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A MERRY CHRISTMAS  
AND  
A HAPPY NEW YEAR  
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# PRABUDDHA BHARATA

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

Vol. 99

DECEMBER 1994

No. 12

## A Hymn to Sri Sarada Devi

(Khāmbāja-miśra; Tritāl; Pajjhatikā-meter)

SWAMI GARGANANDA\*

जननि जननि तव देहि पदम् ।  
त्रिभुवनशरणं श्रीप्रभुनमितं  
शान्ति-भक्ति-चिरसुखास्पदम् ॥ १ ॥

हे परमेश्वरि विश्वविधायिनि  
मर्ते त्वं जाता नरजननी ।  
दीनब्रह्मण-पल्लीकुटीरे  
स्मरणीयं तव पदार्पणम् ॥ २ ॥

सुतकल्याणी लज्जाशीला  
संसारे तव विचित्रलीला ।  
सहिष्णुतामयि दिव्यतपोमयि  
तुलनाहीनं तव कार्यम् ॥ ३ ॥

अभूतपूर्वं तव मातृत्वं  
जननि भवे सततं स्मरणीयम् ।  
दीनदयामयि वितर्ज कृपां मयि  
वर्ष शिरसि तव शुभाशिषम् ॥ ४ ॥

1. O Mother! O Mother! give me shelter at your holy feet which are the refuge of the three worlds; at which the gracious Lord (Sri Ramakrishna) had prostrated; and which are the source of eternal peace, devotion and bliss.

2. O Supreme Goddess, Ruler of the Universe! You took birth on the earth as the Mother of all humanity. Your arrival at the village-cottage of the poor and humble *brāhmins* is worthy of meditation.

3. Auspicious are you, and modest (too). Incomprehensible has been your divine play in the world. (Your life was) full of forbearance and wonderful penances, and incomparable were your actions.

4. O Mother! the unprecedented Motherhood (manifest) in you should at all times be kept in mind (by us) in the world. Do you, who are compassionate towards the distressed, kindly bestow mercy on me, and shower over my head your benign blessings. □

The Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi's Birthday is on the 25th of this month.

\* The Swami, now staying at the Ramakrishna

Yogodyana Math, Calcutta, is known for his poetical compositions in Sanskrit and Bengali.



## Are Indians Religious?—VI

### *Last question*

The remaining question is—'Subjective reform', as you mention, reforming myself first before attending to the needed reforms in society, is impracticable, because it tends to isolate me. There is a strong anti-religious attitude prevailing nowadays which is very discouraging. Is there any other way?

Your difficulty notwithstanding, we give below (slightly edited) excerpts from two letters we received in response to our views, confirming that subjective reform is practical:

Dear Swami,

I received the July PB ...and immediately devoured and enjoyed it, beginning with your editorial ('Are Indians Religious?'). It was of especial interest to me because, except for the early years of raising two children, I have been in the workplace—and in finances to boot. I take care of...money and business affairs (of those) who have not either the time, interest or ability to do so themselves. The good Lord only knows why he has made me work in money, because it has been of no interest to me ever. Nevertheless, that is what I have found I had to do to put bread on the table. I have of course been up against the problem you spoke about in your editorial: the meeting place of greed and principle. Perhaps that is a bit strong, but taken to the essentials, I think it is correct. I have from the very beginning of contact with a client pointed out that I will not either commit or sanction a lie, a fib or self-serving, the problem arising quite frequently with regard to the payment of income taxes, and I have lost jobs due to it. My heart went out to the disciple of Swami Vireshwarananda whose job was threatened unless he shared in corruption. It must

be devastatingly hard on a man who is head of the family. I have had the dubious honour of being exonerated from blame because I am a woman and consequently have not the wit to know better!

Seriously, it seems to me that it boils down to a very simple choice (does not everything?): 'Do I want the world—or God?' If one cannot forgo the material returns that is sometimes demanded by standing for principle, then the answer is 'the world' though we may think that not so. If we want God, there is a price to pay. But if we are sincere and act always from the point of principle, God *will* supply our basic needs. It is promised over and over in every religion in different words. It does take Swamiji's fearlessness, however, to face that brute....

So thanks for a stimulating, thought-provoking issue....

Very best wishes,  
E. D. Tipple  
California, USA

7 July 1994

\*\*\*\*\*

Dear Swami,

Please permit to express my heartfelt appreciation for your ...life-touching editorial (July '94), which is actually a feast for my mind...I am a regular reader of your journal for the past 25 years, and it is giving good guidance for humanity...But this month's editorial, urging individuals to maintain a truthful life at any cost, under all circumstances, gave me great support...since 1964...I have been successfully leading a truthful life.

5 July 1994

Yours,  
R. Gopalan, Madras

\*\*\*\*\*

As for yourself, you are the best judge of your situation. However, we feel your agony. In fact, there are thousands in our

country who, like you, are basically religious-minded, and wish to be honest and hard-working, but, lacking in that one vital quality, fearlessness, find it impossible to resist or even withdraw from the raging storm of irreligion.

In all such cases the common reasons are physical weakness, economic vulnerability, non-availability of alternative employment, family burdens, bitter knowledge that the law and order machinery is itself very weak, and that, consequently, when in any trouble one cannot rely on colleagues or neighbours to come and help, and stand in common defence. To these the 'subjective reform'—willingness to make personal sacrifices, to stand steadfastly by truth as an affirmation of one's trust in God, and to be fearless—is difficult.

#### *Take what you can*

But then, you see, we put across Swamiji's teachings in a general way. Whenever certain things appear important, we try to draw people's attention to what he has said in the matter for the good of the people and the country as a whole. Some thousands may find it too lofty, while some other thousands may receive it as just the inspiration they were looking for and act upon it.

Take an example: Swamiji's startling words to a young revolutionary who had come for advice on how to free India from the atrocities of the British Raj was, 'What India needs today is bomb!' This, obviously, to Swamiji was religion, spirituality, Vedanta, helpful to that individual. But read his lectures, letters, etc.—you will find that he spoke also in other ways to rouse people. He has referred to the country's past glory; belief in her potential; education of the masses and women; giving back their lost (stolen?) individuality to the mercilessly exploited and dehumanized toiling poor of

the country on whose labours a minority enjoys life; enlightening the masses regarding the cunning source of the heartless blows that keep falling on them, and so on. And mind you, all this for the ultimate purpose of stirring the innate spirituality of the people now self-deluded in *tamas* (fear, passivity, callousness, indifference to others' plight) masquerading as *sattwa* (humility, prayerfulness, non-resistance, surrender to God's will, detachment). Different persons have taken whichever teaching they felt was lifegiving.

However, nowhere has he appreciated submission to any of the problems life or nature throws up against us. On the other hand, he has pressed us to look upon them as challenges, which, only if boldly faced, get converted into soul-awakeners. The common thread running through all his teachings is what we summed up as 'subjective reform'. So, now it is up to you to judge yourself and choose.

#### *People in 'transition'*

You may like to ask if these are the only two extreme classifications Vedanta or Swamiji recognizes—a person is either uncompromisingly ethical, or, with the least compromise, with even a step backwards, he or she is irreligious, selfish, corrupt, worldly, and so on. The answer is: No. Vedanta accepts a 'transitional class'. We shall quote from Swamiji and then discuss this:

What we should have is what we have not, perhaps what our forefathers even had not,—that which the Yavanas had,—that impelled by the life-vibrations of which is issuing forth in rapid succession from the great dynamo of Europe the electric flow of a tremendous power, vivifying the whole world. We want that. We want that energy, that love of independence, that spirit of self-



sacrifice, that bond of unity of purpose, that thirst for improvement...and we want that intense spirit of activity (*rajas*) which will flow through our every vein, from head to foot.

Again:

Without enjoyment, renunciation can never come: first enjoy, then you can renounce...The Bauddhas declared: 'Nothing is more desirable in life than *mokṣa*; whoever you are, come one and all to take it.' I ask: 'Is that ever possible?' You are a householder, you must not concern yourself much with things of that sort, you do your *swadharma*—thus say...the scriptures. Exactly so...Scriptures say: 'No doubt, *mokṣa* is far superior to *dharma*; but *dharma* should be finished first of all.' Non-injury is right. 'Resist not evil' is a great thing—these are indeed grand principles; but the *śāstras* (scriptures) say: 'Thou art a householder. If anyone smites thee on thy cheek and thou dost not return him an eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth, thou wilt verily be a sinner.' Manu says: 'When one has come to kill you, there is no sin in killing him, even though he is a *brāhmaṇa*.' This is very true and this is a thing which should not be forgotten. Heroes only enjoy the world. Show your heroism, apply according to circumstances, the fourfold political maxims of conciliation, bribery, sowing dissension and open war to win over your adversary, and enjoy the world,—then you will be a *dhārmika*...Do your *swadharma*—this is truth, the truth of truths. This is my advice to you, my beloved co-religionists. Of course, do not do any wrong, do not injure or tyrannize anyone, but try to do good to others as much as you can. But to passively submit to wrong done by others is a sin,—with the householder; he must try to pay them back in their own

coin then and there. The householder must earn money with great effort and enthusiasm, and by that must support and bring comfort to his own family and to others, and perform good works as far as possible. If you cannot do that, how do you profess to be men? You are not a householder even,—what to talk of *mokṣa* for you!!

Again, in a lecture delivered in Ramnad, in 1897, he says:

There is a tendency to bind everyone down by the same laws as those by which the *sannyasin* is bound, and that is a great mistake. But for that a good deal of the poverty and the misery that you see in India need not have been. A poor man's life is hemmed in and bound down by tremendous spiritual and ethical laws for which he has no use. Hands off! Let the poor fellow enjoy himself a little, and then he will raise himself up and renunciation will come to him of itself.

#### *Dhārmika 'compromises'*

You will notice that the first quote enunciates the kind of mentality and actions Swamiji expected us to cultivate for modernizing India. The other two speak of i) the objectives—wealth (*artha*) and enjoyment (*kāma*)—of those activities, ii) the hurdles created by others, and iii) the ways of overcoming them. There are three ways of attaining the objectives—which, please note, are implicitly lawful. First, neck or nothing, without considering the ethicality of our actions, i.e. most unethically if necessary; second, most ethically—quite prepared to renounce 'enjoyment' if least compromise is called for; lastly, by resorting to fight and force if negotiation, persuasion, inducement, etc. fail. Thus the third, mentioned in the last two quotes, may be viewed as 'compromise' meant for the 'transitional

class'. This 'compromise', this Vedantic principle of 'bending without breaking', or 'one step backward for two forward', is comprised of the well-known *sāma*—conciliation, negotiation, some give-and-take; *dāna*—bribery, inducement; *bheda*—sowing dissension and confusion in the opposition; and *daṇḍa*—open war, fight and force.

The above, let us caution, can be misunderstood or misinterpreted if words such as 'bribery', 'war', 'eye for an eye', etc. are unwittingly lifted out of context and over-emphasized. We must remember that those ideas are scriptural. They are therefore based on *dharma*, and have renunciation and *mokṣa* as the end in view, *artha* and *kāma* constituting the immediate objective. Therefore, householders inclined to resort to this 'compromise' should accept the *whole* scheme of *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma*, and *mokṣa*: They should be, first and foremost, committed to completing their forward 'transition', to keeping alive their Godward or spiritual urge. (In olden days, the householder was, as a rule, to 'transit' into the next stages of life, *vānaprastha* and *sannyāsa*.)

#### The tests

Naturally, you may raise a question: My courage is insufficient for *bheda* and *daṇḍa*. So, excluding them, what then is wrong with the compromises I am making? How can I know whether these are in accordance with the scriptural allowances?

The answer is: One's conscience is the final judge. If we are sincere to the core, we will be able to detect whether our mind is deceptively justifying fear, helplessness, greed, etc. as *sāma* (conciliation) and *dāna* (giving or receiving bribes). When our religious urge is genuine, then the after-reaction to any compromise we may make to attain our *dhārmika* objective will be of a particular type: The determination to resist

on the next occasion, the alertness to avoid or minimize or dodge situations which require compromises will get keener. The tendency to curtail our needs will grow. (Underneath many of today's compromises lurks the 'consumer's avarice'.) A firm 'this once, and no more' will frequently be in our thoughts.

A step backward will invariably be followed by two forward. We will feel a new kind of calm, self-assured strength welling within—quite different from just bravado or obstinacy or physical strength. You might have come across some personalities possessing that kind of indescribable but palpable strength, because of which others feel incapable of even proposing anything unlawful to them. One more test is—if our compromises have occurred for a just cause, out of factual helplessness, and after we have tried all other righteous means, they leave only a self-healing scratch, not a scar, of guilt or regret on our conscience. For, this kind of 'theft' of the purity of conscience is similar to one's being robbed at gunpoint. While introspecting, we will hear, 'The Lord knows I don't like it. The Lord knows I couldn't help it.'

Judged in this light, the prevalent compromises are cancerous and contrary to what Swamiji has voiced. The *dhārmika* compromises are by choice; from a position of strength, from a full awareness of one's ability to employ *daṇḍa*, to strike decisively, if other means to achieve one's objective failed. Hence they helped the forward and upward 'transition'. The present-day 'compromises', 'conciliation', 'adjustment', etc. are not by choice, but under coercion and intimidation. They are out of fear, timidity and weakness, which Swamiji calls 'sin'. Hence the 'downward transition'—increasing immorality, greed, violence, exploitation, etc.



*Problem of isolation*

People like you may wonder—In the frenzied rat-race into which the whole country has entered and gone afar, how can one imagine trying the *dhārmika* compromises? In a society caught in rip-tides, what can ordinary people do?

Is there any other way?, as you have asked. There is, which too Swamiji has pointed out. This also, however, requires fearlessness—fortunately, not of the individual kind but of a collective type. As we have said, no teaching of Swamiji is devoid of this idea of fearlessness, which in turn is based on our deathlessness and fullness as Atman. The way is: Organize, co-operate, protect each other, and resist irreligion. The problem of 'isolation' too, which you have mentioned, will thus get solved. Let all the forces of good join against the minority of evil forces. History has shown, daily life shows, that even one person with a sterling character can defeat a multitude of corrupt people. Where such men of character are lacking, the only alternative is the coming together of as many averagely good people as possible. These days Organization is the key to success in any endeavour.

The onset of such a response is already visible. An awakening is slowly coming among the self-indignant honest majority, who are simply fed up with the endless humiliating compromises they are compelled to make. 'Slowly', because the masses are illiterate, and most of the educated are hopelessly irresponsible as citizens, and unmindful of the contradictions in their religious life. The age-old mentality of looking up to the king as solely responsible for the subjects' welfare, and the effects of the ruthless suppression of public resistance—first by foreign powers, and later, learning from them, by the Indian princes and landlords—persists even today—what

Swamiji calls 'loss of individuality'.

*Vedanta and organization*

The educated and the better privileged should realize their debt to the masses, and the obligation to our saints and sages. If they become more active to protect our cultural values, we can expect quicker and noticeable improvements. Don't you see how unconcerned and smug the Indian intelligentsia is in coming out in full support to groups striving for noble causes? An individual or a small enthusiastic organization stands up to do some nation-cleaning or rectify some local evils, and the rest of India takes the spectator's seat while vested interests work unitedly to frustrate the reform. The most we see are 'Letters to the Editor'.

Group-action is essential in a democracy. It is a sign of a living democracy, a sign that at least the educated and the noble-minded are awake to their dignity, freedom and responsibility. Such politics-free groups alone can provide a rallying point in a fledgling democracy for the weaker millions, and inaugurate a determined and sustained movement for protecting our ideals.

Let us rest assured that this too is a Vedantic way. Whether a person knows it or not, any activity that springs from his or her courage, self-respect, sincerity, a sense of justice, equality, and concern for others out of love and unselfishness is Practical Vedanta. For, Vedanta includes everything that is positive and unifying. This 'collective method' can draw greater public support, become broad-based and effective if our educational institutions—for the present, at least the private ones, which are free from political interference—inspire students to be, above all, self-respecting, principled, and unfailingly fearless, and to see the great strength of organized goodness; and also teach them the *dhārmika* 'compromises'.

If these concepts are explained to the students in terms of belief in God or Atman (individual divinity), the results reaped by them later in life will be spiritual satisfaction. As the *Chhāndogya Upaniṣad* says: Whatever action a person does with conviction, an understanding of the ramifications of that action, and insight into the spiritual mystery of all activity,—that becomes more powerful. Possibly some may be reluctant to accept God or Atman, because of our confused secularism. Never mind, for Swamiji has cited Lord Buddha as the greatest Vedantin and Karma-yogi, though he never spoke on God or Atman. He taught people to be good and do good to others, just because it is right to do so. So, even such persons, if they are steadfastly righteous, fearless, self-sacrificing, and concerned for the welfare of all, will progress towards enlightenment.

#### Conclusion

After all, this was the purpose of the lengthy discussion—to draw people's attention to the fact that our national characteristic is to look upon spiritual advance as the theme of life. This attitude is missing in the prevailing soul-less and compartmentalized religion. To revive it, we should hold fast to Vedanta and its fundamental teachings—indomitable courage, purity in life, etc. discussed all these past few months. We must counter the projection of human beings as consumers and markets, which is one of the major causes of shift in values. We

are essentially divine. Individual and national life should be so oriented as to not aim for human resource development as generally understood, but for human potential development—creating conditions for the divinity in us to become manifest as much as possible *in all walks of life*. Only then can we justly say that Indians are religious.

Vedanta should become our national philosophy: It gives democracy a soul. It is capable of harmonizing science and religion; of ensuring unity in religious diversity; of showing how an intense modern life goes very well with spirituality; of guiding us to fully enjoy the fruits of our hard labours without getting ensnared in worldliness; of helping us face the realities of life and employ the *dhārmika* 'compromises' to cope with them; and of rousing the masses to the necessity and power of organized action in a democracy to protect our priceless heritage,—so that, at the end of our mysterious and sweet-sour life, we, and similarly the succeeding generations, can say, 'O Lord, who art our Father and Mother, here I come.'

Next month the *Prabuddha Bhārata* or *Awakened India* enters its 100th year. So we hope that as we bring you then the special commemorative issue, the year will also bring unmistakable signs of further awakening of the country true to her spiritual tradition—for her own good, and for the good of the world.□

May the Goddess of culture, associated with the models of other cultures, may the Goddess of wisdom in the company of men, ordinary and intellectual, may the fire divine, and may the Goddess of divine speech with masters of language come to bless us and enshrine our hearts.

—*Rg Veda*, 7.2.8.



# Madhusudana Saraswati on the Bhagavad-Gita

SWAMI GAMBHIRANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue)

## THE MAN OF STEADY WISDOM

Further—

यः सर्वत्रानभिस्नेहस्तत्प्राप्य शुभाशुभम् ।  
नाभिनन्दति न द्वेष्टि तस्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठिता ॥

*Yah sarvatrānabhisnehas-  
tattatprāpya śubhāśubham;  
Nābhinandati na dveṣṭi  
tasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā. (2.57)*

*The wisdom of that person remains established who has no attachment for anything anywhere, who neither praises nor hates anything whatever, good or evil, when he comes across it.*

The monk, *yah*, who; *sarvatra*, everywhere, with regard to everything—body, life, etc.; *anabhisnehaḥ*, has no attachment: that kind of a particular mental modification—in relation to something else—which is born of *tamas*, and owing to the presence of which one superimposes on oneself the loss or gain of others, and which goes by the other name of love (*prema*) is *snehaḥ*. One who is free from that (love) in every way is *anabhisnehaḥ*. But he should of course be full of love towards God, the supreme Self, in every way; for, it is to be understood that the lack of love for things which are not the Self is meant for that purpose.

*Na abhinandati*, he does not praise, by expressing particular delight; *tattat*, anything whatever; good, (*śubham*), any object

that is the cause of happiness and is brought about by *prārabdha-karma*; *prāpya*, when he comes across it. *Na dveṣṭi*, he does not hate, does not condemn with internal ill-will; (anything) evil (*aśubham*), an object causing sorrow, when he comes across it. It is only for an unenlightened person that his own wife and others, who are causes of happiness, are welcome objects. *Abhinanda*, praise, is a mental modification, a form of delusion, which leads one to recount their goodness. That (praise) is also born of *tamas*, since recounting their goodness etc. is useless in as much as it does not delight others. Similarly, excellence in learning and so on in others is a cause of sorrow to one by creating envy, and they are unwelcome objects to him. *Dveṣaḥ*, hatred, is a mental modification, a form of delusion, leading one to denouncing them. That (hatred) also is born of *tamas*, since that denouncing is useless in as much as it misses the purpose of nullifying them.

How can these two, praise and hate, which are forms of delusion and are born of *tamas*, possibly exist in a man of steady Wisdom, whose mind is pure? Therefore, in the absence of any disturbing factor, the *prajñā*, Wisdom, concerning the Reality that is the supreme Self; *tasya*, of him, who has no attachment and who is free from joy and sorrow; *pratiṣṭhitā*, remains established, culminates in yielding its fruit. Such a person is the man of steady Wisdom. This is the meaning. Thus, any other seeker of Liberation should have no attachment for anything

anywhere. He should not praise on getting what is good, nor should he condemn on coming across what is evil. This is the purport. (In the earlier verse it was stated positively how a man of steady Wisdom speaks.) And here it has been stated negatively that, he should not utter any speech in the form of praise or condemnation.

Now the Lord proceeds to state in six verses the answer to the question, 'How does he sit?' As to that, with a view to showing that the 'sitting' of the man of Wisdom is verily for *samādhi*—by withdrawing again the organs that have become distracted as a result of emerging (from *samādhi*) owing to the influence of *prārabdha-karma*—, He (the Lord) says:

यदा संहरते चायं कूर्मोऽङ्गानीव सर्वशः ।  
इन्द्रियाणीन्द्रियार्थेभ्यस्तस्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठिता ॥

*Yadā saṁharate cāyam  
kūrmō'ṅgānīva sarvaśaḥ;  
Indriyāṇīndriyārthebhyas-  
tasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā. (2.58)*

*When this one fully withdraws again the organs from the objects of the organs, as a tortoise (withdraws) the limbs, then his Wisdom remains established.*

*Yadā*, when; *ayam*, this one; after emerging (from *samādhi*); *sarvaśaḥ*, fully; *saṁharate*, withdraws; *ca*—used in the sense of—again; all *indriyāṇi*, the organs; *indriya-arthebhyah*, from all the objects of the organs, from sound etc.;—in this regard the example is—*iva*, as; *kūrmah*, a tortoise; (withdraws its) *aṅgāni*, limbs; *tadā*, then; *tasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā*, his Wisdom remains established—the meaning of this is clear. The absence of all activities born of *tamas*, even in the state of emergence (from *samādhi*), was stated in the earlier two verses. Now, however, (it is being stated that) all activities

are absent in the state of *samādhi* again. This is the distinction.

(*Arjuna*:) Is it not that, even in the case of a deluded person the withdrawal of his organs from their objects occurs owing to disease etc.? So how is it said, 'his Wisdom remains established'?

Hence He says:

विषया विनिवर्तन्ते निराहारस्य देहिनः ।  
रसवर्जं रसोऽप्यस्य परं दृष्ट्वा निवर्तते ॥

*Viṣayā vinivartante  
nirāhārasya dehinaḥ  
Rasavarjaṁ raso'pyasya  
paraṁ drṣṭvā nivartate. (2.59)*

*The objects recede from an abstinent man, with the exception of the taste for them. Even the taste of this person falls away after realizing the Absolute.*

*Viṣayāḥ*, the objects, sound etc.; *vinivartante*, recede; even from a sick deluded person, *dehinaḥ*, who has self-identification with his body; *nirāhārasya*, who is abstinent, who does not grasp objects with his organs;—or, from a man of austerity lying like a log of wood—, but *rasavarjaṁ*, with the exception of the taste (for them)—'taste' means thirst; with the exception of that. The objects recede from an unenlightened person, but the thirst for them does not stop. This is the idea.

But, *asya*, of this person, of the man of steady Wisdom, of him who continues in life after knowing directly thus—'I am verily That'—; *rasaḥ api*, even the taste, even the attachment for petty joys; *nivartate*, falls away; *drṣṭvā*, after realizing; *paraṁ*, the Absolute, the human Goal. From the use of the word *api* (even) are to be understood the objects as well. It has been explained accord-



ingly under the verse, '(As) the extent of need...' (2.46), etc. Thus, since the turning away of the objects together with the attachment to them is the characteristic of the man of steady Wisdom, therefore it does not apply to a stupid person. This is the purport.

Since eradication of the objects together with the attachment to them does not occur in the absence of right knowledge of the supreme Self, therefore one should accomplish with great effort the steadiness of Wisdom, which consists in right knowledge that is the destroyer of objects together with the attachment to them. This is the meaning.

As to that, the control of the external organs and the control of the mind are the specific means to the steadiness of Wisdom; for, it is seen that in the absence of these, Wisdom gets destroyed. In order to state this, He speaks of the first defect in the absence of control of the external organs:

यततो ह्यपि कौन्तेय पुरुषस्य विपश्चितः ।  
इन्द्रियाणि प्रमाथीनि हरन्ति प्रसभं मनः ॥

*Yatato hyapi kaunteya  
puruṣasya vipaścitaḥ;  
Indriyāṇi pramāthīni  
haranti prasabham manah. (2.60)*

*As is well known, O son of Kuntī, the turbulent organs violently snatch away the mind of an intelligent person even when he is striving diligently.*

(The word *yatataḥ*, while he is striving, is used in the *Parasmaipada*. Although the root *yat*, to strive, is normally used in the *Ātmanepada*, and hence the correct form should have been *yatamānasya*, with the suffix *śānac* in the *Ātmanepada*, and not *yatataḥ* with the suffix *śatṛ* in the *Parasmaipada*, still,) since the root 'cakṣ', to speak' (which is com-

pulsorily used in the *Ātmanepada*,) has been mentioned (in Pāṇini) with the addition of the indicatory 'ñ', therefore it is indicated that roots having the addition of the indicatory *anudātta* (accentless) 'ī' need not necessarily be used in the *Ātmanepada*. So the *Parasmaipada* (in *yatataḥ*) is not wrong.<sup>1</sup>

*Kaunteya*, O son of Kuntī; *indriyāṇi*, the organs; *haranti*, snatch away, bring modifications in; *manah*, the mind—though for a moment it is made free from modifications—; *vipaścitaḥ puruṣasya*, of an intelligent person—even of a person of great discrimination—; *api yatataḥ*, even while he is striving—while he is again and again making effort in the form of noticing the defects of objects.

(*Arjuna*:) While the preventive factor, discrimination, exists, how can there be the occurrence of distraction?

As to that, He says, *pramāthīni*, turbulent—which are apt to create distractions; which are able to overcome discrimination because of being very powerful. Hence, even when the intelligent master is verily looking on and his protective discrimination is present, the organs, indeed being capable of disturbing all, carry away *prasabham*,

1. In the *sūtra*, 'yafī prayatne', the *ī* after the root *yat* is accentless, *anudātta*. And since this *ī* is to be dropped in grammatical use, the root *yat*, according to Pāṇini, belongs to *Ātmanepada*. So, *yatataḥ* should have been *yatamānasya*. But in the case of the root *cakṣ* (to speak), the reading in the *Pāṇini-sūtra* is *cakṣīñ*. The suffix *īñ* is to be dropped when *cakṣ* is used grammatically. It has been said there in this context that, when *īñ* is dropped the verb-root must be used only in the *Ātmanepada*. It naturally follows that in other cases the *Ātmanepada* is not compulsory. So the use of the verb *yat*, having the accentless *ī*, in *Parasmaipada* as *yatataḥ* is not a violation.

violently, by force, the mind that has entered into the Wisdom born of discrimination, deflecting it from that (Wisdom) through engrossment in their own objects. This is the meaning.

The word *hi* expresses a well-known fact: This fact is indeed well known in the world that, just as powerful robbers, violently overpowering a rich man and the guard of his wealth, steal the wealth before their very eyes, similarly the organs also carry away the mind when in the proximity of objects.

(Arjuna:) If this is so, then what is the remedy for it?

Hence He says:

तानि सर्वाणि संयम्य युक्त आसीत मत्परः ।  
वशे हि यस्येन्द्रियाणि तस्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठिता ॥

*Tāni sarvāṇi saṁyamya  
yukta āsīta matparaḥ;  
Vaśe hi yasyendriyāṇi  
tasya prajñā pratiṣṭhitā. (2.61)*

*Controlling all of them and becoming concentrated, one should remain seated by accepting Me as the supreme. For, the Wisdom of one whose organs are under control becomes steadfast.*

*Saṁyamya*, controlling; *sarvāṇi tāni*, all of them, the organs, which are the instruments of knowledge and action; and *yuktaḥ*,

becoming concentrated, having the mind under control; *āsīta*, one should remain seated, one should remain free from activity. If it is asked, 'How are the turbulent ones (the organs) to be brought under one's control?', to that He says: *matparaḥ*, by accepting Me as the supreme. He is called *mat-paraḥ* to whom I, Vāsudeva, alone, the Self of all, am the supreme (*paraḥ*), the most excellent, goal to be attained. That is to say, he should be absolutely devoted to Me. So has it been said, 'For those devoted to Vāsudeva, there is no evil anywhere.' Indeed, in the world, as robbers are subdued by some one by taking shelter under a powerful king, and they also voluntarily submit to him after knowing that he is under the king's protection, in a very similar way, by taking shelter under the Lord, the inner Controller of all, the wicked organs are to be kept under control through His power itself; and, again, understanding that 'this person is under the protection of the Lord', they certainly come under his control. This is the idea.

As for the great influence of devotion for the Lord, we shall explain this elaborately later on. The Lord states what happens when the organs are under control: *vaśe hi*, for (the Wisdom of one whose organs are) under control....The meaning is clear. So it comes to this that the answer to the question, 'How does he sit?', is given by saying, 'One should sit having the organs under control.'

(to be continued)

What the ordinary [man] wanted was a warrior king, who would drive out the invaders and their sycophants,...and with them the legionaries and the hated tax-gatherers. But the strong-willed rugged prophet [i.e. John the Baptist] announces awesomely, 'Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world'.

—from *Son of Man*, by James Leigh



# Tribute to Swami Vivekananda

SWAMI PRABUDDHANANDA

*This is the text of a talk delivered in New York during the celebrations commemorating the Centenary of Swamiji's participation in the World Parliament of Religions, 1893. The Swami is the Spiritual Leader of the Vedanta Society of Northern California.*

Swami Vivekananda has something to offer to everyone, something inspiring, something transforming, something purifying to everyone. That is why he is known as a universal man. Everyone can get some nourishment from him—spiritual nourishment, emotional nourishment, and intellectual nourishment—all these one can get. Swami Vivekananda was not only a mystic. The word *mystic* has a particular flavour about it—something far away, something other-worldly. In the case of Swamiji, it is not that. The other world has come to this world—that is Swamiji! What we call the spirit has come to the earth. What we call God, he wants to bring to this world. In all his teachings we find that he has emphasized human beings, human dignity, human excellence. All this is our birthright. And we have to manifest that excellence in ourselves. That is why even an unbeliever in religion has some message from Vivekananda.

We don't have to believe in religion. He seems to me to make a clear-cut distinction between these two, or at least I read that meaning: between religion and spirituality, or Reality. Reality is in everyone, and that is the object of worship. That is the object of our reverence and realization. And everyone certainly has that Reality—we are

all Real. How can we say we are unreal? We are all real—very very real. This *Realness* in us has to be recognized. That is why Swami Vivekananda said: 'The old religion said, he is an atheist who does not believe in God, but the new religion says that he is an atheist who does not believe in himself.' It is not that *self* only in a social or psychological sense; it is in Reality. So, that truth has to be recognized, and when that is recognized all problems are solved—in me, in you, in everyone. The ancient Vedantic ideal put it very simply.\*

Man or woman—humankind, is not bad, is not really violent, is not cruel, but is just *dumb*! That's all: Remove that dumbness or darkness, and everything will be alright. Even religion has brought so many problems, for in religion too we find that dumbness. Whenever you go out, wherever you go, remove that dumbness and bring more Light. Bring more light and things will be alright. Light within, light without—everywhere bring that Knowledge, and then

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\* That Self, smaller than the small, greater than the great, is hidden in the hearts of all creatures. The person who is free from desires beholds the majesty of the Self through tranquillity of the senses and the mind, and becomes free from grief. —*Kaṭha-Upaniṣad*

this harmony will be found all round.

Harmony is often misunderstood. It is often understood, as some modern writer puts it—like a bouquet of flowers. Different flowers are there; put them all together and see how beautiful they are! Of course, that reminds me of the small story at the time Charles Darwin was propounding his theory and writing his books. At that time some young men went to him with one creature. They asked him to identify it for them. What they had done was to take different small insects, and after cutting them up, they glued the various parts together—the abdomen of one, the legs of another, the antennae of another, and so on to make a new type to show to Darwin. When they presented it to him, he went on looking at it from all angles in deep thought, and finally asked them: 'Was it humming when you caught it?' The boys nudged one another and said, 'Yes, yes, it was humming!' Then Darwin said, 'It is humbug!' Now, don't take me to be crude, but to use plain words, sometimes our idea of harmony is like that. We take a bit of this and a bit of that, and that, and put them all together—some flowers—all beautiful flowers, and hold them like a nice bouquet. BUT, and there is a big 'but'—there is no sustaining power there: something to nourish the bouquet of flowers.

So Swami Vivekananda said again and again: Religion means Realization has to come. We have to dive deep within, get some nourishment from there, and then spread out. Whether individually, or collectively, or in religion, let people dive deep

within and then harmonize that. From that depth, look out! You will see the harmony. Each religion—each person professing religion, has to dive deep. From that depth of inner Peace he will find there is harmony. Every religion has a universal aspect, and every one of us has that universal Spirit. But then, without that, if we start all these things, start having meetings and celebrations, what will we gain? It will be like the bouquet of flowers. So Swami Vivekananda's emphasis was on this diving deep within. From that depth of our heart we will see the common factor everywhere—a natural harmony. And that type of harmony you see and feel will *tell*; it will express itself in life. It will influence. Everywhere there will be blessedness and peace.

So Swami Vivekananda's harmony of religions and harmony of thought depend on that realization of the Spirit, which he got from his Master, Sri Ramakrishna. Sri Ramakrishna was the embodiment of a Parliament of Religions—in ecumenism, in universalism—just as a *fact*, that's all—not as a thought, not as a practice, but just as a fact, as a reality. He *saw*, and that is as it should be! There is no alternative way to universalism or ecumenism. If our practice and our understanding of harmony comes to that, then it is really worthwhile. And we can go deeper and deeper into that. So let us try to focus on this aspect of it as much as we can. And on this day when we are paying our homage to this great personality, Swami Vivekananda, and also commemorating the World's Parliament of Religions, we may keep in our mind this idea and reflect on it. □

For the sake of experiencing the true and the false, the great Self has a dual nature.  
Yea, the great Self has a dual nature. Yea, the great Self has a dual nature!

—Yajur-Veda, 7.11.8.



# The Purusharthas: A Map of Integral Management

DR. M. SIVARAMAKRISHNA

*Until recently Indian Management systems relied entirely on Western command-control models finetuned for competition and maximizing profit. Today, however, drawing insights from the Gītā and the Upaniṣads, an Indian model is being developed around the ancient interdependent categories of abhyudaya (secular prosperity) and niḥśreyasa (spiritual wellbeing), the values of dharma, artha, kāma and mokṣa, and the implications of yajña. The following article gives us the philosophical framework of this model, exposing the fatal drawbacks of the Western one.*

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## *Move Towards Indigeneity*

The insistent move towards indigeneity and all that it involves, evident in post-colonial societies, constitutes the context for the contemporizing of corresponding paradigms. For management, admittedly the latest, most sophisticated western system, the Indic insights enshrined in its classical philosophical/socio-political and economic frames offer certain correctives as well as interfaces. Here is an attempt to recover them. The necessary validity is, among other things, provided by Derrida's insight (1992:3–24): every culture has a philosophy specific to itself. Alongside it has also 'exemplary' philosophy—elements which transcend specificity, and communicate across frontiers.

## *Creative Balancing of Abhyudaya and Niḥśreyasa.*

All systems function within the overhanging contexts of a meta-system. And as Edward de Bono notes, without these meta-systems 'everyone would act according to their own individual systems which might be based on immediate gratification, self-indulgence and impulse.' In fact, 'the meta-

system lies outside these individual systems and overrides them in favour of society and a longer time base.' And 'religion', he adds 'is the prime example of a meta-system that has served to override man's small view of himself and gives him aims and values he might not otherwise have developed.' (1985:155)

Comparable to these categories are the Indic ones of *abhyudaya* and *niḥśreyasa*.<sup>1</sup> *Abhyudaya* and *niḥśreyasa* are secular pursuits and the sacred orientations, what the *Kaṭha-Upaniṣad* identifies as *preyas*, the delectable, and *śreyas*, the electable, the desired and the desirable, *iṣṭa*, and *eṣṭavya*. Thus if *abhyudaya* is the system of secular management, *niḥśreyasa* is the meta-system which channels the secular. In effect,

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1. The *Śruti* (i.e. the Vedas, particularly the *Upaniṣads*) represents enduring values, but not values which are essentialized and entombed forever; they have to be mediated for actualization through *Smṛti*, approximately, (texts on) the secular systems of economic, social, political aspirations. They are intertexts.

integral management presupposes the creative counterpointing of both. And in Hindu metasystems, repudiating one and consequently affirming another is invalid. Thus these are not pathologically polarized but relativized. The map of this interior and outer management is the *puruṣārtha*, the harmonizing of *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma* and *mokṣa*. In terms of extent idiom this is hardware/software programming equality, playing the game of management with your eye on 'both the score-board and the ball', on profit-priority and altruistic ultimacy. Divorce of the one from the other is according primacy to owning as being ('the more you own the more you are'), and the onset of purposelessness as the invariable of affluence without orientations. Schopenhauer struck at the root of this phenomenon: 'Now that we have thrown away the old burdens of poverty and all that it entails, we become burdens to ourselves.'

#### *Managing Paśu/Puruṣa Polarity:*

Genetically we are *paśu*. As Ananda Coomaraswamy puts it: 'Man as an animal (*paśu*) has no other end in view than that of existence, and can subsist as animal on "bread alone"..., but man as a person

*The basic process of integral management of artha and kāma is thus one which keeps them in creative tension with dharma and mokṣa.*

(*puruṣa*) has other ends before him (*puruṣārtha*).' (1977, 1986: 72). The movement from *paśu* to *puruṣa*, or rather the channeling of the biological and all that it implies, is regulated by the quest for integration, which we call, translating the concept, as deliberately-willed self actualization, and not the desultory pursuit of all that appears desirable.

#### *Aesthetic Analogy*

If neutralizing the instinctively desirable

selfishness—and by implication the impelling desire to achieve maximum profits—appears as impossible, the apparently irrefutable logic is controverted by our experience of contexts where this is evident. This is the world of aesthetic relish. In Indic aesthetics; the basic *sthāyībhāvas* (enduring feelings)—such as passion, fear and pity—, when subjected to the process of generalization, yield, through transcendence of the taint of self-ishness, the *rasa* of pure delight. In effect, we *do* possess the interior ability to transcend the biologically given. This is effortless and therefore exempt from strategies of deliberate manipulation, from motivated managerial skills.

Aesthetic relish spontaneously experienced suggests, analogically, a level of consciousness which could be described as, by and large, disinterested. Therefore, one could think, implicitly, of values sustained not by any apparent motivation of self-advancement but by something transcending it. In these terms the basic problem of management is: how to inform the effortlessly impelling desire for *artha* and *kāma* by the values of *dharma* and *mokṣa*.

#### *Marx/Freud Harmony through Yajña:*

*Artha* and *kāma* are basically, in contemporary context, the Marxian, the economic, and the Freudian, the emotive, systems. Though the former is a *means* to the realization of what the latter conceives as desired ends, if it is not informed by knowledge *jñāna*, of the desirability of these ends, the entire attempt becomes meaningless. Pursuit of *artha* in such contexts is not only *anartha*, fatal, but also *artharahita*, meaningless. Since *artha* has the connotation of both money and meaning, we can infer that money becomes meaningful only if it is validated by other, transcending ends. Thus it is not a 'monotone' value (as Gregory Bateson calls it) assuming monstrous proportions of pure profit, but an integral



component of what Swamiji calls 'toned-down materialism'. Similarly, the overriding, often relentless, desire for desire—*kāma*—is in one sense what Freud calls the pursuit of the pleasure principle. But this is pleasure which ensures, in the process of its realization, the minimal possible disorientation, individually and collectively. Thus *artha* and *kāma*, the imperatives of economy and pleasure, are *not* denuded of their great strength. Only these should not be viewed in abstraction but in the holistic system of *dharma* and *mokṣa*.

management of the knowledge to manage these materials. The knowledge imperative here is implicit in the very structure of *yajña*. *Yajña* is doing something not for oneself alone. In other words, this is reaping the fruit not by the performer but by another who is not related by ties of blood or any other kind. In management/organizational terms, this is agent/dividend polarity. The agent works for the customer, maximizing the dividend; and, unless the attitude of helping another—but probably delighting in the happiness thus occasioned for

*Abhudaya is the system of secular management, and niḥsreyasa is the meta-system which channels the secular... The map of this interior and outer management is the puruṣārtha, the harmonizing of dharma, artha, kāma and mokṣa... This is playing the game of management with your eye on profit-priority and altruistic ultimacy. Divorce of the one from the other is according primacy to owning as being, and the onset of purposelessness as the invariable of affluence without orientations.*

#### *Yajña: Movement from Self-interest to Interest in Self*

The basic process of integral management of *artha* and *kāma* is thus one which keeps them in creative tension with *dharma* and *mokṣa*. This is one of transcendence in the sense of 'the building of a *terministic bridge* whereby one realm is *transcended* by being viewed in terms of a realm "beyond" it.' Thus, *artha* and *kāma* are transcendence downward, and *dharma* and *mokṣa* are transcendence upward. Or, rather for the context of management, this is seeing the *felt facts* of profit and the pleasure stemming thereby, in terms of corresponding correlatives, in the light of imperceptible but indispensable *ideas*. This is, in the metaphors of Edward de Bono, matching appropriate shoes to desired action. If the one reflects desires, the other exemplifies criteria.

The recoverable strategy here is *yajña*. Indic thought identifies two categories: *dravya yajña* and *jñāna yajña*. The one is management of materials, the other is the

another—is ingrained, management will turn out to be a relentless, ruthless pursuit of one's own ends. The movement here is from loyalty to material rewards—or perks—to commitment to integrity. This integrity is loyalty—to others as extensions of normative patterns.

#### *Artha/Kāma: Products/Dharma-Mokṣa Norms Person-Principle Complex*

*Yajña* in effect involves sacrifice and, if sacrifice appears outlandish, one has to recall a crucial, felt fact: when, out of stiff competition, new and newer products get introduced—quite often without our realizing the implications—they radically alter economic, social and political perspectives. Thus, paradoxically, the quality of the product can be ensured without taking into account the related norm of the need for its consumption. With the arrival of electronic media of incredible ranges of reachability, and the consequent global shrinkage (computer's artificial intelligence threatening to replace creativity and innovation), the



question of integrity, quality and environment appear peripheral, almost irrelevant.

In these terms *artha* and *kāma* constitute individual loyalty to growth, while *dharma* and *mokṣa* embody impersonal, normative obligations which restrain this growth from becoming one-sided. These obligations range from loyalty to the individual concern to loyalty to basic values. In effect, the modern management situation, in which ownership is often separate from management, the idea of loyalty to the owner's well-being and not commitment to values of society as a whole may create an amoral ethos. Thus, if accepting change effortlessly to confront ever-shifting trends and orienting this change to demonstrable results (of more and more profit) is basic to managerial contexts, then this change as permanence may create the illusion that, there are no enduring evaluative frames legitimizing these changes channelled for growth.

Viewed thus, the modern business structure and the people who manipulate it are certainly reflective of the structure of yoga. If yoga is freedom from presuppositions and mental modifications, then analogously no company can survive with loyalty to presuppositions. It should be open—like the Yogi's mind—, functioning as a witness to modifications. This basic structure is impersonal, and freedom to choose and concentrate is its essence. In other words, we require for viable models a shift from managing and leading 'to serving as relays'—as impersonal receptacles of ideas/norms/values which restrain growth without correctives. The 'command and control' model of management, reflective of the intrusion of the military ethos into management, gives way to analysis and knowledge-based models. The proviso, implicitly, in this is analysis of the self and knowledge of the norms regulating the self. This is *samanvaya*, or synchronicity, of a

catalyst assisting change and a thinker implicated in the process of informing changes with values. Simplistically, this would mean the fine art of delegating work but not relinquishing responsibility.

#### *Responses Redefined in Terms of Integral Growth:*

Management thus conceived blends the genetic and the holistic. It does not centralize purely economic/hedonistic models of growth. This is pathological dichotomizing of human consciousness. In such a case scarcity and plentitude remain the achievable and the avoidable poles of an exclusively sensate culture. Similarly, exclusive pursuit of *dharma* and *mokṣa* create a passivity and inertia (*tamas* in Hindu typology of human qualities) reflecting ritualism and escapism. In other words, the integral map tempers *accountability* to cognizable goals, economic and hedonistic, with responsibility to values—of transcendence and holistic bonding, *mokṣa* and *dharma*. The strange thing, one eventually realizes, is that *artha* and *kāma* are initial (and therefore tentative) correlates, metaphorically, of ultimate meaning and fulfilment. The former are neither rejected or deified; they are recycled.

*Abhyudaya* and *niḥśreyasa* are thus seen as interlocking systems of holistic growth. It involves the triple structure of *icchā*, *jñāna* and *kriyā śaktis* (the power to wish, know, and act). They require what one expert calls the practice of the art of grace under pressure, of 'peaceful dissatisfaction', 'of merging the spirit of achievement with the joy of what you yourself are'. In effect, what Zen Buddhists call 'calming the mind' and 'discerning the real' are the two simultaneously flowing currents of this integral growth.

#### *Conclusion: Warrant for This Conceptual Model:*

If the above appears a streamlined—  
(Continued on page 507)



# Vaishnavism in Retrospect

PROF. R.K. ACHARJEE

*Bhakti Yoga, the path of devotion to God, is the well-known spiritual discipline naturally preferred by most people. However, its Vedic origin, historical development in India, the great teachers of this Yoga and their contributions, remains unknown to many. The author, who is a Reader in Philosophy, Ramakrishna Mahavidyalaya, North Tripura, presents a brief and interesting outline of the Bhakti Movement.*

Vaiṣṇavism, as a distinct religious faith enriched by a number of religious concepts, beliefs and practices coming from various sources, and nourished by a galaxy of outstanding mystics and saints hailing from different regions of India, has a history of its own. The task of tracing the general course of its development requires painstaking survey and research, which is obviously outside the purview of our present study. Nevertheless, it is held that even a sketchy account of the historical origin and development of Vaiṣṇavism in India might afford us the correct perspective of present discourse, and hence an attempt is made in that direction.

Vaiṣṇavism, as the very name suggests, means that particular theistic religion which is concerned with the worship of Viṣṇu as the Supreme Deity. Viṣṇu, as a great God, is mentioned several times in the *Ṛg-Veda* itself and also in other Vedic literature. In the *Ṛg-Veda*, Viṣṇu is viewed as a solar god, but he had not been elevated to the status of the Supreme Deity. In several Purāṇas also, Viṣṇu has been mentioned. Again, in some late Vedic verses and Smṛti texts, Nārāyaṇa has been eulogized and placed in the status of the Supreme Spirit, and later identified with Viṣṇu. The earliest evidence in favour of this identification is found in the *Baudhāyana-Dharma-Sūtra* written between 600 BC to 300 BC.

Vaiṣṇavism is also called the 'religion of

the Bhāgavatas', i.e., of the worshippers of Bhāgavata, who according to epic literature, is Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa. Several pages of the *Mahābhārata* suggest the identification of Vāsudeva, Viṣṇu and Nārāyaṇa. A study of various historical records proves convincingly that by the 5th century BC, Viṣṇu had already been identified with Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa, and that the main stories of Kṛṣṇa as related in the *Mahābhārata* and *Harivaṃśa* were well known. Bhāgavatism, in course of time, incorporated the earlier cult of Nārāyaṇa and developed into Vaiṣṇavism. Epigraphic evidence shows that the Bhāgavata School existed long before the Christian era. Bhāgavatism appears to be a composite religion embracing within itself certain dogmas, beliefs and practices which are probably all not Āryan.

By the second century AD, the *Bhāgavata* came to be generally known by the name *Pañcharātra-Agama*. The meaning of the term 'pañcharātra' cannot be definitely ascertained. Some scholars have made attempts to trace the origin of the Pañcharātra doctrine to some passages of the *Śatapatha-Brahmana*. But this does not appear tenable. On the contrary, it seems highly probable that, Hinduism, in order to counteract the growing popularity of Buddhism, evolved a popular religion including therein certain practices which are not all Vedic. Pañcharātra put great emphasis on image worship which does not go well with the

Vedic religion. The common point between the doctrines of Pañcharātra and Bhāgavatism is their belief in Vāsudeva as the transcendental Deity. Nevertheless, some competent scholars, both medieval and modern, consider the two doctrines to be independent of each other.

It is interesting to note that the *Gītā* has nowhere mentioned the Pañcharātra. Bāṇa, in the *Harṣacarita*, a treatise written in the middle of the seventh century AD, mentions the Bhāgavatas and the Pañcharātrikas as distinct from each other. In all probability Pañcharātra is a distinct popular religious cult and is non-Vedic in origin. However, in later years Yāmunācārya, the actual founder of Viśiṣṭādvaita philosophy, wrote elaborate commentaries on the Pañcharātra doctrines and attempted to establish the thesis that it was indeed a Vedic doctrine. Whatever might be its origin and relation with the Bhāgavatism (Vaiṣṇavism), its influence in shaping the emotional texture and rituals of Vaiṣṇavism is undoubtedly tremendous and far-reaching. Yāmunācārya and Rāmānuja were instrumental in introducing the rituals described in the Pañcharātra texts into almost all the Vaiṣṇava temples.

Historically speaking, during *Saka-Kusāna* period, Bhāgavatism was a dominant religious faith of a large number of people. From that time onwards, this popular religious system continued to exert considerable influence on the masses, and later on merged into Vaiṣṇavism. Historical documents, literary data and archaeological studies bear clear evidence to the effect that in the Gupta and post-Gupta period, Vaiṣṇavism was firmly established as a dominant faith along with Buddhism and Jainism in Bengal. Some of the Gupta monarchs were ardent devotees of Vāsudeva while others were the worshippers of Viṣṇu, but both often assumed the titles '*Parama Bhāgavata*', and in some cases

'*Parama Vaiṣṇava*'.

Though some of the Gupta rulers professed the Bhāgavata form of Vaiṣṇavism, nothing definite can be asserted about their actual religious practices. Of all the Gupta kings, Chandragupta-II and his son Kumārgupta in particular, made sustained efforts for popularizing Bhāgavatism among the royal houses and also among the masses. It needs to be mentioned that during the Gupta era Vaiṣṇavism was predominantly a cult of Viṣṇu-worship, though historical evidence of later Gupta period (e.g., the Bhitari-pillar inscription) testifies that, belief in Kṛṣṇa as the incarnation of Viṣṇu was prevalent during that period. The example of the Gupta emperors was followed by numerous dynasties of Northern and Southern India.

Even a very brief history of Vaiṣṇava faith and movement in India cannot ignore the development of Vaiṣṇavism in South India, especially during 11th and 12th centuries AD. Śrīvaiṣṇavism, an elevated form of Vaiṣṇavism, reshaped the Vaiṣṇava faith in the South where it was very much alive for centuries. The Śrīvaiṣṇava sect was founded by Ācārya Nāthmuni (AD 824-924), and his grandson, Yāmunācārya, laid down the basic framework of the system. This was subsequently developed by Rāmānuja and placed on the firm philosophic basis of Viśiṣṭādvaita philosophy.

Śrīvaiṣṇavism is said to have spread its roots into the Ālvār movement also in the South. The Ālvārs were God-intoxicated mystic-poets who flourished in the Tamil region. It is difficult to determine the dates of the Ālvārs. The general belief is that they probably belonged to the period between 6th to 9th centuries AD. The Ālvārs are traditionally counted to be twelve in number. Among them there were both brāhmins and non-brāhmins, including a woman, the



famous Āṇḍāl, whose life and practices bear close resemblance to that of the *gopīs* (milkmaids) of Vrindavan. She developed divine love for the deity, Śrī Ranganātha, for whom she had an all-absorbing attachment, as that of a lover for her beloved. The significant feature of the Ālvārs' movement is its cult of *bhakti* (devotion). They considered worldly wealth and enjoyment transient; union with Viṣṇu through absolute self-surrender and loving devotion was the cherished dream of the Ālvārs. They were inspired by the love of the *gopīs* for Kṛṣṇa. They also sang in praise of Viṣṇu, Nārāyaṇa and Kṛṣṇa as well as of the *avatāras* (incarnations), Dāśarathi-Rāma, Balarāma and Vāmana. The cult of *bhakti* and the path of self-surrender (*prapatti*), which came to be recognized as the distinctive features of Vaiṣṇavism in general, can be noticed in the Ālvārs' movement also.

Vaiṣṇavism as we understand it today was first developed into a coherent system by Rāmānuja (AD 1017–1137), who synthesized together the luminous thoughts and insights of the past saints and savants and established it on the sound foundation of Vedantic metaphysics. A verse in the *Padma-purāṇa* mentions only four Vaiṣṇava sects, namely Śrī, Brāhma, Rudra and Sanaka. Rāmānuja, who belonged to the Śrīvaiṣṇava cult, 'firmly grafted the devotional creed of the Ālvārs and the ritualistic creed of the Pañcharātrikas to the Vedantic doctrine, so that henceforth it was impossible to deride the Viṣṇu worshippers as non-Vedic. Pañcharātra rituals could now be adopted in temples without any stigma being attached to it.'<sup>1</sup> Rāmānuja is undoubtedly the most outstanding personality who contributed in a large measure in shaping Vaiṣṇavism into an impressive religious creed and an integrated philosophical

doctrine strengthened by Upaniṣadic thought. However, the conception of Kṛṣṇa as a cowherd boy of Vrindavan and his romantic dalliances with Rādhā and the other *gopīs* is altogether absent in the Vaiṣṇavism expounded by Rāmānuja.

Nimbārka, a Telugu brāhmin, is another Vaiṣṇava savant who put great emphasis on the cult of *bhakti* and criticized the doctrine of *māyā* (unreality of the world). Nothing is definitely known about the period of Nimbārka. It is generally believed that he flourished sometime in the 11th century. The Nimbārka school [*Sanaka (Hansa)-Sampradāya*], unlike the Rāmānujites, gave exclusive importance to the doctrine of Kṛṣṇa's amorous relation with Rādhā and the other cowherd girls. This school repeatedly emphasized the efficacy of sweet, personal and most intimate relation of love between God and man. The path of *bhakti* is recognized as the most dependable means to God-realization. Nimbārka gave exclusive emphasis on *Mādhurya-pradhānā-bhakti*, i.e. devotion springing from love of God's infinite sweetness. And in this respect Nimbārka's disagreement with Rāmānuja and Madhva becomes evident, for both Rāmānuja and Madhva are the exponents of *Aiśvarya-pradhānā-bhakti*, i.e. devotion due to reverence for His incomparable greatness. 'In the sphere of religion, he (Nimbārka) strikes a happy balance between the rigid intellectualism of Advaita philosophy (which denies absolute reality to any personal relationship between God and man) and the impetuous emotionalism of later Vaiṣṇavism (which over-emphasizes such a relation), by giving a proper place to both reason and feeling, but not over-emphasizing one at the expense of the other.'<sup>2</sup>

1. Dr. A.K. Majumder, *Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇava Studies* (Jijnasa, Calcutta, 1978), p. 27.

2. *History of Philosophy: Eastern & Western*, Edited by Dr. S. Radhakrishnana (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1957), p. 346.

Another important Vaiṣṇava school in the South was founded by Mādhvācārya, or Ānandatīrtha, a Karnataka brāhmin who probably flourished in the 13th century (AD 1197–1276). This school is known as *Brahma-sampradāya*, which advocates adoration of Kṛṣṇa alone, not of Gopāla-Kṛṣṇa who is attended by Rādhā and the other *gopīs*. The Madhvas base their religious beliefs on the *Bhāgavata*, but denounce its *rāsapañcādhya-*section. Of the five kinds of personal relationship with the Lord, the Madhvas favour *dāsya* (service), in which the relation between God and the individual soul is like that between a master and his servant. The Madhvas are highly critical of Śaṅkara's theory of *māyā*.

Vallabhācārya, a Telugu brāhmin of the 15th century (born in AD 1479), exalted the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa worship which came to be recognized as a characteristic feature of Bengal Vaiṣṇavism in later years. In other words, Vallabha's Vaiṣṇavism centres round Kṛṣṇa, the beloved of the *gopīs*, and his eternal consort Rādhā. According to Vallabha the highest spiritual aim of man is to participate in the eternal sport of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā. Another feature of Vallabha's *Rudra-sampradāya* is its advocacy of *Puṣṭimārga*, or the path of divine grace. Divine grace enables attainment of *bhakti*, which ultimately paves the way to God-realization. The flame of Vaiṣṇava *sādhana* (Spiritual disciplines) lit up by these saints and scholars of the South still burns brightly.

The issues relating to the exact date, the original texture, and the principal sources of Vaiṣṇavism in Bengal present before us a vast area of fascinating study. In our present discourse we do not propose to undertake any enquiry in that direction. It will be well to remember that Vaiṣṇavism as a religious cult was not very new in Bengal, and it existed in some form or other long before the

advent of Śrī Chaitanya. It was current in Bengal in medieval times and was patronized by the Vaiṣṇavite Varmans of East Bengal and Lakṣmansena. But, in all probability, Vaiṣṇavism as practised during this period was of the form of general Bhāgavatism in which Viṣṇu was considered as the Supreme Deity. During the rule of Sena kings the cult of Viṣṇu was the most dominant force in the religious life of Bengal. The Pālas of Bengal were followers of Buddhism, and the fall of the Pāla dynasty hastened its fall in Bengal.

During the reign of the Senas, who succeeded the Pālas, there was some sort of a revival of Hinduism, with Vaiṣṇavism as a significant and supplementary mode of religious practice within the fold of Hinduism. Nevertheless, on the basis of literary, historical and archaeological data, it seems highly probable that Kṛṣṇa-worship was not unknown in Bengal during the 11th century. This view is substantiated by the Belava inscription of Bhojavarman which, following the *Bhāgavata*, mentions Kṛṣṇa as a companion of the *gopīs*. But here Kṛṣṇa is not elevated to the position of the Supreme Deity; he was simply an incarnation (*avatāra*). This suggests that Kṛṣṇa-worship was gradually gaining ground in Bengal. The Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa cult and the path of devotional love, which are distinctive marks of Neo-Vaiṣṇavism (now known as Bengal or Gauḍīa Vaiṣṇavism), inaugurated by Śrī Chaitanya, found expression in and through the poetical compositions of a galaxy of poets of Bengal, of whom special mention must be made of Jayadeva, Vidyāpati, and Candīdāsa.□

This world is the great gymnasium where we come to make ourselves strong.

—Swami Vivekananda



# From Learning to Knowing\*

SMT. NOBEENA GHOSH

He was a man who knew everything about the Sun.

He was a man of great wisdom and knowledge and had it all written in a book.

He knew on which side the Sun rose and on which it set.

He knew how far away it was and how much light it gave.

He knew its chemistry, he knew its physics.

He could say it all in mathematics; and, when he talked his students listened, entranced, for when he was inspired he talked and talked and talked as only a man of great learning can.

But then one morning he opened his window and SAW the Sun...

.....and he was rendered speechless.

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\* Here is a simple and captivating poem which stills the mind into introspection. The author, a subscriber to the journal and a pious housewife, resides in Calcutta.



# Feminism and Spirituality

DR. SMT. MEERA CHAKRAVORTY

*The Feminist Movement, which began, no doubt, as a reaction against male-domination, has progressed far and awakened a realization that women should work in co-operation with men on equal terms for mutual benefit. There is even a growing awareness that the Movement, transcending its particular concern for women, should address itself to issues such as poverty etc. which affect women and men. This way it can enlist men also and become stronger and more beneficial. The greatest success, however, will come when it consciously draws its rationale and inspiration from the source of morality and ethics, viz. the fact that women and men are equally spiritual.*

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## *Feminism: What it is*

Feminism is the expression of the oppressive experiences of women, who share unequally in every racial, ethnic, religious and other groups in spite of being half or the majority of humankind. Their experiences tell them that, though they are connected directly or indirectly with almost every activity in society, yet they are treated as outsiders. This certainly reflects on the internal dynamics of social history.

Feminism attempts to understand this by pointing out to women that they are objects of 'collective discrimination' within society. That they are deliberately prevented from greater participation in economic, social and political activities is slowly being realized by women themselves. The attitude of bias clearly shows a purposive attempt to victimize women. And yet, strangely enough, women live more intimately with their exploiters and oppressors than with each other! Feminism comes here specifically to bridge the gulf that exists between women, and to create a solidarity among women, to assert their rights, and to provide them with mutual support.

It is necessary to note that the terrible exploitation and victimization of women has been cleverly hidden by many historians. They blandly state that, those who lag behind in contributing to the development of society are women, because they are inferior in all respects. But if every individual is behind a society's development, he or she is equally accountable for those who lag behind. How can the victims alone be made accountable? When the reason adduced is the *development of society*, then moral duty demands individual responsibility as also responsibility to each other. We have forgotten the close relationship between the principle of moral duty, or responsibility, and the principle of reason. This is the categorical imperative that the German philosopher Immanuel Kant emphasized. And this is the categorical imperative that Gandhiji perceived when he said, 'Woman is the companion of man, gifted with equal mental capacities. She has the right to participate in every minute detail of the activities of man, and she has an equal right of freedom and liberty with him...Many of our movements stop halfway because of the condition of our women.'



Therefore feminism takes up such programmes as enable women to become aware of their 'being' and act on the basis of this perception. It also gives women a sense of group identity, and helps them take concerted action after assessing specific situations.

*What it should not be*

However, feminism should not be mere assertion of rights; nor is it just about how and when women became explicitly aware of themselves or of their group-identity. It should be concerned with more central questions: How do women perceive themselves in relation to others in society? How

actions be guided by a moral principle.

*Men as feminists*

Hence I would like to say: Today the aforementioned imperative demands of the feminists that desire to gain an upper hand over men should not be the primary consideration. Instead, they should try to carefully identify and weigh all the factors involved in any given matter, and, as carefully, examine the consequences of their actions. That is, feminists should take up such issues as would invite greater participation of men also. Thus men too could become 'feminists' in the broadest sense of the term. I would like to illustrate it in reference to the

*'Woman is the companion of man, gifted with equal mental capacities. She has the right to participate in every minute detail of the activities of man...Many of our movements stop halfway because of the condition of our women.'*

do women make relevant their experiences in society? What is their social and moral responsibility? Would not their experiences provide humankind with a higher self-understanding?

In my opinion, feminism should imply more than acting within the narrow definition of the term. It should mean acting in harmony with what is common to all people, and thus acting for human dignity—which lies within the framework of the categorical imperative. It is necessary to define this concept of Kant which proposes a concrete step towards understanding feminism. What Kant says is, 'Act only on the maxim through which you can at the same time will that it should become universal law.' This is of prime importance, since it means that, when one has to act, he or she has to act responsibly, considering how the consequences of his/her action is going to affect others. Such considerations would guide our actions and help us discover whether they are fit to be 'universal law'. Only in this way can our conviction and

policy of arms export. What a variety of conflicting interests are involved in this! The interests of the country exporting arms, the interests of the recipient country, and the interests of the common people of the two countries.

Now look at the moral contradiction involved: On the one hand, the government of the exporting country appears to be morally justified, because a flourishing arms trade conforms to the policy assuring employment to as many as possible, both men *and* women. But, on the other hand, these employees may be viewed as participating in an immoral activity which is likely to end in violence on both men *and* women of the importing country! And all the while the evil of violence particularly on women continues in both the countries. So, in addition to working against brutality against women, the feminists can take up issues as export of arms, and organize a protest together with men. For, any kind of violence is irrational and immoral, whether it is directed only at women or on men also.



*Feminism based on spiritualism*

Feminism in this perspective manifests in life only through spiritualism, especially in India. Since moral and ethical values derive their strength from spiritualism, it opens a deeper dimension of feminism. Spiritualism is not just an ideal, but a state to attain which those values are practised. Values, irrespective of their political, social or economic angles, attain their perfection in spirituality. And, often, this perfection extends beyond the welfare of human beings alone. It becomes a universal law enveloping the welfare of non-human beings as well. Spirituality is not only a state of constant passive concern for this welfare, but also corresponding action. Further, it rules out all prejudice, evasion, secrecy, and deception. It requires that we recognize our mistakes, that we give up our ego and grow. In his experiments with Truth, Gandhiji said, 'I must reduce myself to zero. So long as a man does not do this of his own free will and put himself last among his fellow creatures, there is no salvation for him.'

From this viewpoint, feminism transcends its conventional sense to emerge as a greater universal force. Thus the socio-ethical perspective on a problem—be it women's problem or any other—gets included in the spiritual perspective. For instance, Buddha's spiritual attainment helped him guide people morally and ethically in the social and political contexts, too. He categorically denied that his views were religious. They were intended to be moral norms rather than religious norms. He clearly perceived that ethical convictions could make an individual feel politically and socially responsible for his actions, which is more or less what Kant echoed. In the Upanishads, Janaka is described as the knower of Truth, one who had attained salvation. But he was also the best of the administrators.

Since spirituality perfects an individual and makes him or her an 'integrated being', one derives strength from it. If the existing political, social or economic conditions are making us feel weak, we should blame ourselves, because it is we who opted for certain wrong values. Therefore, following the message of the *Gītā*, we should choose a new set of values and act accordingly. This message is relevant to women too on the same grounds. The kind of degradation women are facing has no precedence in history. It is the result of attempting to create a society around the vision of man as the economic producer, reproducer and consumer, while women were given only minimal opportunity to produce and consume. Nevertheless, what women can do is to create the conditions necessary to change this imbalance. They should not feel that they are powerless, or remain passive hoping for better days. Since women are discriminated against, they have the greatest desire to bring about a change, and therefore will work hard for that.

*Gandhiji's views*

A very effective way of doing this is to get men involved, and to convince women that they must get men involved. It is important to note here that Gandhiji wanted this conviction to come to men also. That is why he said: 'Their (men's) first attempt should be directed towards awakening in the minds of as many women as possible a proper sense of their present condition. I am not among those who believe that such an effort can be made through literary education only. But education is essential for enabling women to uphold these natural rights, to improve them and to spread them. Again, the true knowledge of the Self is unattainable by the millions who are without such education.'

This concern for awakening women was greatly emphasized by that 'spiritual



agitator' Mahatma Gandhi. He had realized that, if we have to bring about radical changes in society, we cannot do it except by 'raising a ferment in society'. Women should remember this because, if they chose to protest through *satyāgraha*, they would be using but a spiritual means. For *satyāgraha* means 'bringing into operation a spirit of love and a sense of human brotherhood' in order to fight exploitation. Gandhiji's immense faith in God sustained him throughout his struggle and enabled him to lead such a phenomenal movement against the British. His insight into the concept of *ahimsa* comes from the Upanishads. *Ahimsa* for him 'is not merely a state of harmlessness, but it is a positive state of love, of doing good even to the evil-doer. But it does not mean helping the evil-doer to continue the wrong, or tolerating it by passive acquiescence.' Therefore, if women base their movements on spirituality, they too will acquire this great potential strength, which they only have to realize.

#### *Holy Mother as an ideal*

Another point to note is that, a deep sense of love and fellow feeling is one of the criteria of spiritual life. This has to be the basis of feminism, since this love is not passive—it is an active state, creative by itself. Nor is it selfish—it is universal and, therefore, it imposes an obligation on us to assess objectively a situation, a movement, or a person. A spiritual person does not rationalize himself/herself merely by pursuing a conventionally accepted just or moral end. His/her actions are preceded by a critical analysis of a situation and its context. To understand this better, an illustration from the life of Sri Sarada Devi, wife of Sri Ramakrishna, is necessary. Once Sarada (or the Holy Mother, as she is popularly known) was carrying food from the kitchen to her husband's room. She happened to see a woman who was considered 'wicked' by others. When Sri Ramakrishna came to

know about it, he admonished her, saying that she should have brought his food after the woman had left. She replied, 'How can I discriminate? I am the mother of all.'

This admirable and loving acceptance of one and all is not mere compassion, it comes from the depths of a spiritual life. A spiritual commitment and conviction of this kind is higher than a social or moral conscience. There are many such instances in Sarada Devi's life which are examples of feminism based on spirituality. So, I would like to repeat that feminism should not be looked upon as a 'war' between men and women: it is a dedication to a higher cause, manifested through different movements concerned about environment, health, education, employment, etc. It is only with this outlook that women's movement can become a people's movement, in which the good of all humanity is of chief interest. Sarada Devi's life symbolizes this in a spontaneous way. We can derive inspiration from her for the anti-discrimination movement as also for working concertedly towards such goals as nuclear disarmament.

*(Feminism) bespeaks of an ethic for humanity based on the fundamental freedom of women and also of all human beings. To me it is something more: it is a guide with an ethic enshrining the Spirit.*

#### *Spiritual feminism in action*

In other words, a harmonious relationship between the principles of moral duty and reason is possible in the ethics of feminism. This has been shown by Sarada Devi, Meera, and Akka Mahadevi through their lives. The positive role played by Sarada, especially after the death of Sri Ramakrishna, is of tremendous importance. Her guidance to the Swamis and devotees during their struggle and conflicts filled the vacuum created by her husband's death. When miseries and conflicts came, the



capacity to maintain mental balance was always provided by the Holy Mother. Her commitment to humanity and its service, her unerring advice whenever there was a necessity, her understanding of various problems and the importance of co-operation imparted fresh energy and vision to the monks and others around her. Rightly has she been considered mainly responsible for the Ramakrishna Movement.

Extending the argument, moral duty is more than a demand for justice. For instance, in the matter of a policy for peace, just maintaining a balance of power is not enough. The policy should express one's commitment to peace, a willingness to change one's attitude, a will to co-operate. Since this is true from a spiritual standpoint, it naturally becomes valid also in the politico-social or economic context. Unfortunately most of us take these truths as mere ideals. But Sarada Devi showed it in her actions. An increase in one's spiritual consciousness is always accompanied by a conduct charged with universal love and

active concern for others, and *vice versa*. So, great results can follow if women's groups took up, with a spiritual ideal, issues related to women as also to the whole world, such as poverty, health, etc. This would remove misconceptions about feminism, and enhance people's trust in it. It would also bring a new spiritual ethic into human activities, and arouse a desire for enlightenment.

To conclude, I feel that feminism should derive its strength from spiritualism to become a movement of moral and social conscience, and even go far beyond this to become a movement for enlightenment. As it is, feminism is increasingly highlighting the values which are fundamental to our social, economic and political goals. Therefore, it has got the greatest potential to become a popular worldwide movement. It bespeaks of an ethic for humanity based on the fundamental freedom not just of all women but also of all human beings. To me it is something more: it is a guide with an ethic enshrining the Spirit. □

## The Purusharthas: A Map of Integral Management

(Continued from page 497)

finely drawn, but functionally futile, academic-model, I can only quote Peter F. Drucker as a defense:

In its structure and in its management problems and concerns (large business twenty years from hence) will bear little resemblance to the typical manufacturing company, ... which our textbooks still consider the norm. Instead, it is far more likely to resemble organizations that neither the practising manager nor the management scholar pays much attention to today—the hospital, the univer-

sity, the symphony orchestra.

My context in a university is the warrant for this text.

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# Swamiji on Indian Women

SWAMI TATHAGATANANDA

*Uplift of women through education was one of the two dearest priorities of Swamiji for India's advancement. The Government too has been trying to spread literacy among women and enhance their status in various ways. To say the least, its approach has remained confused, and is totally at variance with the country's traditional reverence for women as the protectors of culture and spiritual ideals. Swamiji's views in the matter are of utmost importance if women's education is to become purposeful. We hope that well-placed women will take up the problems of women, and give shape to Swamiji's ideas.*

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## *India's fundamental outlook*

A nation lives by the idealism that shapes its destiny. Its civilization is sustained by the ability to transmit to posterity the spiritual elements of its idealism. The dominant feature of India is her emphasis on the development of spiritual life, which finds fulfilment in seeking God within and without. The essential feature of her outlook on life is the glorification of spirit over matter, light over darkness, and eternal freedom over temporal enjoyments. Experience has taught her that the philosophy of material self-sufficiency is dangerous as it keeps us bound to the objective world. The real fulfilment of human life is found in the realization of Truth, which makes us absolutely free. The one doctrine by which Indian idealism is best identified by able thinkers is that of '*Tat tvam asi*—That thou art': The divine which is within us, and which is behind everything, is the essence of our soul.

The Indian attitude accepts the spirit in man as immortal, eternal, all-pervading, unchanging, immovable. By realizing this great truth about ourselves, we become free and divine. The Indian mind is dominated by this vision of truth. An eternal longing for the realm of the spirit, a deep and abiding

faith in the divinity of man, and the hope of having spiritual experience in life are the distinguishing features of the Indian way of thinking.

The Indian mind does not create division between nature and spirit, between worldly life and spiritual quest. It seeks to establish harmony in life by accepting a divine unity behind diversity. The goal of religion is to lay open this unitary basis of life. With the awakening and deepening of our spiritual consciousness, we see divinity within and without. To have this awakening, which leads to communion with the Divine, with God, is the goal of Indian culture, which makes a clear distinction between intellectual acceptance and spiritual realization. Ideas and ideals are not dead things. They are living and charged with immense vitality. They impel us to become aware that life is not merely a physical phenomenon or a biological process, but that it is divine.

## *Women are custodians of culture*

In every age India has produced exalted souls who radiated this great culture through their illumined character. Many of them have remained unknown, but their spiritual glow has inspired millions of men



and women of all persuasions to keep alive the sacred inspiration; to strive to make their own lives spiritually oriented, and to encourage their descendants and others too to civilize the race through self-dedication to the divine. In the modern period India gave birth to a number of great women who dedicated themselves to realize truth even in their household surroundings. Their unselfish character, abiding loyalty, loving-heart, and the capacity to undergo hardships for the spiritual ideal have enabled us to remember our divine heritage. Women everywhere are the custodians of culture. So, the position of women in any

In India, too, women have been the custodians of culture. The home and its healthy atmosphere were the cradle of spiritual training. However, Indian culture deteriorated from the day her women were deprived of their eminent place in the social structure. Swamiji had noted this. Writing to Sister Nivedita on 29 July 1897, he says:

Let me tell you frankly that, I am now convinced that you have a great future in the work for India. What was wanted was not a man, but a woman; a real lioness, to work for the Indians, women specially. India cannot yet produce great

*Indian culture deteriorated from the day her women were deprived of their eminent place in the social structure. Swamiji said, 'Women must be put in a position to solve their own problems in their own way. No one can, or ought to, do this for them. And our Indian women are as capable of doing it as any in the world.'*

society is a true index of its spiritual and cultural growth. Through their loving sacrifices other members of the family become sober, gentle and civilized.

If each woman were to dedicate her life to creating harmony and peace in the family, this world will certainly become a better place to live in. 'The refinement of man by woman is said to be the essence of civilization.' The impulsive and harsh nature of man is changed through the power of the pure and loving woman. A healthy and peaceful family life is the basic unit of a global village. No wonder that the ancient lawgiver, Manu, said: 'One Vedic teacher excels ten ordinary teachers in glory; but a mother excels even a thousand fathers in glory.' It has been well said, 'Centuries of life make a little history, and centuries of history make a little tradition.' A culture may be compared to 'a torch that is passed on from hand to hand down the generations.' And in this transmission the role of mothers is crucial.

women, she must borrow them from other nations. your education, sincerity, purity, immense love, determination and, above all, the Celtic blood make you just the woman wanted.<sup>1</sup>

#### *Women's present-day problems*

Backwardness of the women and the people in general made Swamiji restless, and he never tired of exhorting us to cooperate to find solutions to the problem. Sister Nivedita writes:

Our Master, at any rate, regarded the Order to which he belonged as one whose lot was cast for all time with the cause of Woman and the People. This was the cry that rose to his lips instinctively, when he dictated to the phonograph in America, the message he should send to the Raja of Khetri. It was the one thought, too, with which he would turn to the disciple at his side, whenever he felt himself nearer than

1. *The Letters of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1981).



usual to death, in a foreign country, alone, 'Never forget!' he would then say, 'the word is, "Woman and the People"'.<sup>2</sup>

Swamiji's own spiritual experience, backed by his deep and penetrating knowledge of Vedanta, enabled him to see God behind man and woman. Therefore he was convinced of their innate capacity to elevate their position by harnessing this divine energy. Hence Swamiji said: 'The uplift of the women and the awakening of the masses must come first, and then only can any real good come about for the country, for India.'<sup>3</sup> His emphatic opinion on the subject was: 'In India, there are two great evils: trampling on the women, and grinding the poor through caste restrictions.'<sup>4</sup> Swamiji had a great hope in the potential of our women. He said: 'Women must be put in a position to solve their own problems in their own way. No one can, or ought to, do this for them. And our Indian women are as capable of doing it as any in the world.'<sup>5</sup>

#### *Educate women*

To Swamiji 'education' is the key that will open the door to this advancement.

Of course, they have many and grave problems, but none that are not to be solved by that magic word 'education'.<sup>6</sup> ...with such an education, women will solve their own problems. They have all

the time been trained in helplessness, servile dependence on others, and so they are good only to weep their eyes out at the slightest approach of a mishap or danger. Along with other things they should acquire the spirit of valour and heroism. In the present day, it has become necessary for them also to learn self-defence. See how grand was the queen of Jhansi!<sup>7</sup>

According to him, education is 'the manifestation of perfection already in man', and religion is the innermost core of that education. The human being is endowed with infinite power and potentiality. The role of a comprehensive education is to enable the student to bring forth that power and accomplish 'life-building, man-making, character-making, assimilation of ideas.'<sup>8</sup> Swamiji spelled out his scheme for national regeneration:

My idea is first of all to bring out the gems of spirituality that are stored up in our books and in the possession of a few only, hidden, as it were, in monasteries and in forests—to bring them out; to bring the knowledge out of them, not only from the hands where it is hidden, but from the still more inaccessible chest, the language in which it is preserved, the incrustation of centuries of Sanskrit words. In one word, I want to make them popular.<sup>9</sup>

Swamiji no doubt looked upon women as *Śakti*, Spiritual Energy, incarnate. Therefore he never accepted an absolute inequality between the sexes. As he wrote: 'It is very difficult to understand why in this country (India) so much difference is made between men and women, whereas the

2. cf. *The Master As I Saw Him* (Calcutta: Udbodhan Office, 1972), p. 280.

3. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989), Vol. 6, p. 445.

4. Swami Vivekananda, *Our Women* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1974), p. 45.

5. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. 5, pp. 229–30.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 231.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 342.

8. *Ibid.*, Vol. 3, p. 302.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 290.



Vedanta declares that one and the same conscious Self is present in all beings.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, he was aware of the psychological and physiological differences between male and female. So, he felt that, since this distinc-

another thing great. When you are judging man and woman, judge them by the standard of their respectiveness greatness. One cannot be in the other's shoes.<sup>11</sup>

*He wanted Indian women to acquire the intellectual brilliance of Gargi, the spiritual resources and fearlessness of Savitri, and the physical prowess of Lakshmi Bai. In the present day, it has become necessary for them also to learn self-defence.*

tion is true only at a certain level, men should not oppress women, nor need men and women compete with each other. Each is great in his or her own place as assigned by nature. Their roles are complementary: A perfect balance and harmony can be achieved for the real well being of the society through their mutual cooperation based on cordiality and respect. Swamiji said:

Woman is as courageous as man. Each is equally good in his or her own way. What man can bring up a child with such patience, endurance, and love as a woman can? The one has developed the power of doing, the other, the power of suffering. If woman cannot act, neither can man suffer. The whole universe is one of perfect balance. I do not know, but some day we may wake up and find that the mere worm has something which balances our manhood. The most wicked person may have some good qualities that I entirely lack. I see that every day of my life. Look at the savage! I wish I had such a splendid physique. He eats, he drinks, to his heart's content, without knowing perhaps what sickness is, while I am suffering every minute. How many times would I have been glad to have changed my brain for his body! The whole universe is only a wave and a hollow; there can be no wave without a hollow. Balance everywhere. You have one thing great, your neighbour has

So he frequently urged that equal rights and opportunities be made available to women too.

### *Woman as Spiritual Energy*

In her special capacity a woman's life is fulfilled in motherhood. In her motherhood we see the manifestation of a divine quality—self-forgetting and self-sacrificing love that knows no limitations. So Indians see every woman on earth—irrespective of her social status and age—as an embodiment of sweetness, ungrudging love, patience, forbearance, modesty, and such other divine qualities. She is a true replica of the Divine Mother, eternally engaged in the welfare of her children. Speaking about Sri Ramakrishna, his spiritual preceptor, Swamiji said:

This man (Sri Ramakrishna) meant by worshipping woman, that to him every woman's face was that of the Blissful Mother, and nothing but that. I myself have seen this man standing before those women whom society would not touch, and falling at their feet bathed in tears, saying, 'Mother, in one form Thou art in the street, and in another form Thou art the universe. I salute Thee, Mother, I salute Thee.'<sup>12</sup>

Following the great teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, Swamiji regarded all women, high or low, ascetic or householder, married

10. *Ibid.*, Vol. 7, p. 214.

11. *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 26.

12. *Ibid.*, Vol. 4, p. 176.



or unmarried, child or adult, as the living and visible embodiment of the Divine Mother. Therefore he exhorted us to worship them in a pure way, as Mothers. They are *Śakti*, or Power of God. Says Swamiji:

Do you know who is the real *Śakti*-worshipper? It is he who knows that God is the omnipresent force in the universe and sees in women the manifestation of that force. Many men here (in America) look upon their women in this light. Manu, again, has said that gods bless those families where women are happy and well treated. Here men treat their women as well as can be desired, and hence they are so prosperous, so learned, so free, and so energetic. But why is it that we (in India) are slavish, miserable, and dead? The answer is obvious.<sup>13</sup> ...Now, the ideal of women in India is Mother, the mother first, and the mother last. The word *woman* calls up to the mind of the Hindu, motherhood; and God is called Mother.<sup>14</sup>

*Women reveal Motherhood of God*  
Swamiji says further:

In India, the mother is the centre of the family and our highest ideal. She is to us the representative of God, as God is the Mother of the Universe....Our God is both personal and absolute; the absolute is male, the personal female. And thus, it comes that we now say: 'The first manifestation of God is the hand that rocks the cradle.'<sup>15</sup>

This great cultural heritage, if allowed to orient our mind, will enhance the dignity of national life.

Without being able to create this spiritual consciousness with respect to women also, it is not possible to teach ethics. Swamiji wanted us to cultivate a sympathetic attitude so that 'we should look upon man (and woman) in the most charitable light.' Even the public women received sympathy from him. 'I have to sneer at the woman walking in the street, because society wants it! She, my saviour, she, whose street-walking is the cause of the chastity of other women! Think of that. Think, men and women, of this question in your mind.'<sup>16</sup>

Hindu scriptures declare that mother is superior to father, because of her painstaking vocation of motherhood. She cheerfully and courageously undertakes the responsibility of nurturing the child, and thereby commands our respect. Hence the mother is more worthy of veneration than father or anyone else. Building on the natural self-sacrifice inherent in motherhood, their cultural training encourages them to honour the ideals of chastity, unselfishness, patience, and forbearance with the hope of raising the spiritual consciousness of the people.

To the Hindu mind, marriage is sacred, and family life, imbued with this sublime attitude, affords each member the unique scope to manifest his or her native divine qualities through mutual service and self-sacrifice. Conjugal love is sublimated into devotion to the spiritual welfare of the entire family, helping all to widen and deepen their character, and to perform their domestic and social duties as a means to spiritual growth and enlightenment.

Ay! The Hindu mind fears all those ideals which say that the flesh must cling unto the flesh. No, no! Woman! thou

13. *Ibid.*, Vol. 5, p. 26.

14. *Ibid.*, Vol. 8, p. 57.

15. *Prabuddha Bharata*, October 1992, p. 433.

16. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. 2, p. 34.



shalt not be coupled with anything connected with the flesh. The name has been called holy once and for ever, for what name is there which no lust can ever approach, no carnality ever come near, than the one word *mother*? That is the ideal in India.<sup>17</sup>

#### *Sanctity of marriage*

Motherhood is the natural outcome of wifehood. A Hindu woman enters into

be prevented—what can we expect of such progeny?<sup>19</sup>...[These children] may be veritable demons—burning, murdering, robbing, stealing, drinking, hideous, vile.<sup>20</sup>

Instead of suppressing and exploiting women, what should men inspire women to achieve? The ideal woman of India, as envisioned by Swamiji, was the one who could emulate the greatness of Sita, Savitri,

*He could not foresee a Hindu woman of the future entirely without the old power of meditation. Modern science, women must learn; but not at the cost of spirituality... The frivolous, the luxurious, and the denationalized, however splendid in appearance, was to his thinking not educated, but rather degraded.*

family life to prepare herself through austerity, penances, fasts, and prayers to become a good mother. Their physical contact takes place with

the greatest prayer between man and wife, the prayer that is going to bring into the world another soul fraught with a tremendous power for good or for evil. Is it a joke? Is it a simple nervous satisfaction? Is it a brute enjoyment of the body? Says the Hindu: no, a thousand times, no!<sup>18</sup>

A woman's awareness of her own spiritual nature, a proper respect for women, and a pure relationship between parents are essential for a good society. According to the old Hindu tradition, a child is born through prayer. The child must be prayed for. Otherwise, mere romantic love, frivolous attitudes, and sensuous enjoyment do not help to bring forth good children.

Those children that come with curses, that slip into this world, just in a moment of inadvertence, because that could not

Gargi, and Lakshmi Bai, the Queen of Jhansi. Swamiji paid eloquent tribute to the immortal character of Sita—'this glorious Sita, purer than purity itself, all-patience and all-suffering.' At the same time he wanted Indian women to acquire the intellectual brilliance of Gargi, the spiritual resources and fearlessness of Savitri, and the physical prowess of Lakshmi Bai. Indian women should make themselves models of high idealism based on spiritual excellence, practical efficiency and dynamism. They should be self-reliant, courageous, and active, without losing the feminine qualities which add spiritual grace to their lives.

Swami Vivekananda, the modern prophet of the Motherhood of God and the divinity of all women, has given us a blueprint for social regeneration on the firm basis of spiritual equality of the sexes. Unless spiritual evolution takes place in a substantial manner, unless spiritual consciousness takes deep root in our mind, healthy relationships between the sexes can never be established and, consequently, a real welfare-society cannot be developed.

17. *Ibid.*, Vol. 8, p. 58.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 61.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 60.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 62.



Swamiji was a great lover of freedom, but the ideal of having total emancipation from the weakness of the body-mind complex is what he meant. That was dearest to his heart. His idea, in the context of women's uplift, was expressed by Nivedita!

He would never tolerate any scheme of life and policy that tended to bind tighter on mind and soul the fetter of the body. The greater the individual, the more could she transcend the limitations of femininity in mind and character, and the more was such transcendence to be expected and admired.<sup>21</sup>

*What an Indian woman should be*

Though he knew of the great privileges enjoyed by the western women to manifest their personalities, and he had on many occasions spoken eulogistically of them, Swamiji never lost sight of his main point—the goal of human life is to seek total freedom—*moksha*. He was very explicit in this regard:

Hinduism indicates one duty, only

21. *The Master As I Saw Him*, p. 286.

one, for the human soul. It is to seek to realize the permanent amidst the evanescent. No one presumes to point out any one way in which this may be done. Marriage or non-marriage, good or evil, learning or ignorance, any of these is justified, if it leads to that goal.<sup>22</sup>

Nivedita writes: 'He could not foresee a Hindu woman of the future entirely without the old power of meditation. Modern science, women must learn; but not at the cost of the ancient spirituality.'<sup>23</sup> 'The frivolous, the luxurious, and the de-nationalized, however splendid in appearance, was to his thinking not educated, but rather degraded. A modernized Indian woman, on the other hand, in whom he saw the old-time intensity of trustful and devoted companionship to the husband, with the old-time loyalty to the wedded kindred, was still to him, "the ideal Hindu wife"'.<sup>24</sup> His idea was to have a synthesis, an ideal, where the ideas of the East and the West will be happily combined. □

22. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. 5, p. 232.

23. *The Master As I Saw Him*, p. 283.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 282.

...The age of St. Paul, however, is gone; we are to be the new lights for this day. A self-adjusting organization is the great need of our time. When we can get one, that will be the last religion of the world. The wheel must turn, and we should help it, not hinder.

The waves of religious thought rise and fall and on the topmost one stands the 'prophet of the period'. Ramakrishna came to teach the religion of today, constructive, not destructive. He had to go afresh to Nature to ask for facts and he got scientific religion, which never says 'believe', but 'see'; 'I see, and you too can see.'

Use the same means and you will reach the same vision. God will come to everyone, harmony is within the reach of all.

—Swami Vivekananda

# Indian Ideal of Womanhood

A smartly dressed student in his late teens, who had obtained leave from his housemaster at school to visit his parents, was waiting at a railway station for the train that would take him home. Soon he noticed an unaccompanied girl standing a little away. Evidently she too was waiting for her train.

The cinema-syndrome must have taken control of the boy. He let fall some unseemly remarks to the girl. She instead of being amused, glared at him, and to his surprise, without a word, rushed off the platform. But the matter did not end there. As luck would have it for the girl, her house being close to the station, she shortly returned with her furious brother and some of his friends. Before this boy realized the gravity of the situation, they were upon him, pummelling and kicking him. Hearing the hue and cry, the police and some other people intervened and all parties in the *mêlée* were led off to the police station. After a questioning the police officer sent for the boy's local guar-

dian, who was also his hostel warden and after some discussion it was agreed that the matter could be settled leniently and the boy let off with a stern warning.

What followed, however, is typical of India, and perhaps India alone: The girl and boy were called together and, in the presence of all the people gathered there, the police officer addressed the boy saying, 'Son, this girl is like your sister. Are you not ashamed? Now, prostrate before her, touch her feet and beg her forgiveness, promising her, and us, that you will never behave so meanly again with anyone!' Sober now, the boy, with mind wiped clean of cinema-heroes, obeyed and was allowed to go.

The girl was next summoned, and the officer said to her, 'You see, my dear, when incidents like this happen, both parties are usually to blame. However, if you can imagine yourself as a mother, or the Divine Mother, and not a mere girl or woman, your presence will influence others in a different way. Occasions like this will not arise at all. Now you are free to go, and Godspeed to you!' □

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\* This real-life incident was related to us by one of our monks from Calcutta—Ed.

In doing evil, we injure ourselves and others also. In doing good, we do good to ourselves and to others as well....According to *Karma-yoga*, the action one has done cannot be destroyed until it has borne its fruit; no power in nature can stop it from yielding its results. If I do an evil action, I must suffer for it; there is no power in this universe to stop or stay it. Similarly, if I do a good action, there is no power in the universe which can stop its bearing good results.

—Swami Vivekananda



# PRACTICAL VEDANTA

A 'FAQIR COUPLE' WITH STRONG CONVICTIONS\*

HARPREET SINGH

They are an extraordinary couple with strong convictions. They have been carrying on a relentless campaign with missionary zeal against corruption, dishonesty, incompetence and immorality for the past four decades in Punjab. There is hardly anyone who can match their dedication to their self-chosen task.

Soft spoken, ever ready to oblige and accommodate people for right causes, they have gathered a caravan of friends and admirers in all walks of life. As human beings, they are a rarity. They have been working indefatigably day and night for the welfare of the masses. They are none other than the Dangs of Chheharta (Punjab)—Mr. Satya Pal Dang and his wife Vimla Dang.

To be in politics and remain honest is a great achievement. And this couple belongs to that fast vanishing breed of public men and women to whom ethics constitute an essential ingredient of politics, and 'means' are more important than 'ends'. Although the couple has held high positions in life, they never thought of amassing wealth. Rather their only interest was to serve the people and live a simple and ordinary life.

'Men of such purity and probity are hard to come by these days. But even if their number is small and fast dwindling, they are the salt of the earth who make...(us) hope for better times, ...(so that we) continuously (try to) triumph over all our unsavoury experiences', claims Mr. Mubarak Singh, another well-known philanthropist and politician of Amritsar.

Over the 40 years in Chheharta, an industrial suburb of Amritsar, they have come to be known as 'the faqir couple'. They have been living in a two-roomed house in a labourers' colony with minimal comforts. When terrorism was at its peak, Mrs. Dang had been living in his office for security reasons, and, for almost a year, Mr. Dang lived in a verandah, with a kitchen and bathroom at one end.

Mr. Dang is such a down to earth man that he used to travel by public transport even when he was a Minister in the Gurnam Singh Ministry. Mr. Dang was the president of the Chheharta Municipal Committee from 1953 to 1965, and Municipal Commissioner till 1967. He was a member of the Punjab Legislative Assembly in 1967 and 1980. His influence among the masses can be gauged from the fact that he had defeated the then Chief Minister of Punjab, Giani Gurmukh Singh Musafir in 1967. Dr. Dang continues to be a member of the National Council of the CPI since long.

Born in 1920 at Ram Nagar in Gujjaranwala district of Pakistan, Mr. Dang got his Bachelor degree from Government College, Lahore, in 1941. While in college he started taking interest in student activities and became a student-leader. He organized strikes against the British rule and joined the Communist Party under the influence of Mr. Ramesh Chandra, Mr. S.K. Sehgal and Mr. Raj Bains Kishan. In 1945 he helped the Navy officials who revolted against the British in protest against social discrimination. He was the only Indian sent to Prague in 1947 to attend the first meet of the International Union of Students.

\* Reprinted with permission, from *The Hindustan Times*, New Delhi, 17 June 1994.



On the political front, he has stood firm on an ideological principled approach in dealing with social and national problems. He has a philosophy, an ideology, and he has never used unethical means or tactics to gain power or status, and has not ever gone in for cheap publicity.

A nationalist to the core, he has been working relentlessly for the unity of the country. Basically, he is a man of the masses and believes in social equity and justice. He is a champion of the poor. To work for the betterment of the common man is an article of faith with him. He is progressive and liberal and accepts reason-based dissent on national, political and social issues as a basic right of every individual.

Working at his desk in his office, known as Ekata Bhawan, Mr. Dang is more of a political commentator than a politician. No Civil Rights violation or wrong-doing goes by in Punjab without his pen bringing it to notice. The fact that he was at one time the best 'Parliamentarian' in Punjab is evident from the clear and articulate analysis he puts forth even in an ordinary conversation. One can disagree with his politics, but his genuine concerns cannot be doubted.

Like her husband, Mrs. Vimla Dang, too, has been working tirelessly to provide solace to the suffering humanity. To serve the people has been a passion with Mrs. Dang.

Born in 1926 at Allahabad in a middle class Kashmiri migrant family, she joined the progressive movement at an early age and became an activist of the Friends of the Soviet Union organization. She became an activist of the All India Students Federation while a student of Kananaird College, Lahore.

Mrs. Dang represented the All India

Students Federation in the headquarters of the International Union of Students at Prague. She married Mr. Dang in 1952 and shifted to Chheharta. Here she began organizing the women's movement and also took active part in the trade union struggle.

She was elected the president of the Municipal Committee for the first time in 1968, and then in every subsequent election till the committee was merged in Amritsar. Under her stewardship the Chheharta civic body became one of the best administered committees in the State.

During the terrorism days, Mrs. Dang and her organization, Istri Sabha, were in the forefront of the struggle against terrorism, separatism and communalism. They organized meetings, processions and peace marches, despite grave threats to their lives.

In addition, the Istri Sabha devoted a lot of its energies in giving sympathy and rendering material aid to families of innocents who were killed by the terrorists. Along with other activists of the Istri Sabha, Mrs. Dang visited these families all over the State and provided financial help. Mrs. Dang also launched a scheme to give stipends to the wards of such families who had been massacred by the gun-toting boys, to continue with this innovative scheme. The Istri Sabha formed the Punjab Istri Sabha Relief Trust in 1989.

For the excellent social work done, Mrs. Dang has been awarded the Padma-shree award by the President. At present Mrs. Dang is a member of the Punjab Assembly, and here too she often raises questions of public importance which are being neglected by the Government. □

*That which is selfish is immoral, and that which is unselfish is moral.*

—Swami Vivekananda



# Reviews & Notices

**GROWING WITHIN. The Psychology of Inner Development: Selections from the Works of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother. Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1992. pp. 192.**

This book begins with a Preface and a comprehensive introduction by A.S. Dalal. It is made up of nine well integrated sections. The selected excerpts, taken from the Works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, trace the meaning, nature, and processes of inner development. The selections transcend personal religious beliefs as they deal with inner growth as an experiential process. Though based on Sri Aurobindo's Yoga, the emphasis is on personal experience rather than on theoretical principles or religious dogmas.

Section-I deals with the 'Emergence from Consciousness'. The next few sections lucidly illustrate the factors required for the growth of consciousness. These culminate in the last section which deals with the 'Reversal of Consciousness—The New Birth'. 'The New Birth' refers to the evolution of consciousness leading to 'a progressive awakening of inner and higher states of being, culminating in a total reversal of consciousness, a new birth' (p. xxi).

The informal style of these passages adds clarity and coherence. This book has a well-defined Glossary which contains explanations of the special terms and concepts used in the passages. It is a lucid exposition of a complex subject, and it will be an invaluable asset to a discerning reader.

Dr. Rama Nair, Secunderabad

**SERVICE: IDEAL AND ASPECTS. (Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras 600-004). A pocket-size book of 320 pages. Rs. 25/-**

To read through *Service: Ideal and Aspects* was a delight, all the chapters being originally published as articles in the 1992 Special Issue of *Vedanta Kesari* (an English monthly

of the Ramakrishna Math, Madras). No dull reading—this! Every chapter on 'The Ideal of Service' in Part I, written by a competent representative or scholar of Hinduism, Judaism, Jainism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam, is revealing and enlightening. A brilliant Introduction is given by the compiler. It discusses the problem of *ajñāna* (ignorance) and how Service is efficacious in removing its binding effects over our mind and spiritual vision. The idea of serving others—'serving the world'—is looked at from a psychological standpoint. In the state of delusion or ignorance, modern man is alienated from the world around him, and even more tragically, alienated from himself—he does not have true knowledge of himself. His first duty is to be himself/herself, and to know himself as he really is. 'To remove alienation (the painful state of not feeling related to the world around us, to people, and to God), the narrow constricted field of consciousness must be expanded and its light...focused in every nook and corner of one's personality.' Through the unselfish and pure and innocent activity of performing work as service to God and man (or better, God in man), this process of Self-discovery and dispelling ignorance is helped forward.

The group of essays which follow in Part I, discussing on the Ideal of Service in each major religion, gives a clear and unclouded look into the position of each modern religion in respect of its attitude to service to humanity. An overview of all of them reveals that practically all of mankind cherish the dualistic (*dvaitic*) mode of service and worship of God. There is a great distance between God and man. Man is unregenerate and is under obligation to serve Him. Vedanta embraces all of them, however, and does not scorn any, at the same time holding aloft the glowing light of hope that all can rise higher and nearer to realizing the truth that the Divine Lord dwells also in every human being and living crea-



ture. Service rendered to one and all, from the very lowest upwards, in a spirit of worship amounts to no less than the worship of the Infinite Lord of the Universe, the One God, and One Self, residing in every individual.

Part II of *Service: Ideal and Aspects* deals with the actual accomplishments that are possible if the Ideal of Serving-the-world as worship is put into practice. It is no less interesting and absorbing than Part I. Monks and nuns of the Ramakrishna Order and the Sri Sarada Convent have written valuable dissertations on each of the following: 'The Ideal of Service: In the Institutions of the Ramakrishna Mission', 'Service as a Spiritual Discipline', 'The Role of Selfless Service in an Industrial Society', 'Service to the Planet', 'Respect as Service', 'Vedanta's Outreach Through Services in America', and 'The Ideal of Service for the Indian Youth'.

Every person will find something useful in this book. Even the best educated and well-read will become acquainted with so many new and exciting ideas. The *Vedanta Kesari* is to be congratulated for making this collection of articles available to the Indian and World-public.

SS, Mayavati

**THE SONG OF THE SOUL: A Prayer-book in Sanskrit; compiled and translated by Swami Gabhirananda, Pub. Vivekananda Vijnana Bhavanam, Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, Trichur, 680 002; 1993; Rs. 8/-**

Chanting of the mantras in Sanskrit is a particular form of spiritual practice. It makes the mind pure, tranquil and concentrated. It is firmly believed by devotees that material and spiritual benefits are gained by those who chant the verses from scriptures with love, faith and devotion. A timely, much needed compilation of verses from scriptures profoundly relevant for the present age is here—*The Song of the Soul*. This beautiful, neat, handy, and very moderately priced book presents a collection of age-old vital and spiritually charged mantras, sonorous stanzas selected from the

*Upanishads*, the *Bhagavad-Gita* and the *Bhagavata*, which may be recited like a prayer. They offer lofty themes for meditation, suggesting universally acceptable mandates and providing an excellent code of conduct for humanity.

These mantras have been charmingly arranged chapter-wise, and each chapter is given a title representing the main theme. The source for each mantra is quoted. The book's four chapters of the book are preceded by an *Invocation* and appended by hymns to Sri Ramakrishna, Sarada Devi, and the Song of the Gopis from the *Bhagavata*. Inclusion of the 'Song of the Sannyasin', composed by Swami Vivekananda, is very befitting as it describes the state of Self-Knowledge and the means to its realization. An interesting feature of the book is its 'Conclusion' where passages from the *Upanishads*, the *Bhagavata*, the *Bhagavad-Gita*, the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, and the *Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* are given. Essentially they restate the contents of the book. The English translation of the verses is scholarly and lucid.

As written in the 'Introduction', 'The teaching given by *The Song of the Soul* shows an easy way, which would directly take us to spiritual perfection, characterized by renunciation and Self-knowledge.' Indeed, the book is an illuminating and elevating publication, representing Truth in a nutshell. It offers a splendid invitation to spiritual aspirants to memorize and recite these mantras with their lofty meanings. Swami Gabhiranandaji of the Ramakrishna Order should receive thanks for rendering such a valuable service through this novel and refreshing publication.

Dr. Chetana Mandavia, Rajkot

**KIKI AND OTHER STORIES: Based on Mother's Talks; Published by Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1993; pp. 47; Rs. 12.50.**

This little book contains a fount of wisdom. Based on the Mother's talks, the central characters of these tales are cats. The Mother once said '...I assure you that in human beings I have rarely come across



some of the virtues which I have seen in animals, very simple, unpretentious virtues. As in cats ...' (p. 7). The book consists of five illustrated tales. These aphoristic tales convey symbolically those essential values of human existence which, ironically enough, are found in animals rather than in humans.

One story, called 'The Training', lucidly relates the qualities of caring as in the tale of the mother-cat, which lovingly and patiently teaches its kittens to jump from one wall to another. The tale of 'The Grand Lady' conveys the importance of faith and trust. The last tale is that of Kiki, '...a most extraordinary puss'. This cat 'mediated' with the other people at the Ashram. Even after the mediation was over, it would continue to be in a trance. Once when it was bitten by a scorpion it went with complete confidence and trust to the Mother, and shoed her its paw. The Mother took it to Sri Aurobindo who only had to look at it to cure it.

These pithy tales embody the importance of faith and belief which can still work miracles in this disenchanted world. It is a book that is sure to be enjoyed by all.

Dr. Rama Nair, Secunderabad

**THE ETERNAL WISDOM. Central Sayings of Great Sages of All Times. Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1993. pp. 590, Rs. 120/-.**

*The Eternal Wisdom* is a systematic and sustained compilation of the central sayings of the great sages and philosophers of all times. The book begins with an Introduction which consists of 'The Song of Wisdom' and 'Wisdom and the Religions'. The basic precept is the universality of all religious beliefs, for 'A truly religious man ought to think that the other religions are also paths leading towards the Reality. We should always maintain an attitude of respect towards other religions' (Ramakrishna, p. 18).

The book is divided into Bks. I, II and III, with each book further subdivided into various sections. Bk I deals with 'The God of all: The God Who is All'; Bk II with 'The Discovery and Conquest of the Divine in Oneself'; and Bk III with 'The Union of All

in the One in All'. The gradation of these quotable quotes provides a cohesive structure. The methodical and intelligent arrangement of these sayings under the three broad divisions (Bks I, II and III) lead the reader from a definition of the 'sole essence' of the universe as 'All that exists is but the transformation of one and the same *matter* and is therefore one and the same *thing*' (Diogenes of Apollonia, p. 23), to the practical wisdom inherent in this observation of Confucius: 'If you observe in all your acts the respect of yourself and of others, then shall you not be despised of any' (p. 590).

*Eternal Wisdom* concludes with a comprehensive and useful 'List of Authors and Scriptures'. The words of immortal wisdom that comprise the contents of this elegant book have been taken from Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Chinese, Egyptian, Mexican, Zoroastrian, Greek, Roman, Judaic, Christian, Islamic, Babistic and Bahaist scripture, and from the works of the more recent Western authors like Francis Bacon, Goethe, Gogol and Voltaire. It is a thoughtful and varied selection—a tribute to the wisdom of the compilers themselves. In a world that is racked by prejudice and religious bigotry the validity and applicability of the essential wisdom that is woven into these sayings cannot be minimised or undermined. It is a book that can enrich the reader and help him regain the lost values of essential human goodness.

This fine book transcends the barriers of all religions by postulating the oneness of all religious beliefs, for 'Whoever has his footing firm in love, renounces at one and the same time both religion and unbelief' (Farid-uddin Attar, p. 238).

Dr. Rama Nair, Secunderabad

**Correction:** Prabuddha Bharata, Sep. 1994 number p. 2, the title of the article should read 'Glimpses of the Savant Mahendranath Dutta', and not Gupta.—Ed.