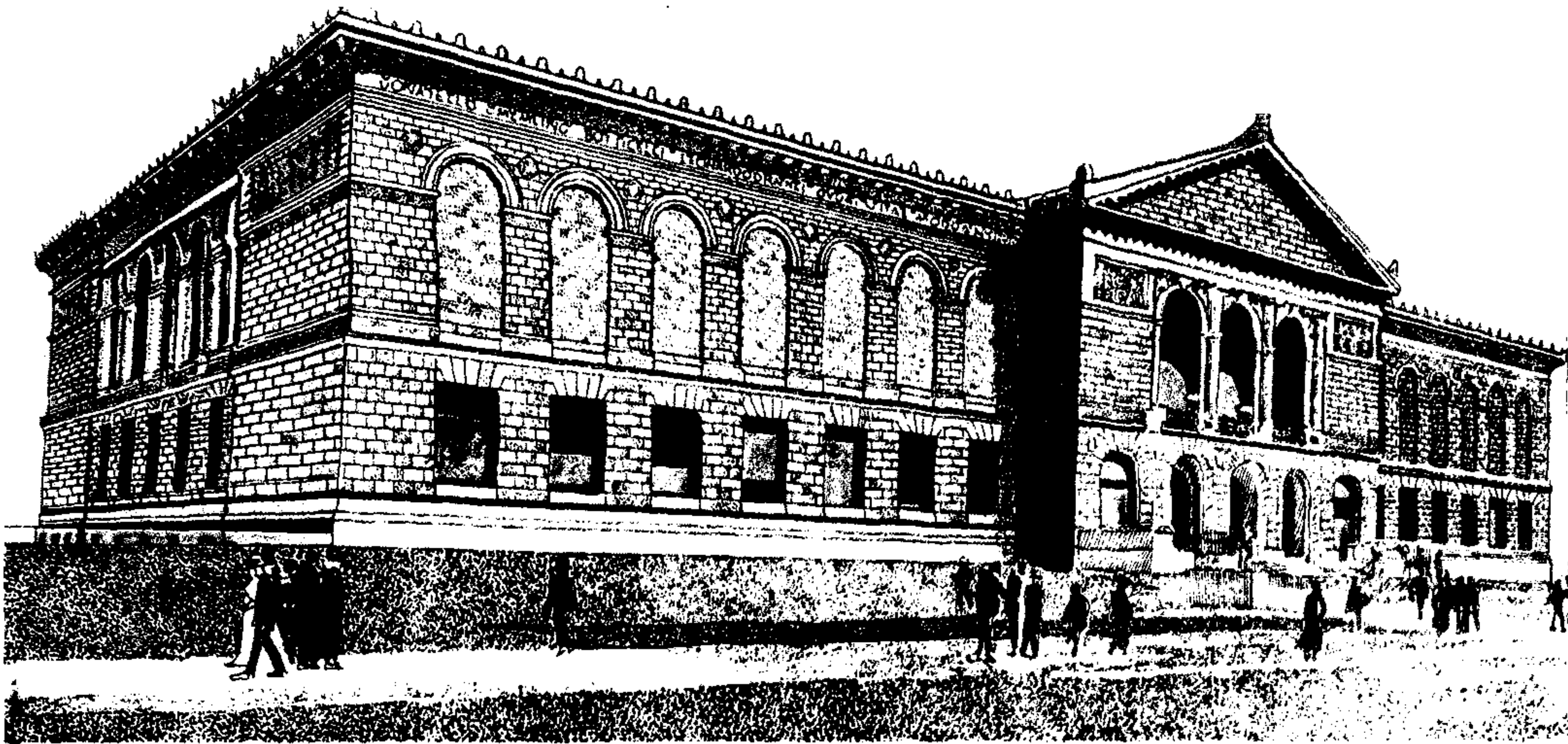




Prabuddha Bharata

or Awakened India



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

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



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Prabuddha Bharata

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JULY 1993

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

Prabuddha Bharata

VOL. 98

JULY 1993

No. 7

Divine Wisdom

तस्मात्त्वं सर्वभावेन भजस्व परमेष्ठिनम् ।
तद्गुणाश्रयया भक्त्या भजनीयपदाम्बुजम् ॥

Therefore, cultivate devotion, which is engendered by contemplating the attributes of the Lord, and practise complete resignation to Him.

वासुदेवे भगवति भक्तियोगः प्रयोजितः ।
जनयत्याशु वैराग्यं ज्ञानं परब्रह्मदर्शनम् ॥

Practice of devotion to Vasudeva generates the spirit of renunciation very soon and also knowledge and experience of Brahman.

यदास्य चित्तमर्थेषु समेष्ट्विन्द्रिय वृत्तिभिः ।
न विगृह्णति वैषम्यं प्रियमप्रियमित्युत ॥
स तदैवात्मनाऽऽत्मानं निःसङ्गं समदर्शनम् ।
हेयोपादेयरहितमारूढं पदमीक्षते ॥
ज्ञानमात्रं परं ब्रह्म परमात्मेश्वरः पुमान् ।
दृश्यादिभिः पृथग्भावैर्भगवानेक ईयते ॥

When a man ceases to distinguish objects, which are really neutral in their value, as desirable and undesirable, according to the estimate of his senses—then he experiences that supreme state of the Atman who is unattached, equal to all, and beyond acceptance and rejection. It is only the Bhagavan, the Pure Consciousness, who is variously called Parabrahman, Paramatma, Parameshwara, and Purusha, who has manifested Himself as the world of objects, the individual seers in it, and the instruments through which they see.

एतावानेव योगेन समग्रेणेह योगिनः ।
युज्यतेऽभिमतो ह्यर्थो यदसङ्गस्तु कृत्स्नशः ॥

The complete detachment and non-affectedness in the midst of this world-manifestation (which such a perception brings), is the one goal that all spiritual disciplines have in view.

from the Kapilopadeśa

Sri Ramanuja and His Prapatti Marga—II

The Śrī Vaiṣṇava Ācāryas wove into the fabric of their philosophy the various strands supplied by the devotional hymns and Sanskrit scriptures. Their object was to achieve a harmonious blending of *Jñāna*, *Bhakti* and *Karma* for the realization of God. This sentiment finds its expression in the invocatory verse of the *Śrī Bhāṣya* of Śrī Rāmānuja:

*Śrūti sirasi vidīpte brahmaṇi Śrīnivāse
bhavatu mama parasmin semuṣi bhakti-
rūpa.*¹

*“May my knowledge gathered by the
study of scriptures be transformed into
love of Śrīnivāsa.”*

Because of this sentiment the Ācāryas are known as *Ubhaya Vedāntins*—Vedāntins who gave importance to both *Jñāna* and *Bhakti*. But Sri Ramanuja laid special emphasis on *Bhakti-Yoga*. Sri Ramanuja's *Bhakti* is not just emotional display, but is rational and practical. He was the first Ācārya to place *Bhakti* on a philosophical foundation. His last message, the quintessence of his teachings, given to his followers at the time of his departure, gives the proof of his rationality and intense practicality. On the last night of his sojourn on the earth, he called his followers and said:

*“Never be slaves to your senses. Be
not satisfied with the acquisition of
worldly knowledge. Go on reading
repeatedly the books dealing with the*

*greatness of God. If perchance you are
favoured with scintillating wisdom by
Guru's grace, then the attraction of the
senses will cease for you. Bear in mind
that he who renders service to God's
devotees attains God speedily. Always
seek the company of those that pursue
the path of self-surrender to God. Do
not associate with people who are always
in quest of filthy lucre and sense enjoy-
ments, but mingle with the devotees of
God to the extent possible. Whoever
looks upon the sacred images of God as
mere stones, his own spiritual teacher as
an ordinary human being, eminent
devotees as high or low according to the
caste of their birth, the holy water that
has touched the feet of God as mere
water, the sacred mantras as collections
of sounds, let him be considered as one
fit to dwell in the infernal regions.*

*He who has truly surrendered himself
at the feet of God should not bestow
any thought on his future, which has
been entirely put at His disposal; for
the least anxiety felt in that connection
betrays the hypocrisy in his self-surrender.
...Let not the performance of your duties
be regarded as a means for achieving
worldly ends, but consider it as service
rendered to the Supreme Being.*

*In this life on earth, find out by
careful discrimination your friends,
enemies and the indifferent. Śrī
Vaiṣṇavas are your friends; those who
hate God are your enemies; the worldly
are the indifferent ones. Let your
heart rejoice at the sight of friends. At
the sight of your enemies let your heart*

1. श्रुतिशिरसि विदिप्ते ब्रह्मणि श्रीनिवासे ।
भवतु मम परस्मिन्सेमुषी भक्तिरूपा ॥

tremble as though you have faced a snake, a tiger, fire and so forth. At the sight of the indifferent, do not mind them, as you would not mind stocks and stones before you. Such should be the conduct of those who have taken refuge in God. Remembering that the All-merciful Being is ready to supply you all that you pray for, never beg of your enemies for the worldly benefits.”²

The *Viśiṣṭādvaita*, or Qualified Non-dualism of Sri Ramanuja, though not entirely a new system, was given a final shape and sound philosophical basis by him. It is the confluence of two currents of thought—personal theism and the doctrine of the Absolute. Sri Ramanuja has built the superstructure of his system taking materials from the *Upaniṣads*, the *Brahma Sūtras*, *Gītā*, *Bhāgavata*, the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* and other Tamiḷ sources. He recognizes three truths (*Tattva-traya*) as ultimate and real. They are nature (*Acit*), soul (*Cit*), and God (*Īśvara*). Nature and soul, though ultimate and eternal, absolutely depend on God. It is like the relationship of the physical body and self-conscious soul. God is the substance, soul and matter are its attributes. Viṣṇu is the soul of all matter and Soul of all individuals. Sri Ramanujā gives a simple example of a Bel-fruit to explain the cardinal principle underlying the *Viśiṣṭādvaita*. He says:

“According to this theory (Qualified Non-dualism), Brahman or the Absolute, is qualified by the universe and its living beings. These three—Brahman, the world, and living beings—together constitute One. Take the instance of a bel-fruit. A man wanted to know the

weight of the fruit. He separated the shell, the flesh, and the seeds. But can a man get the weight by weighing only the flesh? He must weigh flesh, shell, and seeds together. At first it appears that the real thing in the fruit is the flesh, and not its seeds or shell. Then by reasoning you find that the shell, seeds, and flesh all belong to the fruit; the shell and seeds belong to the same thing that the flesh belongs to.”³

This *Tattva-traya* is the gist of this school. Sri Ramanuja elaborates this system in the light of his direct personal experience, citing scriptural authority in support of his standpoint.

According to *Viśiṣṭādvaita*, this world is real, and the omniscient and omnipotent Lord Nārāyaṇa is the sole cause of its existence. He is immanent in the universe (*Acidantaryāmin*). The creation, the process of evolution and the dissolution of his universe are all controlled by Him. This universe is the body of God (*Sarvāṇi cetan-ācetanam tasya śarīram*). Though the world is the body of God, its impurities do not vitiate the ever pure nature of Narayana, as the defects or the deformities of the physical body do not affect the soul. Why should God create this world and what is the purpose behind it? In *Śrī Bhāṣya* he replies:

“The motive which prompts God—Whose all wishes are fulfilled and Who is perfect in Himself—to the creation of a world comprising all kinds of sentient and non-sentient beings, is nothing else but sport (Līlāiva kevala prayojanam).”

Līlā or play is the only motive that can be ascribed to His joyful creation. From

². Swami Ramakrishnananda, *The Life of Sri Ramanuja* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1959) page 256.

³. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1985) page 733.

the point of view of God it is a game, but from the standpoint of human beings it has a purpose. In the illuminating words of Sri Ramakrishna:

*"This world is the līlā of God. It is like a game. In this game there are joy and sorrow, virtue and vice, knowledge and ignorance, good and evil. The game cannot continue if sin and suffering are altogether eliminated from the creation. In the game of hide-and-seek one must touch the 'granny' in order to be free. But the 'granny' is never pleased if she is touched at the very outset. It is God's wish that play should continue for some time...It is God Himself who has become both vidyā and avidyā."*⁴

According to the Qualified Non-dualism, God is the righteous ruler of the world who dispenses justice according to the deserts of each individual soul. A person has freedom to choose his own line of action and to fulfil his desires. God will not prevent any individual from doing good or evil. But Īśvara recognizes him who performs good actions and obeys His commands, blesses him with piety, peace, bliss and *Mokṣa*. A man attains *Mukti* only through grace by absolute surrender to Nārāyaṇa. The world is the means for the final release of an individual soul.

God is the highest person (*Puruṣottama*), who is perfect and possesses infinite benign qualities qualified by nature and individual souls. As He is the highest Reality, everything in this universe and life becomes meaningful only through Him. Sri Ramanuja says; *Parā*, *Vyūha*, *Vibhava*, *Antaryāmin*, and *Ārcāvatāra* are the five kinds of forms or ways of manifestation of God. He

manifests in these forms to help His devotees. *Parā*, or the Supreme, is the transcendental form of God. God assumes different forms for the creation, sustenance and dissolution of this world; this manifestation is called *Vyūha*. The Lord, out of His infinite mercy, to help the suffering and struggling human beings to reach Him, comes down as an *Avatāra*; this is called *Vibhava*. In the *Antaryāmin* form Lord Narayana enters as the indwelling Spirit in all the souls. *Ārcāvatāra* is the form of *Vigraha*, or an image of God worshipped in temples and homes by the devotees. God manifests Himself in all these idols as if He were helpless and powerless, looking to His devotees for ministering to His needs in every possible way.

Jñāna, *Karma*, *Bhakti*, and *Prapatti* (self-surrender) are the four ways of spiritual discipline for the realization of God (*Bhagavat-prāpti*). These are not mutually exclusive, but the real *sādhana* (spiritual discipline) consists of *jñāna*, *karma* and *bhakti* and their harmonious integration. These three find their consummation in *Prapatti*, the devotee's absolute self-surrender to God. *Jñāna* means to realize that the *Ātman* is different from its several accompaniments like the physical body, the mind and the senses. *Jñāna* is also *dhyāna*, or meditation upon the perfect, true character of the *Ātman*. But Sri Ramanuja holds that this knowledge of one's *Ātman* is incomplete until one knows God. *Bhakti*, or intense love for God (*Bhaktirūpāpanna-jñāna*), alone leads to the realization of the Supreme. Intense devotion to the Lord develops into loving self-surrender. A devotee resigns himself to God and his entire responsibility is shuffled off upon his caring Guide. His personal struggle to save himself is transformed into the loving service of God and all beings. This highest ideal of service is known as *Kainkarya*. To Sri

4. *Ibid.*, page 436.

Ramanuja, *kainkarya* is the talisman to the Divine Bliss. He says *mokṣa* is nothing but service to the Lord and all that belong to Him (*nitya kainkarya prāptireva mokṣah*).

Karma, according to Sri Ramanuja, means the sum total of all duties—viz, *Nitya* (conditional), *Naimittika* (unconditional), *Kāmya* (the duties pertaining to one's caste, or occupation, and stage of life), and other specific duties such as prayer, meditation, devotional worship, pilgrimage and giving in charity. He rejects the idea of *Karma-sannyāsa*, renouncing of one's duties, and insists upon the performance of work throughout life, it being consecrated to God. All duties should be performed as acts of worship to God. Sri Ramanuja repeatedly lays stress on the importance and dignity of an active life in all the states of *bhakti* and *jñāna*.

In Viśiṣṭādvaita philosophy, *mokṣa* does not mean the annihilation of the self or its individuality. In the final Release, the *jīva* by the grace of God (*Nirhetuka kṛpā*), sheds off all impurities and imperfections and shines in its pristine purity. In the liberated state it attains to a nature like that of Lord Narayana. Sri Ramanuja rejects the conception that in liberation an individual totally merges in Brahman without retaining any trace of distinction. But he upholds the persistence of pure personality even in the state of freedom.⁵ A liberated person after obtaining the celestial body enjoys in the presence of Īśvara, the supreme beatitude (*Sānnidhya*). He attains the nature of the Lord (*Sārūpya*), and finally becomes one with Him (*Sāyujya*). Though he becomes one with the Supreme, yet he has his separate divine personality. Sri Ramanuja in his *Śrī Bhāṣya* says:

"Were it a settled matter that release consists in the annihilation of 'I', man

*would move away as soon as liberation is hinted at. He would ask as to what value such release would have for him when he himself had perished. No sensible person exerts himself under the influence of the idea that after he himself has dissolved there will remain some entity termed pure light."*⁶

Prapatti-mārga.

Bhakti and *Prapatti*, self-surrender, form the principal means for the attaining the supreme goal of life. *Bhakti* of Sri Ramanuja is not mere emotional outpourings, but is based on *jñāna*, true knowledge acquired from scriptures, from an enlightened teacher, and from mental purification achieved through *Karma-Yoga*. For common people this path is rather difficult and it demands too much. Therefore Sri Ramanuja suggests for these people simple and practical discipline, that of *Prapatti*. It involves three essentials: the surrender of oneself to God with unshakeable faith that one belongs to God (*Svarūpa samarpaṇa*), placing of the responsibility of one's spiritual progress on the Lord (*Bhāra-samarpaṇa*) and consecration of fruits of spiritual attainments to God (*Phala-samarpaṇa*). *Prapatti* does not demand any special qualification from an aspirant. He does not have to retire to a cave or forest nor leave the world to practise austerities. One may be a householder with much care and responsibilities yet he can practise *Prapatti* with all sincerity, without going anywhere. As Sri Ramakrishna tells: householders should renounce mentally, not outwardly. The path of surrender is accessible to persons of all castes whatever may be their station in life. Those who feel that they do not possess either know-

5. Rangacharya, Varadaraja Aiyangar, *Śrī Bhāṣya* (Madras: Brahmavadin Press, 1899, page 99.

6. *Ibid.*, page 98.

ledge or the competence to undertake the arduous spiritual *sādhana*, to them *Prapatti-mārga* offers a great opportunity. As the Lord in the *Gītā* promised: "Relinquishing all Dharmas, take refuge in Me alone. I will deliver you from all sins ; grieve not."⁷

At the outset *Prapatti-mārga* appears easy. Surrender is not easy however, the mighty ego is there to pose difficulties at every step. When we go a little deeper into it we experience the difficulty. The sense of the "I" or *Ahaṃ* always persists. Man has four strong characteristics: he thinks he is the doer (*kartr̥tva*), the enjoyer (*bhoktr̥tva*), that he is happy (*sukhitva*), or that he is miserable (*dukhitva*). As such he never thinks about the Indwelling Spirit. Because of this "I" sense, he passes through agonizing anxieties, tensions, worries and sufferings. It is hard to say: "It is not I, O Lord, but Thou who doest everything." Surrender means not "I", but "Thou". In every action, in every thought one has to remember it. When man does some good work he invariably boasts that it is he who has done it. But for all his misdeeds, failures, and misfortunes, he points his accusing finger to some other or to God. That is his hypocrisy. Good or bad, joy or sorrow, success or failure—in fact, everything belongs to God. It requires tremendous psychological transformation, courage and patience. One's whole thinking has to undergo a radical change. Total surrender is not possible in a day, but it is a life long spiritual *sādhana*. One has to forget oneself constantly and remember to surrender his will to God.

Taking credit for good deeds and blaming God for bad deeds is not devotion, but is a clever trick. Against such tendency Vivekananda cautions:

*"If one says the Lord is causing everything to be done, and wilfully persists in wrong-doing, it only brings ruin on him. That is the origin of self-deception. Don't you feel an elation after you have done a good deed ? ...But how absurd to take the credit of doing the good act on oneself and lay the blame for the evil act on the Lord! It is a most dangerous idea—the effect of ill-digested Gita and Vedanta....Rather say that He is causing the good work to be done while you are responsible for the evil action. That will bring on devotion and faith, and you will see His grace manifested at every step....This is the easiest way to the purification of mind."*⁸

According to Sri Ramanuja, good is that which leads to expansion of the soul and evil is that which makes the soul contract.

Self-surrender is not fatalism—throwing everything on the Supreme Power and keeping quiet. That is a convenient escape, that is indolence. On the contrary, *Śaraṇāgati* involves intense personal efforts. The ego, or the "me" and "mine" have deep roots in the mind. To lift one's consciousness deeply mired in these impurities and direct it towards the Divine is an uphill task. Moral and mental purification demand tremendous personal efforts. It is a relentless battle between the baser nature which keeps man shackled to his dwarf self and the higher nature which struggles to break the spell. The very urge to break the bondage and realize God is due to the Grace of the Lord. As the Indwelling Spirit, He draws the soul towards Himself. That is spiritual awakening. That light

7. *The Bhagavad Gītā*, Chapter 18, verse 66.

8. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989) Vol. 7, page 275.

dawns on one who feels discontent with his petty desires and wants. That discontent through personal efforts stoked into a fire of dispassion is not indolence.

Divine Grace is boundless and ever present, but it will not descend on the aspirant unless it is sought. So long the intense urge to receive it does not exist, it does not come. It is the prayer, it is the longing on the part of a person that makes it function and shower its benediction. To become fit oneself to receive Grace and sustain it one must be pure in mind and heart. God's Grace is not automatic. It comes to crown the persistent exertions and prayers of an aspirant. God does not respond unless He is sought whole-heartedly. Sri Ramakrishna said, "Of the several children busy with their toys, he who throws away the toys and cries for the mother, him the mother takes up in her arms and soothes."⁹ How long does one have to keep up spiritual discipline to receive Divine Grace? Sri Ramakrishna answers this question with a simple example: "One needs a fan only as long as there is no breeze. The fan may be laid aside if the southern breeze blows. Then what need is there of a fan?"¹⁰

The following verse by Sri Ramanuja put in a succinct form describes the essence of self-surrender:

*anukūlyasya saṁkalpāḥ prātikūlyā
varjanam rakṣisyatīti viśvāsaḥ gopṭṛva
varaṇam tathā ātmanikṣepa kārpaṇye
śadvidhā śaraṇāgatih.*¹¹

9. *The Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1975) page 185.

10. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, page 108.

11. अनुकूल्यस्य संकल्पः प्रातिकूल्य वर्जनम्
रक्षिष्यतीति विश्वासः गोप्तृत्व वरणम् तथा
आत्मनिक्षेप कार्पण्ये शड्विधा शरणागतिः ।

It contains six requisites:

(1) The resolve to follow the will of the Lord (*Anukūlyasya saṁkalpāḥ*). The whole creation and all living beings depend on the will of the Lord. Everything appears and disappears according to His wish. Man's free will is very limited. A cow tethered by a rope can move as far as the rope permits it. That is our free will. "Those who have realized God," remarked Sri Ramakrishna, "are aware that free will is a mere appearance. In reality man is the machine and God its Operator, man is the carriage God its Driver."¹² A devotee submits his limited free will to the will of the Almighty and remains undisturbed. To remain unagitated in all circumstances is to follow the will of the Lord.

(2) To desist from going against the will of the almighty (*Prātikūlyā varjanam*). When man realizes that everything happens in the world as God desires he refrains from asserting his puny will. A devotee is neither passive nor indolent. He is active and exerts himself, but he does not worry himself about the fruits of his actions. Any action done with a sense of ego or with the desire to win credit for it, or done with hesitation or fidgeting, is going against the will of the Lord. It is not "my will be done," but "Thy will be done." That is the right attitude,—self-effacement and not self-assertion.

(3) Unshakeable faith that God protects us (*Rakṣisyatīti viśvāsaḥ*). In spiritual life what matters is faith. Faith is life and doubt death. With childlike faith one achieves everything one wants. With doubt and hypocrisy no progress is possible. It is no use saying superficially that every-

12. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, pp. 379-80. ,

thing is "Thine", and clinging to things as "mine". Sri Ramanuja says that one should have supreme faith that God is our father and mother and, like loving parents, He never forsakes us.

(4) Supplication to God and to Him alone—to none else (*Gopīrtva varāṇam tathā*). Not depending on wealth or power, nor seeking the favour of powerful and rich persons, but depending solely on God is true surrender. Others may show their favour when their whims permit and withdraw it on flimsy grounds. God does not need flattery nor servitude. Entirely throwing our burden on the Supreme Power, we save ourselves from all our troubles and sorrows.

(5) Total dependence on the saving Grace of the Infinite Spirit (*Ātma nikṣepa*). Even while striving hard a devotee knows that his endeavours are inadequate—it is only the redeeming Grace that will grant him freedom. He feels utter helplessness and petitions again and again to God to help him. Sri Ramakrishna tells that for a devotee there is no path safer than that of giving "the power of attorney." This means resigning the self to the will of the Almighty, to have no consciousness that anything is mine—including one's body, mind and soul. Through a self-effaced person God works. Leaving everything in His hands with perfect non-resistance the devotee moves in the world without any choice of his own.

(6) To lay bare before the Lord all sins and misdeeds one has committed out of

ignorance and promising not to repeat them (*Kārpānya*). Under the thick veil of ignorance a person not knowing the consequences indulges in sinful acts. But with the thinning of ignorance and awakening of a little love of God, repentance and remorse set in. It is a sure sign of purification. What better way can be there other than beseeching the Eternal Light and Love to forgive one and clear away the mist of ignorance? With the *Antaryāmin* there can be no hide and seek. The tears shed in repentance wipe away all the sins. "Heinous sins," assures Sri Ramakrishna, "the sins of many births, and accumulated ignorance all disappear in the twinkling of an eye, through the grace of God. When light enters a room that has been kept dark a thousand years, does it remove the thousand years' darkness little by little, or instantaneously? Of course, at the mere touch of light all the darkness disappears."¹³

Sri Ramanuja has presented before the world the most rational and practical religion—free from all pedantic rigamarole. In the manner of the *Gītā*, he has achieved the harmonious integration of the conflicting doctrines and dogmatic views in his path of devotion based on *Jñāna* (*Bhakti-rūpāpanna jñāna*). More than this, he has brought the profound truths of Vedānta to the humblest of the cottages. It is due to him that the lowliest of the low finds it possible to have a taste of Divine Bliss and intimate communion with the Supreme.

13. *Ibid.*, page 616.

Further Wanderings in Argentina and Brazil

SWAMI BHAVYANANDA

The author, spiritual head of the Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre in the United Kingdom, gives graphic description of the Vedanta work being done in far off countries in this interesting travelogue.

Seventy-five winters is a long enough period to experience this world. Of course, people do live up to 100 or more. How many still stand on their feet and remain active? After seventy, every year is a bonus. I am living in this period of grace, still on my feet. It is an additional grace that I am able to travel to distant lands, and witness the glory of God. By faith in God, we perceive incredible manifestations of Him.

At the persistent request of Swami Pareshananda, another visit was planned, both to Argentina and Brazil, in July, 1992. A visit to one necessarily includes the other. In Brazil, we have a very devoted group, who have kept contact with me through the years. Hence, I had to give them a longer period of stay, to visit three centres. As soon as my visit became known, devotees from several other cities in Brazil started writing. Though my health is not too bad, I had to stick to my schedule of travel only. The stress of travel and public lecturing takes its toll.

My travel abroad has become easy, because the pressure of work at our English Centre is now shared by my two able assistants, Swami Dayatmananda and Swami Tripurananda, and other brahmacharis. The Swamis deliver regular Sunday lectures, and accept other engagements. They willingly support my engagements abroad.

I arrive first at Rio. The ten-hour overnight flight was very tiring indeed. But

surrounded by kind friends, their love and affection quickly overcame the tiredness. At Rio, the Ramakrishna Society is located in a comfortable flat. This has been donated by an old devotee, a student of Swami Vijayanandaji. It is a two-bedroomed flat, with a small shrine, screened off from the sitting room. Devotees have their weekly meetings of prayer and meditation there regularly. I had many happy memories of my previous visit here. A couple of devotees stayed in the house to look after me. Every evening, we had meditation and a parlour meeting in another devotee's house, which was larger and also had a nice shrine. Though the group is not very big, they keep the light of Sri Ramakrishna bright in the city. Every morning, we would meditate and sing bhajans. Generally, six to eight people attended. Then we used to have a long breakfast session, answering many questions.

Every morning, I went out for long walks. The weather was not bad. As I walked through the bazaars, I found the shops full of tropical vegetables, fruit and other agricultural produce. The shops were well stocked. Though we hear of the poverty of Brazil, it seems to be well hidden. I understand the country is hard hit by recession. Money seems to be scarce; the cost of living is going up; inflation is very high—22% per month. Even to live a simple life, one needs about eight hundred thousand cruzeiros a month. (£1 = 4,000 cs.) Unemployment is very high.

Because taxation is high, they make people redundant. Life in the city is harder than in the country. I understand violence and drugs are on the increase. It is possible to have domestic servants if one has the means. A servant costs about 200,000 cs. per month, with room and board. That is a poor pay indeed. As no employment is available for young ladies, they are forced to accept low-paid domestic jobs.

Our friend, Cordelia, has become more infirm since I saw her last. I suppose she has a reasonable pension and savings. It is she who has gifted the nice flat to the Ramakrishna Society, which is a couple of blocks away from her flat. The Society's flat here is luxurious compared to the flat we have acquired in Moscow.

I fell into a daily routine during the week I spent in Rio. We went for long walks after breakfast along with some devotees, discussing topics both ridiculous and sublime. Rio has a very famous beach, a grand one indeed. One can see thousands of people walking and exercising themselves in various ways—karate, jujitsu, hatha yoga, etc. One morning, we went to see the famous Rio Christ, on the top of a hill, 3,000 metres high. Rio is built on valleys and hills rising straight from the sea. We had nearly reached the spot where our Saviour stands with outstretched hands welcoming everyone, when we were stopped by the long arm of the government, demanding 30,000 CS. to go nearer the Lord. "Gold and silver have I none," neither the almighty dollar. So we had to accept the second best, and drive to the opposite hill where we could have a magnificent view of the Prince of Peace, and also the city spread out among the foothills. The Lord, ashamed of the behaviour of His gatekeepers, covered Himself in heavy mist and cloud, which He did not lift for the next twenty-four

hours. Every evening, we went for a walk in a small park nearby, and then assembled in Cordelia's flat for prayer, meditation and a parlour talk. Usually, I retired by 10.30 pm.

One morning, I was taken to visit the Ramakrishna Ashrama, which is functioning under the leadership of a local gentleman. It is located in the northern part of the city, about thirty minutes from the centre. The buildings are surrounded by high walls and the gates locked. They make sure whom they are letting in. When I revealed my identity, I was admitted and shown a large shrine. It was wonderful to see Sri Ramakrishna sitting in all His glory, surrounded by His band of disciples (Iswarakotis and nityasiddhas). I sat for a few minutes and communicated with Him. I was filled with joy to see Him sitting right in the heart of a deeply religious Catholic community. Glory unto Him! The hall looks more like a church hall than an Indian shrine.

When we came out, we met two residents; one is a doctor, the other a professor. They offered us prasad and talked to us. They told us that the leader, Swami Chaitanya, was out of station. Mr. Delfim (Swami Chaitanya) is a disciple of Swami Vijayananda. He is now the Guru in this place. I believe there are another four residents there. The two above-mentioned gentlemen contribute all their money to run this place. Voluntary contributions from the devotees are also accepted. They have fairly large grounds and buildings, even a swimming-pool. Daily puja is conducted and Saturday lectures and service. About a hundred people gather, I understand.

There is a story behind this ashrama. Swami Vijayananda came to Argentina in 1932, but came to Brazil only in 1957. He

was very dynamic and made several disciples in both places. Delfim is one of his dedicated students in Rio. With the help of the devotees the ashrama was built. Delfim was advised by his Guru to remain a brahmachari and stay in the ashram. The ashrama came into existence in 1972. When Swami Vijayananda died in 1973, his successor's leadership was not accepted by this ashrama, and they remained separate. But the devotees who accepted the new Swami formed a new Ramakrishna Society and started functioning from the flat given by Cordelia. The present Swami, Pareshananda, spends a period of three months annually in Brazil. I understand he has been welcomed into this ashrama, also. The Swami spends some time in Sao Paulo, Curitiba, Belo Horizonte and other places where there are private centres.

Here, I must mention something about the Earth Summit meeting held in June, 1992. This conference has drawn the attention of the nations of the world to the harm modern technological civilisation is causing for safe living on earth. Science and technology has geared itself to cater to the greed of humanity. It has made human life easy and comfortable. In this process, it has been destroying the environment in which life can survive. Natural resources are being depleted, and the atmosphere poisoned. Tropical forests, essential for survival of life, are fast disappearing. There seems to be no limit to human greed. The so-called prosperous, rich nations who have exploited the natural resources of the world for the last two hundred years, are the biggest culprits. They continue to waste the world's natural resources, even today. But they want the underdeveloped nations not to develop and remain poor, so that they can maintain or improve their own standards. The developed countries use 80% of the world's resources to keep a high

standard of living for 10% of the people. The last century saw the political colonisation of the world, which has now ended; but today it is economic colonisation. Rich countries hold the poorer nations to ransom. At the Rio Summit, the latter openly challenged the rich on this unjust inequality. Such a confrontation had never happened before.

In 1972, the United Nations constituted a special body to study the ecological crisis of the earth. They met at Stockholm. After serious study, this body produced recommendations which were not given any serious consideration by any responsible person. The governments of the nations of the world never thought seriously of the threat humanity faced. Some groups like the Green Party, the RSPCA and anti-vivisection groups were tolerated as eccentrics. Recent studies of atmospheric conditions, pollution of water resources, causes of acid rain, condition of the ozone layer, dwindling of renewable sources of energy (coal and oil), problems of nuclear waste, and many other such things, have highlighted the gravity of the human situation on earth. All this led to the calling of a summit meeting at Rio, in June, 1992, by the UNO to consider the threat to life on earth by human folly.

170 countries participated. Many organisations and non-political parties also had their meetings to express their views. Nearly 40,000 people assembled from all over the world. Arrangements had also been made for meetings of the religions of the world to express their concern on ecology. Separate tents had been erected for people of different religions to hold meetings, vigils and prayers. Hinduism was also represented. Many monks and leaders from India had come. The local Ramakrishna Society took the initiative to invite a nun of the Rama-

krishna Order from Los Angeles. Many other societies like Aurobindo, Ananda Marg, Hare Krishna movement, Sai Baba, Brahmakumaris, etc. were all represented.

The heads of governments, also, were there. A lot of noise was made for fourteen days about the impending crisis. The world has awakened to the critical situation of life on earth. Something has to be done to prevent further deterioration.

The under-developed nations are exploiting their natural resources, especially the virgin forests, oil and minerals, to improve their economic life. But the developed countries want to hold them back in the interests of life on earth. The rich have to lower their standards and help the under-developed to live in reasonable comfort. The problem is the rich are not prepared to lower their standards, but the poor are bent upon improving theirs. The crisis is very real indeed. What is needed is a sustainable development.

The developed nations must reduce their indulgences, become less and less consumer societies, cut down their waste of non-renewable sources of energy and minerals, bring down their wasteful standards of living and contribute generously to develop the under-developed nations. Then only there is some hope of stemming the tide. The less fortunate, also, have their role to play. They should not hurry the process of change and development. The question is, will humanity act in a sensible way? The time bomb is ticking fast, we have to hurry to defuse it. Otherwise, God alone can save us. Perhaps even He does not like to change human destiny.

What came out of this Rio Summit? 7,000 official delegates met for two weeks. There were 114 heads of governments.

Thousands assembled, representing various institutions, held vigils and prayed for the health of the planet. Thousands of journalists spread the scare and cried, wolf, wolf. When the heads of government finally produced a document of agreement, it was signed by all, except by the head of a big power. He said, "It was not in the national interest" of his state to sign it. The document and resolutions are non-binding and only pious platitudes.

One good thing that came out of it is the human race mixed freely in the gathering—black, brown, red, yellow and white; atheists and theists; people from every creed, colour and caste, enjoyed being together as human beings. People felt they were human beings first, and then everything else. After this experience, they will never be the same again.

15th July, I found myself in Buenos Aires, Argentina, three hours journey from Rio. There was a big welcoming crowd at the airport, including the Swami and a brahmachari. In the evening, about fifteen to twenty devotees gathered, to whom I spoke before prayer and meditation. As in Rio, I had a leisurely routine here, also. I went for a walk, both morning and evening, and met the devotees in the evening hours after prayer. It was winter in Buenos Aires then, pretty cold, heavy frost—I had to borrow a coat and scarf to go out. There was not much change in the work here. The Swami spends much of his time spreading the message of the Master in Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay. Even in this remote part of the world, new age Indian groups have come, but all of them have respect for the Swami of the Centre. Though our group is not very big in numbers, it is a respected and effective group. More and more local people are coming to attend the lectures. Our Ashrama

carries on its activities smoothly. There is a dedicated group of devotees who support the ashrama. The economy of the country is in the doldrums; it runs on a deficit budget only, but they are quite rich in their natural resources. It has a land mass one and a half times the size of India. The soil is fertile, rich in minerals and oil. The population is only thirty-three million.

On 27th evening, I found myself back in Brazil, in Sao Paulo. This ashrama, though private, has a very good group of devotees and friends. Quite a number had come to the airport, and many had assembled at the ashrama, also. This ashrama has accommodation for about fifteen guests, and a nice shrine-room, too. When Swamis visit the place it is full and very lively. Every evening after meditation we had a parlour meeting. About fifteen to twenty people came. They were all deeply interested and devoted. Apart from the appeal of Vedanta, the popular Hindu religion, also, has captured the imagination of some people. Many groups of Indian origin are quite active here. About thirty minutes away from the city, in a place known as Imbo, they have built up a beautiful retreat house. One day a week, people try to go there and spend a day. There, also, they have a beautiful shrine. I also spent a day there.

The next place was Curitiba, an hour's flight from Sao Paulo. I landed there on 3rd morning. As ever, an enthusiastic group of devotees welcomed me. We drove straight to the Ashrama outside Curitiba,

which has been built up by Jandir, a disciple of Swami Vijayananda, who has remained a brahmachari, though working and earning a livelihood. All his resources he is putting to build up this beautiful ashrama with ten acres of land. Even now, it is all his money that keeps this place going. There is a small incense factory from which he earns his money to keep the retreat house going. The arrangements in this place are excellent. Here also there is accommodation for about fifteen to twenty people to stay. It is interesting to see how small ashramas have come into existence and devotees have gathered in these remote places. They are centres of peace and light. The hard work of Swami Vijayananda has borne fruit. There are several places in Brazil attracting devotees and creating outposts to espouse Sri Ramakrishna's cause.

The divine realisations of Sri Ramakrishna at Dakshineswar have caused an explosion, scattering sparks all over the world. Spiritually oriented people have fanned these sparks into blazing fires, big and small, everywhere. It is wonderful indeed to see how the Master is working in these distant lands, Sao Paulo, Curitiba, Rio, Bele Horizonte and several other places. When Sri Ramakrishna first saw His photograph, He worshipped it and said, "This will be venerated all over the world". How true indeed it is! In my travels I have come across His picture in the least expected places.

(To be continued)

Swami Advaitananda

SWAMI CHETANANANDA

Continuing the serial, the writer, spiritual head of the Vedanta Society of St. Louis, narrates the noble life of another direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna.

The Sāṅkhya scripture says, "Tormented by three kinds of sufferings—physical and mental, terrestrial, and supernatural—people inquire about religion as an antidote to sufferings." Bliss is inherent in human beings; therefore they cannot bear pain, which is a foreign element. For example, a person cannot have rest unless a sand particle is removed from his eye. However, grief sometimes plays an important role in human life: it makes people understand the impermanency of the world. Nothing makes life so empty as the loss of a mother in one's infancy, the death of a father in childhood, or the loss of a spouse in old age.

Gopal Chandra Ghosh of Sinthi, Calcutta, lost his wife when he was fifty-five years of age. Brokenhearted and unable to bear his overwhelming grief, Gopal went to a friend, Dr. Mahendra Pal of Sinthi, for consolation. Mahendra was a devotee of Sri Ramakrishna, so he suggested that Gopal see the Master at Dakshineswar, thinking that the holy company might assuage his grief. Therefore, sometime in March or April of 1884, Mahendra accompanied Gopal on a visit there. Mahendra told the Master about his friend's condition. Generally the devotees felt an affinity with the Master at first sight, but he treated Gopal like a stranger. Gopal did not then see anything extraordinary about the Master nor did he feel attracted to him. After returning home, still deeply depressed,

Gopal decided not to visit Sri Ramakrishna again. Mahendra told Gopal: "Look, holy people sometimes do not like to be caught easily. They test our sincerity through indifference. Please visit the Master frequently."

The second time Gopal went to Dakshineswar, Sri Ramakrishna, like a good physician, gave him an infallible antidote for Gopal's grief. With talk of God, he lifted Gopal's mind and uprooted his worldly ties and attachments. Gopal learned from the Master that the world is unreal, like water in a mirage, and that dispassion is the only medicine which will counteract grief and delusion. The Master's talk about the impermanency of the world appealed to Gopal and made a lasting impression on his mind. He returned home and began to think seriously of renouncing the world to search for God. He was attracted to the Master, so he soon returned to Dakshineswar. Gopal later narrated what happened after his third visit: "The Master possessed me. I would think of him day and night. The pang of separation from the Master gave me chest pain. No matter how hard I tried, I couldn't forget his face."

Gopal Chandra Ghosh was born in 1828 at Rajpur (Jagaddal) in 24-Parganas, nearly 12 miles south of Calcutta. Very little is known about his family except that his

father's name was Govardhan Ghosh. Gopal moved to Sinthi, a northern suburb of Calcutta, in order to work for Beni Madhav Pal. Beni Madhav also lived in Sinthi and had a household goods shop at China Bazar, Calcutta. He was a Brahmo devotee and used to invite Sri Ramakrishna to his beautiful garden house during the spring and fall festivals of the Brahmo Samaj. According to M., the recorder of *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, Gopal first met the Master sometime in the latter part of the 1870s. Gopal probably saw Sri Ramakrishna in the crowd during the festival time, but this did not leave any deep impression on his mind. Moreover, Gopal was a self-effacing person and did not try to put himself in the limelight.

As he had no family ties after the death of his wife, Gopal moved from Sinthi to Dakshineswar to serve the Master. Sri Ramakrishna accepted Gopal as his disciple and would address him as "Old Gopal" or "Overseer." The other disciples called him "Gopalda" or "Gopal, the elder brother," since he was eight years older than Sri Ramakrishna. The Master introduced him to Holy Mother, who needed a person who could do shopping and other errands for her. He praised Gopal's managerial capacity in household affairs and his sweet behaviour with people. One way to judge a person's inside is to watch his external actions: if he is organized outside that indicates he is organized inside also. Gopal was neat and clean, and by temperament methodical and orderly.

A few days after becoming acquainted with the Master, Gopal felt intense renunciation and expressed his desire for a pilgrimage. On April 5, 1884, M. recorded the following conversation in the *Gospel*:

Master (to the elder Gopal): "Do you intend to go on a pilgrimage now?"

Gopal: "Yes, sir. I should like to wander about a little."

Master (to the elder Gopal and the other devotees): "As long as a man feels that God is 'there,' he is ignorant. But he attains knowledge when he feels that God is 'here.'"

"A man wanted a smoke. He went to a neighbour's house to light his charcoal. It was the dead of night and the household was asleep. After he had knocked a great deal, someone came down to open the door. At the sight of the man he asked, 'Hello! What's the matter?' The man replied: 'Can't you guess? You know how fond I am of smoking. I have come here to light my charcoal.' The neighbour said: 'Ha! Ha! You are a fine man indeed! You took the trouble to come and do all this knocking at the door! Why, you have a lighted lantern in your hand!' (All laugh.)"

"What a man seeks is very near him. Still he wanders about from place to place."

In spite of his age, Gopal tried to keep the same pace as the other young disciples. When Narendra (later, Swami Vivekananda) would sing to the accompaniment of the tanpura (a stringed instrument) in the Master's room, Gopal would play the tabla (drums). As a newcomer, he was absorbing Sri Ramakrishna's teachings and way of life. One day Dr. Mahendra Pal came to visit the Master and they left his room through the western door and stepped onto the garden path. They saw a woman sweeper coming towards them with a container of filth on her head, about five or six yards away. When the Master saw her, he prostrated before her, stretching fully on the ground, and said, "Mother, who can do this work except you?" In this way the Master taught his devotees not to look down upon anybody.

Sri Ramakrishna disliked carelessness in people. If a person is forgetful in minor things, he will be forgetful in vital aspects of his life. On May 25, 1884, Sri Ramakrishna went to the Panchavati, where arrangements had been made for kirtan (devotional singing). Gopal carried an umbrella for the Master. Suddenly there was a rainstorm. The Master returned to his room with the devotees, and the musician continued her songs there.

"Have you brought the umbrella?" the Master asked Gopal.

"No, sir," Gopal replied, "I forgot all about it while listening to the music." Gopal rushed to the Panchavati and brought back the umbrella.

The Master said: "I am generally unmindful about the world, but not to that extent. Rakhal also is very careless. Referring to the date of an invitation, he says 'the eleventh' instead of 'the thirteenth.' And Gopal—he belongs in a herd of cows!"¹

Sometime in 1885 Gopal felt the need for initiation from the Master, but because he was bashful he could not ask for it in front of others. Moreover, Sri Ramakrishna did not give any formal initiation to his disciples. He would transmit power to them in other ways—such as touching, or writing a mantra on the tongue, or whispering a mantra in the ear, or singing a song, or just through a glance. Latu described the following incident: "Once, before the noon meal, the Master was walking alone in the temple garden of Dakshineswar. Gopalda took the opportunity to express his desire for initiation to the Master. I saw

from a distance that Gopalda knelt down on the ground and, holding the feet of the Master, began to cry. The Master lifted him up from the ground holding his arms. Gopalda was still crying profusely. What the Master said to him, I did not hear. Since that time I have noticed Gopalda chanting God's name every evening in front of the Krishna temple."

In September of 1885, Sri Ramakrishna moved to Shyampukur, Calcutta for cancer treatment and Gopal went with him. He served the Master like a nurse, giving him medicine and proper diet. Usually Holy Mother prepared food for the Master and carried it to his room. Gopal acted as Holy Mother's messenger; he was free with her, and she did not cover her face with a veil in front of him. When the doctor prescribed any special diet for the Master, Gopal would note down the details and convey them to Holy Mother. When the food was ready, she would send Gopal or Latu to inform the Master. The devotees and disciples would immediately leave the room and Holy Mother would bring the food. Holy Mother would wait in his room until he had finished his meal, then she would take back the cups and plates.

On December 11, 1885, Sri Ramakrishna moved to the Cossipore garden house from Shyampukur. Gopal continued his usual duties. M. wrote in the *Gospel*: "On the morning of December 23, Sri Ramakrishna gave unrestrained expression to his love for the devotees. Touching Kalipada's chest, he said, 'May your inner spirit be awakened!' He stroked Kalipada's chin affectionately and said, 'Whoever has sincerely called on God or performed his daily religious devotions will certainly come here.' In the morning two ladies received his special blessings. His love this day really broke all bounds. He wanted to bless Gopal of

1. There is a pun on the word *gopal*, which also means "herd of cows."

Sinhi and said to a devotee, 'Bring Gopal here.' "

In Cossipore, Narendra began to practise intense spiritual disciplines. One night he said to Gopal and Sharat: "The Master's disease is extremely serious. May he not intend to lay down his body! Strive your best for spiritual enlightenment through service to him and prayer and meditation while there is yet time. Otherwise, after his passing away, there will be no end to your repentance." On January 4, 1886, Narendra said to the Master, "I intend to light a fire under the bel tree of Dakshineswar and meditate." The Master suggested that he practise meditation under the Panchavati as the authorities of the powder magazine would't allow fire so close. Gopal was in the Master's room; he got permission to accompany Narendra and they left for Dakshineswar at 9 p.m.

It was common among the especially dispassionate disciples of Sri Ramakrishna to practise japam and meditation almost the whole night under his guidance. The burning fire of renunciation which the Master instilled in their hearts destroyed all their worldly desires. They forgot their body consciousness, their careers, their family obligations: they loved their Master wholeheartedly and were carried away with divine intoxication by his grace. They served the Master day and night along with their practice of spiritual disciplines.

Gopal was responsible for giving medicine to the Master. One day the Master noticed that the time for taking medicine had passed, so he asked another disciple, "Where is that old man?" When the Master learned that Gopal was sleeping, he said joyfully: "Oh, for how long hours he kept awake at night! Let him sleep. Please don't call him. You had better give me the medicine today."

Gopal used to wash the Master's cancer wound daily with a special solution of margosa leaves boiled in water, which is considered to be antiseptic. One day when Gopal touched the wound, the Master cried out with pain. Gopal said sadly: "Sir, what can I do? If I wash, you will get pain, so let me not do it." "No, no, you go on washing. Look, I have no more pain," the Master replied as he withdrew his mind from that spot. Gopal was then able to wash the place carefully, and the Master continued to talk to him as if he were washing someone's else's wound. Another day at Cossipore Gopal inadvertently breathed on the Master's food plate. As a result, the Master could not offer the defiled food to the Divine Mother and he never ate any food without first offering it to Her. The Master had to be served again with fresh food. After that Gopal was extremely careful while nursing the Master.

Sri Ramakrishna made his life a model and asked his disciples to cast themselves into that mould. Gopal, though older than the other disciples, tried very hard to follow the ideal the Master set for them. Even his brother disciples praised his sincerity, love, and steadfast dedication to the Master. One day he heard the Master say, "Never tell a lie—even jokingly or casually." Gopal followed this teaching to the letter and encouraged others to do the same. Once a doctor prescribed the juice of three lemons for the Master's upset stomach, and Gopal was entrusted to collect them. Instead of only three he brought several additional lemons, but the Master accepted only three and asked him to return the extras. Gopal realized that the Master was an embodiment of truth and his speech and action were congruous.

Every year during *makar-sankrānti* (an auspicious day in the middle of January)

monks and pilgrims from all over India go to Gangasagar, the confluence of the Ganga and the Bay of Bengal, for a holy bath. Many pilgrims go by boat from the Jagannath ghat of Calcutta. Gopal had a little money and wanted to acquire virtue by offering clothes to holy people on that auspicious occasion; so he bought twelve pieces of cloth and twelve rosaries of rudrākṣa beads to distribute among the monks. He dyed the cloths in ochre colour himself. When the Master heard about it, he said to Gopal: "You will attain a thousand times more virtue if you present those ochre cloths and rosaries to my children than to give them to the monks of Jagannath ghat. So one day he gave the ochre cloths and rosaries to the Master, who touched them and sanctified them with a mantram, and then distributed them among eleven of his disciples. The disciples who received the ochre cloths were: Narendra, Rakhal, Niranjana, Baburam, Shashi, Sharat, Kali, Jogin, Latu, Tarak, and Gopal. The twelfth cloth and rosary, according to the Master's instruction, were set aside for Girish Ghosh, to whom it was given later. In this sense it may be said that the Ramakrishna Order was founded by Sri Ramakrishna himself, although it did not come into official existence until after his death.

One evening Naren and Gopal were meditating in a room. Suddenly Naren felt as if a light had begun to burn behind his head. The light grew more and more intense, until it seemed to burst. Naren went into nirvikalpa samadhi. When after a while he became partly aware of his surroundings, he felt that he had somehow lost his body and had nothing but a head. "Gopalda, Gopalda, where is my body?" he cried out. Surprised, Gopal came near him, and touching him said: "It is here, Naren. Can't you feel it?" Gopal, alarmed, ran to tell the Master what had happened.

Sri Ramakrishna did not seem at all surprised. "Let him stay like that for a while," he said calmly. "He's been bothering me long enough to put him into that state."

Sri Ramakrishna passed away on August 16, 1886 at 1:02 a.m. The disciples could not at first ascertain whether it was death or samadhi. Immediately Narendra sent Gopal and Latu to Dakshineswar to bring Ramlal, the Master's nephew, thinking that he could tell the Master's exact condition. When Ramlal came, he felt that the crown of the Master's head was warm. Several doctors were informed, and at last Dr. Mahendralal Sarkar declared that Sri Ramakrishna had passed away. After the cremation that afternoon, all the disciples left for home except Gopal, Latu and Tarak, for they had no place to go. Within a few weeks Baranagore Math was established with the help of Surendra Nath Mitra, a well-to-do devotee of the Master. Gopal joined the other disciples, took the final vows of sannyasa, and became Swami Advaitananda.

Austerity and Pilgrimage

Swami Advaitananda lived for a while at the Baranagore Math. He helped his brother disciples with household work, and played drums when Swami Vivekananda sang. Sometimes the young monks would tease him or make him the subject of practical jokes. Most of the disciples slept in one large room as they did not have many rooms. One night when Swami Advaitananda went to the bathroom, Akhandananda replaced his pillow with a brick. When Advaitananda returned, he discovered his brick-pillow. He smiled and said to Akhandananda: "Ganga [the premonastic name of Akhandananda], I know you have done this mischief. Brother, I shall use your precious gift tonight as my pillow."

Akhandananda was very touched. Immediately he threw away the brick and brought back the pillow. With an apology, Akhandananda said: "Brother, you are a real monk—free from anger and ego."

While living at the Baranagore Monastery, Advaitananda visited many holy places in India. Towards the end of 1887, he went to Varanasi. He stayed in a cottage of Banshi Datta's garden house and lived on alms. He devoted most of his time to spiritual disciplines and made good progress. Sometime in the middle of 1888 he went to Kedarnath and Badrinath, two holy centres in the remote Himalayas. There he met Akhandananda, whom he had not seen for a long time, and burst into tears of joy. After that he stayed for some time in Vrindaban and practised austerities. On March 25, 1890 he went to Gaya with Holy Mother where she performed rites for the departed ancestors of her family. Also in 1890, while travelling in Northern India Advaitananda met Vivekananda and six other brother disciples at Meerut. There they stayed together a few weeks and then began to travel again in different directions. Swami Advaitananda went to attend the Kumbha Festival at Hardwar with Akhandananda.

Finally, Advaitananda returned to the old cottage of Banshi Datta's garden house in Varanasi. He decided to spend the remaining part of his life in this abode of Lord Shiva. Swami Virajananda, a disciple of Swami Vivekananda, left this account of Advaitananda: "In September 1895 I stopped at Varanasi on my way to Vrindaban and stayed with Gopalda at Banshi Datta's house. His room was small, but neat and clean. He was very methodical and economical. Very early in the morning, even in the cold winter, he would bathe in the Ganga and return to his cottage chanting

the Sanskrit hymns on gods and goddesses. He practised japam and meditation until 9 a.m., and then he would go to beg alms [cooked food] from door to door. He was extremely punctual about his spiritual disciplines, eating, sleeping, walking, and other activities. Though his belongings were very few, everything was kept in its proper place. This indicated his great taste and orderliness. In the afternoon during our walk, he would show me the important places of Varanasi. Gopalda, Swami Satchidananda, and I circumambulated *Panchakoshi* [the holy city of Varanasi] in four days and covered forty-four miles. We walked until noon and then we cooked, ate and took rest. At night we slept under a tree by the side of the road."

Swami Advaitananda passed five years in Varanasi, practising austerities and forgetting the mundane world. He took care of whoever came to Varanasi and would show that person the temples of the city of light. In spite of his old age he was healthy. However, once while walking through the street barefoot, a thorn pricked his foot, giving him a lot of trouble. On August 13, 1896, Swami Shivananda wrote to Pramadadas Mitra of Varanasi: "Our old swami [Advaitananda], who is now at Varanasi, has written that a thorn has pricked his foot and is causing a lot of pain. He has had surgery twice and is still bedridden. Please inquire about him immediately and help him in any way possible. He is now staying at the residence of Sagar Chandra Sur, which is behind the Cooch Bihar Kali Temple. Awaiting your early reply." Advaitananda slowly recovered with the loving service of the devotees.

Swami Advaitananda travelled extensively all over India. In 1897 he visited Raipur, central India, with Nabai Chaitanya of Konnagar. Then he went to Kanyakumari, Rameswaram and other holy places of south

India. In 1899 he visited Kamakhya and Darjeeling ; and in 1900 he went to Dwaraka and other holy places of western India.

At Belur Math

In 1897 Swami Vivekananda returned from the West and established the Ramakrishna Mission. He wanted to do philanthropic work in a spirit of divine worship for the regeneration of the country and the spiritual uplift of mankind. For that reason he recalled those brother disciples who were practising austerities in various parts of India. Advaitananda responded to Swamiji's call: he left Varanasi and went to Alambazar, where the Baranagore Math had been moved in 1892. In the early part of 1898, a plot of land was purchased at Belur on the bank of the Ganga for the permanent home of the Order. The monastery was moved again, this time to the rented Nilambar Babu's garden house, Belur, and Advaitananda was entrusted to make the land ready for construction. The new land had previously been used as a dock for repairing boats and steamers, and the landscape was uneven.

Although he was the oldest of the group, in carrying out responsibilities he was second to none. Early in the morning after breakfast he would go to the new plot and engage the Santal tribal labourers who had been hired to level the ground. He scolded them if he found any dereliction of duty. Sometimes Swami Vivekananda would visit the grounds and talk to the poor labourers. He loved to hear the stories of their lives and hardships and sometimes arranged a feast for them. Once their leader said to Swamiji: "O dear Swami, don't come to us when we work—our work stops when we talk to you. Later the old father [Advaitananda] scolds us." Swamiji was touched by his words. Then he said, "No,

no, he will not say anything. Tell me something about your part of the country." Thus Swamiji came to know about their culture and way of life.

Pioneering work is always difficult. Advaitananda worked until noon ; then he took his bath in the Ganga and sitting under a tree ate lunch which had been sent from the monastery. Apart from levelling the ground and other construction work, the swami started a vegetable garden and a dairy farm. Swami Adbhutananda recalled the following about the early days: "Without Gopalda the monks of Belur Math would not have had vegetables along with their rice. He worked so hard to produce various kinds of vegetables in the monastery garden."

In spite of all their hardships, there was fun and laughter among the brother disciples. Swami Vijnanananda related the following incident: "Gopalda and Swami Nityananda were together at Belur Math along with several monks and brahmacharins. Swami Nityananda asked the young monks, 'Brothers, come with me and till this plot of land ; I shall grow eggplant and potatoes.' The young monks immediately started the project. Gopalda noticed it. He went to them and said: 'Oh, how hard you are working here! One should not load such a strenuous task on the young ones. You boys, come with me.' Gopalda took them to his plot and said to them with affection: 'Now, brothers, dig this plot for a flower bed. The soil of the other plot is harder than this plot.' Swamiji and other monks had a hearty laugh when they heard the story of Gopalda's loving sympathy for the young monks."

Once Advaitananda went to visit Holy Mother in Calcutta. Mother was happy to see the old swami, her devoted attendant.

While eating prasad, Advaitananda inquired about Mother's rheumatic pain. She replied: "That rheumatic pain is my constant companion. It will not leave me in this life. However, how are you?" "I also suffer from rheumatic pain," answered Advaitananda. "But I work hard. I don't get much help from the boys. I am growing various kinds of vegetables—okra, eggplant, plantain, and so on—in the monastery garden. As a result, nowadays we seldom buy vegetables. Sometimes I send some vegetables to you." Holy Mother: "My son, you are an old-timer; your life is different from the modern boys, who generally don't care for household matters. The monastery is like a family home, where you need food, clothing, and other necessities. Without these things how can you live there? So it is your duty to take care of the Master's children."

The young novitiates, who came from modern schools and colleges, could hardly rise to Swami Advaitananda's standard of perfection regarding work, and for that reason they had a very hard time with him. Many of them received mild scoldings from the old swami, but they took his criticisms more as a token of affection than as any indication of bitterness. One day he had a revelation which he described later: "The Master has shown me that it is he who is manifested through all. Then who is there to blame or whom to criticize?" After this experience Advaitananda ceased finding fault with anyone, however great might be the latter's errors. Swami Turiyananda once said: "We are much indebted to Gopalda, because we learned the secret of work from him. He was organized and concentrated in everything he did. And he was very methodical in his habits. Until his last day he regularly practised meditation."

Although Swami Vivekananda was thirty-five years younger than Swami Advaitananda, Advaitananda had tremendous love and respect for Swamiji because the Master had made him the leader of the disciples. On the other hand, Swamiji also had affectionate regard for Advaitananda. Once Swamiji composed a comical verse to tease Advaitananda, but that really indicated in what great esteem the old swami was held by all. Swamiji had an idea that the monks of the Ramakrishna Order should know the Sanskrit scriptures, so he asked Advaitananda to study *Laghu Kaumudi* (Sanskrit Grammar). The swami took this request as a command and obeyed it with love.

Swamiji used to tease this old waggish monk, "You are like an old bull; breaking off your horns, you have joined the young calves." One day Swamiji said: "Gopalda, you are getting old day by day. Be careful. Now, you start taking milk and fruits, which will give you new life and your bones will not be rusted. After all, you are the oldest among us; so tomorrow we shall wash you ceremoniously with milk." The next day Swamiji and other monks poured ten seers of milk on Advaitananda's head and then washed him with Ganga water. Afterwards a new cloth was offered to him and he was given various kinds of nutritious food. Joyfully, Swamiji said to him: "Brother, from today you are the abbot and the responsibility of the monastery is yours." It was all done in fun. When one of Swamiji's pet ducks suffered for a week and then died from shortness of breath, Advaitananda said to him, "Sir, it is no use living in this *kali yuga* [iron age] when ducks catch cold from rain and damp and frogs sneeze!"

In 1901 Swamiji made Swami Advaitananda one of the trustees of the Rama-

krishna Order. When Swami Vivekananda died on July 4, 1902, Advaitananda first checked his pulse and then said to Swami Nirbhayananda, "Alas, what are you looking at! Hasten to Dr. Mahendranath Mazumdar [of Baranagore] and bring him here as soon as you can."

After Vivekananda's passing away, the banner of Sri Ramakrishna was carried by his other disciples. They shaped their lives according to the spiritual ideas of the Master and also helped others to put these ideals into practice for their physical, mental and spiritual advancement. There is a saying, "An organization succeeds not because it is big or because it is long established, but because there are people in it who live it, sleep it, dream it, and build a future for it."

Swami Advaitananda made strenuous efforts to mould his life according to the example of the Master and would sometimes express disappointment that he fell so short of his ideal. But this feeling of inadequacy indicated his real spiritual height. He had keen powers of observation like Sri Ramakrishna. He forbade the monks to bang doors or tear a new cloth with a shrill noise, as the Master could not bear it. He kept himself busy in the service of the Master and did not care at all for lazy people. Because of his age and temperament he did not engage in public activities such as relief work and preaching; so his monastic life was uneventful. In spite of that, he definitely set an example to all and he was a source of inspiration to many.

Even in his old age he would get up early and sit for meditation and japam. He suffered from rheumatic pain, so according to the doctor's instructions, he would do regular exercises in his room. Then he would go to the shrine to bow

down to the Master. He prayed: "Master, I am doing exercise for this body. I have done enough, now release me." Afterwards, he would supervise the activities of the monastery. Generally Swami Premananda would do the ritualistic worship in the shrine. When he went to Calcutta for other work, Advaitananda would perform the ritual. In the afternoon he would go for a walk and advise the caretakers of the garden and dairy if they had any problems. At that time the young monks had to do everything in the monastery; Advaitananda helped them by sharing his experience with them.

He loved to do his own work. If anyone offered any personal service, he would decline. His attitude was that a monk should be self-reliant and depend only on God and none else. He was fond of music and would play the drums when the brothers sang devotional songs. He used to chant the Gita every day. Sometimes when he had a little leisure, he would copy the scriptures, as his handwriting was beautiful. For his daily chanting he copied five kinds of Gita.

Humour breaks the barrier of age and eradicates monotony, sadness and gloom from life. A sad countenance was an offense against the rules of the Franciscan Order: the brothers were expected to turn a smiling face to God and to man. They were to make the Lord glad by their gaiety and not weary him with whining and lament. The monks of Sri Ramakrishna also did not care for religion that is obsessed with fear or brings gloominess to life. They learned from the Master that humour has its place in religion, and the bliss that they experienced was expressed in their lives. Swami Advaitananda had a wonderful sense of humour and loved to tease the brothers. For example, he disliked tea while Swami

Subodhananda loved it ; so one day he said to Subodhananda, "Look, don't drink tea ; you will get blood dysentery." But Subodhananda asserted emphatically, "Gopalda, each drop of tea produces a drop of blood." "All right, brother, drink more," Advaitananda said jokingly. All laughed.

In late 1909, Swami Advaitananda, an all-renouncing sannyasin of the Master, made himself ready to depart from this world. He suffered from stomach trouble off and on, and towards the end he had a fever. Dr. Matilal Mukhopadhyay of Ghosuri, Howrah, was his physician and all the monks served their old brother with loving care. One day the swami stood in front of Sri Ramakrishna's picture and prayed, "Master, please release me from this pain." The Master soon answered the prayer of his old disciple. Swami Premananda later said: "Gopalda, before his death, saw the Master carrying a mace on his shoulder. He then asked, 'Master, why are you carrying the mace on your shoulder?' The Master replied: 'I am Gadadhar [literally, "Upholder of the Mace," an epithet of Lord Viṣṇu. Gadadhar is also Sri Ramakrishna's childhood name.] In this age I shall rebuild after destroying everything.'" Truly Sri Ramakrishna was born in this modern time to destroy doubt and delusion from the minds of the people.

Swami Advaitananda passed away at 4:15 p.m. on Tuesday, December 28, 1909. Until the end he was fully conscious and chanting the name of Sri Ramakrishna. As soon as Swami Premananda put a little *caraṇāmṛta* (sanctified water) in his mouth, he breathed his last. Swami Premananda wrote a vivid account of his death in a letter: "Gopalda has gone to the abode of the Master. He had a little fever and nobody realized that he would leave the body so soon. During his last moments his face looked so beautiful! It is a wonderful play of the Master's devotee! At that time Dr. Matilal Mukhopadhyay was present. Gopalda drank a little lemon juice and milk. He greeted Mati Babu [Dr. Mukhopadhyay]. Smiling, he left the body." He was then eighty-one. His body was cremated at Belur Math on the bank of the Ganga.

Swami Advaitananda started his spiritual journey late, but his sincerity and steadfast devotion to the Master brought fulfilment at the end of his life. Sri Ramakrishna made him a role model for elderly seekers of God. He will be remembered by the Ramakrishna Order for his cheerful manners and methodical ways, his self-reliant habits, his untiring zeal in every work he undertook and his implicit devotion to the Master and his cause.

"Almost all our suffering is caused by our not having the power of detachment. So along with the development of concentration we must develop the power of detachment."

—Swami Vivekananda

Gandhian Concept of Religion

DR. D. NIRMALA DEVI

To Gandhiji religion and life were non-separate. By his exemplary life he showed that Truth and Morality should guide all our activities. The writer of this thoughtful paper is a lecturer in the Department of Philosophy at Calicut University, Kerala.

The word religion is derived from the Latin terms *religio* and *onis*. *Re* means 'again', and *ligare* means 'to bind'. Thus the word religion etymologically means 'binding the man again to his source'. However, in common parlance the word is used in different meanings and accordingly, different definitions are usually given for the term by philosophers. A brief survey of the main definitions will point to the susceptibility of the word to different interpretations.

In McTaggart's view, religion is clearly a state of mind. "...It seems to me," says the author, "that it (religion) may best be described as an emotion resting on a conviction of harmony between ourselves and the universe at large." According to Mathew Arnold, "Religion is ethics heightened, enkindled, lit up, by feeling." The German philosopher Immanuel Kant defines God as a moral postulate. He interprets religion in moral terms, restricting its scope to reason alone. But religion, according to F. H. Bradley, "...is rather the attempt to express the complete reality of goodness through every aspect of our being. Hegel on the other hand, takes religion to be a substitute for philosophy, but among religions, Christianity is the absolute truth in pictorial form. For Feuerbach, the essence of religion is a projection of human qualities. Similarly, Comte and Feuerbach called for a new religion—a religion of humanity. There are also others, like Kierkegaard,

who spoke of a Universal religion distinguished from Christianity. But religion, according to Whitehead, "is what one does with his solitariness....Thus religion is solitariness, and if you are never solitary you are never religious. Collective enthusiasm, rituals, Bibles, codes of behaviour, are the trappings of religion, its passing forms. They may be useful or harmful... but the end of religion is beyond all these."¹ For Gandhiji religion is 'doing' while yet 'not doing'.

The above definitions of religion point to the complex nature of the phenomena of religion. None of these definitions is fully comprehensive or adequate.

There is an intimate relation between Religion and Philosophy. Ancient Indian philosophy is said to be based on what can be called a tragic sense of life. It believes that life is full of suffering and the aim of philosophy is to attain freedom from suffering. In other words, most of the Indian systems identify Philosophy with *mokṣa sāstra*, a means of getting rid of the mundane existence. In India, thus, philosophy is made to serve a practical, or more accurately, a religious purpose. Both philosophy and religion raise the life of individual and society to a higher level. Philosophy is theoretical while religion is

1. A. N. Whitehead, *Religion in the Making* (New York: Meridian Books, 1965) pp. 16-17.

practical. A deeper insight into the problems, attitudes, methods, activities and conclusions of Indian philosophy and religion shows that these are complementary to each other.

Like philosophy, the concept of religion is more difficult to explain, and any explanation of the term is sure to lead us back to the origin of our being. If the origin is regarded as matter, as the materialists say, we do not designate going back to matter by the term religion. But if the primary source of our being is likened to be spirit, we call going back to, or caring for our spiritual origin, 'religion'. To understand religion in this way is philosophical. In order to be religious the individual has to believe that the basis or origin of this world is spiritual and that his ultimate aim is to realize that principle in his own being. Religion includes a philosophical theory of reality and also a plan to guide man's life towards such realization.

Religion, as we generally understand it is a product of inheritance for most of humanity. Usually we inherit the property of our parents; likewise we also inherit their beliefs and customs and become a product of the particular faith or religion.

According to Gandhiji, religion is more or less a way of life. He had grown up in a family and tradition that had always respected orthodox Hindu ways of religion and worship. At a very early age he studied the *Gītā* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* and also the Vaiṣṇava and Jaina literatures. These studies sharpened his moral sense and kindled his religious insight. He also made a study of other great religious scriptures, like the Bible and the Quran. All these studies led him to believe that different religions are the different ways of apprehending Truth.

Thus, the most fundamental and crucial concept in Gandhian thought is *Satya*, or Truth, from which he derived his philosophy of *Ahimsā* or Non-violence. *Ahimsā* and *Satya* are very closely related and intertwined in their meaning and practice so that it is practically impossible to disentangle and separate them. They are like the two sides of the same coin. So Gandhiji said, "I have nothing new to teach the world. Truth and non-violence are as old as the hills. All I have done is to try experiments in both on scales as I could. In doing so I have sometimes erred by my errors. Life and its problems have thus become to me so many experiments, in the practice of truth and non-violence."²

He explains what he means by true religion: "It is not the Hindu religion which transcends Hinduism, which changes one's very nature, which binds one indissolubly to the truth within and which ever purifies. It is the permanent element in human nature which counts no cost too great in order to find full expression and which leaves the soul utterly restless until it has found itself...known its Maker and appreciated the true correspondence between the Maker and itself."³ In short, religion means "belief in the ordered moral government of the universe. It is identical with morality and truth in the substance of morality."⁴

Gandhiji was an activist and a practical philosopher. He was not given to abstract theories. He was a man of action, not an academic theorist. His life was open to

2. Nirmal Kumar Bose, *Selections From Gandhi* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publ. House) page 13.

3. *Ibid.*, page 254.

4. Gopinath Dhawan, *The Political Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi*, page 38.

public view, as on a stage. He often said, therefore, that his life was his message.

In Vivekananda's view, religion is a growth from within. It is inherent in the very constitution of man. "Religion is realization, not talk, nor doctrine, nor theories....It is being and becoming, not hearing or acknowledging; it is the whole soul becoming changed into what it believes."⁵

In historical perspective, ancient religion was a social phenomenon, a matter of ecclesia of the community. It was a prop for social stability and a shield against the innovator. Gods were the promoters of the social customs. In the orient, religion is more a matter of spiritual culture than a scholastic learning. "Ordinary religions," said Tagore, "are just aimless wanderings. The aim of true religion is the realisation of one's kinship with everything. Religion... is a sort of homesickness. Like a flock of homesick cranes flying night and day back to their mountain nests, the religious man is also on his sacred voyage to his eternal home."⁶

Religion according to Radhakrishnan is not a creed or a code, but an insight into reality. The radical difference between the West and the East is that the western mind is rationalistic and analytical, positivistic, and practical, while in the East the mind is more inclined to the inward life and intuitive experience.

Ever since man attained the power of reflection, he has been confronted with certain fundamental problems regarding

himself, his relationship with his fellow human beings, with nature and with finding out the ultimate purpose of his existence. We can find that in the midst of comfort and luxury man craves for something higher, something better. This craving can be called the religious craving. "This innate urge of man to unite himself...to his essential nature, referred to [in early Greek religion, forms], as it were, the *summum bonum* of his existence. To bear fruition [it] necessitates a certain WAY OF LIFE. So...religion and 'way of life' become interchangeable terms. In this sense religion, *per-se*, signifies a way of life, aiming at INTEGRATING man with himself, that is, SELF-REALISATION."⁷

To Gandhiji the religious ideal is the realization of Truth or God. God is the essential Unity of everything in this world. If this unity is to be realized one must go beyond oneself. This act of self-transcendence is nothing but perfecting oneself in morality. "True morality consists, not in following the beaten track, but in finding out the true path for ourselves and in fearlessly following it," held Gandhiji. Morality represents the core, the essence of religion. "True religion and true morality are inseparably bound up with each other. Religion is to morality what water is to the seed that is sown in the soil."

Our desires and motives may be divided into two classes—selfish and unselfish. The desire to improve ourselves for the sake of doing good to others can be characterized as moral and all selfish desires are immoral. In Gandhiji's view, moral actions would include only good actions. If doing good actions means doing good to others, it would

5. Swami Vivekananda, *The Complete Works* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989) Vol. 3, page 419.

6. Basant Kumar Lal, *Contemporary Indian Philosophy*, page 71.

7. Dr. S. O. Ramakrishnan, "Will Indian Culture Survive—An Exploration", A paper presented in the 65th Session of I.P.C., Madurai.

involve sacrificing one's personal motives for the good of others. This shows that self-transcendence, or love, constitutes the core or essence of morality. "As soon as we lose the moral basis we cease to be religious. There is no such thing as religion overriding morality. Man, for instance, cannot be untruthful and incontinent and claim to have God on his side."

Politics, as conceived by Gandhiji, is closely connected with ethics and religion:

"I claim that human mind or human society is not divided into watertight compartments called social, political and religious. All act and react upon one another."

Human life being an undivided whole, no line can ever be drawn between its different compartments, nor between ethics and politics. A trader who earns his wealth by deception only succeeds in deceiving himself when he thinks that his sins can be washed away by spending some amount of his ill-gotten gains on the so-called religious purposes.

"One's everyday life is never capable of being separated from one's spiritual being. Both act and react upon one another."

He cannot conceive of politics as divorced from religion. Indeed religion should pervade every one of our actions. Here, religion does not mean sectarianism. It means a belief in ordered moral government of the Universe. It is not less real because it is unseen. This religion transcends Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, etc. It does not supersede them. It harmonizes and gives them reality.

It was Gandhiji's firm religious faith and conviction that drew him into the field of politics. His political philosophy and political technique are only corollaries of his religious and moral principles. To him, "politics bereft of religion is a deathtrap because it kills the soul, for politics like other human activities must be governed either by religion or irreligion. [Without religion] life would be a mere maze of 'sound and fury signifying nothing'."

"Throughout the history of mankind, if any motive power has been more potent than another in the lives of all great men and women, it is that of faith in themselves."

—Swami Vivekananda

Pioneering Vedanta Work in St. Louis by Swami Satprakashananda

GARGI

In any field the pioneer's lot is a hard one. Specially in the sphere of spirituality, and that too in a foreign land, it is formidable. But how unselfish love and goodwill conquer people is touchingly described in this article. Gargi (Marie Louise Burke) of the U.S.A. needs no introduction, she is the now famous authoress of the series of volumes on "Vivekananda in the West, New Discoveries."

(From a Student's Journal, September 1951)

It has been about twelve years since Swami Satprakashananda spent any amount of time in San Francisco. During these years he founded the Vedanta Society of St. Louis and endured the hardships of a pioneer. We wanted to hear the story—the story of how a swami founds a Vedanta centre in America, for it seems such a miraculous thing to do in the midst of an alien and materialistic country. So on the evening of September 4 [1951], when we—nine or ten students of the Vedanta Society of Northern California—had gathered to meet the Swami informally in the small library of the Old Temple, we asked him to tell us of his early years in St. Louis. With the utmost cheerfulness and as though he were speaking about someone else, he told us something of the way it had been.

"As a rule," he began, "Swamis of the Ramakrishna Order do not pick an American city more or less at random and go there to establish a Vedanta society. Usually, one of two factors enters into the decision. It is either a city where a Vedanta society has already been established and the Swami-in-Charge has passed away or, for one reason or another, is unable to continue work, or it is a city in which a sincere

group of people have formed a small centre on their own and then have invited a swami to lead it, guaranteeing him some support."

It was because of poor health that Swami Satprakashananda came to America in the first place and, reversing the usual procedure, sought a city where he might establish a centre. In 1939, when he was visiting Swami Ashokananda in San Francisco and wondering where to go next, the city chosen as the most likely place was St. Louis, Missouri. The choice hung upon a slender thread: the unremarkable fact that a member of the Vedanta Society of Northern California had a sister who lived in St. Louis.

"So I went there," the Swami said, "unasked and unknown. I just went because of this sister."

The sister, willing to do all she could to help, though she herself was not a Vedantin, met him at the train and took him to a hotel. Her next step was the logical one of introducing him to several of her friends who might conceivably be interested in his teachings. Among those people were a young couple and the mother of the wife, the last of whom "caught on," as the Swami said.

"The couple themselves did not want to become Vedantins, but they offered to do all they could to help me. They were very willing. But the mother-in-law was interested at once in Vedanta. She is still a devoted student."

The first suggestion that this Mother-in-Law made to the Swami was that he move to a hotel more centrally located and that he then proceed to give lectures. He told how he moved to a large midtown hotel, where, for a rental fee, he could lecture in the banquet hall. The Young Couple enthusiastically set to work: they had leaflets printed, addressed envelopes to all their friends, and put up a sign in the lobby of the hotel, which announced the Swami's first lecture. He himself went to the editors of the two large newspapers in St. Louis to insert notices—and it was here that he ran into opposition.

"The first editor," he told us, "just looked at me without moving any part of his face. And then he said, 'We don't want that kind of stuff in St. Louis. We are on to rackets like that.'"

A chorus of indignation arose in the library. "What did you say?" we asked. "What did you do?"

The Swami laughed. "What should I say? He did not want 'that kind of stuff.' Why should I argue with him? I went to the editor of the other newspaper, but it was the same story. He did not want 'that stuff' either. One cannot blame them; there had been many fake swamis in St. Louis who had cheated the people. They were suspicious."

Undaunted, he gave his first lecture. Thanks to the leaflets and the sign in the hotel lobby, about forty or fifty people

came. "Some were very attentive," he said, "and came back the next time. But in Vedanta people come and go. It is only a few who are really serious."

During this period of the hotel lectures, Swami Satprakashananda won a token victory over the animosity St. Louis bore towards the word "swami." The Mother-in-Law gave him the name and address of a man who, she had heard, was interested in Indian philosophy. The Swami went to the man's house and found him digging in his front garden. As the Swami introduced himself, the man, heavy-set, middle-aged, and wearing a somewhat truculent face, leaned on his shovel and eyed the slender, boyish-looking Hindu over the picket fence.

"What kind of a swami are you?" he asked. "A real swami or a fake swami?"

"I am a real swami," Swami Satprakashananda replied.

The man was not to be taken in so easily. "Have you ever heard of Sri Ramakrishna?" he asked.

"I am a monk of the Order of Sri Ramakrishna," the Swami answered.

The man narrowed his eyes and looked at him as though to pierce through to his soul and discover if it be black or white. "We have had many fake swamis here," he said. "We don't want any more of them. They are after one thing—money."

"I am a real swami," Swami Satprakashananda repeated evenly. "I am not after money."

"If you are a real swami and a monk of the Ramakrishna Order, as you say, can you then tell me the esoteric meaning of

this passage?" He quoted a verse from the *Kāṭha Upaniṣad*, which the Swami readily and lucidly interpreted. To some extent the dour expression left the man's face, and without another word he stood his shovel against the fence, opened the gate, and led the way to the house.

But the interrogation was not over. The man asked the Swami to be seated, turned his back upon him, and searched for several minutes through his bookshelves. Finding the book he wanted, he thumbed through it and then read aloud another verse from another Upaniṣad.

"And have you realized the esoteric meaning of *that*?" he challenged him, as though catching him at his own game.

"Yes," Swami Satprakashananda replied. "I have."

"Then," said the man tauntingly, "you are one in a million."

Swami Satprakashananda stood up, bowed, and replied, "I am."

It was enough. "Somehow," Swami Satprakashananda said to us, "he believed me. He did not ask any more questions."

The Swami and this doubting Missiourian became good and lasting friends; but happy with his books and his esoteric philosophy, the man was not one to embrace Vedanta, nor was the Swami one to urge him.

"I never urge anyone," he told us. "I offer Vedanta. It is up to the person to take it. One can never force people; one should not try. A person who is not yet through with the world should satisfy his desires and get them out of his system. It is no use telling people to renounce before

they are ready. If there can be small but loyal groups, that is enough. From there spirituality will spread and affect many."

In his endeavour to attract those few ready and potentially loyal people, the Swami continued to give lectures in his hotel and continued to follow each lead that was given to him—leads that more often than not turned out to be blind-alleys.

One night after a lecture while he and the Young Couple, who had stuck by him, were counting the small collection and wondering if there would be enough money to pay the rent of the hall, the phone rang. It was a young man who had been introduced to the Swami by the sister of the member of the Vedanta Society in San Francisco and who had taken a great fancy to him. Slightly intoxicated, the young man had phoned to urge the Swami to come to a party which was at the moment in full swing. Tired, ready for bed, and seeing no point in attending a party, the Swami declined. But as he did so, he mentioned the young man's name, at which the Young Couple began to gesticulate vigorously. "Go!" they formed with their lips, nodding their heads up and down. The name was an influential one, and a party of influential society people might lead to great things. The Swami sighed, accepted the invitation, and changed from his gerua robe to his Western street clothes.

On his arrival, these people did not eye him suspiciously as a fake. "They had become bored," the Swami told us sympathetically. "They wanted to see a swami who was colorful and mysterious and who could tell their fortunes. It was a very beautiful house with many crystal chandeliers, and the women were all dressed like

fairy princesses. There was music, and some of the guests were dancing."

An expectant group formed around him, disappointed, perhaps, that he was not wearing a robe and turban and carrying a crystal ball, but nonetheless enchanted. Never at a loss, never feeling out of place, the Swami talked to them, telling about his work and about Vedanta, and soon his listeners, forgetting turbans and fortune-telling, caught something of his own spirit. "Of course, after a while they went back to their dancing," he told us. "But they were all very nice. Two or three were really interested."

Among those two or three was a young woman who later became an ardent devotee of Sri Ramakrishna. There was also an Episcopalian minister who offered to drive the Swami back to his hotel. As they drove along, they talked together of religion, the Swami telling of his proposed work in America. Suddenly the minister pulled over to the curb and in a voice choked with emotion said: "I believe that you are a saint. You are a real saint! I want to help you." There was a silence. "But you see," the minister continued with a sigh, "I cannot help you, because I am an Episcopalian."

"That is interesting," the Swami replied; "I did not know that an Episcopalian could not help a saint."

There was again a silence, at the end of which the minister got out his wallet and handed the Swami ten dollars—not a small sum in those days.

Slowly and in ways like this, people and money came: here a person became interested, there a few dollars appeared. At least one of his brother monks in America

sent money regularly—but his brothers, too, were struggling to get along. By living with extreme thrift, he was able to eat and to continue his lectures. But those were hard days. He told of that early period so cheerfully that one might imagine it had all been a great lark. Only once did he give some indication of how difficult those times had really been, and this not to relate his own moments of discouragement, but to point out the greatness of his Master, Sri Ramakrishna.

"Going from the lecture hall to my small bedroom and out again to meet someone and in again, I would feel that none of it was to any purpose. There was no one who really cared about all these comings and goings. There was a great loneliness in it. For whom was I doing it and why?" Gripped by loneliness and the sense of futility, he turned to the one sure thing in his life—Sri Ramakrishna. "It dawned upon me," he continued, "that Sri Ramakrishna was, of course, everywhere. He was with me in the lecture hall, with me in my room, with me always; and it was he for whom I was doing all this—for none else." To the Swami this came as a vivid fact; it was not a matter of blind faith. And from that time on, as though he had stepped aside allowing Sri Ramakrishna to work through him, his heart lifted and the work began to take shape and to flow effortlessly and meaningfully.

Gradually, a small and deeply sincere group of students gathered around him, forming the nucleus of the St. Louis Vedanta Society. Regular donations began to come in, and after a year or so of hotel living and lecturing, the Swami was able to move to an apartment, where, by arrangement with the manager, he could hold lectures and give classes—on condition (in conformity with the residential zoning laws of St.

Louis) that there would be no advertising in the newspapers.

That is the present (1951) situation at the Vedanta Society of St. Louis. Although the restriction on publicity probably impedes the Society's growth, this bothers the Swami not in the least. "Those who really want Vedanta will somehow find it," he said.

Many have found it. The Swami has students not only in St. Louis, but in other midwestern cities—men and women who practise according to his instructions and come when they can to his lectures, sometimes traveling for many hours to reach his small apartment. "He does not butter anyone up," one of his students who was visiting San Francisco told me. "If he sees what is holding a person back—and he always does—he will come right out with it. He doesn't mince words. He is candid and uncompromising from the word go." But the penetrating candor of a "real swami" is born of love; it never wounds, it always heals. And the Swami is loved for his candor in return. There is always an air of festivity in his small apartment. Sometimes he will prepare special meals for groups of students, even when—as was often the case at first—his larder is nearly empty.

Ten years after the Swami had given his first lecture in a St. Louis hotel, "unknown and unasked," enough people had become sincere students of Vedanta to make it desirable and possible for the Society to think about purchasing a house of its own.

Indeed, shortly before the Swami visited San Francisco negotiations for a likely site had just fallen through, but the Society will try again, and, if necessary, yet again. Telling us of this, the Swami laughed. "Why worry? If God wants us to have a place, nothing can prevent it. If He doesn't want; nothing will avail. It is all His will."

"Do you work because you love mankind?" Someone asked him. The question made him shudder slightly.

"No," he said. "I do not love mankind."

This answer caused a moment of stunned silence in the library. Here was a man with love bright in his face saying that he did not love mankind!

"When one has made oneself an instrument of God's love," he went on, "one does not go about loving mankind as a business. Neither is love an expression of sentiment. It is spontaneous, unselfconscious. A mother does not consider service to her child to be an act of charity; she is simply doing what is her greatest pleasure to do—what is most natural for her to do. The expression of real love is never deliberated; it is always spontaneous. Never think you are helping others; who are you to help anyone? Who needs your help, if all are God's? Do not degrade another by thinking you can help him, setting yourself off as better than he. When you have understood real love, you will never fail to do the right thing for people; you will never fail to give them real help."

"Behind you is the ocean of infinite power and blessedness."

—Swami Vivekananda

Nature and Destiny of Man in the Philosophy of Dr. Radhakrishnan

DR. VILASINI

Man is essentially spiritual, and to realize his innate divinity is the goal of human life. Such was the deep conviction of Dr. Radhakrishnan. The writer in this lucid and succinct paper throws light on the deeper thoughts of the great savant. She is a post-doctoral research fellow at Calicut University, Kerala.

Radhakrishnan holds that man is a part of the universe and plays a dominant role in the world process. He is not a mere observer. Among all creatures man has supremacy in spite of the fact that he carries the marks of his natural origin in his psychophysical organism. Radhakrishnan could recognize the rationality of the scientific view of man and its impact upon the modern mind. This enabled him to assimilate the idea of evolution into the framework of his own philosophy and to present the traditional concept of *Advaita* in harmony with the modern view. Thus he says, "Man is not, however, an altogether separate and peculiar being. He bears the marks of his origin in his organism, his fragile body, limited life and bounded mind. He has grown out of the physical, vital and animal life into the power of manhood."¹ However, he does not fully agree with the concept of biological evolution. For, according to him, "man is not simply the animal gone up any more than an animal is a man gone down. Between the two there is a gulf."²

Radhakrishnan laid great stress on the role of ethics in the life of man. It disciplines human nature and leads him towards

perfection. It is regarded as a prerequisite for the attainment of spiritual destiny by man. According to him, it is the moral sense by which man distinguishes himself as a spiritual being. Hence we are told that "the moral law within us is evidence of our citizenship in the world of spirit. Moral discipline makes for spiritual insight. Their relationship is not adventitious. To reach the goal is to perfect the means to it."³

According to him, the principles of moral life are enshrined in the ancient concept of *Dharma*. Radhakrishnan regards the human beings as value-seekers by their very nature. They strive for truth, beauty and goodness. Each of these values has its own distinct nature. He strongly believes that a deep awareness and understanding of the mystery of life can be attained only through ethics, religion and philosophy. He laid emphasis on moral values because according to him, they are absolutely necessary for the development and enrichment of human personality. Like Gandhiji, he admits non-violence as one of the best ideals of personal and social morality.

Radhakrishnan points out that the central message of Indian thought as a whole could be regarded as the liberation of man from

1. S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1951) page 263.

2. *Ibid.*

3. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Brahmasūtra, The Philosophy of Spiritual Life* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1960) page 154.

bondage. However, liberation according to him does not mean an escape from life. To be saved, he would tell us, is not to be separated from the world. He observes that the Hindu seers, generally, admit different degrees of salvation depending upon the level of spiritual development attained by the individuals. But it is the final release from ignorance and bondage which is regarded as the liberation or *Mokṣa* in the ultimate sense. It is the *summum bonum* of human existence in the world. It makes the culmination of human progress towards its final end. It is the blessed state in which man finds the perfection of his being. "True freedom," says Radhakrishnan, "is the freedom of the human spirit."⁴

Hinduism regards liberation as the freedom from the cycle of rebirth. Rebirth is linked with time. "To seek for liberation from the wheel of births and deaths," writes Radhakrishnan, "is nothing more than to rise to the spiritual level from the ethical. It is a new dimension altogether, dealing with things eternal."⁵ This spiritual level of existence is not a mere unfolding of what is purely human. The spiritual being is regarded as a new emergent in the hierarchical order of beings in the universe.

In this context Radhakrishnan points out the relevance of the law of *Karma* for human action. According to him, "The purpose of the divine plan is not likely to be exhausted in the short span of life." Moreover, he says, "If every soul is precious to God, universal salvation is a certainty. If some souls are lost, God's omnipotence becomes problematic."⁶ The operation of the law of *Karma* makes it possible for the realization of the Supreme Bliss.

Radhakrishnan says that the law of *Karma* acts as a link between the past, present and future life of man. The present life is an outcome of one's past life and the future life will be in accordance with his present life. Thus he says, "Our present state is conditioned by our past and what we do now will determine our future. Death and birth do not interrupt this process."⁷ Though the present life of the individual is conditioned by the past, he has the freedom to act and regulate his life so that his future would be determined by the present. Hence man is the maker of his own destiny. For, the destiny of man "depends on the direction of its life forces, the lights which guide it, and the laws that mould it."⁸

With regard to his ideas on liberation, Radhakrishnan adopts the Upaniṣadic view which is in agreement with that of Śaṅkara. But the new way in which he presents the doctrine reveals a real advance from the traditional idea. For, the traditional *Advaita* view seems to be in favour of the absorption of the liberated individual in the eternal Brahman. On the other hand, Radhakrishnan's view is that the individuality of the liberated person continues real as long as the cosmic process comes to an end. Thus he says, "So long as the world process continues, the liberated souls retain their individualities, which they lose in the event of the liberation of all, or *Sarva-mukti*."⁹ Radhakrishnan makes it clear that perfect freedom for the individuals is possible only in a perfect world. Hence the goal of every liberated individual soul

(Continued on page 317)

4. S. Radhakrishnan, *Freedom and Culture* (Madras: G. A. Natesan & Co., 1936) page 136.

5. *An Idealist View of Life*, page 304.

6. *Ibid.*, page 286.

7. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Recovery of Faith* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1955) page 96.

8. S. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions & Western Thought* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975).

9. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Hindu View of Life* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1927) page 47.

Homage to the Sage of Mandukya

K. S. RANGAPPA

What a marvellous show
This thing called dream!
How unimpossible in it
Anything imaginable
On earth or in sky!
How like a feather
Solid flesh defies
Earthy pull and time's one-way rush!
Sail in sky and dive in sea
Are light as thought,
Delightful fast in dreamy fantasy.
Past, present and coming events
Jolly mix
To fulfill cravings deep
Or fears simmering within.
But, marvel of marvels,
Goings-on in dream
— Far from dreamy —
Clear as day, are pinching real.

Loves and hates,
Griefs and joys,
Ambitions, frustrations,
Play nightly roles
In bizarre acts
As earnest, as daylight true,
With never a clue
To their grotesquerie.
You wake up,
Shivering or laughing,
Only then to know
It was all but a dream make-up—
To dismiss as airy nothing
All that shook you so
Just a jiffy before!

But was it indeed a dream ?
'Tis a nagging wonder
To the thinker ever,
Long thought a riddle,
Uncrackable.

Wonder of wonders!
 A probing Seer of ages yore
 Broke open
 The mystery chest
 To discover a dimless gem,
 The pellucid Māṇḍūkya,
 The Upaniṣad of Upaniṣads.

The Seer, the nameless prodigy,
 Has cleaved the crystal whole
 Of existence entire
 To crystals clear, three
 — Waking, dream, and sleep —
 And a pregnant Fourth,
 The womb for all the three,
 Unseen, unfelt, unthought,
 Yet ever there everywhere.
 Amazing further more,
 The deep-dissecting Seer
 Shows, like a conjuror the secrets
 In his bag of tricks,
 That dream is waking,
 That waking is dream,
 And each but a dream within a dream,
 Identical twins,
 Both, but children of the mind,
 That all, go to sleep,
 On the lap of dreamless sleep,
 — Only to circle the tireless round
 Of seeming wake and dream ;
 For, who can tell,
 Of wake and dream who is usurper
 Who's usurped ?

The sage surgeon reveals,
 — Most precious of all —
 The gossamer cocoon,
 Unsensable, unthinkable, unspeakable,
 Unchanging, immortal,
 Wrapping up, pervading,
 Like sweetness the sugar,
 The sugar the sweetness,
 All mortal that is.

Gossamers discovered
 Of wake and dream,
 Living in the Light
 Of this inner sight,
 Reveals Māṇḍūkya,
 Seeker feels no pain
 Of slings of fate,
 Nor needs a heaven or haven,
 For, flowers for him
 Serenity supreme
 In dimless Light divine,
 A gift, gods would envy.

NATURE AND DESTINY OF MAN

(Continued from page 314)

should be the liberation of the whole world, and so the liberated individual should inspire his fellow beings to follow the path to perfection. In this context, it must also be noted that, according to Radhakrishnan, all individuals are ultimately destined to attain liberation. He finds support for this view in certain authoritative texts of Hinduism which say that, as human beings we are all the children of immortality (*Amṛtasya-putrāḥ*).¹⁰ At the very moment an individual realizes an experience of liberation from ignorance and bondage, Radhakrishnan says that his whole being is transformed and he becomes a member of the divine community or *Brahmaloka*.¹¹ It is the supreme state of human existence, and is characterized by a deep sense of unity, cooperation and harmony. It is in such a perfect state of harmonious spiritual

existence that Radhakrishnan finds the culmination of the cosmic process.

Thus it can be seen that Radhakrishnan's philosophy is essentially a philosophy of life and its problems. He was not interested in the confusing technical problems of professional philosophers, except when they were relevant to what he regarded as the central issues of philosophy. Thus in his address to the Sixth International Congress of Philosophy in 1926 he declared: We are not so much in need of a keen analysis of particular problems, as those of essence and existence, sense and perception, or a profane insistence on methodology and on the futility of metaphysics, interesting as they all are, but philosophy in the larger sense of the term, a spiritual view of the universe, broad based on the results of science and aspirations of humanity. It is on the foundation of this kind of a spiritualistic and monistic philosophy that we find Radhakrishnan's concept of religion.

10. *An Idealist View of Life*, page 307.

11. *Ibid.*, page 244.

News and Reports

Centenary of Swami Vivekananda's Voyage for the World's Parliament of Religions

Under the auspices of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, the Centenary Celebrations of Swami Vivekananda's "Participation at the Chicago Parliament of Religions" will be held from September, 1993. As a prelude to these celebrations, Ramakrishna Yogodyan Math (7, Yogodyan Lane, Kankurgachi, Calcutta-700 054) celebrated the "Centenary of Swami Vivekananda's Voyage for the World's Parliament of Religions" on three days starting from 31 May, 1993, the centenary of the date on which Swami Vivekananda sailed for U.S.A. after his Bharat Parikrama. On the morning of 31 May, a huge procession of children from local schools and local clubs, monks, devotees, well-wishers and admirers was taken out in and around Kankurgachhi.

The public functions on all the three days started at 4.30 p.m. Srimat Swami Gahananandaji Maharaj, Vice-President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission read out on 31 May, 1993 the benedictory message from Srimat Swami Bhutesanandaji Maharaj, President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, as he could not inaugurate the function owing to indifferent health. He also welcomed the participants on all the three days. The topic "The Significance of Swami

Vivekananda's Bharat Parikrama" was discussed by eminent speakers with Swami Atmasthanandaji Maharaj, General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission presiding over the function.

The second day was devoted to "The Significance of Swami Vivekananda's Travels in the West and Chicago Addresses", and was presided over by Swami Lokeshwaranandaji Maharaj, Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Gol Park. Many learned speakers contributed to the day's discussions.

The topic for the third day was "Swami Vivekananda's Plan for the Regeneration of India" and the meeting was presided over by Swami Prabhanandaji Maharaj, Assistant General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission. A number of speakers gave illuminating talks on the topic.

Dramatic performances covering the life of Swami Vivekananda from childhood days upto his going to Chicago were staged on the first two days. On the concluding day, prizes were distributed to the winners of Quiz, Elocution, Essay and Sit-and-draw competitions among students of schools and colleges. An elegant sitar recital brought the highly rewarding three-day celebration to a close.

Review & Notices

TOWARDS TRANSCENDENCE (A Historical-Analytical study of Yoga as a Method of Liberation), by Motilal Pandit. First published in 1991 by Intercultural Publications (P) Ltd., 15 A/30, W.E.A., New Delhi, 110-005. Rs. 59/-.

Each man appears to be finite and conditioned by a body in space and time. But he is potentially divine and essentially infinite so far as his Self is concerned. So he is a pilgrim towards transcendence. This voyage has been studied in this book both historically and analytically. Yoga supplies the technique for transcendence and is a method of liberation from bondage in finitude and sufferings.

The most important schools of yoga, according to the author, may be said to be the following: rāja yoga, hatha yoga, jñāna yoga, bhakti yoga, and karma yoga. The need for these various schools is said to have arisen on account of different temperaments and dispositions of people. A person who, for example, has an ascetic bent of mind will find satisfaction in the rāja yoga, whereas a person who has an emotional bent of mind will be attracted to bhakti yoga. A man with an intellectual bent of mind will like jñāna yoga, though the author observes that the man will prefer rāja yoga. (xv) The classical yoga of Patañjali and Tantrism are separately discussed.

The contents of the book include five chapters besides the Introduction, Glossary, Bibliography and Index. The first chapter discusses the early sources of yoga which may be traced back to what is referred to as the Indus Civilization. Yoga in the Vedas and in the Pre-Patañjali Upaniṣads has also been discussed. The second chapter deals with the text and context of yogic soteriology. The third chapter elaborates the classical yoga of Patañjali. The fourth chapter is concerned with the early historical roots of Tantricism, and the fifth chapter discusses Tantrism—theory and praxis.

“Tantrism,” the author observes, does not aim at establishing its own doctrinal or metaphysical system of thought.” (p. 145) But Kashmiri Saivism, though a tantra, still is very important as a system of philosophy.

So far as the historical part of the book is concerned, it is good, though very short. The analytical part may not satisfy a scholar. The book presents readable stuff for a general reader. Print, paper and get up are really excellent.

Dr. Nirod Baran Chakraborty
Calcutta.

MYTHS OF COMPOSITE CULTURE AND EQUALITY OF RELIGIONS, by Harsh Narain, Voice of India, New Delhi. 83 pages ; Rs. 25/-.

This book contains three thought-provoking essays. The author is sore over the fact that the quintessentials of Indian culture are being distorted by the protagonists of composite Indian culture. To begin with, the author defines culture; he then classifies it into the culture of the *demos*, and the culture of the *aristos*, and goes on to explain the meaning of composite culture in the Indian context. Cultural congeries, eclectic culture, and synthetic culture—these are the planks which normally sustain any definition of composite culture. The first term cannot apply to the Indian culture as there remains “an internal, essential relationship between its various constituents.” Eclecticism, which implies “random intermixture, irrespective of and indifferent to, the native or nascent urge for unity, self-identity and genius of the respective cultures concerned” also fails to depict the Indian culture in its true form. The fact of India being a synthetic/synthetized culture was veritably debunked by the Partition of India. Hence, one may call Indian society and civilization as composite, but it is not true of Indian culture as such.

Although the author does not rule out interaction between different cultures, he is

convinced that Indian culture is predominantly Hindu culture; cultures of Indian origin such as the Buddhist, the Jaina or the Sikh are sub cultures, while those of semitic origins are counter cultures or in-cultures.

The author feels that the role of Sufis in bridging the gulf between Islam and Hinduism has been grossly exaggerated; that Hindu-Muslim relations during the pre-British period have been wrongly described as extremely cordial; that leftist historians have distorted history by eulogizing "the historical role of Islam" and the "persecutors of Hindus"; and that the Quranic injunctions forbidding the Muslims to befriend the Kafirs or goading them to convert the *Dar al Harb* into *Dar al Islam* have had a disastrous effect on society.

In its generic form, each religion shares some of its features with others; but in its specific form it is at variance with them. The concept of the unity and equality of all religions normally acquires such dimensions as uniformity, commonness of core or essence, cognateness, organismic unity, unity of objects of worship or of spirit and purpose, and equal validity of all systems of faith. The author deftly discusses each of these dimensions before proving that all religions cannot be "one, equal or equally valid." This may remind one of Swami Vivekananda who pleaded for unity and not uniformity among different religions. To quote him: "Why take a single instrument from the great religious orchestra of the earth? Let the grand symphony go on."

Not many would appreciate the author's observations about the spiritual experiences of Sri Ramakrishna. Nor one is likely to agree with him on the point that the British rule did not serve the interests of Christianity. The book, nevertheless, brings out the author's profundity, clarity of thought and expression, and his razor-like arguments in support of his thesis. Rarely do the reviewers get such meaty stuff for consumption.

Dr. Satish K. Kapoor
Jalandhar City

RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD, Vol. III,
Published by the Ramakrishna Mission

Ashrama, Ramakrishna Ave., Patna, by Swami Chandrananda. 800-004. Paper-bound Souvenir; 78 pages. Rs. 10/- plus 2.50 for postage and packing.

The *Sanatana-dharma*, another name given to the vast universal Philosophy of Vedanta and Hinduism, in a sense already is *the* world religion. It is so because the essential principles, beliefs and practices of each and every world religion: Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Sikhism, Sufism, and others are propounded in the Vedas and the Vedanta. Not only that, but the Sanatana-dharma, as embraced and taught by Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, totally accepts and condones all other religions, religionists, and their practices. Now it is for us to reach, in our own comprehension and practice, and in our lives, that same wonderful unity and sympathy for all that Ramakrishna and Vivekananda had.

The present three volumes, *Religions of the World*, are brought out with the intention of making such world-wide sympathy and intellectual understanding possible. Published in modest get-up at modest price, only Rs. 10 each, one can have at a single reading almost, a comprehensive look at all the important world Faiths. Each is necessary and right in its own time and location, and it is up to every person to learn to understand and feel that this is so. 'Hold steadfastly to your own view (for your own growth and development),' said Sri Ramakrishna, 'but never allow yourself to think that yours is the only correct view; others have also correct views which are different from your own. And hardly any person can have the *wholly* correct view, for the Subject is infinite—it is God.'

In this third volume are found brilliant essays on what religions are: Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Vedanta and the Sanatana-dharma. A substantial article on the future of religion is presented from the writings of Swami Vivekananda.

One would imagine that in the future a hard-cover edition with all these articles would be worthwhile and useful.

Swami Shivaprasadananda
Mayavati