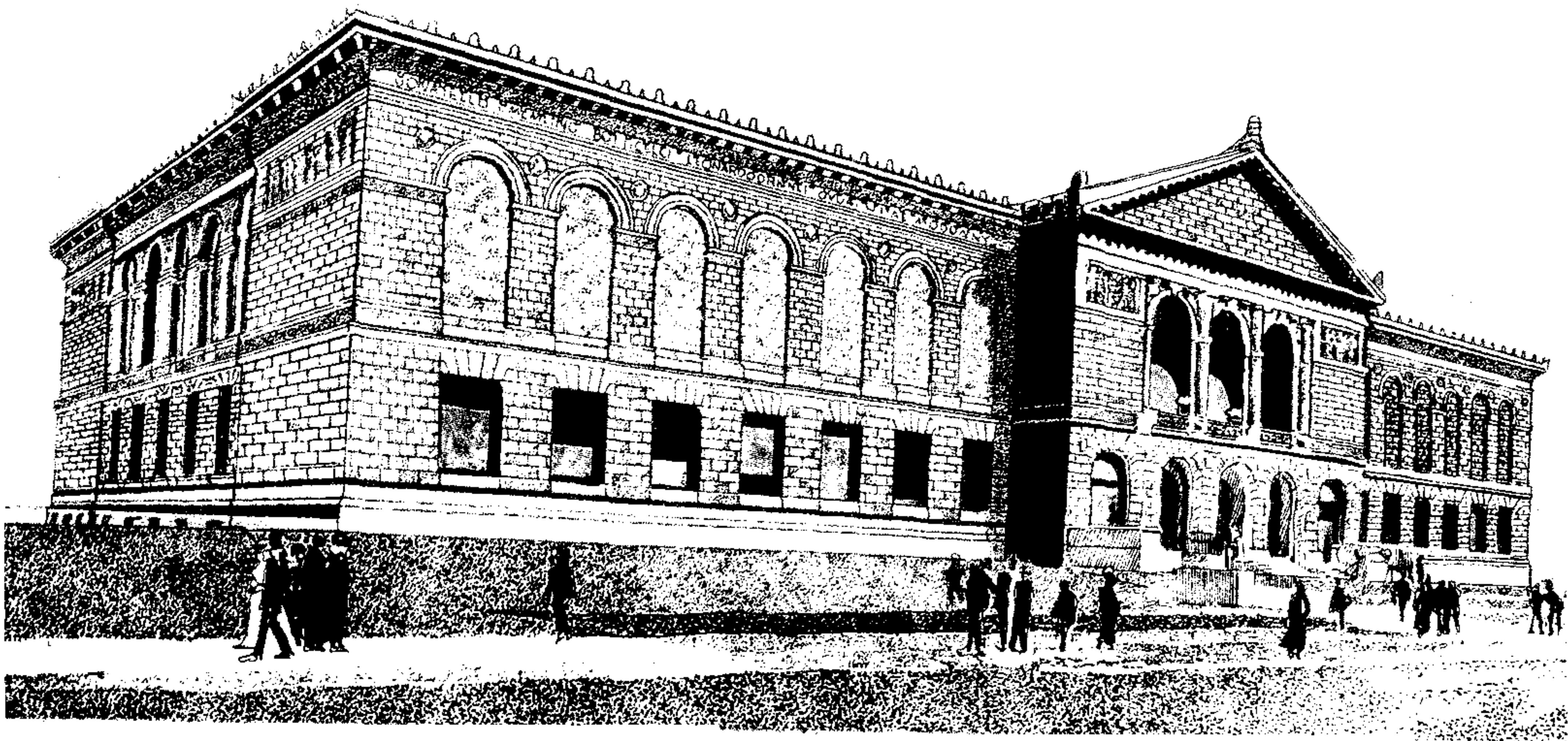




# Prabuddha Bharata

## 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*



### Editorial Office

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

### Publication Office

5 Dehi Entally Road  
Calcutta 700 014  
Phone 244-0898



### Rates of Subscription (inclusive of postage)

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

Cover: The Art Institute  
of Chicago

# Prabuddha Bharata

A Monthly Journal of the  
Ramakrishna Order

*Started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896*

**JUNE 1993**

## CONTENTS

Divine Wisdom	...	...	...	241
Sri Ramanuja and His Prapatti-Marga—I —(Editorial)	...	...	...	242
Swami Niranjanananda —Swami Chetananda	...	...	...	248
Russia Revisited —Swami Bhavyananda	...	...	...	257
Turning Towards Swami Vivekananda for Health—II —Swami Brahmeshananda	...	...	...	265
The Trinity —Ish Kumar	...	...	...	274
Review And Notices	...	...	...	276





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

# Prabuddha Bharata

VOL. 98

JUNE 1993

No. 6

## Divine Wisdom

The one God of the manifold world.

य एकोऽवर्णो बहुधा शक्तियोगाद्  
वर्णानेकान् निहितार्थो दधाति ।  
विचैति चान्ते विश्वमादौ स देवः  
स नो बुद्ध्या शुभया संयुनक्तु ॥

He who is one, without any colour, by the manifold exercise of his power distributes many colours in his hidden purpose and into whom in the beginning and at the end the universe is gathered, may He endow us with a clear understanding.

तदेवाग्निस्तदादित्यस्तद्वायुस्तदु चन्द्रमाः ।  
तदेव शुक्रं तद् ब्रह्म तदापस्तत् प्रजापतिः ॥

That indeed is Agni (fire), that is Āditya (the sun), that is Vāyu (the wind) and that is the moon. That, indeed, is the pure. That is Brahmā. That is the waters. That is Prajā-pati (the lord of creation).

त्वं स्त्री त्वं पुमावसि त्वं कुमार उत बा कुमारी ।  
त्वं जीर्णो दण्डन वञ्चसि त्वं जातो भवसि  
विश्वतोमुखः ॥

You are woman. You are man. You are the youth and the maiden too. You, as an old man, totter along with a staff. Being born you become facing in every direction.

नीलः पतङ्गो हरितो लोहिताक्ष-  
स्तडिद्गर्भं ऋतवः समुद्राः ।  
अनादिमत् त्वं विभुत्वेन वर्तसे  
यतो जातानि भुवनानि विश्वा ॥

You are the dark-blue bird, you are the green (parrot) with red eyes. You are (the cloud) with the lightning in its womb. You are the seasons and the seas. Having no beginning you abide through omnipresence. (You) from whom all worlds are born.

from Śvetāśvatāra Upaniṣad

## Sri Ramanuja and His Prapatti-Marga—I

Messengers of divinity seldom engage themselves in philosophical disputes or endless swirls of debates and polemics. Such exercises at the most can silence opponents or satisfy the scholastic minds. But to common people who are searching for light and solace in their strife-torn lives, these intellectual speculations have very little value. The Prophets and Incarnations of God, in spite of their scholarship, come down to the level of an ordinary man and lift him up from where he is. These divinities on earth, without any criticism, accept people as they are and help them to realize their inner spirituality and divinity. They see God Himself works through all. They live the ideal life and set examples for the rest of mankind to follow. The Incarnations' lives are their message. Their message, though couched in simple language, lights a flame in the hearts of simple folk. Buddha taught in the simple Pali language, so also did Christ, Sri Chaitanya, Sri Ramanuja and other saints preach their gospel in simple words. In our times Sri Ramakrishna spoke the profound truths of Vedanta in a rustic Bengali. These saviours are manifestations of the Godhead in human forms. Knowing everything to be the sport of the Lord, they go about at ease, as care-free children, playing, laughing and dancing in the world. Their divine ecstasy, joy, devotion and guileless humour not only affects all human beings, but awakens spiritual consciousness in them. Unless we see such embodiments of perfection, or read about their lives, our minds steeped in worldliness rarely turn towards God. *Bhāgavata*, *Bhakta* and *Bhagavān*, the

*Bhāgavata*, the devotee, and the Lord, these three are One.

"God incarnates Himself," said Sri Ramakrishna, "on earth in a human body. He is, no doubt present everywhere and in all beings, but man's longing is not satisfied unless he sees God in human form. Man's need is not satisfied without the Divine incarnation."<sup>1</sup>

In all our *Ācaryās*, we observe two striking characteristics: One is their strong adherence to the Upaniṣadic tradition, and the other their ceaseless quest for the direct experience of transcendental Truth. In all the founders and proponents of the major philosophical systems this common characteristic is seen. From the Vedic Age, India has passed through many vicissitudes, has seen periods of transition in the socio-political milieu, and also in the cultural sphere. At one period the mighty current of progress sweeps ahead and at other times slows down. But at no time does the creative fountain of spirituality run dry, nor does the cultural heritage lose its perpetual vitality. When they are at a low ebb there rises a giant personality to resuscitate and give a new and creative thrust to the lagging society. Time and again we read of such phenomena taking place in Indian history.

Every philosophical school, down the ages, has corrected maladjustments or extreme views, or weeded out the unneces-

---

1. *Sri Ramakrishna, The Great Master* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1978) page 883.



sary accretions passed down from the previous age. During the period of the *Brāhmaṇa*-s (ritualistic portion of the *Veda*-s), lofty philosophical concepts were overlooked and prominence was given to elaborate but arid rituals and costly sacrifices. The *Upaniṣads* mark the transition to an advance in deeper philosophical thinking, from previous overwhelming concern with stagnant ritualism. When the deeper thoughts of the *Upaniṣads* led to conflicting diverse interpretations, the *Gītā* marvellously synthesized the apparently conflicting thought systems by pointing out their deeper unity. When self-torturing asceticism and intellectual gymnasticism over perplexing metaphysical theories passed for genuine spirituality, Gautama Buddha was born. His noble life based on perfect moral idealism pulverized such ideas and exposed their hollowness. Jainism too stressed the pure and ethical life of man. Centuries after, Buddha's sublime teachings lost their spiritualizing power and influence over latter-day followers. Hiuen Tsang had noted during his travels in India the state of decline of Buddhism in many centres in the early part of the 7th century. The extremely pure and moral character of early Buddhism slipped down into licentiousness and corruption.

It was necessary to combat the degenerate Buddhism of this period and to re-establish the religion of Vedānta. Kumarila, the founder of the Bhatta school, took his stand on the authority of the *Vedas* and the efficacy of Vedic rites and ceremonies. He was a strong opponent of Buddhism and dealt a powerful blow to its influence. Later in the 8th century appeared on the Indian scene a master mind, one of the world's greatest thinkers. That was Śankara, who with his brilliant intellect and missionary zeal took India by storm. In the meantime however, the followers of Kumarila were

becoming extremely powerful, attaching more importance to the old Vedic rituals, the so-called 'work-portion' (*karma-kāṇḍa*) of the *Vedas*. As a result the *Upaniṣads*, the fountainhead of strength and knowledge, were relegated to a position of non-significance. Śankara with his matchless intellectual power exposed the futility of the *karma-kāṇḍa* of the Bhatta school and held aloft the supremacy of *Jñāna*. In the post-Śankara period many *Advaitic* philosophical schools came into existence to interpret the teachings of the great Teacher. But in this very exacting labour they often differed from one another in heated hair-splitting arguments. Śankara's impersonal Absolute, the illusive character of the world and soul, and the self-conflicting interpretations of his followers could not bring much succour and solace to suffering human beings, however, or enlighten yearning hearts.

In an answer to the wails and longings of common people, and to establish once again the supremacy of theistic religion, Śrī Rāmānuja (1017-1137), the redeemer of the fallen, came on the scene and rejuvenated the *Bhakti* movement. Sri Ramakrishna, pointing out the extraordinary greatness of this sage said:

"You see, there is a vast difference between the *jīva* and *Īśvara*. Through worship and austerity, a *jīva* can at the utmost attain *saṁādhi*; but he cannot come down from that state. On the other hand, an Incarnation of God can come down from *saṁādhi*. A *jīva* is like an officer of the king; he can go as far as the outer court of the seven-storey palace. But the king's son has access to all the seven floors; he can also go outside. Everybody says that no one can return from the plane of *saṁādhi*. In that case, how do you account for sages like Śankara

and Rāmānuja ? They retained the 'ego of Knowledge'.<sup>2</sup>

With strenuous efforts, Sri Ramanuja restored the Hindu faith to its pristine glory. He planted it firmly on the unshakeable foundations of the *Upaniṣads* and the *Gītā*. His role was remarkable in that he had to fight the battle on two fronts. He and his predecessors defended the theistic religion from the atheism of the Buddhists and the relativism of the Jains on one side, and on the other, the *Māyāvāda* of monistic Vedānta.

Sri Ramanuja, the illustrious apostle of the *Bhāgavata Dharma*, occupies a unique place in the spiritual heritage of India. His momentous advent marks an epoch of spiritual revival, a new era of *Bhakti*. He did not rest content with the brilliant expositions of philosophical texts, but he gave supreme importance to spiritual emotions in relation to the Personal God. He synthesized with rare acumen the profound philosophical thoughts and down-to-earth religion in his teachings. His is the practical religion meant for all, but not for the privileged few. He brought from the wisdom of the *Vedas*, the deeper mysteries of the spiritual realm, hitherto inaccessible, to the common masses. He taught mankind, like Sri Ramakrishna in our own age, tapping the eternal source of bliss through devotion to *Savikāra Brahman*, the Personal God. His bleeding heart, his unceasing desire to share the divine bliss with the high and the low have immortalized Sri Ramanuja's name in history. His teachings boldly declare that *Mukti* is not the monopoly of any creed or of any individual ; the portals of Life Divine are open to everyone. Therefore Swami Vivekananda remarked :

"Then came the brilliant Rāmānuja. Shankara, with his great intellect, I am afraid, had not as great a heart. Ramanuja's heart was greater. He felt for the downtrodden, he sympathised with them. He took up the ceremonies, the accretions that had gathered, made them pure so far as they could be, and instituted new ceremonies, new methods of worship, for the people who absolutely required them. At the same time he opened the door to the highest spiritual worship from the Brahmin to the Pariah. That was Ramanuja's work. That work rolled on, invaded the North, was taken up by some great leaders there ;..."<sup>3</sup>

"God can be seen. One can talk to Him as I am talking to you." These are the words of Sri Ramakrishna whose life was the living embodiment of this truth. So was the life of Sri Ramanuja. He lived with God, talked to God and his whole being was permeated by Godconsciousness. Sri Ramanuja's loving and merciful Ranganāth, or Nārāyaṇ, is not a product of imagination or an unrealizable abstract Being living unconcerned about human agonies and pitiful prayers ; but He is our dearest and nearest kin. He is our compassionate Father, Mother, and Friend, who pervades, at the same time, the whole universe. The cornerstone of this Sage's teachings is that even the worst among the sinners, the lowliest of the low, have an equal right to worship and pray to God. Out of His boundless grace He manifests Himself to all who call upon Him, who place their trust in Him.

Sri Ramanuja, the exalted soul, unleashed in the 11th century the tidal waves of

2. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1985 page 767.

3. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989) Vol. 3, pp. 265-66.



*Bhakti*, which inundated the whole nation, drawing into its blissful current the learned as well as the illiterate. Yet, in his overflowing zeal to give a philosophical basis to *Bhakti Yoga*, Sri Ramanuja never failed to give a high place to *Jñāna* and *Karma*. Max Mueller, in his book, *Six Systems of Indian Philosophy*, rightly observes:

“It may be possible to say that Isvara or the Lord is Brahman; but to worship Isvara, and to be told at the same time that Isvara is but phenomenal, must be trying even to the most ardent of worshippers. If therefore Ramanuja, while professing his faith in the Upanishads and his allegiance to Badarayan, could give back to his followers not only their souls, but also a personal god, no wonder that his success should have been so great as it was.”

Saiva and Vaiṣṇava saints are called *Nāyanmārs* and *Ālvārs*, respectively. For the *Nāyanmārs*, Śiva; and for the *Ālvārs*, Viṣṇu is the Supreme Reality. *Ālvār* literally means ‘one who dives deep.’ Sri Vaiṣṇava tradition has fixed their number as twelve, since their matchless devotion and purity are deemed unapproachable by ordinary souls, however exalted be their illumination and devotion. These *Ālvārs* composed the soul-stirring devotional songs and literary pieces in the Tamil language. The movement struck its deep roots in society during the 7th to 10th centuries. The remarkable achievements of the *Ālvārs* lay in breaking down the oppressive caste hierarchy of society. Of the twelve who are especially remembered as saints, some were of the lowest caste, some were out-castes, one was a popular woman saint, *Āṇḍāl*, and another a king, called *Kulaśekhara*. In his book *The Wonder that was India*, Prof. A. L. Basham writing about the devotional intensity and love of God

in these songs, says that they are among India’s greatest contributions to the world’s devotional literature.

Nāthamuni, a great leader of the Sri Vaiṣṇava sect, who flourished in the 10th century, collected all the hymns of the *Ālvārs*. The collection is called *The Nālāyira Prabandham* (book of 4000 hymns). Nāthamuni was overwhelmed by the stirring hymns of the mystics and dedicated his life to popularizing the songs of the Tamil saints. He introduced the regular singing of these songs in Vaiṣṇava temples of South India and raised the status of the regional devotional literature to that of the Vedas. Nāthamuni became the head of the Srirangam temple and his life was marked by intense activity and missionary zeal.

Nāthamuni’s grandson, Yamunācārya, or *Ālvāṇḍar*, won high renown for his vast learning and spiritual insight. His complete surrender and intense longing for the direct experience of the Supreme Reality found fruition in the blissful vision of the Lord Ranganāth. After the vision of God he engaged himself in spiritual ministration and writing treatises on religion. His uncommon dispassion, renunciation and humility, in addition to his profound learning, were vastly admired. Yamunācārya, when his end was drawing near, felt anxious to find a worthy spiritual heir to whom he could bequeath the priceless treasure of Vaiṣṇava lore. Meanwhile, Sri Ramanuja, who was born for this lofty mission, fulfilled the last wish of this great *Ācārya* by taking up the gigantic responsibility of spreading the gospel of Divine Life to millions of earnest souls.

Āsuri Keśava Perumāḷ, a pious and great devotee, used to live in Sriperumbudur, a village near Madras, with his wife Bhudevi. The couple lived happily for many years,

but as no child was born to them both began to sorrow. The hope of getting a son by the grace of Nārāyaṇa, by pleasing Him with the performance of worship and austerities, took hold of Keśava. The childless couple observed religious vows, fasted and performed *yajñas*. In a dream, Lord Viṣṇu appeared and assured Keśava not to be anxious. He would be born to him as a son. About a year later to fulfil their long cherished desire and fervent prayers a radiant child was born to them in 1017 A.D. Such spiritual experiences of the parents of divine souls are rare. In religious history we find only a few examples. Mary, the Mother of Jesus, Mayadevi, the Mother of Buddha, the parents of Sri Rāma-krishna, Bhuvaneswari Devi, the Mother of Vivekananda—all had similar sublime experiences. A wise disciple of Yamunācārya saw this baby and prophesied that the child would possess the great qualities of a sage. He thought the child to be a descent to earth of Lakṣmaṇa, the prince of devotees. The child was called Ramanuja.

From his boyhood, Ramanuja gave evidence of his prodigious intellectual capacity. He could grasp the meaning of a lesson by hearing it only once, however difficult it might be. This quality endeared him to all his teachers. Holy men were very dear to him. He let go no opportunity of serving and associating with them. At the age of sixteen he duly entered the life of a householder. Soon after his marriage his father passed away. Sri Ramanuja left his home thirsting to acquire more knowledge under a competent preceptor. In Kanchi he found Yādavaprakāś, a famous teacher and joined the group of his students. The teacher was a staunch *advaitin*. He would not acknowledge God with form. Sri Ramanuja was a personification of devotion, service to God. Viṣṇu was the very breath of his life. But this devotional

attitude of this astonishingly bright student was repellent to the Guru and as a result he began to look down on Sri Ramanuja with displeasure bordering on contempt. The disciple however, out of reverence for his Guru, refrained from pointing out defects in his teachings.

One day the teacher began explaining a verse from the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* (II.1): *Satyam, jñānam anantam brahma*—; he said Brahman is Truth, Knowledge and Infinity. His explanation did not satisfy the young aspirant. Sri Ramanuja explained that *Satyam*, *Jñānam* and *Anantam* were the attributes of Brahman and not Brahman Itself, just as redness, softness and fragrance could harmoniously coexist in a flower. Sri Ramanuja's interpretation was not only rejected by his guru, but he had to bear patiently an angry outburst of the teacher. On another occasion, Yādavaprakāś was interpreting a passage from the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, Part 1, chapter 6, verse 7—*Tasya yathā kapyāsam puṇḍarikam evam akṣiṇī*—and said God's eyes were red like the buttocks of a monkey. He explained the word *kapyāsam* as the scrotum of a monkey. Sri Ramanuja was pained and shocked to hear such low simile. Challenged by the teacher, he explained, *ka* is water and *pibati* means drinking. The sun or the lotus that drinks water is *kapi*. *Asa* is to open. The import of the word is, God has eyes like the petals of the lotus which bloom before the sun. Sri Ramanuja had to pay the penalty for his audacity. He was driven out by his guru.

One day, Yamunācārya, the spiritual head of the Ranganāth temple, came to Kanchi with his disciples. He saw the young sage Sri Ramanuja in the temple. The Ācārya felt thrilled to see the broad forehead and large luminous eyes of the young man. He had heard earlier about



Sri Ramanuja's intense devotion and vast learning. A fervent prayer shot forth from his heart, "O Lord, make Ramanuja my successor so that he can spread the glory of Thy hallowed name and proclaim to the world Thy redeeming grace." Trusting God would fulfil his wish, Yamunācārya returned to Srirangam.

Though Sri Ramanuja led a householder's life he was not happy with his wife. She was very proud of her brahmin caste and looked down upon others. She insulted many Vaiṣṇava devotees belonging to low caste. Sri Ramanuja could not tolerate such rude behaviour from his wife. Renouncing his wife and wealth he embraced *sannyāsa*, the life of a monk. Yamunācārya, who was waiting for his successor, having heard the news of Sri Ramanuja's *sannyāsa*, sent his emissary to Kanchi to bring Sri Ramanuja to him. But before they could reach Srirangam the great soul Yamunācārya was no more.

Sri Ramanuja beheld the mortal remains of the saint and discovered that the three fingers of his right hand were closed. After enquiry he learnt that the great Ācārya had three unfulfilled desires. First, to propagate the cult of devotion; second, to show gratitude to the memory of two great sages: Vyās and Parāśara; third, to write a commentary on the *Brahmasūtras* from the Viśiṣṭādvaita point of view. Sri Ramanuja vowed that by the grace of the Lord Ranganātha and by the blessings of this holy saint he would devote his life to fulfil these three desires. As soon as he expressed his determination, the three closed fingers straightened out. All these vows were fulfilled by him in his later days.

With rare catholicity of heart Sri Ramanuja entirely refuted the privileges of birth in a caste-ridden society, caring only for

spiritual attainments and good qualities. He advised his followers to relinquish vain pride of caste and assiduously acquire good qualities.<sup>4</sup> He persuaded Kanchipūrṇa, a low-caste devotee, to become his Guru. Dāsarathi, Kureś, Sundarbāhu, Govinda, Yajñamūrti and Saumyanārāyaṇ became his chief disciples. One remarkable incident shows the boundless compassion of this sage. Goṣṭipūrṇa, a renowned Vaiṣṇava guru, after putting Sri Ramanuja to severe spiritual tests, agreed to impart to him a sacred *Nārāyaṇ mantra*, which was a bestower of eternal bliss. But Sri Ramanuja was strictly instructed not to divulge this *mantra* to anyone. Sri Ramanuja was born to help his fellow human beings. His heart overflowed with infinite love for them. He did not remain content with enjoying the bliss of the holy *mantra*, but became restless to share with all his wonderful realization. He climbed to the tower of the temple and in a stentorian voice proclaimed the divine formula to all those assembled. Goṣṭipūrṇa, who had come to know about this grew extremely angry. Sri Ramanuja with humility said to him, "Venerable Sir, I was ready to suffer in hell, therefore I transgressed your instructions. If an insignificant man like me goes to hell and thousands of men and women go to *Vaikuṇṭha*, that is the greatest blessing for me."

Yādavaprakāś, though a great scholar of Advaita, suffered from mental restlessness. He was advised to go to Sri Ramanuja for peace. So he went, and accepted his own disciple as his Guru. Sri Ramanuja removed all disquiet from his mind. Yādavaprakāś, who was puffed up with overweening pride of dry scholarship, realized at last the truth of the *Upaniṣad*: "This Ātman cannot be attained by mastering the *Vedas*, nor by

4. न जातिः कारणं लोके गुणाः कल्याणहेतवः ।

(Continued on page 264)

## Swami Niranjanananda

SWAMI CHETANANANDA

*(Continued from the previous issue)*

Sometimes the young disciples would talk about various riddles of life. Once in Dakshineswar Niranjan and others had a long discussion on free will and predestination. Unable to reach any conclusion, they approached the Master. At first the Master was amused at their naive ideas, but later he commented more seriously: "Does anybody have free will or anything like that? It is by God's will alone that everything has always happened and will continue to happen. Man understands this last of all. Let me give an example of man's free will: It is like a cow tied to a post with a long tether; she can stand at a distance of one cubit from the post or she can go up to the whole length of the tether according to her choice. A man ties a cow with the idea: 'Let her lie down, stand or move about as she likes within that area.' Similarly God has given man some power and also the freedom to utilize it as he likes. That is why man feels he is free. But the rope is fastened to the post. And remember this: If anybody prays to God earnestly, God may shift him to another place and tie him there, or lengthen the tether, or even remove it completely from his neck."

Sri Ramakrishna kept close watch over the disciples' eating, sleeping, and day-to-day behaviour. Only a good student can be a good teacher. The Master trained his inner-circle disciples uncompromisingly so they could become great world teachers. Self-control and truthfulness are indispens-

able to spiritual life. Once, on seeing Niranjan take too much ghee [clarified butter], which creates lust, the Master exclaimed: "My goodness! You take so much ghee! Are you eventually going to abduct people's daughters and wives?" Another day the Master said to a devotee (*pointing to Niranjan*): "Look at this boy. He is absolutely guileless. But he has one fault: he is slightly untruthful nowadays. The other day he said that he would visit me again very soon, but he didn't come." Hearing this, Niranjan immediately apologized.

In September 1885 Sri Ramakrishna had to move to Shyampukur, Calcutta, for treatment of his cancer. Niranjan left home and became the Master's gatekeeper, as he was strong and heroic by nature. There is an interesting story of how Niranjan was fooled by an actress:

In 1884 when Sri Ramakrishna went to see Girish Ghosh's drama, *Chaitanya Lila*, (The Divine Life of Sri Chaitanya) he had been extremely pleased with Binodini, the actress who had played the part of Chaitanya, and had blessed her. She in turn had become very devoted to the Master but could not find another opportunity to meet him. Now, hearing of his illness, she longed to see him again. But the Master's disciples were very strict about visitors. They feared that if Sri Ramakrishna talked too much or if he



were touched by impure people his disease would be aggravated. In order to see the Master, Binodini sought help from Kalipada, whom she knew through Girish. One evening, acting on his advice, she dressed herself as a European gentleman and went with Kalipada to the Shyampukur house. Introducing her to Nirajan as a friend of his, Kalipada took her to the Master, who was alone in his room at that time. Sri Ramakrishna laughed when Kalipada told him who this "European gentleman" really was. After praising Binodini's faith, devotion, and courage, the Master gave her some spiritual instruction and allowed her to touch his feet with her forehead. When Binodini and Kalipada had left, Sri Ramakrishna told the disciples about the trick that had been played on them. The Master enjoyed it so much that the disciples could not be angry.

Following his doctor's advice, Sri Ramakrishna moved from the smoggy environment of Calcutta to a garden house at Cossipore on December 11, 1885. Cossipore was then a suburb of Calcutta (now within the city) and not very far from the Ganga. The Master was quite happy in spite of his terminal cancer. On the morning of December 23, Sri Ramakrishna gave unrestrained expression of his love for the devotees. He said to Nirajan, "You are my father; I shall sit on your lap." Touching another devotee's chest, he said, "May your inner spirit be awakened!" By living with the Master, the devotees' own love and devotion also grew by leaps and bounds.

Once Nirajan went back home for a visit. When he returned, the Master said, "Please tell me how you feel." Nirajan replied, "Formerly I loved you, no doubt, but now it is impossible for me to live without you." Then the Master explained to

M.: "This illness is showing who belongs to the inner circle and who to the outer. Those who are living here, renouncing the world, belong to the inner circle; and those who pay occasional visits and ask, 'How are you, sir?' belong to the outer circle."

The young disciples took turns around the clock serving the Master. Moreover, they were practising spiritual disciplines according to his instruction. They renounced hearth and home and surrendered themselves to the Master. The following incident reveals how the Master protected his disciples: One evening Nirajan and a few other disciples planned to drink the delicious juice from a date palm near the southern boundary of the garden. The Master knew nothing about this. When it was dark, Nirajan and others walked in the direction of the tree. In the meantime, Holy Mother saw the Master running down the steps and through the door. She wondered: "How is it possible? How can one who needs help even to change his position in bed run like an arrow?" Yet she could not disbelieve her eyes. Accordingly, she went to the Master's room and did not find him there. In great consternation she looked all around, but she failed to find him. At last she returned to her room, extremely confused and with much apprehension.

After a while Holy Mother saw the Master running swiftly back to his room. She then went to him and asked about what she had seen. He replied: "Oh, you noticed that. You see, the boys who have come here are all young. They were proceeding merrily to drink the juice of a date palm in the garden. I saw a black cobra there. It is so ferocious and it might have bitten them all. The boys did not know this. So I went there by a different route to drive it away. I told the snake, 'Don't enter here again.'" The Master asked her not to divulge this account to others.

After he had been at Cossipore three or four months, Sri Ramakrishna's body was so emaciated that it was hard to recognize him. But the devotees still hoped that the Master would one day set himself free from the cancer. During this time the Master told Niranjan: "Look. I am now in such a state that whoever sees me in this condition will attain liberation in this life by the grace of the Divine Mother. But know for certain that it will shorten my life." Upon hearing this from the Master, Niranjan became more vigilant about his gate duty. He sat at the entrance day and night with a turban on his head and a stick in his hand and kept outsiders from visiting the Master. Niranjan sometimes hurt people, but he accepted this as an unpleasant duty necessary to protect the Master's life.

A crazy woman used to accompany Vijay Goswami to the Kali temple at Dakshineswar and sing for Sri Ramakrishna. The Master was fond of her singing, but was careful about her as she cherished *madhura bhāva*, the attitude of a wife towards her husband. This is a kind of spiritual relationship a Vaishnava aspirant adopts for Krishna. Once that crazy woman came to Cossipore at noon and wanted to visit the Master. Niranjan stopped her at the entrance. She then became hysterical. Hearing this, the Master asked Sashi (later, Swami Ramakrishnananda) to escort her to him, and he blessed her. Then she began to make more frequent visits. Niranjan adopted a stonewall attitude and prevented her from visiting the Master. Most of the young disciples were very apprehensive because of her unpredictable and seemingly violent behaviour. However, when the woman was finally discouraged, she paid no further visits. Rakhal (later, Swami Brahmananda) expressed his sympathy for the woman. He said: "We all feel sorry for her. She causes so much annoyance,

and for that she suffers too." Immediately Niranjan remarked, "You feel that way because you have a wife at home." Rakhal replied sharply: "Such bragging! How dare you utter such words before him [Sri Ramakrishna]?" The Master would sometimes watch his disciples struggle between two ideals—service to the guru and respect for womanhood.

Another day, Ram Chandra Datta wanted to visit the Master, but Niranjan stopped him at the gate. As a result of this, Ram was hurt since he was one of the prominent lay devotees of the Master. He then asked Latu (later, Swami Adbhutananda): "Please offer these sweets and flowers to the Master and bring a little prasada [offered food] for me." Latu was very touched and said to Niranjan: "Brother, Ram Babu is our very own; why are you putting such restrictions on him?" Still Niranjan was inexorable. Then Latu said rather bluntly, "At Shyampukur you allowed the actress Binodini to visit the Master and now you are stopping Ram Babu, who is such a great devotee." This pricked Niranjan's conscience, so he let Ram go to see the Master. Later when Latu went upstairs, the omniscient Master said to him: "Look. Never see fault in others; rather, see their good qualities." Latu was embarrassed. He came down and apologized to Niranjan, saying: "Brother, please don't mind my caustic remark. I am an illiterate person." This shows how the Master taught his disciples to develop interpersonal relationships.

Once Atul Ghosh, Girish's brother, came to visit the Master and was stopped by Niranjan. Atul was very hurt. Piqued, he took a vow that he would not visit Sri Ramakrishna again unless someone personally came to his house and took him there. Now Atul, though not a doctor, did know how to check a pulse and to evaluate the condi-



tion of a disease. One day the Master asked Niranjan to go to Atul's house and bring him to check his health. Immediately, Niranjan rushed to Atul's place and brought him to the Master. Even while he was sick, the Master was training his devotees—sometimes humbling one and sometimes increasing longing in another.

During the winter the Master would bathe with hot water. One day Niranjan heated a large vessel of water using a lot of firewood. That displeased the Master: he did not care for waste. But Niranjan was stubborn. He carried the whole vessel of water to the Master and said: "Sir, I don't have enough sense to know how much water you need. Since I have brought it, you will have to use it." The Master was pleased to see Niranjan's simple and fearless behaviour.

The disciples took care of the Master's body, and he, in turn, took care of their spiritual life. He silently and naturally gave shape to this group of ideal characters. From his birth, Niranjan had been endowed with divine qualities—simplicity, purity, fearlessness, steadiness, truthfulness and renunciation. When Senior Gopal brought pieces of ochre cloth and twelve rosaries, the Master gave one of each to eleven close disciples including Niranjan, all of whom became monks afterwards. One he kept reserved for Girish. Thus the Master sowed the seed of his forthcoming monastic order.

When the Master passed away on August 16, 1886, the disciples gathered his relics from the Cossipore cremation ground and put them into an urn. They brought the urn to the garden house and decided to continue their service. But they had no money, so Ram Chandra Datta suggested installing the Master's relics at Kankurgachi Yogodyana, his retreat place. Niranjan

vehemently protested this. He, Sashi, and some others secretly transferred the major portion of the Master's relics to a separate urn which they kept at the house of Balaram Basu, a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. In the beginning Narendra (later, Swami Vivekananda) had yielded to Ram Babu's suggestion, but, learning how his brother disciples felt, he consented to their decision. Later, he installed this second urn at Belur Math.

### *Pilgrimage and Austerity*

In December 1886, Niranjan, Narendra, and several other brother disciples went to Antpur, the birthplace of Swami Prem-ananda. There, on Christmas Eve, they took the vows of renunciation in front of a sacred fire not knowing that it was an auspicious day. Sri Ramakrishna had created the hunger for God in their minds, and they began to pass their days in meditation and austerity. One day Sarada (later, Swami Trigunatitananda) went to bathe in a pond. He did not know how to swim. All of a sudden he slipped from a step and fell into deep water. Immediately Niranjan jumped in and rescued him, ignoring the threat to his own life. Niranjan was extremely energetic and dedicated, and he loved to serve people.

In the early part of 1887, Niranjan joined the Baranagore monastery and took the final monastic vows with his brother disciples. Swami Vivekananda gave him the name "Swami Niranjanananda." He continued his spiritual disciplines and austerities in the monastery. He also helped perform the worship service and did most of the laborious work. One day he was carrying some sweets from the market for the Master's offering. A poor woman, holding her little boy in her arms, was walking in the same direction. Seeing the package of sweets in Niranjan-

ananda's hand, the boy cried out: "Mother, I want to eat sweets!" The more she tried to control her son, the more he cried. Niranjanananda gracefully went to the young boy, and placing the packet before him, said, "Please eat these sweets." The poor mother protested: "Father, no. You are carrying these sweets for the Lord. It would be inauspicious if my son were to eat them." Niranjanananda replied: "No, mother, it would be all right. His eating would be the same as the Lord's eating." Handing the packet to the boy, Niranjanananda returned to the market to buy fresh sweets for the Master.

After taking the vows of sannyasa, Swami Niranjanananda went to Puri on a pilgrimage and returned to the Baranagore Monastery on April 8, 1887. The monastery was in very poor condition. Because the disciples could not afford anything better, they were renting a dilapidated house for ten rupees a month. They did not have a suitable altar in the Master's shrine or other accessories for worship. Niranjanananda heard about an aged but expert carpenter in Calcutta and had him make a beautiful altar for the Master. With the help of the devotees, the swami gradually collected a bed for the Master, utensils and a Japanese gong for vespers. Niranjanananda planted a bel tree on the spot where the Master's body had been cremated on the bank of the Ganga, and made a marble altar around the tree. He planned to set inscribed marble slabs in various locations connected with Sri Ramakrishna in the Dakshineswar temple garden, but this plan never materialized. Sometimes he would go to Dakshineswar with Swami Virajananda and meditate in the Panchavati or in the Master's room.

Most people in this world live for themselves. But those who live for others really do live. There is great joy in sharing and

in serving others: such joy eradicates selfishness from the heart and makes a person wholesome. Whenever there was any problem or illness among the brother disciples or Holy Mother, Niranjanananda would assume the necessary responsibility. Niranjanananda nursed Yogananda when he was suffering from small pox in Allahabad, served Latu when he had pneumonia, and helped both Balaram and Ram up to the time of their deaths. When Girish was passing through a period of depression, Niranjanananda took him to Holy Mother, who uplifted him from his dispirited condition. In 1888, when Holy Mother was living alone at Kamarpukur, Harish, an unbalanced devotee of the Master, went there and began to disrupt her peace. He had been poisoned by his wife, and as a result, lost his mind. Holy Mother subsequently complained to the monks at Baranagore. Immediately, Niranjanananda and Saradananda rushed to Kamarpukur. As soon as Niranjanananda arrived, Harish became so frightened that he hurried off to Vrindaban. Later he recovered from his mental illness.

Worldly people are apt to believe that happiness can be derived from worldly possessions and sensual enjoyment; they tend to denounce spiritual disciplines and asceticism. Spiritual people, however, experience that happiness and peace which come from within by controlling their worldly desires. Enjoyment cannot satiate the desire for enjoyment—it increases desires, as clarified butter augments a flame instead of extinguishing it.

In November 1889, Niranjanananda departed from the monastery on a pilgrimage to practise further austerity. He first went to visit the temple of Lord Shiva at Deoghar, and then proceeded to Varanasi. He resided in Bansi Datta's garden house and survived on alms. After that he went to



Prayag, at the confluence of the Ganga and the Yamuna. He travelled throughout various parts of India and then went to Sri Lanka. Swami Vivekananda wrote from America on October 22, 1894: "Why doesn't Niranjan learn Pali in Ceylon and study Buddhist scriptures? I cannot make out what good will come of aimless rambling." However, Swamiji was impressed with Niranjanananda's preaching mission in Sri Lanka. Wherever he went, he would talk about the wonderful life and message of the Master. When he was in Raipur, an army officer named Suraj Rao, met him and was duly inspired. Later on he resigned from his job and became a disciple of Swami Vivekananda. He was later known as Swami Nischayananda. In 1895, before Sri Ramakrishna's birthday, Niranjanananda returned to the monastery, which had been shifted from Baranagore to Alambazar in the later part of 1891.

Gradually news arrived in the monastery that Swami Vivekananda would return to India from the West in early 1897. Swami Niranjanananda left for Colombo and received Swamiji there on January 15, 1897. Afterwards he travelled with Swamiji all across southern India as well as to various parts of northern India. The brother disciples were proud of their leader's success in spreading the message of Vedanta in America and Europe.

In 1898, Swami Niranjanananda went with Swamiji to Almora and then stayed there in order to practise further spiritual disciplines. Sudhir (later, Swami Shuddhananda), an initiated disciple of Swamiji, joined them. Niranjanananda inspired Sudhir, and on September 16, 1898, initiated him into sannyasa. Both then moved to Varanasi and stayed at Banshi Datta's garden house. They continued their austerities as itinerant mendicants—begging food once

a day, walking barefoot without sufficient clothing, sleeping on a blanket without a mosquito curtain, carrying no money, and depending solely on God's will. In Varanasi, Swami Niranjanananda encountered a group of young men and endeavoured to encourage them in spiritual life and in the ideal of service. In 1899, this group observed Sri Ramakrishna's birthday celebration under his guidance. He duly inspired them to sacrifice their lives for the good of many and for the welfare of all. Later this same group founded the Ramakrishna Mission Home of Service and some of them took their monastic vows directly from Swami Vivekananda.

After staying a few months at Varanasi, Niranjanananda went to Kankhal, near Hardwar, a place where mendicants live at the foothills of the Himalayas. Sri Ramakrishna had trained his disciples to build their characters first through practising spiritual disciplines. Truly it is the life that speaks the loudest! The monastic disciples had also learned from the Master how to teach people: Let there be no theft or hypocrisy in your heart. Unite your thought and speech. Religion means realization of Truth. Renounce everything for God. The impact of an illumined soul's life is more profound than the contents of thousands of lectures or books.

When Niranjanananda was at Kankhal, a young man from Varanasi named Kedarnath (later, Swami Achalananda), expressed his desire to become a monk. At first the swami discouraged him, saying that the life of a monk is a very difficult one. He mentioned the passage from the Kaṭha Upaniṣad (1.3.14): "Like the sharp edge of a razor is that path, so the wise say—hard to tread and difficult to cross." But it is equally difficult to stay at home when the fire of renunciation enkindles in the

heart: Kedarnath gave up his job and left home. With the permission of the swami he arrived at Kankhal in August 1899. Niranjanananda received him cordially and took him to a dilapidated house he was living in opposite the present Mahananda Mission. The next day the swami gave him an ochre cloth and asked to repeat the name of Sri Ramakrishna. He taught Kedarnath the basic rule of monastic life: to live on alms, without possessions, depending on God alone.

After some time Swami Niranjanananda became ill and left for Calcutta. A couple of months later the swami wrote to Kedarnath: "My physical condition is extremely bad. It would be nice if you would come and give me a little personal service." Kedarnath immediately went to Calcutta to attend the swami, who was then living in a rented house of M.'s at Bhavani-charan Datta Lane. Swami Brahmananda and the other disciples arranged for his treatment and diet. It was a prolonged illness, and once he was close to death. The swami was later moved to another location, Akhil Mistry Lane, where a devotee provided all of his food and paid his medical expenses. Unfortunately, Kedarnath also became sick and had to go to the monastery which was now located at Belur. He later went back to Varanasi. At last Swami Premananda went to nurse Niranjanananda and he slowly got well.

There are no writings or any recorded reminiscences by Swami Niranjanananda himself. But on December 18, 1946, Swami Achalananda described some of the important characteristics of Swami Niranjanananda's life:

Swami Niranjanananda believed that Sri Ramakrishna was the infinite God incarnated in human form; and he who

took refuge in him would not have to worry in his life.

He had a similarly high estimation of Holy Mother. He believed that by the grace of the Mother, he could do anything.

About Sri Ramakrishna he said: "If anybody came to the Master and said that he wouldn't marry, the Master would dance with joy."

He believed one should sincerely serve the Master—thinking of him as a living, conscious being, our very own. This is the supreme worship. The swami did not put too much stress on rituals and mantras.

He was a strong person and was not afraid of anybody. He considered the Master his only refuge. He appreciated people's dauntless nature.

He had tremendous faith in the doctrine of service as established by Swami Vivekananda and he encouraged people to serve human beings as God.

He was a man of truth and wanted others also to adhere to the truth. He did not care for people who did not keep their word.

He was extremely generous. Whoever sought help from him he would take care of without any misgivings.

He would inspire young people to follow the path of renunciation and again caution them, saying that the path is indeed a difficult one.

He said, "It is important for a monk to live on alms, or *madhukari*." [As a bee collects honey from different flowers, so a monk is supposed to live by begging food from door to door. It is an ancient monastic custom in India.] He himself would collect food like the traditional



monks, and then eat it after offering it to the Master.

He used to do physical exercise regularly and he encouraged the young men to keep their bodies strong and active.

Swami Vivekananda went to the West again in June 1899; he returned to India in December 1900. Swami Niranjanananda was very happy to be with Swamiji once more. In January 1902, Swamiji visited Varanasi where Swami Niranjanananda was currently residing. He arranged for Swamiji's stay at Kali Krishna Tagore's garden house. At that time Okakura Kakuzo, the famous Japanese artist, arrived to escort Swamiji to Japan as a royal guest. Due to his bad health this visit was cancelled; but Swamiji travelled with him to Bodha Gaya and from there to Varanasi. Swamiji wrote to Mrs. Ole Bull on February 10, 1902: "Mr. Okakura has started on his short tour. He intends to visit Agra, Gwalior, Ajanta, Ellora, Chittore, Udaipur, and Delhi. Niranjan has gone with Okakura."

In the later part of February, when Swamiji became gravely ill, Swamis Niranjanananda and Shivananda escorted him to Belur Math. The doctors had been treating Swamiji for diabetes and kidney disease; but at the earnest request of Niranjanananda he took *āyurvedic* medicine for three weeks. During this period, in accordance with the treatment, he did not drink any liquids except a little milk now and then to satiate his thirst. On Sri Ramakrishna's birthday Niranjanananda became Swamiji's gatekeeper in order to prevent the general public from disturbing him. A young brahmachari, who was a disciple of Swamiji, arrived from Mayavati to visit him. Niranjanananda did not know the young man so he stopped him at the gate. But while Niranjanananda was talking to someone

else, the clever brahmachari crawled through his legs and entered Swamiji's room. When Niranjanananda heard this from Swamiji, he appreciated the boy's resourcefulness and dedication.

Niranjanananda's character was a mixture of tenderness and sternness. He was an unattached monk and his love for truth was uncompromising. Once a rich man of Calcutta built a Shiva temple in Varanasi ostensibly to acquire merit. When Swami Vivekananda heard about it, he remarked, "If he would do something to relieve the suffering of the poor, then he would acquire the merit of building a thousand such temples." When Swamiji's statement reached the rich man, he offered a generous donation to the Ramakrishna Mission Home of Service at Varanasi—in a nucleus state at that time. But later, as his initial enthusiasm cooled down, he decided to reduce the sum he had originally offered. This breach of promise so offended Niranjanananda's regard for truth that he rejected the offer altogether, even knowing it would cause great hardship for the institution.

Niranjanananda's devotion to Holy Mother was indeed remarkable. Swami Vivekananda used to say, "Niranjan has a militant disposition, but he has great devotion for Mother so I can easily put up with all his vagaries." In those early days the divinity of Holy Mother was not widely acknowledged; even Girish, a great devotee of the Master, confessed his doubt about it. Girish, as was mentioned previously, was then passing through a critical time—he had lost his wife and his son, and was suffering from mental depression. At that time Niranjanananda took him to Holy Mother and later accompanied him to her village of Jayrambati. Girish stayed there for some months with Niranjanananda under the affectionate care of Holy Mother and

derived immense spiritual benefit. In fact, it was partly as a result of Niranjanananda's active preaching that many devotees came to recognize the spiritual greatness of Holy Mother.

Because he practised such hard austerity, Niranjanananda's health failed. During the last few years of his life he suffered from dysentery. The climate and water of Hardwar are better than those of Belur Math, so he decided to move there to practise Tapasya and went to Holy Mother to receive her blessings. This last meeting was very touching as Niranjanananda released his pent-up devotion for Holy Mother. No one understood the cause—perhaps he had a premonition that he would not live long. He insisted that Holy Mother do everything for him. He entreated her to cook for him and feed him as a mother feeds her young child. Holy Mother fulfilled his wish. Before leaving, he fell at her feet and burst into tears. Then he silently went away, knowing that he would never see her again.

At Hardwar, he lived in a rented house and continued his sadhana (spiritual disciplines). His chronic dysentery was

eating up his body day by day, but it could not stifle his renunciation. Sri Ramakrishna had enkindled his spirit while Niranjanananda was in his teens and it shone brightly throughout the remainder of his life. He wished to complete the journey of his life alone. Towards the end, he was stricken with cholera. Like a hero, he took shelter on the bank of the Ganga and surrendered himself to God. When his attendant offered to serve him, Niranjanananda declined. When the attendant nevertheless insisted, he said, "Don't you want me to die in peace?" Then the attendant reluctantly departed. Swami Niranjanananda, the heroic monk of Sri Ramakrishna, passed away in samadhi on May 9, 1904.

Later, the attendant realized the truth of Sri Ramakrishna's prediction: "Do you know what these youngsters are like? They are like certain plants that grow fruit first and then flowers. These devotees first of all have the vision of God; next, they hear about his glories and attributes, and at last they are united with him. Look at Niranjan. He always keeps his accounts clear. He will be able to go whenever he hears the call."

He whose mind is not attached to anything, who has subdued his heart, and who is free from all longing—he, by renunciation, attains supreme perfection, which is freedom from action.

*Srimad Bhagavat Gītā (18.49)*



# Russia Revisited

SWAMI BHAVYANANDA

*More and more Russians are evincing keen interest in Indian spirituality, specially in the teachings of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. Some small groups in different cities have taken up enthusiastically the study of these two world teachers. The author during his second visit witnessed the religious revival in that great country. He is the spiritual head of the Ramakrishna Centre in the United Kingdom.*

Swami Jyotirupananda and our close friends made my visit to Russia possible again in September, 1992. The last visit was to the USSR and the present one only to Russia. It was less complicated to get a visa this time. Russia seems to recognise that she has to be with the rest of the world. The visa costs a little more, but it is understandable, they are in need of foreign currency.

I was given a red carpet welcome at Moscow airport. Two of our friends walked straight into the plane and took my baggage through a private entrance. The captain was a little surprised. For a VIP everything works out very smoothly! Customs clearance, immigration papers etc. move swiftly. I was driven out of the airport in a big car. We passed through the city and reached the Swami's flat, which is in the suburbs. It is in a beautiful area, quiet and peaceful. Half a dozen close devotees had gathered to welcome us. After courtesies and tea, most of them left. A couple of them stayed on for the evening prayers and meditation. After a light supper, we retired by 10:30 p.m. It was a very good feeling.

This flat is Thakur's (Sri Ramakrishna's) home, though very small. The flat is on

the ground floor. There are three well sized rooms with all facilities. One of the rooms has been converted into a meditation room. It looked as if Thakur has already settled down there. The other two are used for all purposes, bedroom, sitting room and office.

The next day we were all by ourselves until 10 a.m. Then some friends came. We went for a walk in a nearby park. As we walked, I noticed the underground station is fairly near, and surrounded by small stalls selling all sorts of things, including vegetables and fruit. It looked as if we were in a Calcutta bazaar. The roads are poorly maintained and not clean.

The devotees have organised themselves to come by turns and cook food for the Swami. He has collected a very good group of dedicated helpers, who look after him in every way. They do not have very much money, but they provide all the Swami's needs. Most of them could be classified as lower income group, economically. But they will do anything to make the swami feel comfortable. He lives there literally without any money, entirely dependent upon the people for his food and shelter, like a real Sannyasin.

*"Food what chance might bring, well-cooked or ill, judge not."* But he has no complaints. The devotees provide what best they can, sharing what little they have themselves with the Swami. Compared to last year's experience, the arrangements for food and accommodation are satisfactory in every way. His life style is simple and needs are few.

Before I could settle down, engagements for the next three days had been fixed up. A good friend from Yaroslavl arrived, and arranged several meetings, which we had to address, in and around his place. This was not a very convenient arrangement, but we have to accept all this and work hard to become established in Russia. The Swami needs help from all possible directions and sources.

#### *USSR before 1991 and after.*

Seventy-five years of Communism has held the whole nation under its grip and ideology. Even people who did not see eye to eye with their ideology had to be their followers, if they were not to end up in prisons. The machinery of the State and its economy and the life of every individual was controlled. The whole population worked for the State alone.

The wages were small, but people could live within that. Basic necessities were very cheap, but people had no freedom to think or to move from place to place. Even legitimate grievances could not be openly talked about. But they were very secure within limits. All that collapsed overnight. Capitalist economy started creeping in. Prices simply soared; people could not live on the money they earned. The government tried to increase the wages from 200 to

2,000 roubles,<sup>1</sup> but the prices had risen so high, most of the people lived below the poverty line. The average person found it difficult to buy even the basic necessities, food and clothing. The slogans perestroika and glasnost had not brought any succour to the common man. Gorbachev had sealed the corrupt water sources, but no fresh water sources had been found. His plan to stabilize the Soviet state and its economy in a new way had failed. He had to go, and he did. The new regime which has taken over the power is no more able to hold all the states together. They have all become independent. Their economy is in ruins. Even government offices are not able to pay their employees. Some people have to take odd jobs in addition to the work they are doing. Because of the high cost of living, everyone has become poor. In the old economy, a telephone call cost two kopeks, and one could telephone anywhere in the USSR and talk any length of time he liked. In Moscow, for five kopeks, one could take the Metro from one end of the city to the other. But today, it costs fifteen kopeks and 150 kopeks respectively. A local letter today costs seventy kopeks, and a foreign letter, twenty-five roubles. A telephone call abroad costs seventy-five roubles per minute. The train fare between Moscow and St. Petersburg used to be twenty roubles, now it is two hundred. One could fly to India for 2,500 roubles, but now it is 75,000.

People are no longer able to live in reasonable comfort on the money they are getting. The food position in summer is not bad, but in winter, people have to survive on bread and cheese. Some meat, if they can afford it, and when available. Often, people

1. One dollar is equivalent to two hundred roubles. There are one hundred kopeks to a rouble.



try to save some food for winter use. Money is in short supply for everyone, the state and the common man. People live in constant despair.

By and large, everyone has a small flat, though amenities are poor. They have gas, electricity, running water and telephone, but services are very much run down. People in general are very friendly. Everyone smiles and greets. Some come forward and make enquiries about you.

Gorbachev thought he would survive the crisis and create a new commonwealth, but destiny willed otherwise. Boris Yeltsin, who was waiting in the wings, came forward onto the lit stage and became a central figure. Disintegration of USSR, internal bickerings and conflict are part of current history. Gorbachev is hated by the people of the Communist Party, and ignored by the common people. Boris Yeltsin has not improved the situation. He is not loved, but accepted because there is no alternative. People do not want the Communist Party to come back to power. They love their freedom of speech and action, though want and hunger is the price they have to pay. They are prepared for it. Poverty and freedom is much better than food and slavery.

#### *What of the future ?*

I am told that Gorbachev is finished. We have to wait and see. He seems to be lying low. There are sections of the people who admire his courage in destroying the old, tyrannical order. Though they are critical at his failure to create a new order, his admirers see some hope for the nation if he comes back to power. Boris Yeltsin is seen as an aggressive person, who has not delivered the goods. If he is unable to change the situation, how long will he be tolerated ? How long will the patience of

the suffering people endure ? Sooner or or later, a general election is bound to come. We have to wait and see what happens. Whichever party may come into power, some optimists feel, in due course, a strong economy will be built up. In a way, the process has already begun. I have no doubt it will gather momentum. Meanwhile, suffering is unavoidable. The Russian people, in general, are patient, essentially good and open.

All our friends are happy that a Swami is there and now has a flat. They are helping him in all possible ways. Having a flat brings its own problems. He needs a certain amount of money to pay bills and other incidentals. What hope of regular income ? At present, he does not even have any idea what will be the monthly expenses. Rates and taxes, also, are not known to him. The economic condition being what it is, one cannot expect to get any contributions to maintain the ashrama. At this stage, the prospect of getting any money is nil. Nothing can be done about it. Some kind friends have sent money from abroad, which will keep him going for a time. There are certain essential changes to be done in the house. That also costs money. The Swami, being an austere person, has very few needs. He is adequately protected for the winters. There should be no crisis in any way.

#### *Yaroslavl*

We reached Yaroslavl on Friday, 21st September. It was about five hours by train from Moscow. As we alighted, there was a big fanfare. Many people had gathered, and quite a few newspaper reporters, with cameras clicking, and television and radio interviewers. All that kept us busy for an hour. In the next twenty-four hours, we had three public meetings, all very well attended.

We also went to another town, Rybansk, about two hours journey by car, where we had two meetings, also well attended. Rybansk is an industrial town. They manufacture aero engines, motor engines and spare parts. It is on the river Volga. It has many churches, unused and in disrepair. The whole city looks rundown and neglected. People are hard up, not regularly paid; that makes life a little difficult for them.

I must record an interesting episode. When we entered the flat where we stayed for the night, a Russian couple in Indian dress welcomed us. I understand they were members of the Hare Krishna movement. They had taken all the trouble to cook food for us and entertained us. That was the least expected Indian feast in Russia. The Hare Krishna movement has a small establishment here, and next day we visited that place, also.

The accommodation here was very small. Families happily share what they have of space, food and everything. When a guest comes, people vacate their flat, and go and sleep with friends or relatives, appearing early next morning to serve breakfast and look after the guests. They even make beds and close them for you. They do it all so skilfully, to make space for the daily living. Every inch of space is used and tidily organised. They have everything a modern house can have. Television, radio, washing machine, refrigerator, even a dishwasher. Hi-fi systems are also here, and even a dog. All this to be fitted into a flat of two rooms!! I saw in a small bathroom all the possible luxury toiletries of the West were kept stored. Toilet rolls were in short supply, but plenty of cut-up newspaper was available. Because of short supply, people buy whatever is readily available and store it. Not much of cleaning materials were

available. Building materials for maintenance cannot be had, even nails. Private workmen simply do not exist. To say the least, life is irksome and difficult. One learns to put up with the inconveniences philosophically.

The meetings at Rybansk were also well attended and a lot of questions were asked. People, by and large, seem to be well read. The second day we returned to Yaroslavl. The car journey was very hazardous. The roads, which were laid during the Czarist regime, remain unrepaired and untouched. We had a very skilful driver, who negotiated all the potholes, but the passengers had to have great patience. Often, they will be churned inside the car! That we reached our destination was a miracle, indeed. Miracles do happen, even in this age! Spending a night in Yaroslavl, we returned next day to Moscow.

We had only one public meeting in Moscow, arranged by our good friends at the Oriental Institute. About one hundred people attended that meeting, by invitation only. The response was good. Many searching questions, also, were raised. The Oriental Institute is part of the Academy of Sciences. Mr. Rybakov, the Deputy Director, is a good friend. He specialises in India and Indian philosophy. The Institute buildings are very nice, there are rooms for seminars and halls for lectures. They have an impressive library and invite scholars from abroad. The Swami teaches Sanskrit at the Institute and also delivers a lecture there every week.

### *Some Reflections*

Now that we have a place of our own, it is important to have a separate room for Sri Ramakrishna. After all, it is His place and He should be the Centre, round which



everything else moves. During my stay there we meditated both morning and evening and sang hymns. Whether anyone is there or not, the Swami will keep up this routine. When devotees come to the Ashrama, they need to be encouraged to go and spend at least thirty minutes before they start doing any work. In the evenings, whenever they are around, at a fixed time you must have the evening prayers and meditation. People must be encouraged to do this regularly. Buildings do not make an ashrama or a temple. By prayer and meditation, we have to awaken the spirit of God. On special days, a small ritual may be introduced in due course. The spiritual vibrations created here will literally attract people to the Centre.

*What does the Free Economy mean to the ordinary person ?*

One has to see to believe there are supermarkets in Moscow. In these places, one can buy everything that can be had in England. Everything is presented in the same way as in supermarkets anywhere else. But all transactions are through the almighty dollar. When I entered one of these shops, the girl at the counter drew my attention to the notice board which read, "Transactions in hard currency only." So those who have dollars in their pockets—embassy employees, or travelling Westerners and rich Russians only, can enter these places. They all have a high standard of living, but their flats are mostly miserably small. I asked a friend what happens to all this fresh fruit and vegetables if they are not sold in time. They are transferred to some big shops, where they can be bought in rouble currency. But even these shops are beyond the reach of the common people. They are still expensive. But there are enough rouble-rich Russians who can afford, and they keep these shops open.

There is a third category of ordinary shops in all areas. They sell daily necessities and provisions, bread, butter and cheese. Maybe some vegetables, household odds and ends, clothing, etc. I understand clothing has become very expensive. The cost of everything is going up all the time. Then there is the poor man's category of shops—street markets. Near every Metro station, in the open there are small stalls, selling fruit, vegetables, flowers, all sorts of useful articles, utensils, even some imported things, like Coca Cola and 7-Up. Wines and vodka are also available. These stalls spring up like mushrooms every morning and disappear in the evening. All this keeps money circulating, which is in short supply. Taking up a second job seems to be very common, I understand. I am sure some people live from hand to mouth. They all learn somehow how to survive these hard days. For an ordinary man, there is no chance even to make illegal money. Nobody has money to spare anyway! I am sure pick-pockets and thieves are very hard hit!! There is hardly anything worth stealing in an average flat. Our ground-floor flat has no protection for the big glass windows. Someone who is really hungry can break in and take food from the kitchen; maybe he can have a bath if he likes. There is nothing worth stealing!

Most of the people have a dacha—a small holding in the country—and try to grow vegetables and fruit in summer and preserve what they can for winter use. Summer is only three months. Life is hard indeed. "The poor like the warm summer better than the cold days of winter." Coming back from Brazil, a tropical country, just two weeks ago, it is a contrast here. There, there is plenty of food, fruits and anything one wants. The poor are there, also, it is all relative. Here, everything is harsh, comparatively. People have to work

very hard to build up a good future. Still, they smile and greet as they pass.

I understand that many small industries are also coming up. In collaboration with the West there are many private shops, where all sorts of technological gadgets are available. People had not seen these things before. Now, if they have money, they can buy. A lot of food gifts, also, come into Russia. Government shops distribute them to the poor and aged. I understand sometimes they pay a small price for these gifts. Poor people sell these things and make a little extra cash to buy their necessities, and these articles find their way to the roadside bazaars. All this is part of the struggle for existence. Life is rough for everyone—even for Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin! Symbolically, too many potholes and bumps on the road. I hope “This, too, shall pass away.”

28th, Friday morning, we found ourselves in St. Petersburg. Our friends had to do hard bargaining with the taxi driver before we could get into it. The friends here are very enthusiastic people. They accommodated us in the flat which we had rented last year. As I mentioned in last year's report, the Ramakrishna Society here is slowly making its presence felt. They have published half a dozen small booklets. The same evening, we were invited to address a large ecumenical group, called the Temple of Light. About 120 people attended the meeting. Many representatives of different religions and cultural organisations participated in it. I was surprised to find a representative of a pre-Christian Russia group here, calling themselves Aryans, and claiming to be linked with Indian spirituality. Theosophy and Roerich societies have a strong hold in Russia. All these societies are New Age movements and oriental religious groups are not favourably looked

upon by the Orthodox Church. They would like to crush them all, if they could. Thank God, they do not have enough strength in their muscles. We have to wait and see how things develop. At present, it is not clear.

On this occasion, a newspaper devoted to the revival of religion was launched. “Rosa Mira”—Rose of the World, is the name of the newspaper. On the front page, there is a picture of Swami Jyotirupananda with a message. On the central page, there is an interview article of half a page on Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. He (Sri Ramakrishna) has His own methods of finding his way to the farthest corners.

Our friends in St. Petersburg had convened a weekend seminar at Ishwara, two hours from St. Petersburg. Some kind friends took us by car. It was a luxury. The rest of our friends travelled by public transport (bus). Ishwara is the place of Nicholas Roerich's ancestral home. The Ministry of Culture has been organising a museum in that building. The director of the museum kindly accommodated us in her quarters, moving out. She was very happy such a cultural event was being organised in her place. The other participants stayed in a hotel in a nearby village. Roerich was a very famous artist, writer, philosopher and visionary. His wife, Helena, was also a deep thinker and philosopher. She has written fourteen volumes, “Living Ethics,” that is called Agni Yoga. They lived in America. Then, in 1928, they emigrated to India and lived in Kulu valley, where they founded an institution known as the Roerich Institute. They lived there till his death in 1947. His son, who is also an artist, has married an Indian lady and lives in Bangalore. This family has brought spiritual India to Russia. While in India, he was acquainted with the thought



and lives of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. He visited Belur Math, also. A painting of his hangs in the old monastery building. There are Roerich societies all over Russia.

Ishwara village is a farming community of two thousand people. It is a beautiful place. There are many big, neglected houses in the area. I was surprised at the name of Ishwara, given to the village. When I asked some local people, I was told that in the pre-Christian era, there was a Hindu kingdom here. The king had built temples in this particular area to the god Ishwara. With the onset of Christianity though, the signs of the old Hindu influences have disappeared, god Ishwara still sits here in this place! There are a great many archaeological sites here, which are still to be excavated to rediscover the past history.

The retreat was attended by twenty-four people. The selected representatives came from Moscow, Yaroslavl, Latvia (Riga), Lithuania, etc. This was a very fruitful encounter. They were all very earnest people, who were looking for new inspiration. All our meetings were held in the museum hall, where we also meditated. From somewhere, a picture of Sri Ramakrishna appeared to preside over the function. One cannot escape His watchful eyes, even in that distant place! He made a statement during His lifetime that His picture would be worshipped all over the world. If we omit to carry one, He has to find one Himself, to fulfil His own prophecy!! The director and staff of the museum were very helpful. They have invited the Ramakrishna Society, St. Petersburg, to organise such seminars every year.

### *The Ramakrishna Society, St. Petersburg*

Under the inspiration of Swami Lokeshwaranandaji, a group of people formed a Ramakrishna Society in 1990, which was registered only in 1991. Within this one year they have established some standing in St. Petersburg. They have very close links with the other movements that have come into the country. The Lord provided them with the funds required to publish Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda literature. They also have a computer available to them. They have earnestly been looking round for a suitable flat they can buy. Moves have been made, and finances found for this purchase. I understand that Swami Jyotirupananda will visit St. Petersburg for one week every month to deliver lectures and meet people. That is a very good idea indeed. His movement between Moscow and St. Petersburg will spread the message of Sri Ramakrishna more effectively.

3rd September, Moscow. We met a lot of people who came to see us and gave an interview to the Indian Embassy magazine. Moscow friends have suggested that we hold a weekend seminar for their benefit next summer. Eighteen months after the Swami first landed in Moscow, he sees the light at the end of the tunnel. The situation is brighter and optimistic. He has a small group of friends who support and take care of him. Whenever he goes out of Moscow, they gather to see him off, and receive him when he returns. His flat is cleaned, towels changed, bed made and hot food waiting for him. When he goes out for talks in the city, someone accompanies him, buys his tickets and brings him back. All together, they make him feel that he is respected and wanted. He has given inspiration and meaning to their lives. He has picked up enough Russian to communicate with them,

though not to lecture. He is a determined soul. He is prepared to sacrifice himself for the cause of Sri Ramakrishna. With faith in Him, he has found his way to the hearts of kind friends who have gathered round him. Money he has none, but he has a mountain of faith. He is meeting the challenge squarely. He feels fairly well stabilised. Sri Ramakrishna has provided him with a beautiful flat, which everyone likes. For their part, the people are pre-

pared to share their poverty cheerfully with him. Some feel the Centre is their spiritual home. Some have taken upon themselves the responsibility of organising the required fittings for the flat. On the whole, a positive picture is emerging. The Swami feels stable and wanted. The friends have found someone to guide them in their inner life and provide inspiration. The whole thing seems to be moving in the right direction.

## SHI RAMANUJA AND HIS PRAPATTI-MARGA—I

(Continued from page 247)

intellect, nor by much hearing.”<sup>5</sup> He accepted the path of devotion and God with Form. Totapuri, an *advaitin*, at last accepted the Divine Mother and bowed down to his disciple Sri Ramakrishna. Yādavaprakāś took *sannyāsa* from Sri Ramanuja and was given the name Govinda Jeer. He wrote a book on Vaiṣṇava religion—*Yatidharmasamuccaya*.

Drawn by Ramanuja’s irresistible appeal, his divine greatness, purity and compassion, people began to flock to him from far and near. From his facile pen and vast learning many valuable books came into existence. He wrote a commentary on the *Gītā*, the *Gadyatraya*: *Śaraṇāgati-gadya*, *Sri Ranga-*

*gadya* and *Vaikuṇṭha-gadya*; *Vedānta-dīpa*, *Vedārtha-sangraha*, the *Vedānta Sāra* and the *Vaikuṇṭha-grantha*. Embodied in these books are the tenets and practices of the Sri Vaiṣṇava faith. He also composed his magnum opus, the *Srī Bhāṣya*, a lucid commentary on the *Brahma Sūtras* on the line of *Bodhāyan Vṛtti*. Sri Ramanuja also suffered calmly through various persecutions from the Śaiva fanatic king Kulotunga of the Chola dynasty. Inspired by a missionary zeal he travelled throughout the country, converting many kings and admitting thousands of people belonging to different faiths into the noble fold of Sri Vaiṣṇavism. This illustrious messenger of God who enriched the thought and life of the human race with the supremacy of bhakti, divine wisdom and unearthly compassion, freed himself from the shackles of the flesh at a ripe old age in the year 1137 A.D.

5. नायमात्मा प्रवचनेन लभ्यो न मेधया न बहुना श्रुतेन । —*Katha Up.*, II-23.



# Turning Towards Swami Vivekananda for Health—II

SWAMI BRAHMESHANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue)

We have seen in the foregoing review that through ages the concepts of health and medicine had been evolving and changing. Medicine evolved from being curative to being preventive, from preventive to social, and from social to community oriented. Today its principal value is "health" and its goal is "health for all". In 1977 it was decided in the Health Assembly of WHO to launch the "Health for All" movement. This was reaffirmed at Alma Ata in 1978 and endorsed by the UNO General Assembly in 1981. The Alma Ata Conference observed that "the gross inequality in the health status of people, particularly between developed and developing countries as well as within countries is politically, socially and economically unacceptable."<sup>1</sup>

Swami Vivekananda was deeply aware of the inequality and injustice prevailing in society, and was intensely sensitive to the miseries of the unprivileged masses. Almost three quarters of a century before the Alma Ata declaration, he had suggested some remedies which are even more relevant today. Let us therefore turn towards him for guidance for the fulfilment of the goal of "Health for all by 2000." It must be remembered that Swamiji based all his

teachings on the Vedantic truth of the divinity of man and the unity of existence.

*Swamiji's message for the sick:*

Swami Vivekananda has a message for the ailing person. He believed that Vedantic truths can drive away disease. He wrote to his ailing brother disciples: "Even the poison of a snake is powerless if you can firmly deny it."<sup>2</sup> And again: "Why are Baburam and Yogen suffering so much? It is owing to their negative, their self-abasing spirit. Tell them to brush aside their illness by mental strength, and in an hour illness will disappear. I the Atman smitten with disease! Off with it! Tell them to meditate for an hour at a stretch, 'I am the Atman, how can I be affected by disease!'—and everything will vanish. Think all of you that you are the infinite powerful Atman and see what strength comes out.... I *am*, God *is*, everything is in me. I *will* manifest health, purity, knowledge, whatever I want....Who says you are ill—what is disease to you? Brush it aside!...Repeat to yourself that such and such are Atman, that they are infinite, and how can they have any disease? Repeat this an hour or so on a few successive days and all disease and trouble will vanish into naught."<sup>3</sup>

1. Park, J. E. & Park, K., *Text Book of Preventive and Social Medicine*, 12th ed., (Jabalpur: M/S. Banarasidas Bhanot, 1989) page 9.

2. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1978), Vol. VI, page 275.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 276-77.

"Whenever any one of you is sick, let him himself or anyone of you visualise him in your mind, and mentally say and strongly imagine that he is all right. That will cure him quickly. You can do it even without his knowledge, and even with thousands of miles between you."<sup>4</sup>

*Message for the medical personnel:*

For doctors and those who are engaged in the service of the sick, Swamiji's message is even more pertinent and explicit. He urges them to serve the patients as the veritable embodiments of God. "Serving man as God" is the *Yuga-dharma*, the religion for the present age. This attitude turns a secular act into a consecrated one and service of men into the best form of worship of the divine. In this worship of the patient-God, the physician or the surgeon is the chief priest, the nurse, the compounder, the assistants, the anaesthetists and others are his helpers; and the objects of worship (*upacāra* or *upakaraṇa*) are the tablets, injections, ointments, infusions, etc. A surgical operation in its elaborate preparation, solemnity, and methodical procedure can be fairly compared to an elaborate Durgā Pūjā.

But the mere attitude of mind considering the patient as God is not enough. For a true servant of the people, Swamiji lays down a few important conditions. For all would-be reformers, patriots and social servants Swamiji says: "Three things are necessary for great achievements. First feel from the heart. Do you feel that the millions of descendants of gods and of sages have become *next-door neighbours to brutes*... *that is the first step*."<sup>5</sup> The second condition is to find out a way, a practical solu-

tion to the problem before us. And the third condition is the steadfastness, the will, the determination to pursue the path one has chosen, against all difficulties and hindrances. In other words none can truly and effectively serve the sick unless he has a feeling heart and real love and sympathy, nor until he has learnt the necessary skills to serve, irrespective of any returns in the form of money, name, or fame, or recognition, and until he can face all difficulties like financial stringency, social unfairness or blame, or withdrawal of cooperation. The relevance of the above conditions laid down by Swamiji for an ideal medical worker can be immediately appreciated if we look at the prevailing medical scene in India. Due to lack of feeling this noble method of service, the medical profession, is getting converted into a trade and an ugly method of exploitation; due to lack of proper knowledge it is being reduced to quackery, and without the necessary determination to pursue, it is leading to negligence and incomplete treatment.

Incidentally, it may be mentioned that with all his love for India and revolutionary sociological ideas about the uplift of the masses, Swamiji did not try for national independence soon after his return from the West. Asked why he was not more outspoken for India's freedom from the British rule, Swamiji said that India lacked men who could safeguard the freedom if obtained. Hence, he instead established the Belur Math and opened centres for man-making and character building. This need for character is also evident in the field of medicine. The unethical practices prevailing at present in India in the medical field underscore Swami Vivekananda's message of the need for man-making and character-building. Suffice it to say that the doctors and the paramedical personnel must first of all be men, endowed with

4. *Ibid.*, Vol. V, 1985, page 33.

5. *Ibid.*, Vol. III, 1984, page 225.



something of Buddha's heart and Śankara's intellect with a gigantic will capable of surmounting all difficulties.

#### *Food, Water and Sanitation:*

Let us now turn to the wider issues concerning health. Swami Vivekananda may not have spoken directly about health and medicine, but he has given enough hints by which the health of the masses can be improved, diseases can be prevented and mortality can be reduced. Swamiji believed in total eradication of disease. "My method of treatment is to take out by the roots the very causes of the disease and not to keep them merely suppressed."<sup>6</sup> This was told in context of social reform, and Swamiji also pointed out the root causes of all ills. They were, in short, poverty and ignorance.<sup>7</sup> The Indian masses had very little to eat and were ignorant about the basic laws of health. "The poor die of starvation because they can get nothing to eat, and the rich die of starvation because what they take is not food."<sup>8</sup> Swamiji gave an illustration about the ignorance of the Indians about food: "Suppose the head of the firm gets displeased with someone and decreases his pay; or out of three or four bread winning sons in a family, one suddenly dies, what do they do? Why, they at once curtail the quantity of milk for the children, or live on one meal a day having a little puffed rice or so at night!" When asked what else can be done, Swamiji replied, "Why, can't they exert themselves and earn more to keep up their standard of food?"<sup>9</sup>

Swamiji has given some valuable advice regarding healthy food habits. "Concentrated food should be taken. To fill the

stomach with a large quantity of rice is the root of laziness."<sup>10</sup> "Take such food as is substantial and nutritious and at the same time easily digested. The food should be such as contains the greatest nutriment in the smallest compass, and be at the same time quickly assimilable....It is sufficient food to have rice, Dāl (lentils), whole-wheat chapatis (unfermented bread), fish, vegetables and milk."<sup>11</sup> He praised the eating habits of Japanese who took small frequent meals consisting of rice and soup of split peas.

Digestive disorders are extremely common among Indians and Swamiji rightly diagnosed their cause as faulty eating habits. "All fried things are really poisonous; in hot countries the less oil and clarified butter (ghee) taken, the better. Those who take fried food suffer from dyspepsia and ultimately the digestion is ruined. ...Spices are no food at all. To take them in abundance is only due to bad habit."<sup>12</sup> Another cause of diseases like diarrhoea, dysentery, cholera, typhoid fever, jaundice, etc. is eating unwashed or contaminated food. Appealing to the religious sense of devoted Hindus, Swamiji advised them to be as particular about avoiding *nimitta doṣa* (physical uncleanness) as they were about *āśraya doṣa*, bad character of one who may be serving food. "The sweet vendor's shop is Death's door."<sup>13</sup> "It has become too common with us to buy food from the sweet vendor's shop in the bazaar, and you can judge for yourselves how impure these confections are from the point of view of the *nimitta doṣa*; for, being kept exposed, the dirt and dust of the roads as well as dead insects adhere to them, and how stale and polluted they must sometimes be."<sup>14</sup>

6. *Ibid.*, Vol. V, 334.

7. *Ibid.*, Vol. VI, 225.

8. *Ibid.*, Vol. V, 486-87.

9. *Ibid.*, V, 375.

10. *Ibid.*, V, 375.

11. *Ibid.*, V, 486.

12. *Ibid.*, V, 486.

13. *Ibid.*, V, 486.

14. *Ibid.*, V, 481.

Swamiji was against all fermented foods. "And as for fermented bread, it is also poison. Never take any fermented thing."<sup>15</sup> With the increasing variety of "fancy foods" and drinks now available in the market with very little food value, Swamiji's advice regarding food becomes all the more pertinent. If not heeded, we may witness more such scenes as an emaciated person clothed in rags sitting miserable in a city slum drinking five-rupee Coca Cola.

In "The East and the West," Swamiji has discussed in detail about food and eating habits. After reviewing the various prevalent views about vegetarian and non-vegetarian diet, Swamiji gives his considered opinion for the masses of a poor country like India, who have to struggle hard for survival. "He who has to steer the boat of his life with strenuous labour through the constant life and death struggles and competition of this world, must of necessity take meat. So long as there will be in human society such a thing as the triumph of the strong over the weak, animal food is required or some other substitute for it has to be discovered; otherwise the weak will naturally be crushed under the feet of the strong."<sup>16</sup>

Swamiji was no dietitian, but his observations and advice is most scientific and in accord with the rules of diet and health. It may be mentioned that in recent years soybean has been discovered as a vegetarian substitute for meat. It is rich in proteins and can be taken by those strict vegetarians who would not like to eat meat.

The next important causes of disease are drinking impure or polluted water, and unclean habits. "Impure water and impure

food is the cause of all maladies."<sup>17</sup> To his brother disciples Swamiji advised, "Have two filters made and use that filtered water for both cooking and drinking purposes. Boil water before filtering....Keep a strict eye on everybody's health....Dirty clothes are the chief cause of disease."<sup>18</sup>

#### *Intermarriage and early marriage of girls:*

Swami Vivekananda pointed out that marriages confined within a single caste and early marriage of girls were important causes of physical weakness of the offspring. "There is, for example, a good cause for intermarriage in India, in the absence of which the race is becoming physically weaker day by day"<sup>19</sup>... "and for this very reason the race is getting deteriorated physically, and consequently all sorts of diseases and other evils are finding a ready entrance into it!...The blood having had to circulate within the narrow circle of a limited number of individuals has been vitiated, so the new-born children inherit from their very birth the constitutional diseases of their fathers...their bodies have very little power to resist the microbes of any disease."<sup>20</sup> For similar reasons Swamiji criticized severely the practice of child marriage. "Somehow the parents must dispose of a girl in marriage if she be nine or ten years of age! And what a rejoicing of the whole family if a child is born to her at the age of thirteen!"<sup>21</sup>

#### *Something for all:*

Let us now study the sociological ideas of Swami Vivekananda, and their implications for the national health policy. Swamiji

15. *Ibid.*, V, 488.

16. *Ibid.*, V, 485.

17. *Ibid.*, V, 489.

18. *Ibid.*, VI, 333.

19. *Ibid.*, V, 334.

20. *Ibid.*, V, 340-41.

21. *Ibid.*, V, 343.



was a patriot with the practical wisdom of a sociologist and social scientist, and his teachings have great relevance for the sociology of medicine. He said, "We want the greatest possible good from the least outlay."<sup>22</sup> Translated into modern terms, it would mean adopting the most cost-effective methods. He did not favour any reform which would benefit only a limited section of society. "All that you mean by your social reform," he said, "is either widow remarriage or female emancipation, or something of that sort. Do you not? And these again are directed within the confines of a few of the castes only. Such a scheme of reform may do good to a few, no doubt, but of what avail is that to the whole nation? Is that reform or only a form of selfishness, somehow to cleanse your own room and keep it tidy and let others go from bad to worse!"<sup>23</sup> "Most of what you talk of social reform does not touch the poor masses."<sup>24</sup> He was indeed bitter towards those who thought that "for the luxury of a handful of rich, let millions of men and women remain submerged in the hell of want and abysmal depth of ignorance, for if they get wealth and education (and health) society will be upset!"<sup>25</sup> The state of affairs, he said, must be just the reverse.

"If there is inequality in nature, still there must be equal chances for all, or if greater for some and for some less, the weaker should be given more chance than the strong....If the son of a brahmin needs one teacher, that of a *chandala* [the neglected low-caste person] needs ten. For greater help must be given to

him whom nature has not endowed with an acute intellect from birth."<sup>26</sup>

We have noted that the modern western model of high-tech medical care is extremely expensive and elite-oriented. "In a developing country [like India], the fortunate rich urban elite have access to almost any highly sophisticated technology, either in the capital or abroad, while many of the rural poor have no modern medical health care whatever."<sup>27</sup> Such a state of affairs Swamiji would condemn as selfishness. Emphasis must be to provide something for everyone, rather than to give more to the already fortunate few.

The following chart<sup>28</sup> shows the percentage of population having health care at a particular technological level in a model industrial country and in a model developing one. The black and white arrows represent policy choices in the deployment of resources. It is obvious that development in the direction of the white arrow would be in line with the directives of Swami Vivekananda. In the figure, a level of basic "human right" or primary health care can be inserted below "penicillin". In a poor country like India where resources are scarce, it is far more advisable to provide pure drinking water, healthy food, and assistance of trained dai for every mother during delivery of her child, rather than facilities for kidney transplant or coronary bypass surgery.

In this context it may be mentioned that Swamiji believed in working at the micro-level, at the level of the individual citizen. For, he had great faith in the average, poor

22. *Ibid.*, VII, 1979, page 509.

23. *Ibid.*, V, 333-34.

24. *Ibid.*, V, 334.

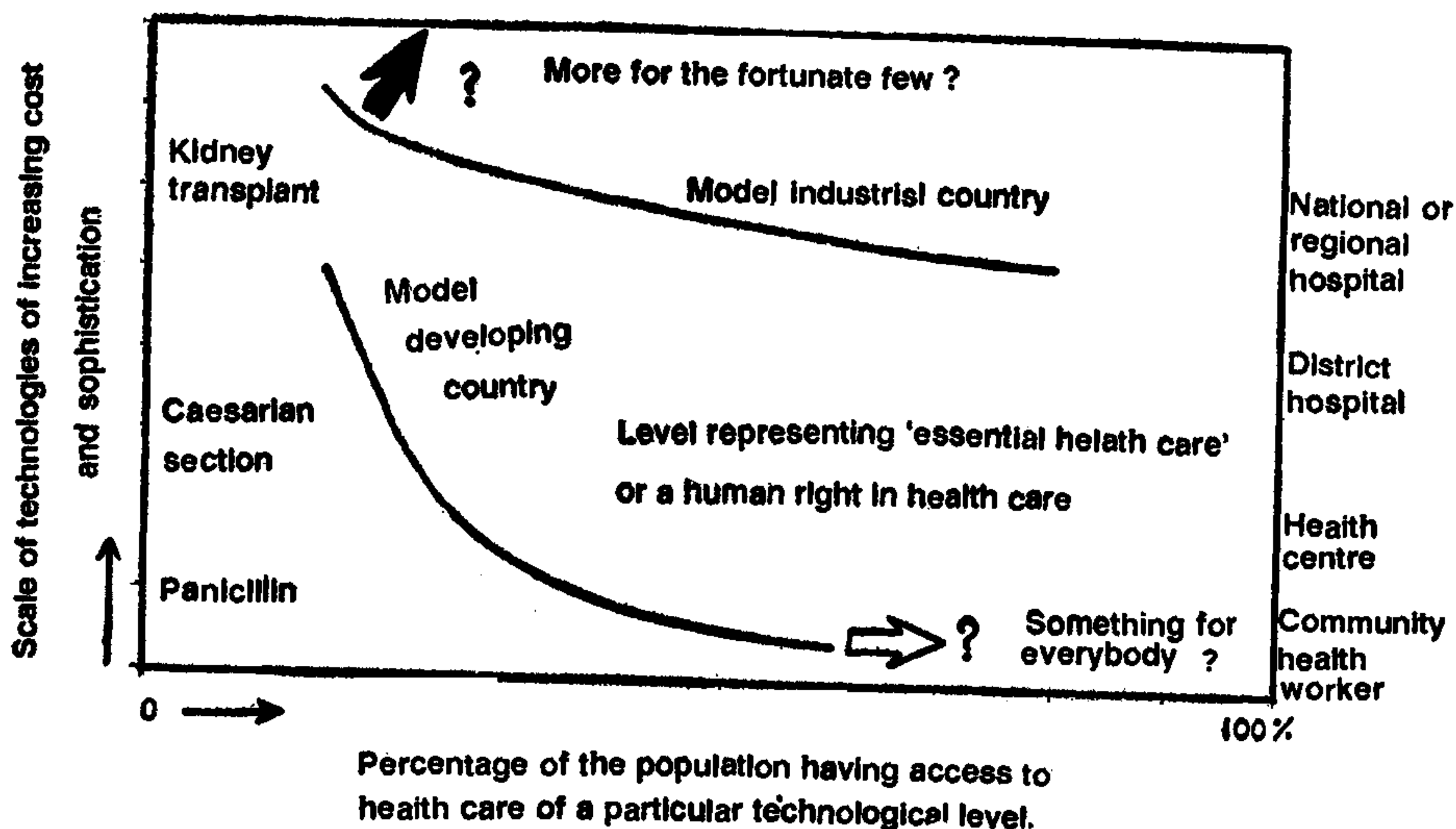
25. *Ibid.*, V, 146.

26. *Ibid.*, V, 319.

27. King, M. H., "Medicine in an Unjust World"; *Oxford Textbook of Medicine* ELBS (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1985) p. 3.9.

28. King (*Ibid.*), p. 3.7.

Indian whom he considered the builder of a New India. "Let her [the New India]," he said, "arise—out of the peasant's cottage, grasping the plough; out of the huts of the villagers who cannot come to the centres of education. He also said that longevity increases by staying in the villages and diseases are almost unknown there.<sup>31</sup> This



fisherman, the cobbler, and the sweeper. Let her spring from the grocer's shop, from beside the oven of the fritter seller...."<sup>29</sup> The doctor, the compounder, the nurse, the village health worker, the village dai, are all builders of New India. Health, medical care, and health education must reach every Indian—the peasants, the labourers, the fishermen, the cobblers and the sweepers!

Swami Vivekananda was never tired of reminding that "the nation lives in the cottages."<sup>30</sup> He was against urbanization and shifting of youth from the villages to the cities. Instead, he wanted the city-youth to go to the villages and educate the

is enough of a hint for us to know that Swamiji would have preferred emphasis on primary health centres in the villages over the modern medical centres in the cities "which look more like airports than therapeutic environments," and where patients tend to feel helpless and frightened.<sup>32</sup>

*Against blindly imitating the West:*

There is a trend in medicine to follow the USA in everything, almost blindly. The current prestige of high technology medicine is such that it dominates the

<sup>29</sup>. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. VII, page 327.

<sup>30</sup>. *Ibid.*, V, 29.

<sup>31</sup>. *The Life of Swami Vivekananda By His Eastern & Western Disciples*, Revised 2-volume edition (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1983) Vol. I, pp. 274-75.

<sup>32</sup>. Capra, Fritjof, *The Turning Point* (New York: Flamingo, 1989) page 148.



ambition of the medical profession. Swami Vivekananda was extremely critical of the "terrible mania of becoming westernized."<sup>33</sup>

"Alas, to such a state is our country reduced! People will look upon their own gold as brass while the brass of the foreigner is gold to them."<sup>34</sup> "I am so thoroughly against every affectation of the western ideas...what a frippery civilization it is indeed that the foreigners have brought over here. What a materialistic illusion have they created!"<sup>35</sup>

Although the sophisticated high-tech medicine is prestigious and capable, it is not universal, or is rather only partially universal, being too expensive and beyond the reach of the poor. Not to accept it, or to refuse to plan one's services according to it may mean getting labelled 'technically inadequate,' or feeling medically inferior, or socially deviant. To follow the call of Swamiji and to go against such a powerful trend requires considerable courage. But we must be bold to mould our medical services to suit the dire needs of Indian villages and slums rather than imitate the technological sophistry of the USA.

"Appropriate" technology for the poor does not mean cheap or primitive technology, but scientifically sound procedures in materials and methods which are practical in the society and effective. The use of bifid inoculation needles for smallpox vaccination, which paved the way to its eradication, use of oral rehydration fluid for diarrhoea, monthly weight records of infants and children to monitor their growth—are all parts of appropriate technology and are equally scientific and far more pertinent than the use of fibre-optic endoscopes,

ultrasound machines, computer tomography or micro-surgery.

One of the reasons why Swamiji was against blind acceptance of Western norms and methods was their tendency to become exploitative. In the beginning Swamiji was charmed by the ability of Americans to quickly form organizations, but he soon realized that such organizations in the heat of competition could behave "like packs of wolves, without any beauty," and exploit the simple and the poor. It is unfortunate that this unhealthy western trend is gradually permeating such a noble profession as the medical. Taking the lead from Swamiji, every effort must be made to keep it free from such unethical trends.

What about specialization and "super-specialization" which has formed an integral part of modern medicine? Although it was not developed to such a degree during Swamiji's time, it seems that he would not have favoured it. He has hinted that a broad-based person, combining various skills in his single personality, was better suited for Indian conditions. He once told his disciples: "You must be prepared to go into deep meditation now and the next moment you must be ready to go and cultivate these fields. You must be prepared to explain the difficult intricacies of the s  stras now and the next moment to go and sell the produce of the field in the market. You must be prepared for all menial services, not only here, but elsewhere also."<sup>36</sup>

Translated into medical terms, we need doctors who could read an E.C.G., put a scalp vein drip, repair a hernia, set a fractured bone, pass an endo-tracheal tube, detect an amoeba under the microscope, and teach medical assistants competently,

33. *Complete Works*, Vol. V, page 372.

34. *Ibid.*, V, 373.

35. *Ibid.*, VI, 319.

36. *Ibid.*, III, 447.

rather than a doctor who specializes in diseases of one organ in one age group, or does only one operation, or who can pass an endoscope through only one orifice. It may be mentioned here that Mrs. Indira Gandhi exhorted Indian doctors not to become too specialized.<sup>37</sup>

From the foregoing it must not be concluded that Swamiji was against scientific methods or scientific advancement. He preferred allopathic medicine because it was backed by experimentation. He had himself undergone various types of treatments: allopathic, magnetic, ayurvedic, etc. He wanted that experimentations be done in other systems of medicine also.

#### *Education:*

Swamiji suggested education as the chief weapon for the regeneration of India. "Educate the masses by going from door to door, and make them realize their pitiable condition."<sup>38</sup> Along with material help, Swamiji also wanted preaching to be done because, "all the wealth of the world cannot help one little Indian village if the people are not taught to help themselves."<sup>39</sup> Education which would teach people to be self-reliant and frugal, that is what he wanted.<sup>40</sup> By education he did not mean only moral and spiritual education, but also education in the secular subjects, like geography,<sup>41</sup> chemistry, physics, and especially physiology.<sup>42</sup> It seems Swamiji had a special fascination for physiology and medical science.

Indian masses must therefore be made competent to take care of their own medical needs. Fundamentals of health and sanitation, first-aid, and preliminary treatment of many maladies can be easily taught to the people. Spread of diseases and the outbreak of epidemics can never be prevented unless the masses are informed about the way they occur and the means of preventing them.

Swamiji was a strong advocate of religious as well as secular education for women, "which would be of benefit not only to them, but to others as well..."<sup>43</sup> and with which they will solve their own problems.<sup>44</sup> The health of the baby largely depends upon the health of the mother and on how hygienically and healthily she takes care of the child.

#### *Three steps of help:*

It is said that if one is planning for one year, let him grow a crop; if for thirty years, plant trees; and if for a hundred years, then let it be man-making. Similarly, three levels can be recognized in medicare. Curative medicine is short term; preventive medicine and health education come under the second category, while the scheme of man-making alone can bring lasting results. It was this third step which was emphasized by Swami Vivekananda.

Swamiji also recognized three levels of service, viz. the physical and material, the intellectual, and the spiritual.<sup>45</sup> Medical treatment falls under the category of physical help. Health education is the intellectual help, which is important if the benefits of physical help are to be sustained.

<sup>37</sup>. King, "Medicine in an Unjust World" p. 39.

<sup>38</sup>. *The Complete Works*, V, 380.

<sup>39</sup>. *Ibid.*, VII, 507-8.

<sup>40</sup>. *Ibid.*, VII, 508.

<sup>41</sup>. *Ibid.*, V, 288.

<sup>42</sup>. *Ibid.*, VII, 507.

<sup>43</sup>. *Ibid.*, V, 343.

<sup>44</sup>. *Ibid.*, V, 342.

<sup>45</sup>. *Ibid.*, I, 1984, page 53.



The most important is spiritual help, which alone can permanently cure the disease of worldliness. Swamiji was a spiritual giant and a spiritual physician *par-excellence*. Indeed, he has advised his disciples to carry out all the three types of healings, depending upon the person or persons and conditions they were dealing with. He has thus, in a way, advocated a comprehensive holistic medicine. There is no aspect of health which has been left out by Swamiji.

#### *Conclusion:*

Let us now summarize Swami Vivekananda's advice for health and his message for the medical world. He advised the sick to get over their suffering by asserting their divine nature. The doctors and health workers must serve the patients as God. Wholesome food, pure drinking water and clean habits are necessary to prevent common diseases. Girls in particular must get health education and must not be married too young. National Health must be planned in such a way that the masses, particularly those living in the villages, get basic health care. Let not the western methods of treatment be imitated blindly; they must be modified according to our

needs. Health education must be spread to the masses so that people can look after their own health-care needs. And finally, let character be formed, and doctors equipped with various skills go from village to village and serve the poor masses.

Seventy-eight years later in 1978 the Alma-Ata Conference suggested comprehensive primary health care as the most hopeful solution for "Health for all by the year 2000." "Primary health care includes at least education concerning the prevailing health problems and the methods of preventing and controlling them, the promotion of an adequate food supply and proper nutrition, together with a sufficient supply of safe water and basic sanitation. It also includes maternal and child health, family planning, and immunization against the major infectious diseases, as well as prevention and control of locally endemic diseases and injuries, and the provision of essential drugs."<sup>46</sup> Does not this declaration of Alma Ata, in part read like the message of Swami Vivekananda? However, it lacks the man-making message and the spiritual dimension.

<sup>46</sup>. King, "Medicine in an Unjust World", p. 3.9.

"If you want any good to come, just throw your ceremonials overboard and worship the Living God, the Man-God—every being that wears a human form—God in His universal as well as individual aspect."

—Swami Vivekananda

# The Trinity

ISH KUMAR

*The author of this short lucid essay is a retired professor of English. He is of Bokaro Steel City, Bihar.*

The Trinity, a dictionary defines as "three persons or modes of being of the Godhead as conceived in orthodox christian belief ; Father, Son, and Spirit as constituting one God." In India, long before the birth of Christ, the Sages had another trinity—*Satyam, Sivam, Sundaram* (Truth, Goodness, Beauty). But as is usual, it was soon forgotten in mundane activities.

It took birth again in Greece, where the philosophers identified beauty and goodness and the linguists gave the same word kudos to both. Plato definitely declared that what was beautiful was always good and what was good was always beautiful. When people asked him if his own preceptor, Socrates, was good (though he was extremely ugly), he gave his famous doctrine of Ideas. Ideas are the truth, the reality ; the particular things that we see and touch are mere shadows. Things die, ideas live ; men are mortal, Man is immortal. The idea of beauty is more to be loved than a beautiful person. The beloved may die, but love does not die. Real beauty, said Plato, is not physical, but ideal like goodness, not visible, but invisible. Socrates was, in fact, the most beautiful person in the world, because he was "the wisest, the justest, the best of all men whom I have ever known."

There was another, more recent, illustration: Abraham Lincoln was not a good-looking person. A delegation from Philadelphia went to visit him and they introduced one of their members, saying that he had been good enough to paint and present to their league-room a most beautiful portrait

of his. Lincoln thought it over and turning to the painter said, "I presume, sir, that in painting the portrait you took your idea from my principles and not my person."<sup>1</sup> Purity of the mind and the heart shines through the body. Pure illumined souls radiate holy and luminous vibrations on all who come in contact with them.

When people did not believe Plato, he illustrated his points from geometry. Geometry, in fact, was the most advanced branch of knowledge at the time, so much so that he had got written at the door of his Academy, "Let no man ignorant of Geometry enter here!" Illustrating his doctrine of ideas, he said that a line was defined as having length but no breadth, and a point as having neither length nor breadth. However thin our pencil point, we cannot draw a line which has no breadth at all or make a point without length and breadth. The line and the point on which Geometry is based, are not what you actually make, but their ideas. He even declared that God was the idea of the highest Good, which of course included Beauty at the time. This philosophy of ideas prevailed throughout the Greek civilization. Beauty and goodness always lived together. Is it not surprising that there was one word for both!

Fichte, the famous German philosopher said, "To will goodness and imagine beauty is alone truly to live." When this

---

1. Quoted from: Swami Yatiswarananda, *Meditation and Spiritual Life* (Bangalore: Sri Ramakrishna Ashram, 1983) page 91.



idea came to France, people did not believe it and continued repeating (as a crude jest of course) that a woman who was beautiful was seldom faithful and the woman who was faithful was seldom beautiful.

In England, Shakespeare added truth to beauty and said that truth and beauty were like the fragrance and colour of a flower which could not be separated. After him, the most Shakespeare-like of English poets was Keats, who was more definite: "Beauty is truth, truth is beauty," he said, but did not stop there and added, "That is all ye know on earth and all ye need to know."<sup>2</sup> That was enough for physical, aesthetic and spiritual life. He was fully convinced of it and wrote in letters: "What the imagination seizes on as beauty must be truth." And, "I can't feel certain of any truth but from a clear concept of beauty."<sup>3</sup> Even Plato had said the same, "Beauty is the splendour of truth," though he did not develop it further. Now it has become an admitted fact in the spiritual world. Every spiritual leader now declares that truth, goodness and beauty, *satyam*, *śivam*, *sundaram*, are the three attributes of God. Some even say that this trinity itself is God. There is however no doubt that they are the highest virtues in spiritual life.

2. From a letter to Benjamin Bailey, November 22, 1817.

3. "Ode to a Grecian Urn".

There is another trinity too in Vedic philosophy: *Satcidānanda* — Existence, Knowledge, Bliss. You have first to have faith in the existence of God and then try to know Him through Yogic practices which will finally lead you to bliss. The non-dualists (*Advaitins*), however, go a step further and believe that the human being himself is *Satcidānanda*, though he has forgotten himself through delusion (*māyā*). Man can realize his real identity, first by having faith in himself and then by attaining knowledge by spiritual practices, which will ultimately lead to his salvation which, for them, means merging with Divinity.

Mahendranath Gupta, the recorder of *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, said, "He who is a poet looks for beauty and the philosopher for truth. The goal of both is the same. He who is Truth is also Beauty, and He who is Beauty is also Truth. A true poet and a true philosopher are one. ...Except for God, there is nothing eternally beautiful or ever new."<sup>4</sup>

There is another Holy Trinity associated with *Brahmā*, *Viṣṇu*, and *Śiva* in our scriptures—the gods of creation, protection and destruction. Even otherwise, the number three is considered auspicious.

4. *Prabuddha Bhārata*, 1990, page 116.

"When the world is the end and God the means to attain that end, that is material. When God is the end and the world is only the means to attain that end, spirituality has begun."

—Swami Vivekananda

## Review & Notices

TIRUMANTIRAM of Tirumular. Madras, 600-004; Sri Ramakrishna Math Publication. Pp. 465 plus xviii, Rs. 100/-.

Originally titled *Mantra Mala*, this hymnal is aptly famous as *Tirumantiram*, the Holy Word. Legend has it that a yogi from Mount Kailas, Sundarar by name, was on a visit to the South to meet his fellow disciple, Agastyar. One evening, on the outskirts of a village, he found a herd of cows lowing miserably by the dead body of their cowherd. Moved by intense compassion, he got into the body of the cowherd and led the cattle to their destination. On his return to the spot, however, he found his own body had disappeared by an act of grace of Siva. The yogi continued in the humble body and went on to develop into a celebrated saint whose sayings (3000 in number) provide the basic foundations for the Saiva-Siddhanta Doctrine. Obviously this symbolic story narrates the advent of a Master to guide and lead a forlorn humanity to the high refuge of God as Love, *anbe sivam*.

The magnificent volume before us is a product of loving labour by dedicated scholars and devotees. The full text is given in Tamil, followed by fluent renderings in English verse and notes by the late Dr. B. Natarajan. A running commentary on the contents, and supplementary notes by M. Sundararaj, provide helpful guidelines to enter into the spirit of the Utterances. The work is not just a devotional hymnal; it expounds the techniques of the several types of yoga that were current in those times; it gives in detail the philosophy and the practice of the Tantras—including some of their esoteric contents. The work is divided into nine Tantras, each leading to the next. The first Tantra dwells upon the transitoriness of the world and the liberating role of Grace. The second describes the action of Grace despite the evil doings of humans. There are four “deaths”, i.e. mergences: “The daily mergence in deep sleep/The next mergence that gives the Soul a longer rest/The Pure mergence that puts the Soul in primal quiescence/The Redemption mergence that steepes the Soul in Lord’s Grace.”

(verse 428) The human body is a temple: “Within you is Nadi/Firm as the rock of ages/Yet they know Him not, and seek Him not/Lacking in Grace, they sure are.” (verse 513)

The third Tantra describes in detail the Ashtanga Yoga, the eight siddhis, the Way to Kayasiddhi, the importance of Breath Rhythm in days of the week. The composition of key Mantras and their application, their corresponding Yantras, the astrological factors that are relevant in the process, are dwelt upon in the fourth Tantra.

The fifth Tantra is devoted fully to the exposition of the philosophy and ritual of the Saiva Siddhanta, the Sanmarga. The four stages of the final Beatitude are laid down: Saloka, Samipa, Sarupa and “Para, of Infinite Space (Sayujya) beyond which there is state none.” (verse 1507) In a beautiful passage the poet sings: “In the corner dark of the Chamber of Primal Stuff/There She was—the Virgin Lady of Grace/Intent on consorting with the Blind Old Man—the Soul immortal/She rent his veil of night/Showered full many a favour/Wooded with temptation diverse/ and lo! to Her bosom took him/in wedlock holy.” (verse 1514)

The sixth Tantra speaks of the importance of Tapas, concentration of energies: “Come apart from the clever argumentation of contending theology/And for a brief while, look inward.” (verse 1631) The qualifications of a “fit disciple” are enumerated.

The seventh Tantra speaks of the institution of Lingam; the significance of the control of Bindu and the way to retain it; the successive steps in Kundalini Yoga; the various Mudras; the various types of Sun: cosmic Sun, Siva Sun, microcosmic Sun, etc.

The eighth Tantra describes the different *avasthas*, states of consciousness, the implications of Pati-Pasu-Pasa for individual liberation into unity with Siva; Bhakti consummating in Jnana, etc. All the themes



pertain to the clarification of the situations in the practice of Yoga.

The ninth and last Tantra spells out the grades of liberation. Fate is not something imposed on us. "Nothing there/Except by your past deeds come/The heavens cannot decree otherwise/And so by Muladhara Way/I sought the Lord within the head/And what I did afore/Took me in the Fair Land of Bliss." (verse 2848) And finally, the Lord is all-pervasive: "He is sentience, He is Life/He is union, He is separation/He is continuity beyond thought/He stands in the fragrance of flower within." (verse 2857).

It is a profound experience to go through these three thousand utterances of a God-realised Man. Many a mental block breaks down; spiritual vistas open on all sides; ways to the supreme goal are not exclusive, they all unite in the melting ocean of Love. Many treat this work as a compendium of moral maxims. It is certainly not that, though as a preparatory discipline ethical norms are prescribed. Underneath the apparently simple imagery, there runs a rich vein of many-sided spiritual experience.

The Sri Ramakrishna Math is to be thanked for their enterprise in bringing this *de luxe* volume with a lavish layout. And what is more, the work is offered at practically cost price, thanks to the munificence of the nobly inspired philanthropist, Sri N. Mahalingam.

M. P. Mandit  
Pondicherry

---

**BUDDHIYOGA OF THE GITA AND OTHER ESSAYS**, by Shri Anirvan. Madras: first published by Biblia Impex Pvt. Ltd., 1983, Reprinted by Samata Books, 10 Kamaraj Bhavan, 573 Mount Rd. Madras-6; 1991; Rs. 60/-; Pp. 190.

The book under review is a collection of eight occasional English writings of one of the noted poet-philosophers of India. Most of the essays included in this collection were already published in the *Prabuddha*

*Bhārata* between 1948 and 1952. Of the remaining few, the one on Vedic Exegesis is reprinted from *The Cultural Heritage of India*, Vol. I (1948) and the other on New Hopes from *Srinwantu* (English edition). The last essay, namely, "Sri Aurobindo and the Mystery of Death" was published posthumously in *Asia* (Saigon) in Nov. 1978. About a dozen poems and translations have also been included in this edition. Sri Anirvan (1896-1978), the author of the essays, is greatly influenced by the writings and personalities of Swami Vivekananda and Ravindranath Tagore.

The longest essay of the collection, "Buddhi and Buddhiyoga" (77 pages) covers almost half of the total material of the collection. The concept of *Buddhiyoga* found prominently in the *Gītā*, has been explained by the author very ably. *Buddhi* is said to be a spiritual "awakening" or "illumination". The author notes that the *Gītā* does not precisely define *buddhi*. Instead, it uses it as a cosmic principle (VII. 4) and also as a psychological principle (XIII. 5) In both the cases the experiential knowledge of the world has been emphasised. In the Sāmkhya philosophy *buddhi* occupies a place between the ego and the nature. It becomes identified with *sattva* and functions as a secret guiding power of our life. How to gain a direct experience of *buddhi* is one of the major problems of human existence. The *Gītā* propounds the concept of *Buddhiyoga* (XVIII. 57) where one is always conscious of God, having in mind the ideal of universal good. Widening of our consciousness is the first step towards realisation of this goal. Self-assertion is another potent urge in course of the evolution. Self-expression and self-assertion find fulfilment in the will-to-sacrifice which is clearly expressed in the ideal of *lokasamgraha* or social service. (III. 20, 25)

The significance of *Buddhiyoga* is that it provides a calm and illuminating poise beyond the flights of reason, unperturbed by the dualities of sensation, emotion and will—in which the spiritual adventure has found its home by a harmonisation of intuitive reason. *Buddhiyoga* achieves its end in the ideal of a *sthita-prajña*. (II. 55-68).



Three essays of the collection (2, 3, & 4) are concerned with the Vedic hermeneutics. After Swami Dayananda and Sri Aurobindo, Sri Anirvan is one of the most vigorous contemporary scholars of Vedic studies. His three volumes of *Veda-Mīmāṃsā*, published by the Government Sanskrit College, Calcutta in 1961, 1965 and 1970 respectively, testify his scholarship. He is the Pippalāda of the Vedas, who can transmute the varieties of experiences into the stuff of the spirit. For him, the Vedas are not the object of archaeological curiosity. They are a living force in Indian spirituality manifesting a unity of purpose in her cultural homogeneity. To understand the truth of the living ideas found in the Vedas one must have the epic vision of a Vyāsa. Vedic symbolism, a combination of mysticism and occultism, is a master-key for unlocking the mysteries of the Vedic literature. Hasty generalisations of modern analytic scholars should be discouraged. To understand and to interpret the Vedas one must experience the phenomenon in its height, depth and breadth.

Two essays of the collection are concerned with spirituality. Spirituality, for Anirvan, is life's conscious endeavour to grow by harmonious assimilation. To change the world of senses into the world of ideas so that consciousness may be dynamically free in its self-enjoyment is a pivot on which turns the whole of man's spiritual endeavour.

The author treats *nivṛtti* (introflexion of consciousness) as a spiritual value of supreme importance. The concept of existence, which is another important spiritual value, is fully appreciated by introflexion. And in the end we reach Quiescence. Joy is another great spiritual value according to the author which is enjoyed when we reach Quiescence. The author mentions of a new spiritual value, namely, Cosmic will, discovered recently. There is, obviously, a purpose behind the cosmos. The nature cannot evolve blindly. Cosmic salvation is the end of the evolution, which is another name for Quiescence.

In his essay "New Hopes" written after Russell's *New Hopes for a Changing World* (1951), Anirvan treats Russell as the

representative of Rational Realism and Kapila as representing Spiritual Realism. He finds Rational Realism to be forcing the mankind to live under constant shadow of fear. Resultantly, the modern civilisation is starving in the midst of plenty. Hence the need for stepping in of the Spiritual Realism to fill up the gap. Then a Spiritual Positivism, as developed in Buddhism after Sāṃkhya, could be developed in modern situation as well to allow our new hopes for building a happy world having integral vision of Reality.

The last essay of the collection is concerned with Sri Aurobindo and the Mystery of Death. The author treats Sri Aurobindo's departure from this world as a masterpiece of supreme art. Death, for Anirvan, is natural and a form of Quiescence. The conquest of death is possible on the cosmic level alone. If treated as fulfilling God's plan, death is not fearful. It is the fulfilment of the Divine Plan. Sri Aurobindo's death has been treated by the author as a sacrifice in a noble cause of fulfilling such a plan, if any. And Sri Anirvan's own death is no less a sacrifice in the noble cause pursued by his elder brother, Sri Aurobindo.

The major thesis of the author is that the material and the spiritual are the two sides of the same coin, i.e., Reality, and they should not be viewed as opposites but complementaries. Unless this state of mind is reached, one cannot appreciate the mystery of the creation. In his own life the author tried to live up to this measure and one can easily say that he has achieved the end to a great perfection.

The work is highly commendable to the students and scholars of Indian spirituality, specially of the Vedic and the *Gītā* areas. The Ārya tradition finds one of the profoundest understandings in the writings of Anirvan.

Dr. S. P. Dubey  
Jabalpur

VEDANTA OR THE SCIENCE OF  
REALITY, by K. A. Krishnaswamy Iyer.



Bangalore: Adhyatma Prakasa Karyalaya, 1991. Pp. 478 ; Rs. 120/-.

The purpose of the book is to establish Vedanta as the only means of understanding and experiencing Reality, and thereby solving all the riddles of life. Krishnaswamy Iyer, as is observed by Swami Satchidananda Saraswati in his introduction, is not writing merely on the basis of an intellectual appreciation of Vedanta, but with the conviction that comes from practice and experiencing the fruits of the method. The Swami's introduction itself forms a valuable section of the book, bringing the ideas into focus and also discussing points of departure from the tradition of Shankara. While according due merit to the prominent world religions and philosophies, Krishnaswamy Iyer draws attention to their limitations. The most important lacuna is shown to be failure to explain the three states of human experience, waking, dream and sleep. Instead, most philosophies and religions take the mono-basic view, assuming the waking state to be the most important and striving to explain the other two states with reference to the waking itself. Iyer points out that the tri-basic view adopted by Vedanta provides the rationale for all three states and establishes that Truth transcends all three. Vedanta also gives us the reason for our basic instincts of immortality, love, truth, freedom and happiness.

Iyer infuses a sense of the urgency to attain Self-knowledge by repeatedly pointing to the wonder of that state on the one hand and the futility of a mechanical life of ignorance on the other. He explains that all effort, in any case, is only in the direction of regaining Self-awareness, only, one is not conscious of this. Even evil is explained in this manner: "Individuation begets evil, and evil is the cure for individuation at the same time." In the absence of evil there would have been no need to understand the mystery of life, posits Iyer, there is likely to have been only an orgy of pleasure. Further, the longing to unravel the meaning of death also makes Vedanta significant asserts Iyer, as it is "the only system that promises release from death here and now," and is not satisfied with promise of immortality after death. In this

manner, the importance of the Vedantic approach and its significance in every human life is highlighted.

However, there are certain aspects of Iyer's approach which may not be readily acceptable. One is his inclination to emphasise the supremacy of reason over faith, though not ridiculing or berating the latter. On the other hand, tradition seems to indicate that reason has a part to play only where faith is lacking. At any rate faith and reason have equal roles to play, going hand in hand. Without a basic faith there will be no preparedness even to follow reason further. Without reason, faith could be misplaced. Iyer does not point to the interdependency of the two as he is keen on establishing the scientific, rational basis of Vedanta.

Iyer's reference to "becoming" pure consciousness is problematic because "becoming" implies duality. Hence the example given by Iyer of a caterpillar turning into a butterfly is not strictly acceptable. So also the term "Vedic Monism" used by Iyer to define Advaita. The correct usage, that has also gained currency now, is "Non-duality", as Monism, or One, also implies the existence of a second in relation to "the One", "One" being a relative term.

It appears that much energy has been spent in the book proving the inadequacies of other philosophies and the superiority of Vedanta as the Science of Reality. But it is pointed out that the then prevalent atmosphere of prejudice against Oriental Philosophy did warrant a clear explanation in English of the premises of Vedanta and its merits over Western philosophic thought. And it is said that Krishnaswamy Iyer is one of the pioneers in tearing away the veil of prejudice. The sense in which one feels such justifications are excessive is that, as a consequence, much attention cannot be given to the practical aspect of Vedanta. Krishnaswamy Iyer has explained the intellectual bedrock of the system and also touched upon certain practices that are pursued in the system to arrive at an experience of the Truth. But the latter are only very briefly sketched. As a result, to one already firm in his intellectual conviction

about the validity of Vedanta, the book does not supply a detailed practical methodology, nor means to tackle the problem on the way. Yet, to those who are wavering, to those in doubt about the soundness of various philosophical and religious systems, the book is of great value. So long as there are sceptics, so long as people pride themselves on their rationality yet fail to put reason to its highest use, the book is relevant. That is why it has lived through successive editions right from 1930.

Dr. Sarada Natarajan  
Bangalore

SRI RAMAKRISHNA VANI O VEDANTA VACANA (a book in Bengali), by Swami Vedantananda. Published by Sri Umapada Mitra, Road No 8/A, Rajendra Nagar, Patna (Bihar), India, 800-016. Rs. 6/-.

The advent of Sri Ramakrishna was for establishing dharma in its pristine purity. The *Upanishads* may well be taken as the

repository of authentic religion. The preachings of Sri Ramakrishna as recorded in *Kathāmṛta* appear to be a lucid exposition of the Upanishadic teachings. Swami Vedantananda has presented Sri Ramakrishna's message with the parallel deliberations of the Upanishads in the book under review. He has taken the following twenty-one themes for his discussion—1) Paramahansa, (2) Jñāna, (3) Vijñāna, (4) Omkāra, (5) Saptabhūmi, (6) Avāṅmanasagocaram, (7) Sacchidānanda, (8) Nirguṇa Brahma, (9) Saṅga Brahma, (10) Māyā, (11) Īśvara, (12) Jīva, (13) Mana, (14) Dhyāna, (15) Abhyāsa Yoga, (16) Vāsānā, (17) Yoga, (18) Satya, (19) Karma, (20) Sannyāsa, and (21) Pāja-puṇya.

The book proves that Sri Ramakrishna came not to destroy but to fulfil. The author deserves congratulation for his scholarly endeavour.

Dr. Nirod Baran Chakraborty  
Calcutta

### Books received

*Spiritual Perfection*, 213 pages ; price not stated.

*Philosophy and Action of the R.S.S. for National Integration and Inter-religious Understanding*, 25 pages ; price not stated.

*Thoughts for Daily Meditation, Vol. IV*, 207 pages ; price not stated.

*Liberation (Mukti) in Indian Philosophy*, 155 pages ; price not stated.

Above four books are by Anthony Elenjittam. Publishers: Aquinas Publications & Basic Education Publishers, Bombay 400-050.

*Courage To Be Myself*, by Carlos G. Vales, pages 237 ; price Rs. 43/-.

*The Gitanjali Album, A Teenager's Testament*, pages 113 ; price Rs. 100.

*One Minute Nonsense*, by Anthony de Mello, pages 340 ; price Rs. 55/-.

The above three books are published by Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, Anand 388-001, Gujarat.

*Inspiring Thoughts*, by R.N. Lakhotia, pages 64, price Rs. 4/-.

*Spirituality & World Peace*, by R. N. Lakhotia, pages 54, price Rs. 4/-.

*Inspiring Anecdotes*, by R. N. Lakhotia, pages 80, price Rs. 5/-.

*Towards Better Living*, by R. N. Lakhotia, pages 300, price Rs. 991/-.

All the above four books are published by Lakhotia International School of Better Living, S-228 Greater Kailash-II, New Delhi, 110-048.





### Editorial Office

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

### Publication Office

5 Dehi Entally Road  
Calcutta 700 014  
Phone 244-0898



### Rates of Subscription (inclusive of postage)

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

Cover: The Art Institute  
of Chicago

# Prabuddha Bharata

A Monthly Journal of the  
Ramakrishna Order

*Started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896*

**JUNE 1993**

## CONTENTS

Divine Wisdom	...	...	...	241
Sri Ramanuja and His Prapatti-Marga—I —(Editorial)	...	...	...	242
Swami Niranjanananda —Swami Chetananda	...	...	...	248
Russia Revisited —Swami Bhavyananda	...	...	...	257
Turning Towards Swami Vivekananda for Health—II —Swami Brahmeshananda	...	...	...	265
The Trinity —Ish Kumar	...	...	...	274
Review And Notices	...	...	...	276



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

# Prabuddha Bharata

VOL. 98

JUNE 1993

No. 6

## Divine Wisdom

The one God of the manifold world.

य एकोऽवर्णो बहुधा शक्तियोगाद्  
वर्णानेकान् निहितार्थो दधाति ।  
विचैति चान्ते विश्वमादौ स देवः  
स नो बुद्ध्या शुभया संयुनक्तु ॥

He who is one, without any colour, by the manifold exercise of his power distributes many colours in his hidden purpose and into whom in the beginning and at the end the universe is gathered, may He endow us with a clear understanding.

तदेवाग्निस्तदादित्यस्तद्वायुस्तदु चन्द्रमाः ।  
तदेव शुक्रं तद् ब्रह्म तदापस्तत् प्रजापतिः ॥

That indeed is Agni (fire), that is Āditya (the sun), that is Vāyu (the wind) and that is the moon. That, indeed, is the pure. That is Brahmā. That is the waters. That is Prajā-pati (the lord of creation).

त्वं स्त्री त्वं पुमावसि त्वं कुमार उत बा कुमारी ।  
त्वं जीर्णो दण्डन वञ्चसि त्वं जातो भवसि  
विश्वतोमुखः ॥

You are woman. You are man. You are the youth and the maiden too. You, as an old man, totter along with a staff. Being born you become facing in every direction.

नीलः पतङ्गो हरितो लोहिताक्ष-  
स्तडिद्गर्भं ऋतवः समुद्राः ।  
अनादिमत् त्वं विभुत्वेन वर्तसे  
यतो जातानि भुवनानि विश्वा ॥

You are the dark-blue bird, you are the green (parrot) with red eyes. You are (the cloud) with the lightning in its womb. You are the seasons and the seas. Having no beginning you abide through omnipresence. (You) from whom all worlds are born.

from Śvetāśvatāra Upaniṣad



## Sri Ramanuja and His Prapatti-Marga—I

Messengers of divinity seldom engage themselves in philosophical disputes or endless swirls of debates and polemics. Such exercises at the most can silence opponents or satisfy the scholastic minds. But to common people who are searching for light and solace in their strife-torn lives, these intellectual speculations have very little value. The Prophets and Incarnations of God, in spite of their scholarship, come down to the level of an ordinary man and lift him up from where he is. These divinities on earth, without any criticism, accept people as they are and help them to realize their inner spirituality and divinity. They see God Himself works through all. They live the ideal life and set examples for the rest of mankind to follow. The Incarnations' lives are their message. Their message, though couched in simple language, lights a flame in the hearts of simple folk. Buddha taught in the simple Pali language, so also did Christ, Sri Chaitanya, Sri Ramanuja and other saints preach their gospel in simple words. In our times Sri Ramakrishna spoke the profound truths of Vedanta in a rustic Bengali. These saviours are manifestations of the Godhead in human forms. Knowing everything to be the sport of the Lord, they go about at ease, as care-free children, playing, laughing and dancing in the world. Their divine ecstasy, joy, devotion and guileless humour not only affects all human beings, but awakens spiritual consciousness in them. Unless we see such embodiments of perfection, or read about their lives, our minds steeped in worldliness rarely turn towards God. *Bhāgavata*, *Bhakta* and *Bhagavān*, the

*Bhāgavata*, the devotee, and the Lord, these three are One.

"God incarnates Himself," said Sri Ramakrishna, "on earth in a human body. He is, no doubt present everywhere and in all beings, but man's longing is not satisfied unless he sees God in human form. Man's need is not satisfied without the Divine incarnation."<sup>1</sup>

In all our *Ācaryās*, we observe two striking characteristics: One is their strong adherence to the Upaniṣadic tradition, and the other their ceaseless quest for the direct experience of transcendental Truth. In all the founders and proponents of the major philosophical systems this common characteristic is seen. From the Vedic Age, India has passed through many vicissitudes, has seen periods of transition in the socio-political milieu, and also in the cultural sphere. At one period the mighty current of progress sweeps ahead and at other times slows down. But at no time does the creative fountain of spirituality run dry, nor does the cultural heritage lose its perpetual vitality. When they are at a low ebb there rises a giant personality to resuscitate and give a new and creative thrust to the lagging society. Time and again we read of such phenomena taking place in Indian history.

Every philosophical school, down the ages, has corrected maladjustments or extreme views, or weeded out the unneces-

---

1. *Sri Ramakrishna, The Great Master* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1978) page 883.

sary accretions passed down from the previous age. During the period of the *Brāhmaṇa*-s (ritualistic portion of the *Veda*-s), lofty philosophical concepts were overlooked and prominence was given to elaborate but arid rituals and costly sacrifices. The *Upaniṣads* mark the transition to an advance in deeper philosophical thinking, from previous overwhelming concern with stagnant ritualism. When the deeper thoughts of the *Upaniṣads* led to conflicting diverse interpretations, the *Gītā* marvellously synthesized the apparently conflicting thought systems by pointing out their deeper unity. When self-torturing asceticism and intellectual gymnasticism over perplexing metaphysical theories passed for genuine spirituality, Gautama Buddha was born. His noble life based on perfect moral idealism pulverized such ideas and exposed their hollowness. Jainism too stressed the pure and ethical life of man. Centuries after, Buddha's sublime teachings lost their spiritualizing power and influence over latter-day followers. Hiuen Tsang had noted during his travels in India the state of decline of Buddhism in many centres in the early part of the 7th century. The extremely pure and moral character of early Buddhism slipped down into licentiousness and corruption.

It was necessary to combat the degenerate Buddhism of this period and to re-establish the religion of Vedānta. Kumarila, the founder of the Bhatta school, took his stand on the authority of the *Vedas* and the efficacy of Vedic rites and ceremonies. He was a strong opponent of Buddhism and dealt a powerful blow to its influence. Later in the 8th century appeared on the Indian scene a master mind, one of the world's greatest thinkers. That was Śankara, who with his brilliant intellect and missionary zeal took India by storm. In the meantime however, the followers of Kumarila were

becoming extremely powerful, attaching more importance to the old Vedic rituals, the so-called 'work-portion' (*karma-kāṇḍa*) of the *Vedas*. As a result the *Upaniṣads*, the fountainhead of strength and knowledge, were relegated to a position of non-significance. Śankara with his matchless intellectual power exposed the futility of the *karma-kāṇḍa* of the Bhatta school and held aloft the supremacy of *Jñāna*. In the post-Śankara period many *Advaitic* philosophical schools came into existence to interpret the teachings of the great Teacher. But in this very exacting labour they often differed from one another in heated hair-splitting arguments. Śankara's impersonal Absolute, the illusive character of the world and soul, and the self-conflicting interpretations of his followers could not bring much succour and solace to suffering human beings, however, or enlighten yearning hearts.

In an answer to the wails and longings of common people, and to establish once again the supremacy of theistic religion, Śrī Rāmānuja (1017-1137), the redeemer of the fallen, came on the scene and rejuvenated the *Bhakti* movement. Sri Ramakrishna, pointing out the extraordinary greatness of this sage said:

"You see, there is a vast difference between the *jīva* and *Īśvara*. Through worship and austerity, a *jīva* can at the utmost attain *saṁādhi*; but he cannot come down from that state. On the other hand, an Incarnation of God can come down from *saṁādhi*. A *jīva* is like an officer of the king; he can go as far as the outer court of the seven-storey palace. But the king's son has access to all the seven floors; he can also go outside. Everybody says that no one can return from the plane of *saṁādhi*. In that case, how do you account for sages like Śankara



and Rāmānuja ? They retained the 'ego of Knowledge'.<sup>2</sup>

With strenuous efforts, Sri Ramanuja restored the Hindu faith to its pristine glory. He planted it firmly on the unshakeable foundations of the *Upaniṣads* and the *Gītā*. His role was remarkable in that he had to fight the battle on two fronts. He and his predecessors defended the theistic religion from the atheism of the Buddhists and the relativism of the Jains on one side, and on the other, the *Māyāvāda* of monistic Vedānta.

Sri Ramanuja, the illustrious apostle of the *Bhāgavata Dharma*, occupies a unique place in the spiritual heritage of India. His momentous advent marks an epoch of spiritual revival, a new era of *Bhakti*. He did not rest content with the brilliant expositions of philosophical texts, but he gave supreme importance to spiritual emotions in relation to the Personal God. He synthesized with rare acumen the profound philosophical thoughts and down-to-earth religion in his teachings. His is the practical religion meant for all, but not for the privileged few. He brought from the wisdom of the *Vedas*, the deeper mysteries of the spiritual realm, hitherto inaccessible, to the common masses. He taught mankind, like Sri Ramakrishna in our own age, tapping the eternal source of bliss through devotion to *Savikāra Brahman*, the Personal God. His bleeding heart, his unceasing desire to share the divine bliss with the high and the low have immortalized Sri Ramanuja's name in history. His teachings boldly declare that *Mukti* is not the monopoly of any creed or of any individual ; the portals of Life Divine are open to everyone. Therefore Swami Vivekananda remarked :

"Then came the brilliant Rāmānuja. Shankara, with his great intellect, I am afraid, had not as great a heart. Ramanuja's heart was greater. He felt for the downtrodden, he sympathised with them. He took up the ceremonies, the accretions that had gathered, made them pure so far as they could be, and instituted new ceremonies, new methods of worship, for the people who absolutely required them. At the same time he opened the door to the highest spiritual worship from the Brahmin to the Pariah. That was Ramanuja's work. That work rolled on, invaded the North, was taken up by some great leaders there ;..."<sup>3</sup>

"God can be seen. One can talk to Him as I am talking to you." These are the words of Sri Ramakrishna whose life was the living embodiment of this truth. So was the life of Sri Ramanuja. He lived with God, talked to God and his whole being was permeated by Godconsciousness. Sri Ramanuja's loving and merciful Ranganāth, or Nārāyaṇ, is not a product of imagination or an unrealizable abstract Being living unconcerned about human agonies and pitiful prayers ; but He is our dearest and nearest kin. He is our compassionate Father, Mother, and Friend, who pervades, at the same time, the whole universe. The cornerstone of this Sage's teachings is that even the worst among the sinners, the lowliest of the low, have an equal right to worship and pray to God. Out of His boundless grace He manifests Himself to all who call upon Him, who place their trust in Him.

Sri Ramanuja, the exalted soul, unleashed in the 11th century the tidal waves of

2. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1985 page 767.

3. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989) Vol. 3, pp. 265-66.

*Bhakti*, which inundated the whole nation, drawing into its blissful current the learned as well as the illiterate. Yet, in his overflowing zeal to give a philosophical basis to *Bhakti Yoga*, Sri Ramanuja never failed to give a high place to *Jñāna* and *Karma*. Max Mueller, in his book, *Six Systems of Indian Philosophy*, rightly observes:

“It may be possible to say that Isvara or the Lord is Brahman; but to worship Isvara, and to be told at the same time that Isvara is but phenomenal, must be trying even to the most ardent of worshippers. If therefore Ramanuja, while professing his faith in the Upanishads and his allegiance to Badarayan, could give back to his followers not only their souls, but also a personal god, no wonder that his success should have been so great as it was.”

Saiva and Vaiṣṇava saints are called *Nāyanmārs* and *Ālvārs*, respectively. For the *Nāyanmārs*, Śiva; and for the *Ālvārs*, Viṣṇu is the Supreme Reality. *Ālvār* literally means ‘one who dives deep.’ Sri Vaiṣṇava tradition has fixed their number as twelve, since their matchless devotion and purity are deemed unapproachable by ordinary souls, however exalted be their illumination and devotion. These *Ālvārs* composed the soul-stirring devotional songs and literary pieces in the Tamil language. The movement struck its deep roots in society during the 7th to 10th centuries. The remarkable achievements of the *Ālvārs* lay in breaking down the oppressive caste hierarchy of society. Of the twelve who are especially remembered as saints, some were of the lowest caste, some were out-castes, one was a popular woman saint, *Āṇḍāl*, and another a king, called *Kulaśekhara*. In his book *The Wonder that was India*, Prof. A. L. Basham writing about the devotional intensity and love of God

in these songs, says that they are among India’s greatest contributions to the world’s devotional literature.

Nāthamuni, a great leader of the Sri Vaiṣṇava sect, who flourished in the 10th century, collected all the hymns of the *Ālvārs*. The collection is called *The Nālāyira Prabandham* (book of 4000 hymns). Nāthamuni was overwhelmed by the stirring hymns of the mystics and dedicated his life to popularizing the songs of the Tamil saints. He introduced the regular singing of these songs in Vaiṣṇava temples of South India and raised the status of the regional devotional literature to that of the Vedas. Nāthamuni became the head of the Srirangam temple and his life was marked by intense activity and missionary zeal.

Nāthamuni’s grandson, Yamunācārya, or *Ālvāṇḍar*, won high renown for his vast learning and spiritual insight. His complete surrender and intense longing for the direct experience of the Supreme Reality found fruition in the blissful vision of the Lord Ranganāth. After the vision of God he engaged himself in spiritual ministration and writing treatises on religion. His uncommon dispassion, renunciation and humility, in addition to his profound learning, were vastly admired. Yamunācārya, when his end was drawing near, felt anxious to find a worthy spiritual heir to whom he could bequeath the priceless treasure of Vaiṣṇava lore. Meanwhile, Sri Ramanuja, who was born for this lofty mission, fulfilled the last wish of this great *Ācārya* by taking up the gigantic responsibility of spreading the gospel of Divine Life to millions of earnest souls.

Āsuri Keśava Perumāḷ, a pious and great devotee, used to live in Sriperumbudur, a village near Madras, with his wife Bhudevi. The couple lived happily for many years,



but as no child was born to them both began to sorrow. The hope of getting a son by the grace of Nārāyaṇa, by pleasing Him with the performance of worship and austerities, took hold of Keśava. The childless couple observed religious vows, fasted and performed *yajñas*. In a dream, Lord Viṣṇu appeared and assured Keśava not to be anxious. He would be born to him as a son. About a year later to fulfil their long cherished desire and fervent prayers a radiant child was born to them in 1017 A.D. Such spiritual experiences of the parents of divine souls are rare. In religious history we find only a few examples. Mary, the Mother of Jesus, Mayadevi, the Mother of Buddha, the parents of Sri Rāma-krishna, Bhuvaneswari Devi, the Mother of Vivekananda—all had similar sublime experiences. A wise disciple of Yamunācārya saw this baby and prophesied that the child would possess the great qualities of a sage. He thought the child to be a descent to earth of Lakṣmaṇa, the prince of devotees. The child was called Ramanuja.

From his boyhood, Ramanuja gave evidence of his prodigious intellectual capacity. He could grasp the meaning of a lesson by hearing it only once, however difficult it might be. This quality endeared him to all his teachers. Holy men were very dear to him. He let go no opportunity of serving and associating with them. At the age of sixteen he duly entered the life of a householder. Soon after his marriage his father passed away. Sri Ramanuja left his home thirsting to acquire more knowledge under a competent preceptor. In Kanchi he found Yādavaprakāś, a famous teacher and joined the group of his students. The teacher was a staunch *advaitin*. He would not acknowledge God with form. Sri Ramanuja was a personification of devotion, service to God. Viṣṇu was the very breath of his life. But this devotional

attitude of this astonishingly bright student was repellent to the Guru and as a result he began to look down on Sri Ramanuja with displeasure bordering on contempt. The disciple however, out of reverence for his Guru, refrained from pointing out defects in his teachings.

One day the teacher began explaining a verse from the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* (II.1): *Satyam, jñānam anantam brahma*—; he said Brahman is Truth, Knowledge and Infinity. His explanation did not satisfy the young aspirant. Sri Ramanuja explained that *Satyam*, *Jñānam* and *Anantam* were the attributes of Brahman and not Brahman Itself, just as redness, softness and fragrance could harmoniously coexist in a flower. Sri Ramanuja's interpretation was not only rejected by his guru, but he had to bear patiently an angry outburst of the teacher. On another occasion, Yādavaprakāś was interpreting a passage from the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, Part 1, chapter 6, verse 7—*Tasya yathā kapyāsam puṇḍarikam evam akṣiṇī*—and said God's eyes were red like the buttocks of a monkey. He explained the word *kapyāsam* as the scrotum of a monkey. Sri Ramanuja was pained and shocked to hear such low simile. Challenged by the teacher, he explained, *ka* is water and *pibati* means drinking. The sun or the lotus that drinks water is *kapi*. *Asa* is to open. The import of the word is, God has eyes like the petals of the lotus which bloom before the sun. Sri Ramanuja had to pay the penalty for his audacity. He was driven out by his guru.

One day, Yamunācārya, the spiritual head of the Ranganāth temple, came to Kanchi with his disciples. He saw the young sage Sri Ramanuja in the temple. The Ācārya felt thrilled to see the broad forehead and large luminous eyes of the young man. He had heard earlier about

Sri Ramanuja's intense devotion and vast learning. A fervent prayer shot forth from his heart, "O Lord, make Ramanuja my successor so that he can spread the glory of Thy hallowed name and proclaim to the world Thy redeeming grace." Trusting God would fulfil his wish, Yamunācārya returned to Srirangam.

Though Sri Ramanuja led a householder's life he was not happy with his wife. She was very proud of her brahmin caste and looked down upon others. She insulted many Vaiṣṇava devotees belonging to low caste. Sri Ramanuja could not tolerate such rude behaviour from his wife. Renouncing his wife and wealth he embraced *sannyāsa*, the life of a monk. Yamunācārya, who was waiting for his successor, having heard the news of Sri Ramanuja's *sannyāsa*, sent his emissary to Kanchi to bring Sri Ramanuja to him. But before they could reach Srirangam the great soul Yamunācārya was no more.

Sri Ramanuja beheld the mortal remains of the saint and discovered that the three fingers of his right hand were closed. After enquiry he learnt that the great Ācārya had three unfulfilled desires. First, to propagate the cult of devotion; second, to show gratitude to the memory of two great sages: Vyās and Parāśara; third, to write a commentary on the *Brahmasūtras* from the Viśiṣṭādvaita point of view. Sri Ramanuja vowed that by the grace of the Lord Ranganātha and by the blessings of this holy saint he would devote his life to fulfil these three desires. As soon as he expressed his determination, the three closed fingers straightened out. All these vows were fulfilled by him in his later days.

With rare catholicity of heart Sri Ramanuja entirely refuted the privileges of birth in a caste-ridden society, caring only for

spiritual attainments and good qualities. He advised his followers to relinquish vain pride of caste and assiduously acquire good qualities.<sup>4</sup> He persuaded Kanchipūrṇa, a low-caste devotee, to become his Guru. Dāsarathi, Kureś, Sundarbāhu, Govinda, Yajñamūrti and Saumyanārāyaṇ became his chief disciples. One remarkable incident shows the boundless compassion of this sage. Goṣṭipūrṇa, a renowned Vaiṣṇava guru, after putting Sri Ramanuja to severe spiritual tests, agreed to impart to him a sacred *Nārāyaṇ mantra*, which was a bestower of eternal bliss. But Sri Ramanuja was strictly instructed not to divulge this *mantra* to anyone. Sri Ramanuja was born to help his fellow human beings. His heart overflowed with infinite love for them. He did not remain content with enjoying the bliss of the holy *mantra*, but became restless to share with all his wonderful realization. He climbed to the tower of the temple and in a stentorian voice proclaimed the divine formula to all those assembled. Goṣṭipūrṇa, who had come to know about this grew extremely angry. Sri Ramanuja with humility said to him, "Venerable Sir, I was ready to suffer in hell, therefore I transgressed your instructions. If an insignificant man like me goes to hell and thousands of men and women go to *Vaikuṇṭha*, that is the greatest blessing for me."

Yādavaprakāś, though a great scholar of Advaita, suffered from mental restlessness. He was advised to go to Sri Ramanuja for peace. So he went, and accepted his own disciple as his Guru. Sri Ramanuja removed all disquiet from his mind. Yādavaprakāś, who was puffed up with overweening pride of dry scholarship, realized at last the truth of the *Upaniṣad*: "This Ātman cannot be attained by mastering the *Vedas*, nor by

4. न जातिः कारणं लोके गुणाः कल्याणहेतवः ।

(Continued on page 264)



## Swami Niranjanananda

SWAMI CHETANANANDA

*(Continued from the previous issue)*

Sometimes the young disciples would talk about various riddles of life. Once in Dakshineswar Niranjan and others had a long discussion on free will and predestination. Unable to reach any conclusion, they approached the Master. At first the Master was amused at their naive ideas, but later he commented more seriously: "Does anybody have free will or anything like that? It is by God's will alone that everything has always happened and will continue to happen. Man understands this last of all. Let me give an example of man's free will: It is like a cow tied to a post with a long tether; she can stand at a distance of one cubit from the post or she can go up to the whole length of the tether according to her choice. A man ties a cow with the idea: 'Let her lie down, stand or move about as she likes within that area.' Similarly God has given man some power and also the freedom to utilize it as he likes. That is why man feels he is free. But the rope is fastened to the post. And remember this: If anybody prays to God earnestly, God may shift him to another place and tie him there, or lengthen the tether, or even remove it completely from his neck."

Sri Ramakrishna kept close watch over the disciples' eating, sleeping, and day-to-day behaviour. Only a good student can be a good teacher. The Master trained his inner-circle disciples uncompromisingly so they could become great world teachers. Self-control and truthfulness are indispens-

able to spiritual life. Once, on seeing Niranjan take too much ghee [clarified butter], which creates lust, the Master exclaimed: "My goodness! You take so much ghee! Are you eventually going to abduct people's daughters and wives?" Another day the Master said to a devotee (*pointing to Niranjan*): "Look at this boy. He is absolutely guileless. But he has one fault: he is slightly untruthful nowadays. The other day he said that he would visit me again very soon, but he didn't come." Hearing this, Niranjan immediately apologized.

In September 1885 Sri Ramakrishna had to move to Shyampukur, Calcutta, for treatment of his cancer. Niranjan left home and became the Master's gatekeeper, as he was strong and heroic by nature. There is an interesting story of how Niranjan was fooled by an actress:

In 1884 when Sri Ramakrishna went to see Girish Ghosh's drama, *Chaitanya Lila*, (The Divine Life of Sri Chaitanya) he had been extremely pleased with Binodini, the actress who had played the part of Chaitanya, and had blessed her. She in turn had become very devoted to the Master but could not find another opportunity to meet him. Now, hearing of his illness, she longed to see him again. But the Master's disciples were very strict about visitors. They feared that if Sri Ramakrishna talked too much or if he

were touched by impure people his disease would be aggravated. In order to see the Master, Binodini sought help from Kalipada, whom she knew through Girish. One evening, acting on his advice, she dressed herself as a European gentleman and went with Kalipada to the Shyampukur house. Introducing her to Niranjan as a friend of his, Kalipada took her to the Master, who was alone in his room at that time. Sri Ramakrishna laughed when Kalipada told him who this "European gentleman" really was. After praising Binodini's faith, devotion, and courage, the Master gave her some spiritual instruction and allowed her to touch his feet with her forehead. When Binodini and Kalipada had left, Sri Ramakrishna told the disciples about the trick that had been played on them. The Master enjoyed it so much that the disciples could not be angry.

Following his doctor's advice, Sri Ramakrishna moved from the smoggy environment of Calcutta to a garden house at Cossipore on December 11, 1885. Cossipore was then a suburb of Calcutta (now within the city) and not very far from the Ganga. The Master was quite happy in spite of his terminal cancer. On the morning of December 23, Sri Ramakrishna gave unrestrained expression of his love for the devotees. He said to Niranjan, "You are my father; I shall sit on your lap." Touching another devotee's chest, he said, "May your inner spirit be awakened!" By living with the Master, the devotees' own love and devotion also grew by leaps and bounds.

Once Niranjan went back home for a visit. When he returned, the Master said, "Please tell me how you feel." Niranjan replied, "Formerly I loved you, no doubt, but now it is impossible for me to live without you." Then the Master explained to

M.: "This illness is showing who belongs to the inner circle and who to the outer. Those who are living here, renouncing the world, belong to the inner circle; and those who pay occasional visits and ask, 'How are you, sir?' belong to the outer circle."

The young disciples took turns around the clock serving the Master. Moreover, they were practising spiritual disciplines according to his instruction. They renounced hearth and home and surrendered themselves to the Master. The following incident reveals how the Master protected his disciples: One evening Niranjan and a few other disciples planned to drink the delicious juice from a date palm near the southern boundary of the garden. The Master knew nothing about this. When it was dark, Niranjan and others walked in the direction of the tree. In the meantime, Holy Mother saw the Master running down the steps and through the door. She wondered: "How is it possible? How can one who needs help even to change his position in bed run like an arrow?" Yet she could not disbelieve her eyes. Accordingly, she went to the Master's room and did not find him there. In great consternation she looked all around, but she failed to find him. At last she returned to her room, extremely confused and with much apprehension.

After a while Holy Mother saw the Master running swiftly back to his room. She then went to him and asked about what she had seen. He replied: "Oh, you noticed that. You see, the boys who have come here are all young. They were proceeding merrily to drink the juice of a date palm in the garden. I saw a black cobra there. It is so ferocious and it might have bitten them all. The boys did not know this. So I went there by a different route to drive it away. I told the snake, 'Don't enter here again.'" The Master asked her not to divulge this account to others.



After he had been at Cossipore three or four months, Sri Ramakrishna's body was so emaciated that it was hard to recognize him. But the devotees still hoped that the Master would one day set himself free from the cancer. During this time the Master told Niranjan: "Look. I am now in such a state that whoever sees me in this condition will attain liberation in this life by the grace of the Divine Mother. But know for certain that it will shorten my life." Upon hearing this from the Master, Niranjan became more vigilant about his gate duty. He sat at the entrance day and night with a turban on his head and a stick in his hand and kept outsiders from visiting the Master. Niranjan sometimes hurt people, but he accepted this as an unpleasant duty necessary to protect the Master's life.

A crazy woman used to accompany Vijay Goswami to the Kali temple at Dakshineswar and sing for Sri Ramakrishna. The Master was fond of her singing, but was careful about her as she cherished *madhura bhāva*, the attitude of a wife towards her husband. This is a kind of spiritual relationship a Vaishnava aspirant adopts for Krishna. Once that crazy woman came to Cossipore at noon and wanted to visit the Master. Niranjan stopped her at the entrance. She then became hysterical. Hearing this, the Master asked Sashi (later, Swami Ramakrishnananda) to escort her to him, and he blessed her. Then she began to make more frequent visits. Niranjan adopted a stonewall attitude and prevented her from visiting the Master. Most of the young disciples were very apprehensive because of her unpredictable and seemingly violent behaviour. However, when the woman was finally discouraged, she paid no further visits. Rakhal (later, Swami Brahmananda) expressed his sympathy for the woman. He said: "We all feel sorry for her. She causes so much annoyance,

and for that she suffers too." Immediately Niranjan remarked, "You feel that way because you have a wife at home." Rakhal replied sharply: "Such bragging! How dare you utter such words before him [Sri Ramakrishna]?" The Master would sometimes watch his disciples struggle between two ideals—service to the guru and respect for womanhood.

Another day, Ram Chandra Datta wanted to visit the Master, but Niranjan stopped him at the gate. As a result of this, Ram was hurt since he was one of the prominent lay devotees of the Master. He then asked Latu (later, Swami Adbhutananda): "Please offer these sweets and flowers to the Master and bring a little prasada [offered food] for me." Latu was very touched and said to Niranjan: "Brother, Ram Babu is our very own; why are you putting such restrictions on him?" Still Niranjan was inexorable. Then Latu said rather bluntly, "At Shyampukur you allowed the actress Binodini to visit the Master and now you are stopping Ram Babu, who is such a great devotee." This pricked Niranjan's conscience, so he let Ram go to see the Master. Later when Latu went upstairs, the omniscient Master said to him: "Look. Never see fault in others; rather, see their good qualities." Latu was embarrassed. He came down and apologized to Niranjan, saying: "Brother, please don't mind my caustic remark. I am an illiterate person." This shows how the Master taught his disciples to develop interpersonal relationships.

Once Atul Ghosh, Girish's brother, came to visit the Master and was stopped by Niranjan. Atul was very hurt. Piqued, he took a vow that he would not visit Sri Ramakrishna again unless someone personally came to his house and took him there. Now Atul, though not a doctor, did know how to check a pulse and to evaluate the condi-

tion of a disease. One day the Master asked Niranjan to go to Atul's house and bring him to check his health. Immediately, Niranjan rushed to Atul's place and brought him to the Master. Even while he was sick, the Master was training his devotees—sometimes humbling one and sometimes increasing longing in another.

During the winter the Master would bathe with hot water. One day Niranjan heated a large vessel of water using a lot of firewood. That displeased the Master: he did not care for waste. But Niranjan was stubborn. He carried the whole vessel of water to the Master and said: "Sir, I don't have enough sense to know how much water you need. Since I have brought it, you will have to use it." The Master was pleased to see Niranjan's simple and fearless behaviour.

The disciples took care of the Master's body, and he, in turn, took care of their spiritual life. He silently and naturally gave shape to this group of ideal characters. From his birth, Niranjan had been endowed with divine qualities—simplicity, purity, fearlessness, steadiness, truthfulness and renunciation. When Senior Gopal brought pieces of ochre cloth and twelve rosaries, the Master gave one of each to eleven close disciples including Niranjan, all of whom became monks afterwards. One he kept reserved for Girish. Thus the Master sowed the seed of his forthcoming monastic order.

When the Master passed away on August 16, 1886, the disciples gathered his relics from the Cossipore cremation ground and put them into an urn. They brought the urn to the garden house and decided to continue their service. But they had no money, so Ram Chandra Datta suggested installing the Master's relics at Kankurgachi Yogodyana, his retreat place. Niranjan

vehemently protested this. He, Sashi, and some others secretly transferred the major portion of the Master's relics to a separate urn which they kept at the house of Balaram Basu, a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. In the beginning Narendra (later, Swami Vivekananda) had yielded to Ram Babu's suggestion, but, learning how his brother disciples felt, he consented to their decision. Later, he installed this second urn at Belur Math.

### *Pilgrimage and Austerity*

In December 1886, Niranjan, Narendra, and several other brother disciples went to Antpur, the birthplace of Swami Prem-ananda. There, on Christmas Eve, they took the vows of renunciation in front of a sacred fire not knowing that it was an auspicious day. Sri Ramakrishna had created the hunger for God in their minds, and they began to pass their days in meditation and austerity. One day Sarada (later, Swami Trigunatitananda) went to bathe in a pond. He did not know how to swim. All of a sudden he slipped from a step and fell into deep water. Immediately Niranjan jumped in and rescued him, ignoring the threat to his own life. Niranjan was extremely energetic and dedicated, and he loved to serve people.

In the early part of 1887, Niranjan joined the Baranagore monastery and took the final monastic vows with his brother disciples. Swami Vivekananda gave him the name "Swami Niranjanananda." He continued his spiritual disciplines and austerities in the monastery. He also helped perform the worship service and did most of the laborious work. One day he was carrying some sweets from the market for the Master's offering. A poor woman, holding her little boy in her arms, was walking in the same direction. Seeing the package of sweets in Niranjan-



ananda's hand, the boy cried out: "Mother, I want to eat sweets!" The more she tried to control her son, the more he cried. Niranjanananda gracefully went to the young boy, and placing the packet before him, said, "Please eat these sweets." The poor mother protested: "Father, no. You are carrying these sweets for the Lord. It would be inauspicious if my son were to eat them." Niranjanananda replied: "No, mother, it would be all right. His eating would be the same as the Lord's eating." Handing the packet to the boy, Niranjanananda returned to the market to buy fresh sweets for the Master.

After taking the vows of sannyasa, Swami Niranjanananda went to Puri on a pilgrimage and returned to the Baranagore Monastery on April 8, 1887. The monastery was in very poor condition. Because the disciples could not afford anything better, they were renting a dilapidated house for ten rupees a month. They did not have a suitable altar in the Master's shrine or other accessories for worship. Niranjanananda heard about an aged but expert carpenter in Calcutta and had him make a beautiful altar for the Master. With the help of the devotees, the swami gradually collected a bed for the Master, utensils and a Japanese gong for vespers. Niranjanananda planted a bel tree on the spot where the Master's body had been cremated on the bank of the Ganga, and made a marble altar around the tree. He planned to set inscribed marble slabs in various locations connected with Sri Ramakrishna in the Dakshineswar temple garden, but this plan never materialized. Sometimes he would go to Dakshineswar with Swami Virajananda and meditate in the Panchavati or in the Master's room.

Most people in this world live for themselves. But those who live for others really do live. There is great joy in sharing and

in serving others: such joy eradicates selfishness from the heart and makes a person wholesome. Whenever there was any problem or illness among the brother disciples or Holy Mother, Niranjanananda would assume the necessary responsibility. Niranjanananda nursed Yogananda when he was suffering from small pox in Allahabad, served Latu when he had pneumonia, and helped both Balaram and Ram up to the time of their deaths. When Girish was passing through a period of depression, Niranjanananda took him to Holy Mother, who uplifted him from his dispirited condition. In 1888, when Holy Mother was living alone at Kamarpukur, Harish, an unbalanced devotee of the Master, went there and began to disrupt her peace. He had been poisoned by his wife, and as a result, lost his mind. Holy Mother subsequently complained to the monks at Baranagore. Immediately, Niranjanananda and Saradananda rushed to Kamarpukur. As soon as Niranjanananda arrived, Harish became so frightened that he hurried off to Vrindaban. Later he recovered from his mental illness.

Worldly people are apt to believe that happiness can be derived from worldly possessions and sensual enjoyment; they tend to denounce spiritual disciplines and asceticism. Spiritual people, however, experience that happiness and peace which come from within by controlling their worldly desires. Enjoyment cannot satiate the desire for enjoyment—it increases desires, as clarified butter augments a flame instead of extinguishing it.

In November 1889, Niranjanananda departed from the monastery on a pilgrimage to practise further austerity. He first went to visit the temple of Lord Shiva at Deoghar, and then proceeded to Varanasi. He resided in Bansi Datta's garden house and survived on alms. After that he went to

Prayag, at the confluence of the Ganga and the Yamuna. He travelled throughout various parts of India and then went to Sri Lanka. Swami Vivekananda wrote from America on October 22, 1894: "Why doesn't Niranjan learn Pali in Ceylon and study Buddhist scriptures? I cannot make out what good will come of aimless rambling." However, Swamiji was impressed with Niranjanananda's preaching mission in Sri Lanka. Wherever he went, he would talk about the wonderful life and message of the Master. When he was in Raipur, an army officer named Suraj Rao, met him and was duly inspired. Later on he resigned from his job and became a disciple of Swami Vivekananda. He was later known as Swami Nischayananda. In 1895, before Sri Ramakrishna's birthday, Niranjanananda returned to the monastery, which had been shifted from Baranagore to Alambazar in the later part of 1891.

Gradually news arrived in the monastery that Swami Vivekananda would return to India from the West in early 1897. Swami Niranjanananda left for Colombo and received Swamiji there on January 15, 1897. Afterwards he travelled with Swamiji all across southern India as well as to various parts of northern India. The brother disciples were proud of their leader's success in spreading the message of Vedanta in America and Europe.

In 1898, Swami Niranjanananda went with Swamiji to Almora and then stayed there in order to practise further spiritual disciplines. Sudhir (later, Swami Shuddhananda), an initiated disciple of Swamiji, joined them. Niranjanananda inspired Sudhir, and on September 16, 1898, initiated him into sannyasa. Both then moved to Varanasi and stayed at Banshi Datta's garden house. They continued their austerities as itinerant mendicants—begging food once

a day, walking barefoot without sufficient clothing, sleeping on a blanket without a mosquito curtain, carrying no money, and depending solely on God's will. In Varanasi, Swami Niranjanananda encountered a group of young men and endeavoured to encourage them in spiritual life and in the ideal of service. In 1899, this group observed Sri Ramakrishna's birthday celebration under his guidance. He duly inspired them to sacrifice their lives for the good of many and for the welfare of all. Later this same group founded the Ramakrishna Mission Home of Service and some of them took their monastic vows directly from Swami Vivekananda.

After staying a few months at Varanasi, Niranjanananda went to Kankhal, near Hardwar, a place where mendicants live at the foothills of the Himalayas. Sri Ramakrishna had trained his disciples to build their characters first through practising spiritual disciplines. Truly it is the life that speaks the loudest! The monastic disciples had also learned from the Master how to teach people: Let there be no theft or hypocrisy in your heart. Unite your thought and speech. Religion means realization of Truth. Renounce everything for God. The impact of an illumined soul's life is more profound than the contents of thousands of lectures or books.

When Niranjanananda was at Kankhal, a young man from Varanasi named Kedarnath (later, Swami Achalananda), expressed his desire to become a monk. At first the swami discouraged him, saying that the life of a monk is a very difficult one. He mentioned the passage from the Kaṭha Upaniṣad (1.3.14): "Like the sharp edge of a razor is that path, so the wise say—hard to tread and difficult to cross." But it is equally difficult to stay at home when the fire of renunciation enkindles in the



heart: Kedarnath gave up his job and left home. With the permission of the swami he arrived at Kankhal in August 1899. Niranjanananda received him cordially and took him to a dilapidated house he was living in opposite the present Mahananda Mission. The next day the swami gave him an ochre cloth and asked to repeat the name of Sri Ramakrishna. He taught Kedarnath the basic rule of monastic life: to live on alms, without possessions, depending on God alone.

After some time Swami Niranjanananda became ill and left for Calcutta. A couple of months later the swami wrote to Kedarnath: "My physical condition is extremely bad. It would be nice if you would come and give me a little personal service." Kedarnath immediately went to Calcutta to attend the swami, who was then living in a rented house of M.'s at Bhavani-charan Datta Lane. Swami Brahmananda and the other disciples arranged for his treatment and diet. It was a prolonged illness, and once he was close to death. The swami was later moved to another location, Akhil Mistry Lane, where a devotee provided all of his food and paid his medical expenses. Unfortunately, Kedarnath also became sick and had to go to the monastery which was now located at Belur. He later went back to Varanasi. At last Swami Premananda went to nurse Niranjanananda and he slowly got well.

There are no writings or any recorded reminiscences by Swami Niranjanananda himself. But on December 18, 1946, Swami Achalananda described some of the important characteristics of Swami Niranjanananda's life:

Swami Niranjanananda believed that Sri Ramakrishna was the infinite God incarnated in human form; and he who

took refuge in him would not have to worry in his life.

He had a similarly high estimation of Holy Mother. He believed that by the grace of the Mother, he could do anything.

About Sri Ramakrishna he said: "If anybody came to the Master and said that he wouldn't marry, the Master would dance with joy."

He believed one should sincerely serve the Master—thinking of him as a living, conscious being, our very own. This is the supreme worship. The swami did not put too much stress on rituals and mantras.

He was a strong person and was not afraid of anybody. He considered the Master his only refuge. He appreciated people's dauntless nature.

He had tremendous faith in the doctrine of service as established by Swami Vivekananda and he encouraged people to serve human beings as God.

He was a man of truth and wanted others also to adhere to the truth. He did not care for people who did not keep their word.

He was extremely generous. Whoever sought help from him he would take care of without any misgivings.

He would inspire young people to follow the path of renunciation and again caution them, saying that the path is indeed a difficult one.

He said, "It is important for a monk to live on alms, or *madhukari*." [As a bee collects honey from different flowers, so a monk is supposed to live by begging food from door to door. It is an ancient monastic custom in India.] He himself would collect food like the traditional

monks, and then eat it after offering it to the Master.

He used to do physical exercise regularly and he encouraged the young men to keep their bodies strong and active.

Swami Vivekananda went to the West again in June 1899; he returned to India in December 1900. Swami Niranjanananda was very happy to be with Swamiji once more. In January 1902, Swamiji visited Varanasi where Swami Niranjanananda was currently residing. He arranged for Swamiji's stay at Kali Krishna Tagore's garden house. At that time Okakura Kakuzo, the famous Japanese artist, arrived to escort Swamiji to Japan as a royal guest. Due to his bad health this visit was cancelled; but Swamiji travelled with him to Bodha Gaya and from there to Varanasi. Swamiji wrote to Mrs. Ole Bull on February 10, 1902: "Mr. Okakura has started on his short tour. He intends to visit Agra, Gwalior, Ajanta, Ellora, Chittore, Udaipur, and Delhi. Niranjan has gone with Okakura."

In the later part of February, when Swamiji became gravely ill, Swamis Niranjanananda and Shivananda escorted him to Belur Math. The doctors had been treating Swamiji for diabetes and kidney disease; but at the earnest request of Niranjanananda he took *āyurvedic* medicine for three weeks. During this period, in accordance with the treatment, he did not drink any liquids except a little milk now and then to satiate his thirst. On Sri Ramakrishna's birthday Niranjanananda became Swamiji's gatekeeper in order to prevent the general public from disturbing him. A young brahmachari, who was a disciple of Swamiji, arrived from Mayavati to visit him. Niranjanananda did not know the young man so he stopped him at the gate. But while Niranjanananda was talking to someone

else, the clever brahmachari crawled through his legs and entered Swamiji's room. When Niranjanananda heard this from Swamiji, he appreciated the boy's resourcefulness and dedication.

Niranjanananda's character was a mixture of tenderness and sternness. He was an unattached monk and his love for truth was uncompromising. Once a rich man of Calcutta built a Shiva temple in Varanasi ostensibly to acquire merit. When Swami Vivekananda heard about it, he remarked, "If he would do something to relieve the suffering of the poor, then he would acquire the merit of building a thousand such temples." When Swamiji's statement reached the rich man, he offered a generous donation to the Ramakrishna Mission Home of Service at Varanasi—in a nucleus state at that time. But later, as his initial enthusiasm cooled down, he decided to reduce the sum he had originally offered. This breach of promise so offended Niranjanananda's regard for truth that he rejected the offer altogether, even knowing it would cause great hardship for the institution.

Niranjanananda's devotion to Holy Mother was indeed remarkable. Swami Vivekananda used to say, "Niranjan has a militant disposition, but he has great devotion for Mother so I can easily put up with all his vagaries." In those early days the divinity of Holy Mother was not widely acknowledged; even Girish, a great devotee of the Master, confessed his doubt about it. Girish, as was mentioned previously, was then passing through a critical time—he had lost his wife and his son, and was suffering from mental depression. At that time Niranjanananda took him to Holy Mother and later accompanied him to her village of Jayrambati. Girish stayed there for some months with Niranjanananda under the affectionate care of Holy Mother and



derived immense spiritual benefit. In fact, it was partly as a result of Niranjanananda's active preaching that many devotees came to recognize the spiritual greatness of Holy Mother.

Because he practised such hard austerity, Niranjanananda's health failed. During the last few years of his life he suffered from dysentery. The climate and water of Hardwar are better than those of Belur Math, so he decided to move there to practise Tapasya and went to Holy Mother to receive her blessings. This last meeting was very touching as Niranjanananda released his pent-up devotion for Holy Mother. No one understood the cause—perhaps he had a premonition that he would not live long. He insisted that Holy Mother do everything for him. He entreated her to cook for him and feed him as a mother feeds her young child. Holy Mother fulfilled his wish. Before leaving, he fell at her feet and burst into tears. Then he silently went away, knowing that he would never see her again.

At Hardwar, he lived in a rented house and continued his sadhana (spiritual disciplines). His chronic dysentery was

eating up his body day by day, but it could not stifle his renunciation. Sri Ramakrishna had enkindled his spirit while Niranjanananda was in his teens and it shone brightly throughout the remainder of his life. He wished to complete the journey of his life alone. Towards the end, he was stricken with cholera. Like a hero, he took shelter on the bank of the Ganga and surrendered himself to God. When his attendant offered to serve him, Niranjanananda declined. When the attendant nevertheless insisted, he said, "Don't you want me to die in peace?" Then the attendant reluctantly departed. Swami Niranjanananda, the heroic monk of Sri Ramakrishna, passed away in samadhi on May 9, 1904.

Later, the attendant realized the truth of Sri Ramakrishna's prediction: "Do you know what these youngsters are like? They are like certain plants that grow fruit first and then flowers. These devotees first of all have the vision of God; next, they hear about his glories and attributes, and at last they are united with him. Look at Niranjan. He always keeps his accounts clear. He will be able to go whenever he hears the call."

He whose mind is not attached to anything, who has subdued his heart, and who is free from all longing—he, by renunciation, attains supreme perfection, which is freedom from action.

*Srimad Bhagavat Gītā (18.49)*

# Russia Revisited

SWAMI BHAVYANANDA

*More and more Russians are evincing keen interest in Indian spirituality, specially in the teachings of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. Some small groups in different cities have taken up enthusiastically the study of these two world teachers. The author during his second visit witnessed the religious revival in that great country. He is the spiritual head of the Ramakrishna Centre in the United Kingdom.*

Swami Jyotirupananda and our close friends made my visit to Russia possible again in September, 1992. The last visit was to the USSR and the present one only to Russia. It was less complicated to get a visa this time. Russia seems to recognise that she has to be with the rest of the world. The visa costs a little more, but it is understandable, they are in need of foreign currency.

I was given a red carpet welcome at Moscow airport. Two of our friends walked straight into the plane and took my baggage through a private entrance. The captain was a little surprised. For a VIP everything works out very smoothly! Customs clearance, immigration papers etc. move swiftly. I was driven out of the airport in a big car. We passed through the city and reached the Swami's flat, which is in the suburbs. It is in a beautiful area, quiet and peaceful. Half a dozen close devotees had gathered to welcome us. After courtesies and tea, most of them left. A couple of them stayed on for the evening prayers and meditation. After a light supper, we retired by 10:30 p.m. It was a very good feeling.

This flat is Thakur's (Sri Ramakrishna's) home, though very small. The flat is on

the ground floor. There are three well sized rooms with all facilities. One of the rooms has been converted into a meditation room. It looked as if Thakur has already settled down there. The other two are used for all purposes, bedroom, sitting room and office.

The next day we were all by ourselves until 10 a.m. Then some friends came. We went for a walk in a nearby park. As we walked, I noticed the underground station is fairly near, and surrounded by small stalls selling all sorts of things, including vegetables and fruit. It looked as if we were in a Calcutta bazaar. The roads are poorly maintained and not clean.

The devotees have organised themselves to come by turns and cook food for the Swami. He has collected a very good group of dedicated helpers, who look after him in every way. They do not have very much money, but they provide all the Swami's needs. Most of them could be classified as lower income group, economically. But they will do anything to make the swami feel comfortable. He lives there literally without any money, entirely dependent upon the people for his food and shelter, like a real Sannyasin.



*"Food what chance might bring, well-cooked or ill, judge not."* But he has no complaints. The devotees provide what best they can, sharing what little they have themselves with the Swami. Compared to last year's experience, the arrangements for food and accommodation are satisfactory in every way. His life style is simple and needs are few.

Before I could settle down, engagements for the next three days had been fixed up. A good friend from Yaroslavl arrived, and arranged several meetings, which we had to address, in and around his place. This was not a very convenient arrangement, but we have to accept all this and work hard to become established in Russia. The Swami needs help from all possible directions and sources.

#### *USSR before 1991 and after.*

Seventy-five years of Communism has held the whole nation under its grip and ideology. Even people who did not see eye to eye with their ideology had to be their followers, if they were not to end up in prisons. The machinery of the State and its economy and the life of every individual was controlled. The whole population worked for the State alone.

The wages were small, but people could live within that. Basic necessities were very cheap, but people had no freedom to think or to move from place to place. Even legitimate grievances could not be openly talked about. But they were very secure within limits. All that collapsed overnight. Capitalist economy started creeping in. Prices simply soared; people could not live on the money they earned. The government tried to increase the wages from 200 to

2,000 roubles,<sup>1</sup> but the prices had risen so high, most of the people lived below the poverty line. The average person found it difficult to buy even the basic necessities, food and clothing. The slogans perestroika and glasnost had not brought any succour to the common man. Gorbachev had sealed the corrupt water sources, but no fresh water sources had been found. His plan to stabilize the Soviet state and its economy in a new way had failed. He had to go, and he did. The new regime which has taken over the power is no more able to hold all the states together. They have all become independent. Their economy is in ruins. Even government offices are not able to pay their employees. Some people have to take odd jobs in addition to the work they are doing. Because of the high cost of living, everyone has become poor. In the old economy, a telephone call cost two kopeks, and one could telephone anywhere in the USSR and talk any length of time he liked. In Moscow, for five kopeks, one could take the Metro from one end of the city to the other. But today, it costs fifteen kopeks and 150 kopeks respectively. A local letter today costs seventy kopeks, and a foreign letter, twenty-five roubles. A telephone call abroad costs seventy-five roubles per minute. The train fare between Moscow and St. Petersburg used to be twenty roubles, now it is two hundred. One could fly to India for 2,500 roubles, but now it is 75,000.

People are no longer able to live in reasonable comfort on the money they are getting. The food position in summer is not bad, but in winter, people have to survive on bread and cheese. Some meat, if they can afford it, and when available. Often, people

---

1. One dollar is equivalent to two hundred roubles. There are one hundred kopeks to a rouble.

try to save some food for winter use. Money is in short supply for everyone, the state and the common man. People live in constant despair.

By and large, everyone has a small flat, though amenities are poor. They have gas, electricity, running water and telephone, but services are very much run down. People in general are very friendly. Everyone smiles and greets. Some come forward and make enquiries about you.

Gorbachev thought he would survive the crisis and create a new commonwealth, but destiny willed otherwise. Boris Yeltsin, who was waiting in the wings, came forward onto the lit stage and became a central figure. Disintegration of USSR, internal bickerings and conflict are part of current history. Gorbachev is hated by the people of the Communist Party, and ignored by the common people. Boris Yeltsin has not improved the situation. He is not loved, but accepted because there is no alternative. People do not want the Communist Party to come back to power. They love their freedom of speech and action, though want and hunger is the price they have to pay. They are prepared for it. Poverty and freedom is much better than food and slavery.

#### *What of the future ?*

I am told that Gorbachev is finished. We have to wait and see. He seems to be lying low. There are sections of the people who admire his courage in destroying the old, tyrannical order. Though they are critical at his failure to create a new order, his admirers see some hope for the nation if he comes back to power. Boris Yeltsin is seen as an aggressive person, who has not delivered the goods. If he is unable to change the situation, how long will he be tolerated ? How long will the patience of

the suffering people endure ? Sooner or or later, a general election is bound to come. We have to wait and see what happens. Whichever party may come into power, some optimists feel, in due course, a strong economy will be built up. In a way, the process has already begun. I have no doubt it will gather momentum. Meanwhile, suffering is unavoidable. The Russian people, in general, are patient, essentially good and open.

All our friends are happy that a Swami is there and now has a flat. They are helping him in all possible ways. Having a flat brings its own problems. He needs a certain amount of money to pay bills and other incidentals. What hope of regular income ? At present, he does not even have any idea what will be the monthly expenses. Rates and taxes, also, are not known to him. The economic condition being what it is, one cannot expect to get any contributions to maintain the ashrama. At this stage, the prospect of getting any money is nil. Nothing can be done about it. Some kind friends have sent money from abroad, which will keep him going for a time. There are certain essential changes to be done in the house. That also costs money. The Swami, being an austere person, has very few needs. He is adequately protected for the winters. There should be no crisis in any way.

#### *Yaroslavl*

We reached Yaroslavl on Friday, 21st September. It was about five hours by train from Moscow. As we alighted, there was a big fanfare. Many people had gathered, and quite a few newspaper reporters, with cameras clicking, and television and radio interviewers. All that kept us busy for an hour. In the next twenty-four hours, we had three public meetings, all very well attended.



We also went to another town, Rybansk, about two hours journey by car, where we had two meetings, also well attended. Rybansk is an industrial town. They manufacture aero engines, motor engines and spare parts. It is on the river Volga. It has many churches, unused and in disrepair. The whole city looks rundown and neglected. People are hard up, not regularly paid; that makes life a little difficult for them.

I must record an interesting episode. When we entered the flat where we stayed for the night, a Russian couple in Indian dress welcomed us. I understand they were members of the Hare Krishna movement. They had taken all the trouble to cook food for us and entertained us. That was the least expected Indian feast in Russia. The Hare Krishna movement has a small establishment here, and next day we visited that place, also.

The accommodation here was very small. Families happily share what they have of space, food and everything. When a guest comes, people vacate their flat, and go and sleep with friends or relatives, appearing early next morning to serve breakfast and look after the guests. They even make beds and close them for you. They do it all so skilfully, to make space for the daily living. Every inch of space is used and tidily organised. They have everything a modern house can have. Television, radio, washing machine, refrigerator, even a dishwasher. Hi-fi systems are also here, and even a dog. All this to be fitted into a flat of two rooms!! I saw in a small bathroom all the possible luxury toiletries of the West were kept stored. Toilet rolls were in short supply, but plenty of cut-up newspaper was available. Because of short supply, people buy whatever is readily available and store it. Not much of cleaning materials were

available. Building materials for maintenance cannot be had, even nails. Private workmen simply do not exist. To say the least, life is irksome and difficult. One learns to put up with the inconveniences philosophically.

The meetings at Rybansk were also well attended and a lot of questions were asked. People, by and large, seem to be well read. The second day we returned to Yaroslavl. The car journey was very hazardous. The roads, which were laid during the Czarist regime, remain unrepaired and untouched. We had a very skilful driver, who negotiated all the potholes, but the passengers had to have great patience. Often, they will be churned inside the car! That we reached our destination was a miracle, indeed. Miracles do happen, even in this age! Spending a night in Yaroslavl, we returned next day to Moscow.

We had only one public meeting in Moscow, arranged by our good friends at the Oriental Institute. About one hundred people attended that meeting, by invitation only. The response was good. Many searching questions, also, were raised. The Oriental Institute is part of the Academy of Sciences. Mr. Rybakov, the Deputy Director, is a good friend. He specialises in India and Indian philosophy. The Institute buildings are very nice, there are rooms for seminars and halls for lectures. They have an impressive library and invite scholars from abroad. The Swami teaches Sanskrit at the Institute and also delivers a lecture there every week.

### *Some Reflections*

Now that we have a place of our own, it is important to have a separate room for Sri Ramakrishna. After all, it is His place and He should be the Centre, round which

everything else moves. During my stay there we meditated both morning and evening and sang hymns. Whether anyone is there or not, the Swami will keep up this routine. When devotees come to the Ashrama, they need to be encouraged to go and spend at least thirty minutes before they start doing any work. In the evenings, whenever they are around, at a fixed time you must have the evening prayers and meditation. People must be encouraged to do this regularly. Buildings do not make an ashrama or a temple. By prayer and meditation, we have to awaken the spirit of God. On special days, a small ritual may be introduced in due course. The spiritual vibrations created here will literally attract people to the Centre.

*What does the Free Economy mean to the ordinary person ?*

One has to see to believe there are supermarkets in Moscow. In these places, one can buy everything that can be had in England. Everything is presented in the same way as in supermarkets anywhere else. But all transactions are through the almighty dollar. When I entered one of these shops, the girl at the counter drew my attention to the notice board which read, "Transactions in hard currency only." So those who have dollars in their pockets—embassy employees, or travelling Westerners and rich Russians only, can enter these places. They all have a high standard of living, but their flats are mostly miserably small. I asked a friend what happens to all this fresh fruit and vegetables if they are not sold in time. They are transferred to some big shops, where they can be bought in rouble currency. But even these shops are beyond the reach of the common people. They are still expensive. But there are enough rouble-rich Russians who can afford, and they keep these shops open.

There is a third category of ordinary shops in all areas. They sell daily necessities and provisions, bread, butter and cheese. Maybe some vegetables, household odds and ends, clothing, etc. I understand clothing has become very expensive. The cost of everything is going up all the time. Then there is the poor man's category of shops—street markets. Near every Metro station, in the open there are small stalls, selling fruit, vegetables, flowers, all sorts of useful articles, utensils, even some imported things, like Coca Cola and 7-Up. Wines and vodka are also available. These stalls spring up like mushrooms every morning and disappear in the evening. All this keeps money circulating, which is in short supply. Taking up a second job seems to be very common, I understand. I am sure some people live from hand to mouth. They all learn somehow how to survive these hard days. For an ordinary man, there is no chance even to make illegal money. Nobody has money to spare anyway! I am sure pick-pockets and thieves are very hard hit!! There is hardly anything worth stealing in an average flat. Our ground-floor flat has no protection for the big glass windows. Someone who is really hungry can break in and take food from the kitchen; maybe he can have a bath if he likes. There is nothing worth stealing!

Most of the people have a dacha—a small holding in the country—and try to grow vegetables and fruit in summer and preserve what they can for winter use. Summer is only three months. Life is hard indeed. "The poor like the warm summer better than the cold days of winter." Coming back from Brazil, a tropical country, just two weeks ago, it is a contrast here. There, there is plenty of food, fruits and anything one wants. The poor are there, also, it is all relative. Here, everything is harsh, comparatively. People have to work



very hard to build up a good future. Still, they smile and greet as they pass.

I understand that many small industries are also coming up. In collaboration with the West there are many private shops, where all sorts of technological gadgets are available. People had not seen these things before. Now, if they have money, they can buy. A lot of food gifts, also, come into Russia. Government shops distribute them to the poor and aged. I understand sometimes they pay a small price for these gifts. Poor people sell these things and make a little extra cash to buy their necessities, and these articles find their way to the roadside bazaars. All this is part of the struggle for existence. Life is rough for everyone—even for Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin! Symbolically, too many potholes and bumps on the road. I hope “This, too, shall pass away.”

28th, Friday morning, we found ourselves in St. Petersburg. Our friends had to do hard bargaining with the taxi driver before we could get into it. The friends here are very enthusiastic people. They accommodated us in the flat which we had rented last year. As I mentioned in last year's report, the Ramakrishna Society here is slowly making its presence felt. They have published half a dozen small booklets. The same evening, we were invited to address a large ecumenical group, called the Temple of Light. About 120 people attended the meeting. Many representatives of different religions and cultural organisations participated in it. I was surprised to find a representative of a pre-Christian Russia group here, calling themselves Aryans, and claiming to be linked with Indian spirituality. Theosophy and Roerich societies have a strong hold in Russia. All these societies are New Age movements and oriental religious groups are not favourably looked

upon by the Orthodox Church. They would like to crush them all, if they could. Thank God, they do not have enough strength in their muscles. We have to wait and see how things develop. At present, it is not clear.

On this occasion, a newspaper devoted to the revival of religion was launched. “Rosa Mira”—Rose of the World, is the name of the newspaper. On the front page, there is a picture of Swami Jyotirupananda with a message. On the central page, there is an interview article of half a page on Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. He (Sri Ramakrishna) has His own methods of finding his way to the farthest corners.

Our friends in St. Petersburg had convened a weekend seminar at Ishwara, two hours from St. Petersburg. Some kind friends took us by car. It was a luxury. The rest of our friends travelled by public transport (bus). Ishwara is the place of Nicholas Roerich's ancestral home. The Ministry of Culture has been organising a museum in that building. The director of the museum kindly accommodated us in her quarters, moving out. She was very happy such a cultural event was being organised in her place. The other participants stayed in a hotel in a nearby village. Roerich was a very famous artist, writer, philosopher and visionary. His wife, Helena, was also a deep thinker and philosopher. She has written fourteen volumes, “Living Ethics,” that is called Agni Yoga. They lived in America. Then, in 1928, they emigrated to India and lived in Kulu valley, where they founded an institution known as the Roerich Institute. They lived there till his death in 1947. His son, who is also an artist, has married an Indian lady and lives in Bangalore. This family has brought spiritual India to Russia. While in India, he was acquainted with the thought

and lives of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. He visited Belur Math, also. A painting of his hangs in the old monastery building. There are Roerich societies all over Russia.

Ishwara village is a farming community of two thousand people. It is a beautiful place. There are many big, neglected houses in the area. I was surprised at the name of Ishwara, given to the village. When I asked some local people, I was told that in the pre-Christian era, there was a Hindu kingdom here. The king had built temples in this particular area to the god Ishwara. With the onset of Christianity though, the signs of the old Hindu influences have disappeared, god Ishwara still sits here in this place! There are a great many archaeological sites here, which are still to be excavated to rediscover the past history.

The retreat was attended by twenty-four people. The selected representatives came from Moscow, Yaroslavl, Latvia (Riga), Lithuania, etc. This was a very fruitful encounter. They were all very earnest people, who were looking for new inspiration. All our meetings were held in the museum hall, where we also meditated. From somewhere, a picture of Sri Ramakrishna appeared to preside over the function. One cannot escape His watchful eyes, even in that distant place! He made a statement during His lifetime that His picture would be worshipped all over the world. If we omit to carry one, He has to find one Himself, to fulfil His own prophecy!! The director and staff of the museum were very helpful. They have invited the Ramakrishna Society, St. Petersburg, to organise such seminars every year.

### *The Ramakrishna Society, St. Petersburg*

Under the inspiration of Swami Lokeshwaranandaji, a group of people formed a Ramakrishna Society in 1990, which was registered only in 1991. Within this one year they have established some standing in St. Petersburg. They have very close links with the other movements that have come into the country. The Lord provided them with the funds required to publish Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda literature. They also have a computer available to them. They have earnestly been looking round for a suitable flat they can buy. Moves have been made, and finances found for this purchase. I understand that Swami Jyotirupananda will visit St. Petersburg for one week every month to deliver lectures and meet people. That is a very good idea indeed. His movement between Moscow and St. Petersburg will spread the message of Sri Ramakrishna more effectively.

3rd September, Moscow. We met a lot of people who came to see us and gave an interview to the Indian Embassy magazine. Moscow friends have suggested that we hold a weekend seminar for their benefit next summer. Eighteen months after the Swami first landed in Moscow, he sees the light at the end of the tunnel. The situation is brighter and optimistic. He has a small group of friends who support and take care of him. Whenever he goes out of Moscow, they gather to see him off, and receive him when he returns. His flat is cleaned, towels changed, bed made and hot food waiting for him. When he goes out for talks in the city, someone accompanies him, buys his tickets and brings him back. All together, they make him feel that he is respected and wanted. He has given inspiration and meaning to their lives. He has picked up enough Russian to communicate with them,



though not to lecture. He is a determined soul. He is prepared to sacrifice himself for the cause of Sri Ramakrishna. With faith in Him, he has found his way to the hearts of kind friends who have gathered round him. Money he has none, but he has a mountain of faith. He is meeting the challenge squarely. He feels fairly well stabilised. Sri Ramakrishna has provided him with a beautiful flat, which everyone likes. For their part, the people are pre-

pared to share their poverty cheerfully with him. Some feel the Centre is their spiritual home. Some have taken upon themselves the responsibility of organising the required fittings for the flat. On the whole, a positive picture is emerging. The Swami feels stable and wanted. The friends have found someone to guide them in their inner life and provide inspiration. The whole thing seems to be moving in the right direction.

## SHI RAMANUJA AND HIS PRAPATTI-MARGA—I

(Continued from page 247)

intellect, nor by much hearing.”<sup>5</sup> He accepted the path of devotion and God with Form. Totapuri, an *advaitin*, at last accepted the Divine Mother and bowed down to his disciple Sri Ramakrishna. Yādavaprakāś took *sannyāsa* from Sri Ramanuja and was given the name Govinda Jeer. He wrote a book on Vaiṣṇava religion—*Yatidharmasamuccaya*.

Drawn by Ramanuja’s irresistible appeal, his divine greatness, purity and compassion, people began to flock to him from far and near. From his facile pen and vast learning many valuable books came into existence. He wrote a commentary on the *Gītā*, the *Gadyatraya*: *Śaraṇāgati-gadya*, *Sri Ranga-*

*gadya* and *Vaikuṇṭha-gadya*; *Vedānta-dīpa*, *Vedārtha-sangraha*, the *Vedānta Sāra* and the *Vaikuṇṭha-grantha*. Embodied in these books are the tenets and practices of the Sri Vaiṣṇava faith. He also composed his magnum opus, the *Srī Bhāṣya*, a lucid commentary on the *Brahma Sūtras* on the line of *Bodhāyan Vṛtti*. Sri Ramanuja also suffered calmly through various persecutions from the Śaiva fanatic king Kulotunga of the Chola dynasty. Inspired by a missionary zeal he travelled throughout the country, converting many kings and admitting thousands of people belonging to different faiths into the noble fold of Sri Vaiṣṇavism. This illustrious messenger of God who enriched the thought and life of the human race with the supremacy of bhakti, divine wisdom and unearthly compassion, freed himself from the shackles of the flesh at a ripe old age in the year 1137 A.D.

5. नायमात्मा प्रवचनेन लभ्यो न मेधया न बहुना श्रुतेन । —*Katha Up.*, II-23.

# Turning Towards Swami Vivekananda for Health—II

SWAMI BRAHMESHANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue)

We have seen in the foregoing review that through ages the concepts of health and medicine had been evolving and changing. Medicine evolved from being curative to being preventive, from preventive to social, and from social to community oriented. Today its principal value is "health" and its goal is "health for all". In 1977 it was decided in the Health Assembly of WHO to launch the "Health for All" movement. This was reaffirmed at Alma Ata in 1978 and endorsed by the UNO General Assembly in 1981. The Alma Ata Conference observed that "the gross inequality in the health status of people, particularly between developed and developing countries as well as within countries is politically, socially and economically unacceptable."<sup>1</sup>

Swami Vivekananda was deeply aware of the inequality and injustice prevailing in society, and was intensely sensitive to the miseries of the unprivileged masses. Almost three quarters of a century before the Alma Ata declaration, he had suggested some remedies which are even more relevant today. Let us therefore turn towards him for guidance for the fulfilment of the goal of "Health for all by 2000." It must be remembered that Swamiji based all his

teachings on the Vedantic truth of the divinity of man and the unity of existence.

*Swamiji's message for the sick:*

Swami Vivekananda has a message for the ailing person. He believed that Vedantic truths can drive away disease. He wrote to his ailing brother disciples: "Even the poison of a snake is powerless if you can firmly deny it."<sup>2</sup> And again: "Why are Baburam and Yogen suffering so much? It is owing to their negative, their self-abasing spirit. Tell them to brush aside their illness by mental strength, and in an hour illness will disappear. I the Atman smitten with disease! Off with it! Tell them to meditate for an hour at a stretch, 'I am the Atman, how can I be affected by disease!'—and everything will vanish. Think all of you that you are the infinite powerful Atman and see what strength comes out.... I *am*, God *is*, everything is in me. I *will* manifest health, purity, knowledge, whatever I want....Who says you are ill—what is disease to you? Brush it aside!...Repeat to yourself that such and such are Atman, that they are infinite, and how can they have any disease? Repeat this an hour or so on a few successive days and all disease and trouble will vanish into naught."<sup>3</sup>

---

1. Park, J. E. & Park, K., *Text Book of Preventive and Social Medicine*, 12th ed., (Jabalpur: M/S. Banarasidas Bhanot, 1989) page 9.

---

2. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1978), Vol. VI, page 275.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 276-77.



"Whenever any one of you is sick, let him himself or anyone of you visualise him in your mind, and mentally say and strongly imagine that he is all right. That will cure him quickly. You can do it even without his knowledge, and even with thousands of miles between you."<sup>4</sup>

*Message for the medical personnel:*

For doctors and those who are engaged in the service of the sick, Swamiji's message is even more pertinent and explicit. He urges them to serve the patients as the veritable embodiments of God. "Serving man as God" is the *Yuga-dharma*, the religion for the present age. This attitude turns a secular act into a consecrated one and service of men into the best form of worship of the divine. In this worship of the patient-God, the physician or the surgeon is the chief priest, the nurse, the compounder, the assistants, the anaesthetists and others are his helpers; and the objects of worship (*upacāra* or *upakaraṇa*) are the tablets, injections, ointments, infusions, etc. A surgical operation in its elaborate preparation, solemnity, and methodical procedure can be fairly compared to an elaborate Durgā Pūjā.

But the mere attitude of mind considering the patient as God is not enough. For a true servant of the people, Swamiji lays down a few important conditions. For all would-be reformers, patriots and social servants Swamiji says: "Three things are necessary for great achievements. First feel from the heart. Do you feel that the millions of descendants of gods and of sages have become *next-door neighbours to brutes*... *that is the first step*."<sup>5</sup> The second condition is to find out a way, a practical solu-

tion to the problem before us. And the third condition is the steadfastness, the will, the determination to pursue the path one has chosen, against all difficulties and hindrances. In other words none can truly and effectively serve the sick unless he has a feeling heart and real love and sympathy, nor until he has learnt the necessary skills to serve, irrespective of any returns in the form of money, name, or fame, or recognition, and until he can face all difficulties like financial stringency, social unfairness or blame, or withdrawal of cooperation. The relevance of the above conditions laid down by Swamiji for an ideal medical worker can be immediately appreciated if we look at the prevailing medical scene in India. Due to lack of feeling this noble method of service, the medical profession, is getting converted into a trade and an ugly method of exploitation; due to lack of proper knowledge it is being reduced to quackery, and without the necessary determination to pursue, it is leading to negligence and incomplete treatment.

Incidentally, it may be mentioned that with all his love for India and revolutionary sociological ideas about the uplift of the masses, Swamiji did not try for national independence soon after his return from the West. Asked why he was not more outspoken for India's freedom from the British rule, Swamiji said that India lacked men who could safeguard the freedom if obtained. Hence, he instead established the Belur Math and opened centres for man-making and character building. This need for character is also evident in the field of medicine. The unethical practices prevailing at present in India in the medical field underscore Swami Vivekananda's message of the need for man-making and character-building. Suffice it to say that the doctors and the paramedical personnel must first of all be men, endowed with

4. *Ibid.*, Vol. V, 1985, page 33.

5. *Ibid.*, Vol. III, 1984, page 225.

something of Buddha's heart and Śankara's intellect with a gigantic will capable of surmounting all difficulties.

#### *Food, Water and Sanitation:*

Let us now turn to the wider issues concerning health. Swami Vivekananda may not have spoken directly about health and medicine, but he has given enough hints by which the health of the masses can be improved, diseases can be prevented and mortality can be reduced. Swamiji believed in total eradication of disease. "My method of treatment is to take out by the roots the very causes of the disease and not to keep them merely suppressed."<sup>6</sup> This was told in context of social reform, and Swamiji also pointed out the root causes of all ills. They were, in short, poverty and ignorance.<sup>7</sup> The Indian masses had very little to eat and were ignorant about the basic laws of health. "The poor die of starvation because they can get nothing to eat, and the rich die of starvation because what they take is not food."<sup>8</sup> Swamiji gave an illustration about the ignorance of the Indians about food: "Suppose the head of the firm gets displeased with someone and decreases his pay; or out of three or four bread winning sons in a family, one suddenly dies, what do they do? Why, they at once curtail the quantity of milk for the children, or live on one meal a day having a little puffed rice or so at night!" When asked what else can be done, Swamiji replied, "Why, can't they exert themselves and earn more to keep up their standard of food?"<sup>9</sup>

Swamiji has given some valuable advice regarding healthy food habits. "Concentrated food should be taken. To fill the

stomach with a large quantity of rice is the root of laziness."<sup>10</sup> "Take such food as is substantial and nutritious and at the same time easily digested. The food should be such as contains the greatest nutriment in the smallest compass, and be at the same time quickly assimilable....It is sufficient food to have rice, Dāl (lentils), whole-wheat chapatis (unfermented bread), fish, vegetables and milk."<sup>11</sup> He praised the eating habits of Japanese who took small frequent meals consisting of rice and soup of split peas.

Digestive disorders are extremely common among Indians and Swamiji rightly diagnosed their cause as faulty eating habits. "All fried things are really poisonous; in hot countries the less oil and clarified butter (ghee) taken, the better. Those who take fried food suffer from dyspepsia and ultimately the digestion is ruined. ...Spices are no food at all. To take them in abundance is only due to bad habit."<sup>12</sup> Another cause of diseases like diarrhoea, dysentery, cholera, typhoid fever, jaundice, etc. is eating unwashed or contaminated food. Appealing to the religious sense of devoted Hindus, Swamiji advised them to be as particular about avoiding *nimitta doṣa* (physical uncleanness) as they were about *āśraya doṣa*, bad character of one who may be serving food. "The sweet vendor's shop is Death's door."<sup>13</sup> "It has become too common with us to buy food from the sweet vendor's shop in the bazaar, and you can judge for yourselves how impure these confections are from the point of view of the *nimitta doṣa*; for, being kept exposed, the dirt and dust of the roads as well as dead insects adhere to them, and how stale and polluted they must sometimes be."<sup>14</sup>

6. *Ibid.*, Vol. V, 334.

7. *Ibid.*, Vol. VI, 225.

8. *Ibid.*, Vol. V, 486-87.

9. *Ibid.*, V, 375.

10. *Ibid.*, V, 375.

11. *Ibid.*, V, 486.

12. *Ibid.*, V, 486.

13. *Ibid.*, V, 486.

14. *Ibid.*, V, 481.



Swamiji was against all fermented foods. "And as for fermented bread, it is also poison. Never take any fermented thing."<sup>15</sup> With the increasing variety of "fancy foods" and drinks now available in the market with very little food value, Swamiji's advice regarding food becomes all the more pertinent. If not heeded, we may witness more such scenes as an emaciated person clothed in rags sitting miserable in a city slum drinking five-rupee Coca Cola.

In "The East and the West," Swamiji has discussed in detail about food and eating habits. After reviewing the various prevalent views about vegetarian and non-vegetarian diet, Swamiji gives his considered opinion for the masses of a poor country like India, who have to struggle hard for survival. "He who has to steer the boat of his life with strenuous labour through the constant life and death struggles and competition of this world, must of necessity take meat. So long as there will be in human society such a thing as the triumph of the strong over the weak, animal food is required or some other substitute for it has to be discovered; otherwise the weak will naturally be crushed under the feet of the strong."<sup>16</sup>

Swamiji was no dietitian, but his observations and advice is most scientific and in accord with the rules of diet and health. It may be mentioned that in recent years soybean has been discovered as a vegetarian substitute for meat. It is rich in proteins and can be taken by those strict vegetarians who would not like to eat meat.

The next important causes of disease are drinking impure or polluted water, and unclean habits. "Impure water and impure

food is the cause of all maladies."<sup>17</sup> To his brother disciples Swamiji advised, "Have two filters made and use that filtered water for both cooking and drinking purposes. Boil water before filtering....Keep a strict eye on everybody's health....Dirty clothes are the chief cause of disease."<sup>18</sup>

#### *Intermarriage and early marriage of girls:*

Swami Vivekananda pointed out that marriages confined within a single caste and early marriage of girls were important causes of physical weakness of the offspring. "There is, for example, a good cause for intermarriage in India, in the absence of which the race is becoming physically weaker day by day"<sup>19</sup>... "and for this very reason the race is getting deteriorated physically, and consequently all sorts of diseases and other evils are finding a ready entrance into it!...The blood having had to circulate within the narrow circle of a limited number of individuals has been vitiated, so the new-born children inherit from their very birth the constitutional diseases of their fathers...their bodies have very little power to resist the microbes of any disease."<sup>20</sup> For similar reasons Swamiji criticized severely the practice of child marriage. "Somehow the parents must dispose of a girl in marriage if she be nine or ten years of age! And what a rejoicing of the whole family if a child is born to her at the age of thirteen!"<sup>21</sup>

#### *Something for all:*

Let us now study the sociological ideas of Swami Vivekananda, and their implications for the national health policy. Swamiji

15. *Ibid.*, V, 488.

16. *Ibid.*, V, 485.

17. *Ibid.*, V, 489.

18. *Ibid.*, VI, 333.

19. *Ibid.*, V, 334.

20. *Ibid.*, V, 340-41.

21. *Ibid.*, V, 343.

was a patriot with the practical wisdom of a sociologist and social scientist, and his teachings have great relevance for the sociology of medicine. He said, "We want the greatest possible good from the least outlay."<sup>22</sup> Translated into modern terms, it would mean adopting the most cost-effective methods. He did not favour any reform which would benefit only a limited section of society. "All that you mean by your social reform," he said, "is either widow remarriage or female emancipation, or something of that sort. Do you not? And these again are directed within the confines of a few of the castes only. Such a scheme of reform may do good to a few, no doubt, but of what avail is that to the whole nation? Is that reform or only a form of selfishness, somehow to cleanse your own room and keep it tidy and let others go from bad to worse!"<sup>23</sup> "Most of what you talk of social reform does not touch the poor masses."<sup>24</sup> He was indeed bitter towards those who thought that "for the luxury of a handful of rich, let millions of men and women remain submerged in the hell of want and abysmal depth of ignorance, for if they get wealth and education (and health) society will be upset!"<sup>25</sup> The state of affairs, he said, must be just the reverse.

"If there is inequality in nature, still there must be equal chances for all, or if greater for some and for some less, the weaker should be given more chance than the strong....If the son of a brahmin needs one teacher, that of a *chandala* [the neglected low-caste person] needs ten. For greater help must be given to

him whom nature has not endowed with an acute intellect from birth."<sup>26</sup>

We have noted that the modern western model of high-tech medical care is extremely expensive and elite-oriented. "In a developing country [like India], the fortunate rich urban elite have access to almost any highly sophisticated technology, either in the capital or abroad, while many of the rural poor have no modern medical health care whatever."<sup>27</sup> Such a state of affairs Swamiji would condemn as selfishness. Emphasis must be to provide something for everyone, rather than to give more to the already fortunate few.

The following chart<sup>28</sup> shows the percentage of population having health care at a particular technological level in a model industrial country and in a model developing one. The black and white arrows represent policy choices in the deployment of resources. It is obvious that development in the direction of the white arrow would be in line with the directives of Swami Vivekananda. In the figure, a level of basic "human right" or primary health care can be inserted below "penicillin". In a poor country like India where resources are scarce, it is far more advisable to provide pure drinking water, healthy food, and assistance of trained dai for every mother during delivery of her child, rather than facilities for kidney transplant or coronary bypass surgery.

In this context it may be mentioned that Swamiji believed in working at the micro-level, at the level of the individual citizen. For, he had great faith in the average, poor

22. *Ibid.*, VII, 1979, page 509.

23. *Ibid.*, V, 333-34.

24. *Ibid.*, V, 334.

25. *Ibid.*, V, 146.

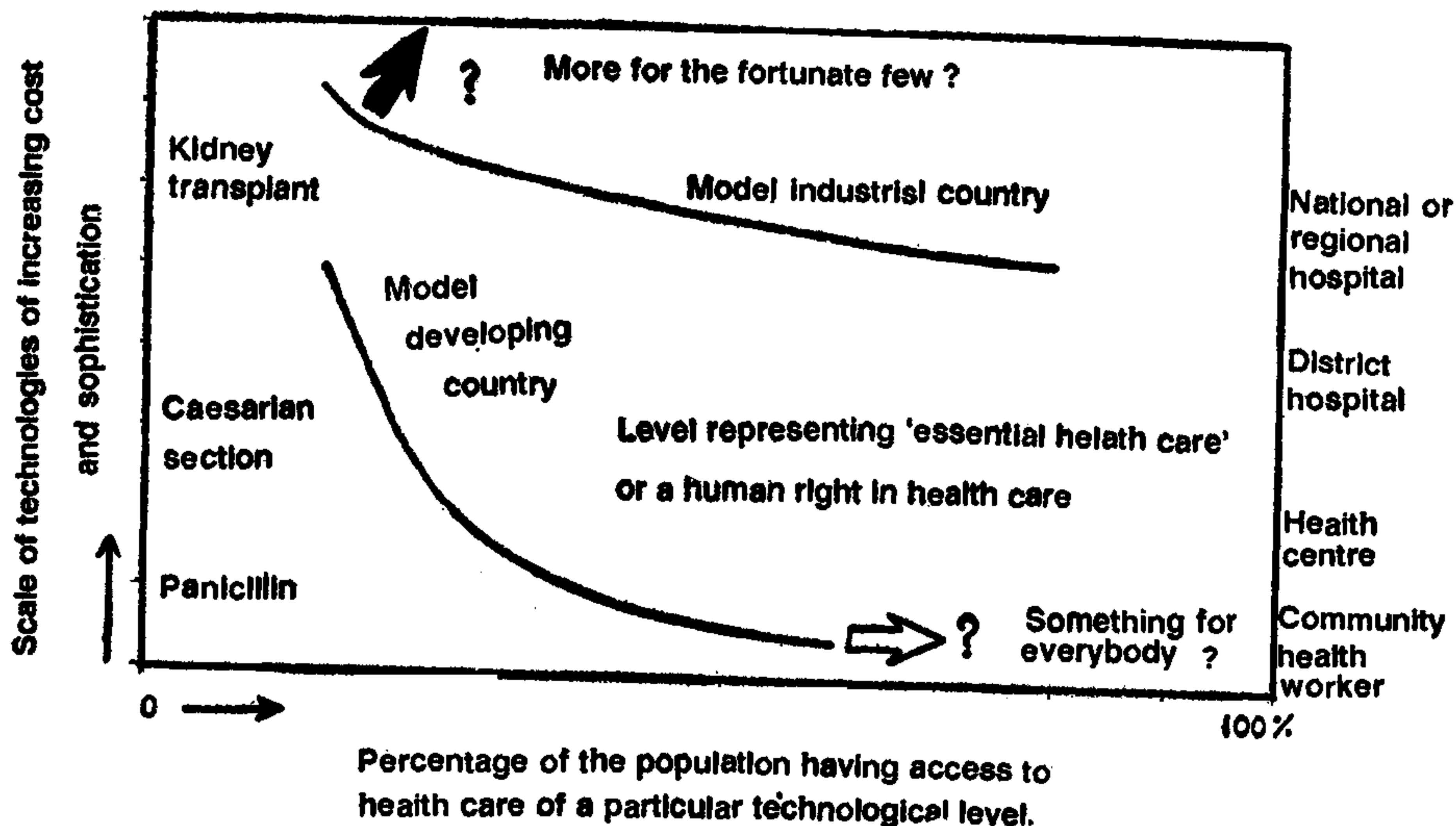
26. *Ibid.*, V, 319.

27. King, M. H., "Medicine in an Unjust World"; *Oxford Textbook of Medicine* ELBS (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1985) p. 3.9.

28. King (*Ibid.*), p. 3.7.



Indian whom he considered the builder of a New India. "Let her [the New India]," he said, "arise—out of the peasant's cottage, grasping the plough; out of the huts of the villagers who cannot come to the centres of education. He also said that longevity increases by staying in the villages and diseases are almost unknown there.<sup>31</sup> This



fisherman, the cobbler, and the sweeper. Let her spring from the grocer's shop, from beside the oven of the fritter seller...."<sup>29</sup> The doctor, the compounder, the nurse, the village health worker, the village dai, are all builders of New India. Health, medical care, and health education must reach every Indian—the peasants, the labourers, the fishermen, the cobblers and the sweepers!

Swami Vivekananda was never tired of reminding that "the nation lives in the cottages."<sup>30</sup> He was against urbanization and shifting of youth from the villages to the cities. Instead, he wanted the city-youth to go to the villages and educate the

is enough of a hint for us to know that Swamiji would have preferred emphasis on primary health centres in the villages over the modern medical centres in the cities "which look more like airports than therapeutic environments," and where patients tend to feel helpless and frightened.<sup>32</sup>

*Against blindly imitating the West:*

There is a trend in medicine to follow the USA in everything, almost blindly. The current prestige of high technology medicine is such that it dominates the

<sup>29</sup>. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. VII, page 327.

<sup>30</sup>. *Ibid.*, V, 29.

<sup>31</sup>. *The Life of Swami Vivekananda By His Eastern & Western Disciples*, Revised 2-volume edition (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1983) Vol. I, pp. 274-75.

<sup>32</sup>. Capra, Fritjof, *The Turning Point* (New York: Flamingo, 1989) page 148.

ambition of the medical profession. Swami Vivekananda was extremely critical of the "terrible mania of becoming westernized."<sup>33</sup>

"Alas, to such a state is our country reduced! People will look upon their own gold as brass while the brass of the foreigner is gold to them."<sup>34</sup> "I am so thoroughly against every affectation of the western ideas...what a frippery civilization it is indeed that the foreigners have brought over here. What a materialistic illusion have they created!"<sup>35</sup>

Although the sophisticated high-tech medicine is prestigious and capable, it is not universal, or is rather only partially universal, being too expensive and beyond the reach of the poor. Not to accept it, or to refuse to plan one's services according to it may mean getting labelled 'technically inadequate,' or feeling medically inferior, or socially deviant. To follow the call of Swamiji and to go against such a powerful trend requires considerable courage. But we must be bold to mould our medical services to suit the dire needs of Indian villages and slums rather than imitate the technological sophistry of the USA.

"Appropriate" technology for the poor does not mean cheap or primitive technology, but scientifically sound procedures in materials and methods which are practical in the society and effective. The use of bifid inoculation needles for smallpox vaccination, which paved the way to its eradication, use of oral rehydration fluid for diarrhoea, monthly weight records of infants and children to monitor their growth—are all parts of appropriate technology and are equally scientific and far more pertinent than the use of fibre-optic endoscopes,

ultrasound machines, computer tomography or micro-surgery.

One of the reasons why Swamiji was against blind acceptance of Western norms and methods was their tendency to become exploitative. In the beginning Swamiji was charmed by the ability of Americans to quickly form organizations, but he soon realized that such organizations in the heat of competition could behave "like packs of wolves, without any beauty," and exploit the simple and the poor. It is unfortunate that this unhealthy western trend is gradually permeating such a noble profession as the medical. Taking the lead from Swamiji, every effort must be made to keep it free from such unethical trends.

What about specialization and "super-specialization" which has formed an integral part of modern medicine? Although it was not developed to such a degree during Swamiji's time, it seems that he would not have favoured it. He has hinted that a broad-based person, combining various skills in his single personality, was better suited for Indian conditions. He once told his disciples: "You must be prepared to go into deep meditation now and the next moment you must be ready to go and cultivate these fields. You must be prepared to explain the difficult intricacies of the s  stras now and the next moment to go and sell the produce of the field in the market. You must be prepared for all menial services, not only here, but elsewhere also."<sup>36</sup>

Translated into medical terms, we need doctors who could read an E.C.G., put a scalp vein drip, repair a hernia, set a fractured bone, pass an endo-tracheal tube, detect an amoeba under the microscope, and teach medical assistants competently,

33. *Complete Works*, Vol. V, page 372.

34. *Ibid.*, V, 373.

35. *Ibid.*, VI, 319.

36. *Ibid.*, III, 447.



rather than a doctor who specializes in diseases of one organ in one age group, or does only one operation, or who can pass an endoscope through only one orifice. It may be mentioned here that Mrs. Indira Gandhi exhorted Indian doctors not to become too specialized.<sup>37</sup>

From the foregoing it must not be concluded that Swamiji was against scientific methods or scientific advancement. He preferred allopathic medicine because it was backed by experimentation. He had himself undergone various types of treatments: allopathic, magnetic, ayurvedic, etc. He wanted that experimentations be done in other systems of medicine also.

#### *Education:*

Swamiji suggested education as the chief weapon for the regeneration of India. "Educate the masses by going from door to door, and make them realize their pitiable condition."<sup>38</sup> Along with material help, Swamiji also wanted preaching to be done because, "all the wealth of the world cannot help one little Indian village if the people are not taught to help themselves."<sup>39</sup> Education which would teach people to be self-reliant and frugal, that is what he wanted.<sup>40</sup> By education he did not mean only moral and spiritual education, but also education in the secular subjects, like geography,<sup>41</sup> chemistry, physics, and especially physiology.<sup>42</sup> It seems Swamiji had a special fascination for physiology and medical science.

Indian masses must therefore be made competent to take care of their own medical needs. Fundamentals of health and sanitation, first-aid, and preliminary treatment of many maladies can be easily taught to the people. Spread of diseases and the outbreak of epidemics can never be prevented unless the masses are informed about the way they occur and the means of preventing them.

Swamiji was a strong advocate of religious as well as secular education for women, "which would be of benefit not only to them, but to others as well..."<sup>43</sup> and with which they will solve their own problems.<sup>44</sup> The health of the baby largely depends upon the health of the mother and on how hygienically and healthily she takes care of the child.

#### *Three steps of help:*

It is said that if one is planning for one year, let him grow a crop; if for thirty years, plant trees; and if for a hundred years, then let it be man-making. Similarly, three levels can be recognized in medicare. Curative medicine is short term; preventive medicine and health education come under the second category, while the scheme of man-making alone can bring lasting results. It was this third step which was emphasized by Swami Vivekananda.

Swamiji also recognized three levels of service, viz. the physical and material, the intellectual, and the spiritual.<sup>45</sup> Medical treatment falls under the category of physical help. Health education is the intellectual help, which is important if the benefits of physical help are to be sustained.

<sup>37</sup>. King, "Medicine in an Unjust World" p. 39.

<sup>38</sup>. *The Complete Works*, V, 380.

<sup>39</sup>. *Ibid.*, VII, 507-8.

<sup>40</sup>. *Ibid.*, VII, 508.

<sup>41</sup>. *Ibid.*, V, 288.

<sup>42</sup>. *Ibid.*, VII, 507.

<sup>43</sup>. *Ibid.*, V, 343.

<sup>44</sup>. *Ibid.*, V, 342.

<sup>45</sup>. *Ibid.*, I, 1984, page 53.

The most important is spiritual help, which alone can permanently cure the disease of worldliness. Swamiji was a spiritual giant and a spiritual physician *par-excellence*. Indeed, he has advised his disciples to carry out all the three types of healings, depending upon the person or persons and conditions they were dealing with. He has thus, in a way, advocated a comprehensive holistic medicine. There is no aspect of health which has been left out by Swamiji.

### *Conclusion:*

Let us now summarize Swami Vivekananda's advice for health and his message for the medical world. He advised the sick to get over their suffering by asserting their divine nature. The doctors and health workers must serve the patients as God. Wholesome food, pure drinking water and clean habits are necessary to prevent common diseases. Girls in particular must get health education and must not be married too young. National Health must be planned in such a way that the masses, particularly those living in the villages, get basic health care. Let not the western methods of treatment be imitated blindly; they must be modified according to our

needs. Health education must be spread to the masses so that people can look after their own health-care needs. And finally, let character be formed, and doctors equipped with various skills go from village to village and serve the poor masses.

Seventy-eight years later in 1978 the Alma-Ata Conference suggested comprehensive primary health care as the most hopeful solution for "Health for all by the year 2000." "Primary health care includes at least education concerning the prevailing health problems and the methods of preventing and controlling them, the promotion of an adequate food supply and proper nutrition, together with a sufficient supply of safe water and basic sanitation. It also includes maternal and child health, family planning, and immunization against the major infectious diseases, as well as prevention and control of locally endemic diseases and injuries, and the provision of essential drugs."<sup>46</sup> Does not this declaration of Alma Ata, in part read like the message of Swami Vivekananda? However, it lacks the man-making message and the spiritual dimension.

<sup>46</sup>. King, "Medicine in an Unjust World", p. 3.9.

"If you want any good to come, just throw your ceremonials overboard and worship the Living God, the Man-God—every being that wears a human form—God in His universal as well as individual aspect."

—Swami Vivekananda



# The Trinity

ISH KUMAR

*The author of this short lucid essay is a retired professor of English. He is of Bokaro Steel City, Bihar.*

The Trinity, a dictionary defines as "three persons or modes of being of the Godhead as conceived in orthodox christian belief; Father, Son, and Spirit as constituting one God." In India, long before the birth of Christ, the Sages had another trinity—*Satyam, Sivam, Sundaram* (Truth, Goodness, Beauty). But as is usual, it was soon forgotten in mundane activities.

It took birth again in Greece, where the philosophers identified beauty and goodness and the linguists gave the same word kudos to both. Plato definitely declared that what was beautiful was always good and what was good was always beautiful. When people asked him if his own preceptor, Socrates, was good (though he was extremely ugly), he gave his famous doctrine of Ideas. Ideas are the truth, the reality; the particular things that we see and touch are mere shadows. Things die, ideas live; men are mortal, Man is immortal. The idea of beauty is more to be loved than a beautiful person. The beloved may die, but love does not die. Real beauty, said Plato, is not physical, but ideal like goodness, not visible, but invisible. Socrates was, in fact, the most beautiful person in the world, because he was "the wisest, the justest, the best of all men whom I have ever known."

There was another, more recent, illustration: Abraham Lincoln was not a good-looking person. A delegation from Philadelphia went to visit him and they introduced one of their members, saying that he had been good enough to paint and present to their league-room a most beautiful portrait

of his. Lincoln thought it over and turning to the painter said, "I presume, sir, that in painting the portrait you took your idea from my principles and not my person."<sup>1</sup> Purity of the mind and the heart shines through the body. Pure illumined souls radiate holy and luminous vibrations on all who come in contact with them.

When people did not believe Plato, he illustrated his points from geometry. Geometry, in fact, was the most advanced branch of knowledge at the time, so much so that he had got written at the door of his Academy, "Let no man ignorant of Geometry enter here!" Illustrating his doctrine of ideas, he said that a line was defined as having length but no breadth, and a point as having neither length nor breadth. However thin our pencil point, we cannot draw a line which has no breadth at all or make a point without length and breadth. The line and the point on which Geometry is based, are not what you actually make, but their ideas. He even declared that God was the idea of the highest Good, which of course included Beauty at the time. This philosophy of ideas prevailed throughout the Greek civilization. Beauty and goodness always lived together. Is it not surprising that there was one word for both!

Fichte, the famous German philosopher said, "To will goodness and imagine beauty is alone truly to live." When this

---

1. Quoted from: Swami Yatiswarananda, *Meditation and Spiritual Life* (Bangalore: Sri Ramakrishna Ashram, 1983) page 91.

idea came to France, people did not believe it and continued repeating (as a crude jest of course) that a woman who was beautiful was seldom faithful and the woman who was faithful was seldom beautiful.

In England, Shakespeare added truth to beauty and said that truth and beauty were like the fragrance and colour of a flower which could not be separated. After him, the most Shakespeare-like of English poets was Keats, who was more definite: "Beauty is truth, truth is beauty," he said, but did not stop there and added, "That is all ye know on earth and all ye need to know."<sup>2</sup> That was enough for physical, aesthetic and spiritual life. He was fully convinced of it and wrote in letters: "What the imagination seizes on as beauty must be truth." And, "I can't feel certain of any truth but from a clear concept of beauty."<sup>3</sup> Even Plato had said the same, "Beauty is the splendour of truth," though he did not develop it further. Now it has become an admitted fact in the spiritual world. Every spiritual leader now declares that truth, goodness and beauty, *satyam*, *śivam*, *sundaram*, are the three attributes of God. Some even say that this trinity itself is God. There is however no doubt that they are the highest virtues in spiritual life.

2. From a letter to Benjamin Bailey, November 22, 1817.

3. "Ode to a Grecian Urn".

There is another trinity too in Vedic philosophy: *Satcidānanda* — Existence, Knowledge, Bliss. You have first to have faith in the existence of God and then try to know Him through Yogic practices which will finally lead you to bliss. The non-dualists (*Advaitins*), however, go a step further and believe that the human being himself is *Satcidānanda*, though he has forgotten himself through delusion (*māyā*). Man can realize his real identity, first by having faith in himself and then by attaining knowledge by spiritual practices, which will ultimately lead to his salvation which, for them, means merging with Divinity.

Mahendranath Gupta, the recorder of *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, said, "He who is a poet looks for beauty and the philosopher for truth. The goal of both is the same. He who is Truth is also Beauty, and He who is Beauty is also Truth. A true poet and a true philosopher are one. ...Except for God, there is nothing eternally beautiful or ever new."<sup>4</sup>

There is another Holy Trinity associated with *Brahmā*, *Viṣṇu*, and *Śiva* in our scriptures—the gods of creation, protection and destruction. Even otherwise, the number three is considered auspicious.

4. *Prabuddha Bhārata*, 1990, page 116.

"When the world is the end and God the means to attain that end, that is material. When God is the end and the world is only the means to attain that end, spirituality has begun."

—Swami Vivekananda



## Review & Notices

TIRUMANTIRAM of Tirumular. Madras, 600-004; Sri Ramakrishna Math Publication. Pp. 465 plus xviii, Rs. 100/-.

Originally titled *Mantra Mala*, this hymnal is aptly famous as *Tirumantiram*, the Holy Word. Legend has it that a yogi from Mount Kailas, Sundarar by name, was on a visit to the South to meet his fellow disciple, Agastyar. One evening, on the outskirts of a village, he found a herd of cows lowing miserably by the dead body of their cowherd. Moved by intense compassion, he got into the body of the cowherd and led the cattle to their destination. On his return to the spot, however, he found his own body had disappeared by an act of grace of Siva. The yogi continued in the humble body and went on to develop into a celebrated saint whose sayings (3000 in number) provide the basic foundations for the Saiva-Siddhanta Doctrine. Obviously this symbolic story narrates the advent of a Master to guide and lead a forlorn humanity to the high refuge of God as Love, *anbe sivam*.

The magnificent volume before us is a product of loving labour by dedicated scholars and devotees. The full text is given in Tamil, followed by fluent renderings in English verse and notes by the late Dr. B. Natarajan. A running commentary on the contents, and supplementary notes by M. Sundararaj, provide helpful guidelines to enter into the spirit of the Utterances. The work is not just a devotional hymnal; it expounds the techniques of the several types of yoga that were current in those times; it gives in detail the philosophy and the practice of the Tantras—including some of their esoteric contents. The work is divided into nine Tantras, each leading to the next. The first Tantra dwells upon the transitoriness of the world and the liberating role of Grace. The second describes the action of Grace despite the evil doings of humans. There are four “deaths”, i.e. mergences: “The daily mergence in deep sleep/The next mergence that gives the Soul a longer rest/The Pure mergence that puts the Soul in primal quiescence/The Redemption mergence that steepes the Soul in Lord’s Grace.”

(verse 428) The human body is a temple: “Within you is Nadi/Firm as the rock of ages/Yet they know Him not, and seek Him not/Lacking in Grace, they sure are.” (verse 513)

The third Tantra describes in detail the Ashtanga Yoga, the eight siddhis, the Way to Kayasiddhi, the importance of Breath Rhythm in days of the week. The composition of key Mantras and their application, their corresponding Yantras, the astrological factors that are relevant in the process, are dwelt upon in the fourth Tantra.

The fifth Tantra is devoted fully to the exposition of the philosophy and ritual of the Saiva Siddhanta, the Sanmarga. The four stages of the final Beatitude are laid down: Saloka, Samipa, Sarupa and “Para, of Infinite Space (Sayujya) beyond which there is state none.” (verse 1507) In a beautiful passage the poet sings: “In the corner dark of the Chamber of Primal Stuff/There She was—the Virgin Lady of Grace/Intent on consorting with the Blind Old Man—the Soul immortal/She rent his veil of night/Showered full many a favour/Wooded with temptation diverse/ and lo! to Her bosom took him/in wedlock holy.” (verse 1514)

The sixth Tantra speaks of the importance of Tapas, concentration of energies: “Come apart from the clever argumentation of contending theology/And for a brief while, look inward.” (verse 1631) The qualifications of a “fit disciple” are enumerated.

The seventh Tantra speaks of the institution of Lingam; the significance of the control of Bindu and the way to retain it; the successive steps in Kundalini Yoga; the various Mudras; the various types of Sun: cosmic Sun, Siva Sun, microcosmic Sun, etc.

The eighth Tantra describes the different *avasthas*, states of consciousness, the implications of Pati-Pasu-Pasa for individual liberation into unity with Siva; Bhakti consummating in Jnana, etc. All the themes



pertain to the clarification of the situations in the practice of Yoga.

The ninth and last Tantra spells out the grades of liberation. Fate is not something imposed on us. "Nothing there/Except by your past deeds come/The heavens cannot decree otherwise/And so by Muladhara Way/I sought the Lord within the head/And what I did afore/Took me in the Fair Land of Bliss." (verse 2848) And finally, the Lord is all-pervasive: "He is sentience, He is Life/He is union, He is separation/He is continuity beyond thought/He stands in the fragrance of flower within." (verse 2857).

It is a profound experience to go through these three thousand utterances of a God-realised Man. Many a mental block breaks down; spiritual vistas open on all sides; ways to the supreme goal are not exclusive, they all unite in the melting ocean of Love. Many treat this work as a compendium of moral maxims. It is certainly not that, though as a preparatory discipline ethical norms are prescribed. Underneath the apparently simple imagery, there runs a rich vein of many-sided spiritual experience.

The Sri Ramakrishna Math is to be thanked for their enterprise in bringing this *de luxe* volume with a lavish layout. And what is more, the work is offered at practically cost price, thanks to the munificence of the nobly inspired philanthropist, Sri N. Mahalingam.

M. P. Mandit  
Pondicherry

---

**BUDDHIYOGA OF THE GITA AND OTHER ESSAYS**, by Shri Anirvan. Madras: first published by Biblia Impex Pvt. Ltd., 1983, Reprinted by Samata Books, 10 Kamaraj Bhavan, 573 Mount Rd. Madras-6; 1991; Rs. 60/-; Pp. 190.

The book under review is a collection of eight occasional English writings of one of the noted poet-philosophers of India. Most of the essays included in this collection were already published in the *Prabuddha*

*Bhārata* between 1948 and 1952. Of the remaining few, the one on Vedic Exegesis is reprinted from *The Cultural Heritage of India*, Vol. I (1948) and the other on New Hopes from *Srinwantu* (English edition). The last essay, namely, "Sri Aurobindo and the Mystery of Death" was published posthumously in *Asia* (Saigon) in Nov. 1978. About a dozen poems and translations have also been included in this edition. Sri Anirvan (1896-1978), the author of the essays, is greatly influenced by the writings and personalities of Swami Vivekananda and Ravindranath Tagore.

The longest essay of the collection, "Buddhi and Buddhiyoga" (77 pages) covers almost half of the total material of the collection. The concept of *Buddhiyoga* found prominently in the *Gītā*, has been explained by the author very ably. *Buddhi* is said to be a spiritual "awakening" or "illumination". The author notes that the *Gītā* does not precisely define *buddhi*. Instead, it uses it as a cosmic principle (VII. 4) and also as a psychological principle (XIII. 5) In both the cases the experiential knowledge of the world has been emphasised. In the Sāmkhya philosophy *buddhi* occupies a place between the ego and the nature. It becomes identified with *sattva* and functions as a secret guiding power of our life. How to gain a direct experience of *buddhi* is one of the major problems of human existence. The *Gītā* propounds the concept of *Buddhiyoga* (XVIII. 57) where one is always conscious of God, having in mind the ideal of universal good. Widening of our consciousness is the first step towards realisation of this goal. Self-assertion is another potent urge in course of the evolution. Self-expression and self-assertion find fulfilment in the will-to-sacrifice which is clearly expressed in the ideal of *lokasamgraha* or social service. (III. 20, 25)

The significance of *Buddhiyoga* is that it provides a calm and illuminating poise beyond the flights of reason, unperturbed by the dualities of sensation, emotion and will—in which the spiritual adventure has found its home by a harmonisation of intuitive reason. *Buddhiyoga* achieves its end in the ideal of a *sthita-prajña*. (II. 55-68).



Three essays of the collection (2, 3, & 4) are concerned with the Vedic hermeneutics. After Swami Dayananda and Sri Aurobindo, Sri Anirvan is one of the most vigorous contemporary scholars of Vedic studies. His three volumes of *Veda-Mīmāṃsā*, published by the Government Sanskrit College, Calcutta in 1961, 1965 and 1970 respectively, testify his scholarship. He is the Pippalāda of the Vedas, who can transmute the varieties of experiences into the stuff of the spirit. For him, the Vedas are not the object of archaeological curiosity. They are a living force in Indian spirituality manifesting a unity of purpose in her cultural homogeneity. To understand the truth of the living ideas found in the Vedas one must have the epic vision of a Vyāsa. Vedic symbolism, a combination of mysticism and occultism, is a master-key for unlocking the mysteries of the Vedic literature. Hasty generalisations of modern analytic scholars should be discouraged. To understand and to interpret the Vedas one must experience the phenomenon in its height, depth and breadth.

Two essays of the collection are concerned with spirituality. Spirituality, for Anirvan, is life's conscious endeavour to grow by harmonious assimilation. To change the world of senses into the world of ideas so that consciousness may be dynamically free in its self-enjoyment is a pivot on which turns the whole of man's spiritual endeavour.

The author treats *nivṛtti* (introflexion of consciousness) as a spiritual value of supreme importance. The concept of existence, which is another important spiritual value, is fully appreciated by introflexion. And in the end we reach Quiescence. Joy is another great spiritual value according to the author which is enjoyed when we reach Quiescence. The author mentions of a new spiritual value, namely, Cosmic will, discovered recently. There is, obviously, a purpose behind the cosmos. The nature cannot evolve blindly. Cosmic salvation is the end of the evolution, which is another name for Quiescence.

In his essay "New Hopes" written after Russell's *New Hopes for a Changing World* (1951), Anirvan treats Russell as the

representative of Rational Realism and Kapila as representing Spiritual Realism. He finds Rational Realism to be forcing the mankind to live under constant shadow of fear. Resultantly, the modern civilisation is starving in the midst of plenty. Hence the need for stepping in of the Spiritual Realism to fill up the gap. Then a Spiritual Positivism, as developed in Buddhism after Sāṃkhya, could be developed in modern situation as well to allow our new hopes for building a happy world having integral vision of Reality.

The last essay of the collection is concerned with Sri Aurobindo and the Mystery of Death. The author treats Sri Aurobindo's departure from this world as a masterpiece of supreme art. Death, for Anirvan, is natural and a form of Quiescence. The conquest of death is possible on the cosmic level alone. If treated as fulfilling God's plan, death is not fearful. It is the fulfilment of the Divine Plan. Sri Aurobindo's death has been treated by the author as a sacrifice in a noble cause of fulfilling such a plan, if any. And Sri Anirvan's own death is no less a sacrifice in the noble cause pursued by his elder brother, Sri Aurobindo.

The major thesis of the author is that the material and the spiritual are the two sides of the same coin, i.e., Reality, and they should not be viewed as opposites but complementaries. Unless this state of mind is reached, one cannot appreciate the mystery of the creation. In his own life the author tried to live up to this measure and one can easily say that he has achieved the end to a great perfection.

The work is highly commendable to the students and scholars of Indian spirituality, specially of the Vedic and the *Gītā* areas. The Ārya tradition finds one of the profoundest understandings in the writings of Anirvan.

Dr. S. P. Dubey  
Jabalpur

VEDANTA OR THE SCIENCE OF  
REALITY, by K. A. Krishnaswamy Iyer.



Bangalore: Adhyatma Prakasa Karyalaya, 1991. Pp. 478 ; Rs. 120/-.

The purpose of the book is to establish Vedanta as the only means of understanding and experiencing Reality, and thereby solving all the riddles of life. Krishnaswamy Iyer, as is observed by Swami Satchidananda Saraswati in his introduction, is not writing merely on the basis of an intellectual appreciation of Vedanta, but with the conviction that comes from practice and experiencing the fruits of the method. The Swami's introduction itself forms a valuable section of the book, bringing the ideas into focus and also discussing points of departure from the tradition of Shankara. While according due merit to the prominent world religions and philosophies, Krishnaswamy Iyer draws attention to their limitations. The most important lacuna is shown to be failure to explain the three states of human experience, waking, dream and sleep. Instead, most philosophies and religions take the mono-basic view, assuming the waking state to be the most important and striving to explain the other two states with reference to the waking itself. Iyer points out that the tri-basic view adopted by Vedanta provides the rationale for all three states and establishes that Truth transcends all three. Vedanta also gives us the reason for our basic instincts of immortality, love, truth, freedom and happiness.

Iyer infuses a sense of the urgency to attain Self-knowledge by repeatedly pointing to the wonder of that state on the one hand and the futility of a mechanical life of ignorance on the other. He explains that all effort, in any case, is only in the direction of regaining Self-awareness, only, one is not conscious of this. Even evil is explained in this manner: "Individuation begets evil, and evil is the cure for individuation at the same time." In the absence of evil there would have been no need to understand the mystery of life, posits Iyer, there is likely to have been only an orgy of pleasure. Further, the longing to unravel the meaning of death also makes Vedanta significant asserts Iyer, as it is "the only system that promises release from death here and now," and is not satisfied with promise of immortality after death. In this

manner, the importance of the Vedantic approach and its significance in every human life is highlighted.

However, there are certain aspects of Iyer's approach which may not be readily acceptable. One is his inclination to emphasise the supremacy of reason over faith, though not ridiculing or berating the latter. On the other hand, tradition seems to indicate that reason has a part to play only where faith is lacking. At any rate faith and reason have equal roles to play, going hand in hand. Without a basic faith there will be no preparedness even to follow reason further. Without reason, faith could be misplaced. Iyer does not point to the interdependency of the two as he is keen on establishing the scientific, rational basis of Vedanta.

Iyer's reference to "becoming" pure consciousness is problematic because "becoming" implies duality. Hence the example given by Iyer of a caterpillar turning into a butterfly is not strictly acceptable. So also the term "Vedic Monism" used by Iyer to define Advaita. The correct usage, that has also gained currency now, is "Non-duality", as Monism, or One, also implies the existence of a second in relation to "the One", "One" being a relative term.

It appears that much energy has been spent in the book proving the inadequacies of other philosophies and the superiority of Vedanta as the Science of Reality. But it is pointed out that the then prevalent atmosphere of prejudice against Oriental Philosophy did warrant a clear explanation in English of the premises of Vedanta and its merits over Western philosophic thought. And it is said that Krishnaswamy Iyer is one of the pioneers in tearing away the veil of prejudice. The sense in which one feels such justifications are excessive is that, as a consequence, much attention cannot be given to the practical aspect of Vedanta. Krishnaswamy Iyer has explained the intellectual bedrock of the system and also touched upon certain practices that are pursued in the system to arrive at an experience of the Truth. But the latter are only very briefly sketched. As a result, to one already firm in his intellectual conviction



about the validity of Vedanta, the book does not supply a detailed practical methodology, nor means to tackle the problem on the way. Yet, to those who are wavering, to those in doubt about the soundness of various philosophical and religious systems, the book is of great value. So long as there are sceptics, so long as people pride themselves on their rationality yet fail to put reason to its highest use, the book is relevant. That is why it has lived through successive editions right from 1930.

Dr. Sarada Natarajan  
Bangalore

SRI RAMAKRISHNA VANI O VEDANTA VACANA (a book in Bengali), by Swami Vedantananda. Published by Sri Umapada Mitra, Road No 8/A, Rajendra Nagar, Patna (Bihar), India, 800-016. Rs. 6/-.

The advent of Sri Ramakrishna was for establishing dharma in its pristine purity. The *Upanishads* may well be taken as the

repository of authentic religion. The preachings of Sri Ramakrishna as recorded in *Kathāmṛta* appear to be a lucid exposition of the Upanishadic teachings. Swami Vedantananda has presented Sri Ramakrishna's message with the parallel deliberations of the Upanishads in the book under review. He has taken the following twenty-one themes for his discussion—1) Paramahansa, (2) Jñāna, (3) Vijñāna, (4) Omkāra, (5) Saptabhūmi, (6) Avāṅmanasagocaram, (7) Sacchidānanda, (8) Nirguṇa Brahma, (9) Saṅga Brahma, (10) Māyā, (11) Īśvara, (12) Jīva, (13) Mana, (14) Dhyāna, (15) Abhyāsa Yoga, (16) Vāsānā, (17) Yoga, (18) Satya, (19) Karma, (20) Sannyāsa, and (21) Pāja-puṇya.

The book proves that Sri Ramakrishna came not to destroy but to fulfil. The author deserves congratulation for his scholarly endeavour.

Dr. Nirod Baran Chakraborty  
Calcutta

### Books received

*Spiritual Perfection*, 213 pages ; price not stated.

*Philosophy and Action of the R.S.S. for National Integration and Inter-religious Understanding*, 25 pages ; price not stated.

*Thoughts for Daily Meditation, Vol. IV*, 207 pages ; price not stated.

*Liberation (Mukti) in Indian Philosophy*, 155 pages ; price not stated.

Above four books are by Anthony Elenjittam. Publishers: Aquinas Publications & Basic Education Publishers, Bombay 400-050.

*Courage To Be Myself*, by Carlos G. Vales, pages 237 ; price Rs. 43/-.

*The Gitanjali Album, A Teenager's Testament*, pages 113 ; price Rs. 100.

*One Minute Nonsense*, by Anthony de Mello, pages 340 ; price Rs. 55/-.

The above three books are published by Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, Anand 388-001, Gujarat.

*Inspiring Thoughts*, by R.N. Lakhotia, pages 64, price Rs. 4/-.

*Spirituality & World Peace*, by R. N. Lakhotia, pages 54, price Rs. 4/-.

*Inspiring Anecdotes*, by R. N. Lakhotia, pages 80, price Rs. 5/-.

*Towards Better Living*, by R. N. Lakhotia, pages 300, price Rs. 991/-.

All the above four books are published by Lakhotia International School of Better Living, S-228 Greater Kailash-II, New Delhi, 110-048.