



Prabuddha Bharata

or Awakened India

VOL. 99

OCTOBER 1994

ISSN 0032-6178



PRABUDDHA BHARATA

A Monthly Journal of the
Ramakrishna Order
Started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896

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5 Dehi Entally Road
Calcutta 700 014
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Rates of Subscription
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India	Rs.	30	Rs.	500
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Surface Mail	£	15	£	225
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Cover: A view of the Himalayas

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PRABUDDHA BHARATA

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

Vol. 99

OCTOBER 1994

No. 10

DIVINE WISDOM

Śuka's Hymn to the Lord

नमः परस्मै पुरुषाय भूयसे
सदुद्भवस्थाननिरोधलीलया ।
गृहीतशक्तित्रितयाय देहिनाम्
अन्तर्भवायानुपलक्ष्यवर्त्मने ॥

Salutations to the Supreme Person, the boundless Being, the wielder of His triune Śakti for His sportive manifestation in creation, preservation and dissolution, the indwelling spirit within all beings, and the unseen director of everything!

भूयो नमः सद्वृजिनच्छिदेऽसताम्
असंभवायाखिलसत्त्वमूर्तये ।
पुंसां पुनः पारमहंस्य आश्रमे
व्यवस्थितानामनुमृग्यदाशुषे ॥

Salutations again unto Him who dispels the sins of the good, who destroys the wicked, who manifests as the various pure divine forms, and who bestows on the all-renouncing Truth-seekers the blessings they seek!

नमो नमस्तेऽस्त्वृषभाय सात्वतां
विदूरकाष्ठाय मुहुः कुयोगिनाम् ।
निरस्तसाम्यातिशयेन राधसा
स्वधामनि ब्रह्मणि रंस्यते नमः ॥

Salutations again and again to the bestower of illumination on true devotees, who is far from the reaches of hypocritical ascetics, and who ever shines in His glory as the all-inclusive Brahman, whom there is none to equal or to excel !

—From the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam

Are Indians Religious?—IV

Last month we had answered the second doubt against Swamiji's call to Indians to hold fast to religion while striving for national development. A few more issues may well be discussed in that context.

A review

Briefly recapitulated, our views expressed last month were as follows: Most among the educated Indians hold that science, not religion, should govern social or national affairs. This is partly justified—because it is science that confers right knowledge and material benefits; besides, religions are mutually exclusive and condescending; further, since they insist on blind allegiance to their doctrines and organizations, they are a danger to democracy, and to individual dignity and freedom; and, since some religions claim uniqueness, they are a threat to our wonderful religious and cultural diversity.

In this way, Vedanta, on the one hand, by redefining religion as a scientific system of spiritual knowledge, and on the other, by desecularizing science, integrates the two into one mental frame.

On the other hand, experience is showing the limitations of science. Secular science has led us away from spiritual values. Attempts to substitute these with secular democratic and humanistic values too have failed. For, lacking in depth, they have not inspired *the masses* to practise mutual love, honesty, sharing, etc. when dealing with persons of other languages, castes and

religions. Again, the sciences still are inconclusive in explaining our personality and the meaning of our existence. So we have begun to feel lost in the maze of life. Lastly, secularism has degenerated into materialism and consumerism.

Vedanta integrates science and religion

Naturally, we are searching all over for a way to combine the best in religion (spiritual values and mystical experiences) and science (rationality, freedom, and utility in temporal life). We had pointed out that, ironically, we already have Vedanta, meant by Swamiji when he use the word 'religion'. It provides that ideal combination. In fact, the religion-science conflict is impossible in Vedanta. For, it gives importance only to their discoveries, more than to their speculations. And it considers those discoveries as comprising a single body of knowledge, gathered by humanity in the struggle to understand itself and the wondrous cosmos—that is, in the struggle to understand the sensate and the trans-sensate aspects of existence.

As a corollary, Vedanta empowers only science in the sense-domain, and only religion in the spiritual domain. However, it dismisses the notion that these two domains are totally disconnected or opposed to each other, by affirming that matter/energy studied by science is basically spiritual, appearing differently to the senses. It also emphasizes that, though we may reject religion's world-views, its spiritual experiences are true and verifiable through appropriate disciplines. In this way, Vedanta, on

the one hand, by redefining religion as a scientific system of spiritual knowledge, and, on the other, by desecularizing science, integrates the two into one mental frame.

Advantages of Vedanta

The consequences of this are noteworthy: Psychologically, we are able to re-establish the wholeness of our personality, desisting from the hurtful division of our being into religious and secular. Our being, motives and activities get a spiritual consistency. Regarding religious matters, we learn that rituals, scriptures, organizations and priests are all dispensable aids for us to acquire mystical experiences; beyond that they are encumbrances that prevent us from calling our souls our own. That makes our religious life spontaneous. Also, since all existence is spiritual, individual dignity and freedom get a divine status.

Further, we gain from Vedanta a clear scheme of life: desecularized education; character-formation on the basis of a spiritual view of ourselves and the world; spiritually oriented perspective before entering community life; righteous striving for wealth and comfort; participation in socially beneficial activities; survey of temporal life as one's age advances; gradual withdrawal from mundane engagements; and longer contemplation on the divine mystery of individual existence in the backdrop of the vast cosmic reality. At the workaday level, too, we continue to fully employ science and technology for materially bettering individual and national life. But we remain protected from the evil effects of secularism. Because, since according to Vedanta science too is spiritual, the very foundation of secularism and materialism is destroyed.

Thus, our religious life grows beyond mere beliefs and rituals as we strive to realize our spiritual nature; and we get

connected with the source of virtues and values necessary to manage the sciences, technologies, material comforts, and human relationships.

All this discussion may appear too simple to be true. Doubts are sure to linger: Is there proof for the central argument that mystical experiences are genuine? Besides, was India ever able to apply Vedanta to collective life? Is it sensible to shift our focus to spirituality from the ongoing secular developmental programmes? That is, is Vedanta capable of serving as the foundational philosophy for a modern State?

Is Vedanta genuine?

We are confident that Vedanta is perfectly capable. As for the authenticity of spiritual experiences, we hope that the Indian society can do without long discussions: Our civilization has periodically brought forth numberless prophets, monks, householder-saints, saintly rulers, and wealthy but spiritually illumined citizens—both women and men.

In this context, often an amusing challenge is flung: Why do saints and prophets abound only in India? Why not in the Western countries? We say: Even God is afraid to be born there again, lest he be crucified or excommunicated! Inflexible religions, by denying freedom of religious enquiry, have made those societies spiritually weak. Something similar happens on the agrarian scene: Fields repeatedly used for cultivation of only one variety of crop become infertile. In contrast, Western societies, having wrested scientific and political freedom from the Church, have been continuously yielding a rich variety of scientists and political thinkers. They have great scientists, industrialists, businessmen, and political leaders to be proud of.

Similarly, India, owing to some ten cen-

turies of oppressive foreign kingship, has deteriorated in social, political and scientific matters. The stench of that partially decomposed tradition of exploitative kingship and feudalism still persists in all her institutions. Thinkers, scientists, industrialists and political leaders with originality and drive are hard to come by.

But in spiritual matters the position is different: Because of the tradition of religious liberty, which gives a place even for outright heretic preaching, our culture is a fertile field for the birth of spiritual giants, both men and women. Every part of our country, irrespective of language and caste, has spiritual teachers to be proud of.

In spite of this we are inclined to believe the Western scientists, who, by and large, continue to decry all of religion, including spiritual experiences. We forget they have their own reasons: The memory of the inhuman anti-science and anti-free-thought purges that were unleashed by Christian and Islamic leaders—all in the name of God—would prompt any sane person to reject out of hand all the claims of religion. But then, this is quite unscientific. How can they be casual about the innumerable instances of divine experiences among various cultures? Besides, the methods employed by psychologists and neurologists to verify the existence of mind, consciousness, or soul are imperfect. They are objective, looking for those entities in laboratory animals and patients—looking everywhere except within themselves!

We learnt of a seminar held a few months ago in New Delhi, in which an eminent psychologist from abroad participated. It seems he quoted one of his neurosurgeon friends who had said: 'I do not understand all this talk about mind and consciousness. I have operated on at least 200 persons, but failed to detect any such thing as mind'!

Well, dear neurologist, do you have to search for mind out there? Why not try looking into yourself to understand mind and consciousness? Do you feel you are a moment-to-moment product of your brain's neural activity? Does that sufficiently explain your personality, your continuous sense of 'I'?

And as regards spiritual experiences, scientists have argued that they are hallucinations, self-hypnotizations, or the effects of 'unhealthy' celibacy! Learned theories, indeed. Scientific theories! We reply: Science lays claim to a speciality that its theories, developed from repeated study of phenomena, can, in reverse, reproduce, those phenomena. If so, we request these scientists to reproduce, through hypnosis or whatever method, a Buddha, a Christ, a Mohammed, or a Nanak. Just one, please. The world badly needs such embodiments of spirituality, unselfish love and peace. If you are unable to apply your theory to one of your patients, then why not hypnotize yourself into one of those great personalities, or, say, to a fraction of their character?

Secular science and the media

This they are incapable of demonstrating. And yet the media, instead of highlighting the shortcomings of science in this crucial area, continues to propagate secularism and materialism. There are reasons to believe that the religion-science conflict, as commonly perceived, is not any more only a question of rationality and verifiability. It is heavily influenced by the media, and has come to have a commercial angle.

Let us explain: Why are the latest near-Vedantic trends in science, indicating a spiritual dimension of existence, given only nominal publicity? Why does it appear that it will be ages before these developments enter in a big way into school textbooks,

novels, audiovisual media, etc. and thus into mass consciousness? In sickening contrast, why is sustained multi-media publicity guaranteed for every opinion that reinforces the materialistic image of human beings?

Man is a complex configuration of matter/energy; individuality and consciousness are the by-products of brain activity; man is a highly evolved animal; acts of unselfishness and love, sanctification of marriage, parental affection, etc. are stratagems for self-perpetuation learnt during his evolution; celibacy or sexual restraint is injurious to health; consumerism is sound economics; decent living is not enough—if you stop keeping step with the fast changing life-styles, you will suffer psychological problems; —such ideas, based on a partial understanding of human beings, are relentlessly blared at us in ever so many ways. Why? What makes some scientists let their insufficiently tested hypotheses on human nature be used by the government and the media to project human beings as mere consumers, markets, and resources?

...the religion-science conflict, as commonly perceived, is not anymore only a question of rationality and verifiability. It has come to have a commercial angle.

It is difficult to judge who is the greater culprit—the priests of religion, who gradually discovered a source of money and temporal power in complicating simple spiritual truths? or, the priests of (political, economic and social) sciences, who too, out of greed and desire for political and business patronage, find it profitable to rationalize secularism?

In any case, this secularism is sure to come to an end. Serious studies in yoga, meditation, out-of-body experiences, near-

death visions, etc. are going on in various countries. Some scientists are tending to accept spiritual realities. So, we can look forward to a time when, as Swamiji has foretold, spiritual ideas will come in strictly scientific formulation—without popes, without mullahs, without brahmin priests; without superstitions, and without demand for organizational allegiance. After a lapse of several centuries Vedanta seems all set to become the life-guide of the masses. Thanks to the materialistic scientists who broke the monopoly of those whom Gandhiji called 'the vendors of religion', and thanks also to the growing number of Vedantic scientists who will destroy the basis of secularism and materialism. De-mystified spiritual truths will stand revealed as simple laws of existence, and of human evolution from a sensate self-identity to one that is spiritual.

Vedanta in ancient India

Let scientists take their time. But, in the light of our own tradition, we should feel convinced that mystical experiences are genuine. Should it not be we who ought to be taking the initiative to live Vedanta? Should we not be asserting that, since all existence is spiritual, life cannot suffer the ridiculous partly-religious and mostly-secular division?

Then, as regards Vedanta's fitness to become our national philosophy and influence every aspect of life: We should remember two points: First, we have suffered nearly 1,500 years of ruthless foreign invasions and subjugation—an experience unparalleled by any other nation. As a consequence, Vedantic ideas have got nearly obliterated from the national consciousness. We have forgotten how to live Vedanta! Ignorance, and therefore disbelief about the scope of Vedanta has taken hold instead. Second, the concept that science and national life must be secular is a Western virus. It entered India through the Western model of

education. And this education, foisted on us by the British, is deeply infected by that secularism which originated in Europe. Europe had to impose secularism, as we have already said, because of the scientists-rationalists *vs* the Church conflict, and because of a struggle for political power between the Church and the royalty. And in the USA secularism became the official policy in order to separate the State and the Church. However, these problems are totally absent in Vedanta. All our apprehensions about Vedanta will disappear if we but once grasp a point made earlier, that it is not a *religion* as commonly understood.

Besides, there is historical evidence that, for several thousand years—prior to the eleventh century AD when frequent invasions by foreigners began—, Vedanta was the national philosophy. We recommend four books: *Rg vedic Culture* by Abinas Chandra Das (R. Cambray & Co., Calcutta), which deals with the origin and development of Vedanta; *Civilization in Ancient India* by R.C. Dutt (Elm Press, Calcutta), from which we get a good idea about how Vedanta became firmly established as our national ideology, and which, incidentally, destroys some of the current myths about our caste-system and the idea that women were always second-rated in our culture; *A Comparative History of Ideas* by Prof. Hajime Nakamura (Messrs. Motilal Banarasidass, New Delhi), an excellent recent study establishing, among other things, that the idea—everything that exists is spiritual—and the concept of the 'absolute Subject' are characteristically Indian; and, of course, Swamiji's *Complete Works*. Our views are based on these.

Vedanta as national philosophy

Consider another point: Why did emperors, kings and traders, from the civilized parts of the world during the above referred period, dream of coming to India?

To colonize primitives? To capture slaves? Mark it well—they were drawn by the proverbial 'wealth of Ind'. And why were scholars, too, from abroad eager to come? To see snake-charmers and magicians? To study India as an anthropological museum? To preach and convert ignorant heathens? Mark it again—they came to learn from her famed men and women of science, wisdom and spirituality.

Yes, today people do just anything to go to the West. But that is for learning the modern sciences, getting rich and enjoying the senses. Not to gather wisdom. Even today it is to India alone that people turn for wisdom, spirituality and universality—for solutions to the problems of secularism and materialism.

So, our forefathers had both wealth *and* wisdom through Vedanta. Shall we imagine that wealth was acquired without hard work, science and technology? Do you find that they employed immoral means? No. All the foreigners who came then were struck by the truthfulness of the people. Could they have amassed wealth by ravaging their colonies across the seas? Not even that, for, none of the former Indian colonies have bitter memories about her. Could mere priestcraft, superstitions and the teachings of the Purāṇas have conferred such opulence and scientific knowledge? Should we accept the silly charge that Vedanta makes people otherworldly?

Sir Monier Williams, in the introduction to his famous *Sanskrit-English Dictionary* says:

...the Hindus had made considerable advance in astronomy, algebra, arithmetic, botany, and medicine, not to mention their superiority in grammar, long before some of these sciences were cultivated by the most ancient nations of Europe...while in wisdom, depth, and

shrewdness of their moral apothegms they are unrivalled. (p. xxi.)

The *Chāndogya-upaniṣad* (VII.1.2) lists some more well developed fields of knowledge: mineralogy, perfumery, dancing, music, sculpture, painting, etc. Regarding the scientific temperament of our forefather, Dr. Royle of the King's College, London, remarks in his *Essays* how surprising it is 'to find among the operations of those ancient surgeons those of lithotomy and the extraction of the foetus *ex utero*; and that no fewer than 127 surgical instruments are described in their works.' Suśruta, in his *Saṁhitā*, prescribes that 'surgical instruments should be of metal, always bright, handsome, polished, and so sharp as to be able "to divide a hair longitudinally".'

And as regards the character of the people, we get a glimpse in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (V.11.5): 'King Aśvapati Kaikeya says: "In my kingdom there is no thief, no miser, no drunkard, no man without an altar in his house, no ignorant person, no adulterer, much less an adulteress."' R.C. Dutt, in *Civilization of Ancient India*, has given some extracts from Hiuen Tsang's diary:

The people were well off and contented, the houses rich and well-found....They were noble and gracious in appearance....They applied themselves much to learning, and in their travels were very much given to discussion on religious subjects. (II. p.140.)

(Of the people of Maharashtra, he observes:) To their benefactors they are grateful, to their enemies relentless. If they are insulted, they will risk their lives to avenge themselves. If they are asked to help one in distress, they will forget themselves in their haste to render assistance. (*Ibid.*, p. 156.)

...they are upright and honourable. In money matters they are without craft, and in administering justice they are con-

siderate. They dread retribution of another state of existence (i.e., rebirth), and make light of the things of the present world. They are not deceitful or treacherous in their conduct, and are faithful to their oaths and promises. (*Ibid.*, p. 159.)

And here is an observation of Colonel Sleeman of the British Raj: Villagers, he says, adhere habitually to truth in their own *panchāyats* (village councils); and,

I have had before me hundreds of cases in which a man's property, liberty, and life has depended upon his telling a lie, and he has refused to tell it. (*Ibid.*, p. 159.)

And in matters of the State, did Vedanta make kings impractical? Just see what Megasthenes (fourth century BC) has recorded about Chandra Gupta Maurya, the then most powerful king in India: He had a standing army of 600,000 foot soldiers, 30,000 cavalry, and 9,000 elephants; in the case of the Saurashtrian king the figures given are 1,50,000, 5,000, and 1,600 respectively;—which provides us a fair idea of a State's resources and military preparedness.

In the light of our tradition, should we not be asserting that, since all existence is spiritual, life cannot suffer the ridiculous partly-religious and mostly-secular division?

All this is not to say that during all those centuries our society was faultless. It did develop occasional dark patches. Gambling, adultery, drinking, theft, bribery, greed, etc. were seen sometimes. But they were effectively contained. Rules of political administration, as mentioned in such texts as the *Rājadharmā*-section of the *Mahābhārata*, and the *Arthaśāstra* of the great Vedantin, Kauṭilya, deal with these hard realities of life in a matter of fact manner. In fact, such texts are masterpieces on the

application of the lofty Vedantic spiritual truths to daily life. What is striking about all these laws and policies is that they i) were open to amendment depending on changing social conditions, and ii) were such that every citizen—commoner or king—could say at the end of his or her life, 'After passing through all these ups and downs of life, I have not been overwhelmed by them, I have caught a glimpse of my spiritual nature.' This the Vedanta helped people achieve by repeatedly stressing life's positive side, people's noble instincts, and their spiritual essence. Thus the national ideology was such that it prevented people from getting caught up in worldly prosperity; i.e. it helped them grow spiritually.

We must reject secularism

Turning the pages of history, we see how Vedanta was adopted as the basic ideology of the State by such great rulers as Vikramaditya of Ujjaini, the Gupta Emperors, Chandragupta Maurya of Magadha, Bimbisara to name a few. We can go back through some 15,000 years to the time when R̥gvedic culture was already well developed, and still not find one instance of a king opting for secularism. There are instances of kings trying to curb the influence of the priests but no case of a secular king!

We suspect that our secularists have little knowledge of Sanskrit. Therefore their access to the sourcebooks on our culture and history is through translations, which mostly are faulty—prejudiced by Western perceptions. Can a foreigner, no matter how learned in Sanskrit grammar, adequately capture the ethos of our culture? Can an Indian, no matter how conversant in English, fully feel the pulse of Western nations? Would those nations consider authoritative his 'learned studies' on their culture?

How we wish our country's somebodies

had a knowledge of Sanskrit, and of Vivekananda's insights into religion and our past! Then they might have seen the difference between Vedanta and 'religion', and the relationship between Vedanta and science. They might easily have proclaimed Vedanta the national ideology, without fear of getting accused of imposing 'Hinduism'. Even while taking full advantage of modern science and technology, the nation could have been saved from the baser effects of secularism and materialism. With a common Vedantic ideology, national integration—through shared values—would have been achieved early after independence. And we would not have been groping, even fifty years after Independence, to formulate a value-oriented education. Neither would we have remained confused on whether to use the term 'religious values' or 'spiritual values' while systematizing education.

Since our forefathers managed this country so well through Vedanta, we must surely reject the idea that science and national life must be secular. We hope our discussion has cleared the doubts. If it has not, we shall be glad even if it stimulates you to reexamine your assertion that religion should be barred from playing a significant role in social or national activities. We do not expect our political leaders, bureaucrats, and policymakers to revise overnight their pro-secular outlook. Because, for them the present arrangement is highly lucrative to be thrown away. And, as we have said, the effects of the long period of foreign subjugation still cling to our administrative bodies. We look forward to the withering of that rotting system. But, in the meanwhile, individuals can energetically take up Vedanta as a new attitude. As regards the country, Swamiji's Vedanta, often called the song of the free, confidently and expectantly awaits the emergence of a new leadership from the post-Independence educated young, who were born in freedom. □

Madhusudana Saraswati on the Bhagavad-Gita

SWAMI GAMBHIRANANDA

(continued from the previous issue)

KARMA YOGA

(Arjuna:) Is it that mere performance of actions is the goal of man, because of which it is said that one should ever perform fruitless work? Then, in accordance with the adage, 'Even a stupid person does not tend to work without a desire for results', is it not better that action should be undertaken verily out of a desire for its result?

He (the Lord) says 'No':

दूरेण ह्यवरं कर्म बुद्धियोगाद्धनञ्जय ।
बुद्धौ शरणमन्विच्छ कृपणाः फलहेतवः ॥

*Dūreṇa hyavaram karma
buddhiyogāddhanañjaya;
buddhau śaraṇamanviccha
krpaṇāḥ phalahetavaḥ (2.49).*

O Danañjaya, since action is far inferior to the yoga of wisdom, therefore seek shelter in wisdom. Those who thirst for rewards are pitiable.

O Dhanañjaya, hi, since; karma, action that is done with desire for results and is the cause of birth and death; is dūreṇa, far, to a very great degree; avaram, inferior; buddhi-yogāt, to the yoga of wisdom, to the Yoga of Action, which is the means to the Knowledge of the Self;—or, since all actions whatsoever are far inferior to the Yoga in the form of Knowledge of the supreme Self—, therefore anviccha, seek; śaraṇam, shelter; buddhau, in wisdom, in the Knowledge of the supreme Self, which is the destroyer of

all evils; i.e., decide to undertake the motiveless Yoga of Action, which is a protector by virtue of its destroying sins that are obstructions.

But phala-hetavaḥ, those who thirst for rewards, who being desirous of fruits undertake inferior actions; they are krpaṇāḥ, pitiable, i.e., very wretched, under the sway of others because of continuously revolving in the 'Persian Wheel' consisting of birth, death, etc., as it has been said in the Śruti, 'He, O Gārgi, who departs from this world without knowing this Immutable is miserable.'¹ And therefore you also do not become pitiable, but engage in the motiveless Yoga of Action, which is the generator of Self-knowledge, the destroyer of all evils. This is the purport.

As, indeed, miserly people earning wealth with great pains are, because of thirst only for some insignificant visible pleasure, unable to experience the great happiness that comes from charity etc., and thus cheat themselves, similarly those who perform actions with great pains out of greed for mere petty results become deprived of the experience of supreme Bliss. Thus, alas! What a misfortune and foolishness is their lot. This is what is suggested by the word krpaṇa (miserly, pitiable).

Having thus exposed the defect in the absence of the yoga of wisdom, He points

1. Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad, 3.8.9.

out the gain when it is present:

बुद्धियुक्तो जहातीह उभे सुकृतदुष्कृते ।
तस्माद्योगायुज्यस्व योगः कर्मसु कौशलम् ॥

*Buddhiyukto jahātīha
ubhe sukṛtaduṣkṛte;
Tasmādyogāya yujyasva
yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam (2.50).*

Endued with the idea of equanimity here, one rejects both virtue and vice. Therefore you strive for the Yoga (of equanimity). (This) yoga is skill in action.

Buddhi-yuktaḥ, endued with the idea of equanimity; *iha*, here, in the midst of actions; *jahāti*, one rejects; *ubhe*, both; *sukṛta-duṣkṛte*, virtue and vice, through purification of the mind and attainment of Knowledge. Since this is so, *tasmāt*, therefore; *yujyasva*, you strive, be ready; *yogāya*, for the yoga of equanimity; because this kind of *yogaḥ*, idea of equanimity; is *kauśalam*, skill; of the person engaged *karmasu*, in action, whose mind is devoted to God. The fact that even actions, which are causes of bondage, become free from it and culminate in Liberation is (indeed) a great skill. Though consisting essentially of actions, since the Yoga of Action, which is imbued with the idea of equanimity, destroys evil actions, therefore it is greatly skillful. 'But you are not skillful, because, though you are a sentient being, you still do not destroy evil persons of your own caste.' Thus here is a suggestion through the figure of speech called *vyatireka* (contrast).²

Or : *Iha*, when work associated with the idea of equanimity is performed, one

becomes endued with wisdom through purification of the mind; and being a realizer of the supreme Self, *jahāti*, rejects; *ubhe*, both; *sukṛta-duṣkṛte*, virtue and vice. *Tasmāt*, therefore, *yujyasva*, strive to attain the Yoga of Action, which is associated with the idea of equanimity; since *karmasu*, among actions; the Yoga of Action associated with the idea of equanimity is *kauśalam*, skillful, i.e., capable of averting evil actions.

(Arjuna:) Is it not that, what is required is the forsaking of vice but not the forsaking of virtue, for that would lead to the deprivation of the human goal?

Apprehending this, He speaks of the result in the form of attainment of the supreme human goal by eschewing petty results:

कर्मजं बुद्धियुक्ता हि फलं त्यक्त्वा मनीषिणः ।
जन्मबन्धविनिर्मुक्ताः पदं गच्छन्त्यनामयम् ॥

*Karmajam buddhiyuktā hi
phalam tyaktvā manīṣiṇaḥ;
Janmabandhavinirmuktāḥ
padam gacchantyanāmayam (2.51).*

Because, by giving up results produced by actions, those who are endued with the idea of equanimity become wise, (and thus being) fully freed from the bondage of birth, reach the state beyond disease.

Hi, because; *tyaktvā*, by giving up, *phalam*, results; *karmajam*, produced by actions; those who are imbued with the idea of equanimity become *manīṣiṇaḥ*, wise, possessed of the wisdom about the Self arising from such sentences as 'Thou art That', through purification of the mind by performing actions only for adoring the Lord. And having become so, they, *vinirmuktāḥ*, freed fully, completely—in a way that is absolute—, from the bondage (*bandha*) in the

2. *Vyatireka*—in which the thing compared (here, Arjuna) is shown to be inferior, in some respects, to that with which the comparison is made (here, Yoga of Action).

form of birth (*janma*); *gacchanti*, reach, i.e., attain identity with; *padam*, the state, the reality of the Self, which is the end to be attained, which is Brahman of the nature of Bliss, which is called Liberation, the human Goal; *anāmayam*, beyond disease, free from the disease of nescience and its effects, free from fear.

Since those who, with the idea of equanimity, thus perform actions by giving up the desire for results become purified in mind through them, and, having nescience and its effects destroyed by the Knowledge of the Reality of the Self arising from the evidence of Vedic statements such as 'Thou art That', attain the supreme state of Viṣṇu—called Liberation, consisting in the cessation of all evils and attainment of supreme Bliss—, therefore, 'You also, who are a seeker of the highest good as evident from "Tell me that which is the absolute and everlasting highest goal" (2.7), undertake this kind of Yoga of Action.' This is the intention of the Lord.

(*Arjuna*:) When shall I have purification of mind as I perform actions thus?

Hence He says:

यदा ते मोहकलिलं बुद्धिर्व्यतितरिष्यति ।
तदा गन्तासि निर्वेदं श्रोतव्यस्य श्रुतस्य च ॥

*Yadā te mohakalilam
buddhirvyatitarisyati;
Tadā gantāsi nirvedam
śrotavyasya śrutasya ca (2.52).*

When your mind will go beyond the turbidity of delusion, then you will acquire dispassion for what has to be heard and what has been heard.

There is no such rule about the time—that, purification of the mind will come after

the lapse of this much time. But *yadā*, when, at the time; *te*, your; *buddhiḥ*, mind, the internal organ; *vyatitarisyati*, will go beyond; *moha-kalilam*, the turbidity of delusion, the dirt of non-discrimination, the deep-rooted manifestations of ignorance in the form 'I am such', 'this is mine', etc., i.e., when it will attain the state of purity by giving up the dirt of *rajas* and *tamas*; *tadā*, then, at that time; *gantāsi*, you will acquire; *nirvedam*, dispassion; *śrotavyasya*, for what has to be heard; and *śrutasya*, what has been heard, regarding fruits of actions. (This is in accordance with the Śruti) 'A Brāhmin should resort to renunciation after examining the worlds acquired through *karma*.'³ The idea is that, through the result in the form of detachment, you will understand that there has been purification of the mind.'

(*Arjuna*:) When does the attainment of Knowledge occur to one who has thus acquired detachment through purification of the internal organ?

In anticipation of this question He says:

श्रुतिविप्रतिपन्ना ते यदा स्थास्यति निश्चला ।
समाधावचला बुद्धिस्तदा योगमवाप्स्यसि ॥

*Śrutivipratipannā te yadā
sthāsyati niścalā;
samādhāvacalā buddhis-
tadā yogamavāpsyasi (2.53).*

When your mind which was bewildered by hearing will remain undisturbed and undistracted in the supreme Self, then you will attain Yoga.

Yadā, when, at the time; *te*, your; *buddhiḥ*, mind; which was earlier *śruti*-

(continued on page 434)

3. *Mundaka Upaniṣad*, 1.2.12.

Centenary Celebration: Vedanta Society, New York

A MESSAGE FROM SWAMI RANGANATHANANDA

A slightly adapted Message from the revered Swami, who is one of the Vice Presidents of the Ramakrishna Order and now stays at the Ramakrishna Math, Hyderabad.

This Vedanta Society is the oldest Centre of the Ramakrishna Order in the United States. Founded by Swami Vivekananda himself, it was served also by some other disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, and is associated with a few distinguished American men and women. Before founding this Society, through which he wanted to establish an institution to propagate the rational, universal, and unifying philosophy and spirituality of Vedanta, Swami Vivekananda had, a year earlier, presented this great philosophy and spirituality at the Chicago Parliament of Religions, where the response from the huge audience was tremendous. For, the central theme of his speeches in the Parliament was the innate divinity of every human being and his or her capacity to realize it.

Vivekananda presented religion as a science of total human development and fulfilment. What is mere belief in ethnical religions becomes a search and a discovery here, accompanied by character transformation, for the science of values is integral to the science of religion. In ethnical religion, one can combine in oneself religion and an evil character. In the words of Sir Arthur Eddington, in his book, *Science and the Unseen World* (p. 54):

You can understand the true spirit neither of science, nor of religion unless seeking is placed in the forefront.

Vedanta discovered ages ago, through a thorough scientific investigation into human nature, the profound truth, behind the body-mind complex, of the one infinite immortal *Ātman*, ever free, ever pure, and ever luminous. So its message to every human being is expressed by a short formula of the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, *Tat tvam asi*—That thou art. More than one scientist has appreciated this profound utterance about the true nature of the human being.

Today's biology, while dealing with evolution at the human stage, speaks of the need for humanity to develop a science of values to guide human evolution to its right channels. Neither the physical world nor the human body and sense organs can be the source of these values, of which love is the greatest. Many of today's biologists will admit this, that the genetic system is essentially selfish. Love and all other moral, ethical, and humanistic values cannot come out of that. All these values are spiritual values, with the onset of which a human being becomes spiritual, says Vedanta. This spirituality is the birthright of every human being. It is here that you find the importance of Vedantic truth of the infinite *Ātman*, whose slight manifestation in inter-human relations will rouse values in all human beings.

(Continued on page 432)

One Circle More^{*}

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

One circle more the spiral path of life ascends,
And Time's restless shuttle—running back and fro
Through maze of warp and woof—
Spins out a stronger piece.

Hand in hand they stand—and try
To fathom depths whence springs eternal love,
Each in other's eyes,

And find no power holds o'er that age
But brings the youth anew to them,
And time—the good, the pure, the true.

* There was some rest and relaxation for Swami Vivekananda during the great summer he spent in New York State at Ridgely Manor in 1899. In one such moment of rest he may have written this poem —'for his hosts, who were finding happiness and renewed youth in their life together', writes Mrs. Burke in her *New Discoveries*, vol. 5, wherein it found its first publication in 1987.

The Buddha spoke gently: 'Once a person is caught by belief in a doctrine, he loses all his freedom. When one becomes dogmatic, he believes his doctrine is the only truth and that all other doctrines are heresy. Disputes and conflicts all arise from narrow views. They can extend endlessly, wasting precious time and sometimes even leading to war. Attachment to views is the greatest impediment to the spiritual path. Bound to narrow views, one becomes so entangled that it is no longer possible to let the door of truth open.'

Romania Needs Swamiji's Message

DR. DONALD SZANTHO HARRINGTON

Speech given at the United Nations Dag Hammarskjold Auditorium on 6 November 1993, as part of the celebration commemorating Swamiji's participation in the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago, 1893.

Dr. Harrington, Minister Emeritus of the Community Church of New York, is a close friend of the Ramakrishna Order for the past several years. His father had attended the Parliament of Religions in 1893.

(Responding to the welcome and introduction of the Host, Dr. Harrington said:)

Swamijis, Friends,.....The privilege is mine to be here. I have learned so much and gained so much from the Ramakrishna Mission over the years, not only here in New York and other places in America. But I guess I am one of the few people here who has had the opportunity to spend some very precious days at Mayavati, up in the Himalayas. And that is an experience. If you ever have it, you will never forget it. To be there with the young men who are preparing to be Swamis is one of the great experiences that one may have in life and it is one I will never forget.

Yes, I have just come back from two and a half years in a small village in Romania. And I shall go back in about a month and a half. I don't know how many more years I will spend there, but I will stay as long as I can.....because the troubles there are very great. They are the kind of troubles to which Swamiji—Vivekananda—addressed himself. Here the ethnic and religious hatreds are a vast tie that sweeps through and moves thousands and millions of people against each other, and there is bloodshed always

near the surface. There are pogroms in Romania today— burning of peoples' houses and villages,—especially of those who are called gypsies (but prefer to call themselves *Roma*), who, incidentally, came from India a long time ago, back in the 13th century. And they make up today one quarter of the population of Romania. I live among the Hungarians who are now a beleaguered minority in what used to be their country. And the hatreds are right there all the time.

My father was born in Waltham Massachusetts in 1869. He died in Waltham Massachusetts in 1964. He had a long and good life. In 1893 he went to Chicago to the Columbian Exposition and many years later he told his children about that experience. I will never forget his description of the *august* procession that came into the 'court of honour' (as it was called); of the great religious figures of the world—128 pairs of men and women walking together, representing the brotherhood of religions. He said it was a moment he could never forget, and that no one should ever forget.

Among his reminiscences, as Swami A—

has suggested, was a remembrance of how the gathering was electrified by the words that were spoken by Swami Vivekananda when he was first introduced, when he explained something which was a little difficult for American religionists to believe—that *belief* was not the central business of religion. He said, religion is not a way of *believing*; it is a way of *being* and *becoming*. Religion is being *real* yourself, and *becoming* part of what is *real* in the universe.

This was a revelation and it was a very striking and important one. My father spoke of it very often. Beliefs can divide us. If only we can get close to the heart of Nature, the heart of the Universe, which we call by all the different names which can be summarized in 'God'. When we get close to That, then beliefs do not divide us, for we all know that we come from one place—we have one Father. One God has created us all, as the great prophet (Jewish prophet) Malachi put it so long ago.

Swami Vivekananda reminded us of that in a very special way, and a kind of new way, and that has made all the difference. My father spoke especially of his saying that in the sacred language of his religion, Sanskrit, the word *exclusion* cannot be translated. In other words it is a uniting experience that we human beings have, and need to have, and that was the message that electrified the World Parliament of Religions a hundred years ago. Swami

Vivekananda was the *giver*, and we are all the better for it.

My father had many memories of that occasion, but that procession was the one that he remembered the best, and that thought of 'no exclusion' he felt was the most important.

Isn't it interesting—here, after having served in this great city for some forty-five years—actually it will be fifty years next year since I came to New York to minister to the Community Church; before that, I ministered for five years in the city of Chicago. But fate, or whatever one may want to call it, has taken me to a tiny little village where hatreds are very great. And I'm working at village development. And we are succeeding in many ways. But one of the things I think that may be most important: my wife and I (she is a minister also), we have a motto, and we use it on every occasion, and we ask our children to learn it and recite it: 'Mutual religious and ethnic *toleration*; Mutual religious and ethnic *acceptance*; Mutual religious and ethnic *appreciation*.' This is the way to solve the problems of that tremendously intermingled *ménage* of peoples—that *ménage* of peoples that are Central and Eastern Europe. It is the only way to solve it.

We hope that that message, which was Vivekananda's message, may become stronger in that part of the world. □

He that loveth his neighbour hath fulfilled the law....Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not covet, and if here be any other commandment, it is summed up in this word, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

—St. Paul

Transmission of Human Values— Childhood to Youth

DR. ROMA CHAKRABORTY

Rightly educated citizens are the true wealth of a nation. What our children, tomorrow's citizens, are receiving as education is hardly worth the name. What can the parents and teachers do to remedy this problem? Dr. Chakraborty, Reader in the Dept. of Political Science, Sarojini Naidu College for Women, Dum Dum, Calcutta, and herself a deeply anguished parent, deals with the subject with a sense of urgency.

In a society which is to survive beyond a single generation, individuals and groups of individuals are bound to interact on the bases of shared values, so that the future heirs of the society—the children—can be brought up to perpetuate the society and its values. In every society, the sense of regional or national identity is sought to be transmitted to the new generations, directly or indirectly, through the various formal and informal agencies of education. Where the society is highly civilized and organized, this education is very effective; where it is not, nothing great can be accomplished. A sociologist will perhaps define a social 'organization' as a special type of social system. But no matter what the system may be, each society or system must have a will to accomplish certain objectives, and at the same time should have a method for perpetuating those objectives through future generations.

In order to train persons from their childhood to become future good citizens, the role of several agencies stand out in importance. First and foremost is the family, which provides the newborn infant with its first environment and vital first impressions. This moulding of the character of the child by the family contributes immensely to the formation of patterns of thought and action that carry over into adulthood. A child is physically helpless and, being fully

dependent on its parents and other members of the family, is nursed and nurtured by them until it can do things on its own. Due to constant contact with them, certain characteristics—emotional, physical, behavioural, and traditional-social—are transmitted to the child. It is the duty, commonly recognized in every society, of the members of the family to direct their children to choose company, try to be good, and to feel for others. Children so trained will be able, later in life, to appreciate healthy competition, and they will also be able to cooperate wholeheartedly with others in a humanistic way. The humanistic ideal is summed up in one way thus:

*Ayam nijah paroveti
gaṇanā laghucetasām;
Udāracaritānām tu
vasudhaiva kuṭumbakam.*

'Is this person my own, or is he a stranger?'—this is the reckoning of the undeveloped mind. To the generous mature mind, however, the world itself is their family. (That is, they regard the whole world as their own.)¹

1. *Pañcatantra of Viṣṇuśarman*, Edited by Mr. M.R. Kale (Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass), *Kathā* 3, *Śloka* 38; p. 49.

There is no doubt that parental practices and attitudes play an important role in the child's development. It is universally known that the roles of the parents and others closely associated with the child are critical. When parents want their child to develop a healthy mind—cheerful, optimistic, sympathetic, obedient—they should themselves provide a commensurate example for the child to observe. The easiest way to imprint mental patterns of happiness and contentment in the child's subconscious mind is by providing it with noble examples to emulate those qualities. The home environment and the personality of the parents provide the child with the beginning of its education.

*Lālayet pañca varṣāni
daśa varṣāni tādayet;
Prāpte tu ṣoḍaśe varṣe
putram mitravādācaret.*

Parents should give full affection to, and properly teach the child with love and care, up to the age of five. Then, if necessary, also discipline them (spank or scold them) during the next ten year period. But after the child crosses fifteen he should be treated by his parents as a friend.²

In this day and age parents should feel more responsible for their children's development. They should try to set daily goals for the child to achieve; and instill high ideals, teaching, and also setting a shining example of the methods of attaining perfection. Within the family experience itself the children can be trained for a wider future social life. It is in the family also that the first ethical ideals and religious training can best

be ingrained and imparted. The family also protects from psychological isolation. The nascent individual develops behaviour patterns, beliefs, attitudes and understanding through seeing, hearing, and otherwise sensing, the worth that Mother and Father cherish towards those. Because childhood is the time when meaningful traits are communicated to the child without outside intervention, the family as the main socializing agent prepares its progeny for appropriate adjustments that will come later in life.

The Indian scriptures have recognized

Bringing up children will be comparatively easy—even effortless—if parents have the qualities of mind and heart they wish to see develop in their young ones!

since the Vedic Age the importance of the family as the first potential socializing agent for imparting cognitive orientations. We find in the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, for example, how Brahmā, the Creator-god, was the first transmitter of knowledge to his son, Atharvā. In the same manner Atharvā passed on that knowledge to his son Aṅgir; Aṅgir passed it on to Satyavaha, and the transmission continued from generation to generation. Even certain families became acclaimed for their special mastery of branches of knowledge. The revival of this tradition would bring nothing but good to society in the modern tumultuous world.³

3. *Eight Upaniṣads: Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, Translated by Swami Gambhirananda (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1958).

*Om! Brahmā devānām prathamah sambabhūva
viśvasya kartā bhuvanasya goptā;
Sa brahmavidyām sarvaavidyāpratiṣṭhām
Atharvāya jyēṣṭhaputrāya prāha.*

OM ! Brahmā, the creator of the universe and the protector of the world, was the first among the gods to manifest Himself. To His eldest son Atharvā He imparted that knowledge of

2. *The Garuḍa-Purāṇa*, Part I, Maharshi Krishna-dwaipayana Vedabyasa, Edited by Panchanan Tarkaratna and Dr. Sriji Nyayatirtha (Calcutta: Nababharat, 1985), 114/59, p. 375.

While developing the moral qualities in children, the do's and don't's of self discipline in all the circumstances of life, virtues such as honesty, integrity, sense of dignity and responsibility, and compassion for others should be emphasized too. These qualities of the heart support the moral training. Lack of them will breed indiscipline and dishonesty eventually. But as in all training and education of the children, the maxim of Vivekananda 'Be and make'—become good ourselves and help others to become good—, should always be kept in mind. Bringing up children will be comparatively easy—even effortless—if parents have the qualities of mind and heart they wish to see develop in their young ones!

As the child grows older, youthful tendencies start appearing, and it comes more and more to be influenced by outside agencies, such as peers and teachers. These important agencies in the child's education begin to press their peculiar claims on the youth's loyalty. This sometimes leads to temporary conflicts between them and the older members of the family, particularly the parents. This period is very crucial in the development of the youth's personality. Though the problems of adolescence pass away in time, events and incidents of this

age have a lasting imprint on the growing mind.

In schools, colleges and other institutions young people get the opportunity of learning about one another, getting acquainted with each other, studying, working and living together. This togetherness generates in them a sense of common identity and an awareness of individual and collective power. At this stage the primary task of the educational institutions is to *understand* the pupils and guide them to use their newly discovered powers to achieve goals. Students eagerly acquire knowledge and skills through goal-directed activities. However, goal-achievement depends also on a student's home environment, and his motivation and capability, as well as on the quality of academic training and the socio-psychological atmosphere of the school.⁴

Marie Montessori stressed the development of the 'total child' and said, 'Children must grow not only in the body but in the spirit.'⁵ She further said that school children are more spontaneous, and this spontaneity is derived from their inner life. Every educational system ought to begin by creating an environment that protects the young for the time being from the difficult and dangerous obstacles of the adult world.⁶ Sharing the progressive spirit of Montessori, but going beyond too, Swami Vivekananda said, 'Education is not the amount of information that is put into your brain and runs riot there, undigested, all your life. We must have life-building, man-making, character-making assimilation of

Brahman, which is the basis of all knowledge.

Atharvane yām pravadata Brahmā

Atharvā tām purovācāngire brahmavidyām;

Sa Bhāradvājāya satyavahāya prāha

Bhāradvājo'ngirase parāvarām.

The knowledge of Brahman which Brahmā imparted to Atharvā, Atharvā transmitted to Angir in days of yore. Angir passed it on to Satyavaha of the line of Bharadvāja. He, belonging to the line of Bharadvāja, handed down to Angiras this knowledge that had been received in succession from the higher by the lower ones.

4. Herbert J. Klausmeier, *Educational Psychology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985), p. 89.

5. Marie Montessori, *Dr. Montessori's Own Handbook* (Cambridge, Robert Bentley, Inc., 1964), p. 3.

6. Marie Montessori, *The Child in the Family*, Translated by Rockmor Cirillow (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1970), p. 3.

ideas.⁷ Pointing out that almost infinite potentiality lies in every mind, he uttered an invaluable truth on education when he said that it is 'the manifestation of the perfection already in man' — in the child, we can say;⁸ and, 'Like fire in a piece of flint, knowledge exists in the mind; suggestion is the friction which brings it out.'⁹

Needless to say, one of the most vital and crucial functions of any society is the education of the young, and it should be considered uppermost in importance for the progress and well-being of any country. Thinking of India, Mahatma Gandhi wrote in his autobiography: 'Unless the development of the mind and body goes hand in hand with the corresponding awakening of the soul, the former alone would prove to be a poor, lopsided affair.'¹⁰ He further said that spiritual training is essential for education of the heart. The concept of the 'total person' has been echoed again and again by progressive thinkers. As John Gardner, one of America's foremost educators, aptly stated: 'Education in a formal sense is only a part of the society's larger task of abetting the individual's intellectual, emotional and moral growth. What we must reach for is a conception of perpetual self-discovery, perpetual reshaping to realize one's best self, to be the person one could be.'¹¹

In the Vedic period children used to go to live in a teacher's house (*gurugrha*) to acquire knowledge in various subjects and

to develop their character. A rigorous training, generally lasting twelve years, was entailed :

*Sa ha dvādasavarṣa upetya
caturviṃśativarṣaḥ sarvānvedānadhītya
eyāya*

Having gone (to the teacher's house) when twelve years old, he, after studying all the Vedas, came back when he was twenty-four.¹²

The final goal of all this learning was self-realization based on a religion-oriented education, imparted by a teacher who was eminently qualified to take the responsibility for all his students. Certainly Swami Vivekananda was thinking of this in relation to both parents and teachers when he said: 'Without the personal life of the teacher there would be no education. One should live from his very boyhood with one whose character is like a blazing fire, and should have before him a living example of the highest teaching.'¹³

However great a nation may be politically, economically, socially, or militarily, it must uphold the primacy of moral and humanistic values. Otherwise its glory will turn to ashes.

Unfortunately the modern system of teaching in our country does not instill in the minds of the growing children and youth the spirit of unselfishness, renunciation, introspection, and service towards society. On the contrary, it has been replaced by a materialistic and science-inspired system

7. Swami Vivekananda, *The Complete Works of*, (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989), Vol. 3, p. 302.

8. *Ibid.*, Vol. 4, p. 358.

9. *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 28.

10. Mahatma Gandhi, *All Men Are Brothers: Autobiographical Reflections*, Compiled by Krishna Kripalani (New York: Continuum Publishing Co., 1987), p. 138.

11. John W. Gardner, *Excellence—Can We Be Equal and Excellent Too?* (New York, Harper & Row, 1961), p. 136.

12. *The Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, Translated by Swami Swahananda (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1956), VI.1.2, pp. 411-12.

13. Swami Vivekananda, *India and Her Problems* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1976), p. 45.

inherited from the Western countries. Rapid growth of science and technology has indeed made the world topsy-turvy. However great a nation may be politically, economically, socially, or militarily, it must uphold the primacy of moral and humanistic values. Otherwise its glory will turn to ashes.

It is very unfortunate that educational ideas, methods and goals are nowadays inspired by Western materialism and science almost exclusively. In the rush for wealth and success, children are being denied the training in moral values of life. This denial has spawned in our society inhuman beings with the animal instincts of greed, anger, fear and self-centredness. Why are the basic good human qualities, namely learning, self-control, purity, helpfulness, straight-forwardness and truthfulness missing these days? For this we have to blame our present educational system, its unrelatedness to the real needs of the nation and to the intellectual-spiritual aspirations of youth. Its underlying philosophy being too mass-competitive and materialistically oriented, it is not fulfilling its promise. Since the future of our country depends on its youth, it is essential that the moral values imbibed through man-making, character-building education be revived.

One member of the Rajya Sabha, Mr. R.K. Narayan, said recently in the Parliament: 'The joyless childhood of the pupil in today's schools...burdened with a heavy satchel of books and crushed by an overdose of instructions...goes unnoticed in the stress of a world of adult concerns....Investigations show that an average child carries six to eight kilograms of the "paraphernalia of modern education" like a "packmule".... Dress regulations are another senseless formality—ties and laced shoes are insisted upon irrespective of climate. And things are not much better when the child returns from school. Mother, father, or tutor is waiting for him to undergo special coaching. So the day

ends for the child with no time left for play and/or relaxation. Do you not think it is a cruel and harsh life for a child, who has no chance to bloom?'¹⁴

What is the present state of education in our country? Is it education at all in the true sense of the term? How much of moral values has this system of education been able to instill into the minds of our children, the future custodians and guardians of the nation? Dr. Mrs. Annie Besant, the great British lady, Theosophist, and ardent supporter of the Indian National Movement, strongly criticized our educational system. The present state of education, in her words, is just 'cramming a boy's head with a lot of disjointed facts, poured into the head as into a basket, to be emptied out again in the examination room, and the empty basket carried out again into the world.'¹⁵ A student may be successful in school or college examinations but fail miserably in the examinations of life. Why do students fail in future life? Because the present system of education converts them into dumb driven cattle rather than enlightened citizens. They are nowadays bookworms rather than creative thinkers. Our educational system today has totally disillusioned our youth, holding up for emulation everything foreign, and ignoring to a great extent our indigenous cultural wealth. 'Give them back their lost individuality!' cried Swami Vivekananda. I personally feel that the blind adulation, idolization, and idealization of everything Western has brought about the degeneration of our high cultural integrity, and forgetfulness of our supreme heritage and godly humanitarian feelings. To counter such downfall in almost every sphere of national life, right-thinking persons must try to introduce compulsory religious train-

14. *The Statesman*, 29 April 1989.

15. Harish Sadani, 'Education—The Present State and Future Needs', in *Yuba Bharati*, June 1989, p. 26.

ing, reviewing Vedic learning, reorienting study to the needs of life, curtailing too much dependence on books, and placing stress on those items which will help make our future generations more creative and self-confident, with perfect and unquestionable strength of mind. The country's strength will be in the character of the people. If people are properly trained, they may develop acute sensitivity to major national and international issues, and express their concern over such issues. They can urge the government to recognize the potential of individuals while determining their future life. It is desirable that we understand the socio-cultural background of India and be aware of the dynamic nature of social change.

I earnestly appeal, in the name of humanity, to all right-thinking educationists to come forward to combat with firmness the evils of the so-called modern system...

The youth themselves should not forget to organize their energies for the purpose of community welfare. They must grow up to be brave men and women who realize the grandest ideals of human existence. They must develop the spirit of true love for India and learn to serve and sacrifice. It is India that, long before the emergence of the Western civilization, idealized universal brotherhood. India's great Upaniṣadic culture holds that every human being on earth is the child of Immortal Bliss. So let us train up our young men and women on the basis of this idea of the Divinity of Man, his eternal perfection. The youth must prepare themselves as the emblem of eternal bliss.

Reorientation of our educational system

means that education must go to the root of every problem in society. It must help all the children and youth to develop an integrated personality, so that the internal potential divinity can shine forth to manifest universal love towards all beings. Application of the law of moral causation is essential, and alone can stop further moral erosion and give to everyone real strength. The framers of educational policy must also bear in mind that it is a fact that moral law is as inevitable as the law of gravitation. While restructuring the educational system for transmitting true education, the curriculum-makers should think on the meaning of the *Rg-Veda's* famous verse — '*Ā no bhadraḥ kratavo yantu viśvataḥ*' — Let noble thoughts come to us from every side! Finally, in a nutshell, I like to suggest to all right-thinking persons:

- Strive to improve the much needed relationship between parents (and all family members) and children, and the vital relationship between teacher and student;
- curtail as much as possible the competitive, materialistic, so-called 'Western-oriented' educational system; and
- inculcate 'man-making' and 'character-building' value-based education, so that youth can qualitatively shift their concentration to unfolding their personality with sound moral values of life.

In conclusion I earnestly appeal, in the name of humanity, to all right-thinking true educationists to come forward to combat with firmness the evils of the so-called modern system, which is causing ruination of the human values of life. Do this by framing a truly noble man-making educational philosophy and following it, one as wanted by the all-time human leader of the present universe—Swami Vivekananda. □

Alexander was once asked, 'Why do you show greater respect and reverence to your instructor than you do to your father?' He answered, 'From my teacher I obtain life eternal; and from my father a perishable existence. Moreover, my father brought me down from heaven to earth but Aristotle has raised me from earth to heaven.'

Bhagavad-Gita and the Poetry of Swami Vivekananda

RACHNA MERHOTRA

(Continued from the previous issue)

The Lord creates this universe by means of two aspects of His Being—*Prakṛti* and *Puruṣa*, matter and consciousness. These two are known as *Māyā*, lower and higher respectively. We fail to perceive the Divine essence in nature through our ignorance. *Māyā* is the source of delusion. The play of *Prakṛti* and its modes conceal the Reality. God hides Himself behind the veil of His creation. Man has to see through activities to find the Reality:

The world—
Deceived by those three qualities of being—
Wotteth not Me Who am outside them all,
Above them all, Eternal ! Hard it is
To pierce that veil divine of various shows
Which hideth Me; yet they who worship Me
Pierce it and pass beyond. (p. 63, ch. 7.25)*

God is not known to those whose minds are cheated by the show of things. The human beings do not know the nature of the Supreme Lord who is the Self of all beings and who is by nature eternal, pure, enlightened and free. Saints like Swami Vivekananda cross beyond the world of *māyā* which is the source of delusion:

There is but One—The Free—
The Knower—Self !

Without a name, without a form or stain.
In Him is *Māyā*, dreaming all this dream.
The Witness, He appears as nature, soul.
Know thou art That, Sannyasin bold ! Say—
'OM Tat Sat, OM !'¹

Man should be free from all dualities (the pairs of opposites) to realize the eternal Truth. He should be self-possessed to attain liberation. He should rise above the three *guṇas* (constituents of *Prakṛti*) to be one with Brahman. A man freed from his ego finds fullness of life in the Supreme, the all-pervading Existence. Lord Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna in the *Gītā*:

But thou, be free of the three qualities
(*guṇas*)
Free of the pairs of opposites, and free
From that sad righteousness which
calculates:
Self-ruled, Arjuna! simple, satisfied !
(p. 19, ch. 2.45)

Swami Vivekananda's appeal is to 'Strike off thy fetters and all the dual throng'² to attain the Truth. 'Knowledge, and non-knowledge—whose centre is/ The feeling of small self, the "Aham!" "Aham!"—/ Full of the dual sense of pleasure and of pain—/ Teeming with birth and life, decay and death,'³ is a mere out-

* This and similar later references occurring in the body of the text are from Sir Edwin Arnold's *The Song Celestial or Bhagavad Gita*; pub. Self-Realization Fellowship, Los Angeles, California, U.S.A.; 1981.

1. Swami Vivekananda, *In Search of God and Other Poems*, p. 17.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 53.

ward presentation of our world. The fact is,
'The atom and its compound, all that is/
Animate and inanimate, all, all—/ The
Internal and the External—dwell/ In that
one common plane of existence!'⁴

Man should overcome his ignorance to
enjoy the supreme bliss of union with God.
The *Gītā* insists on the attainment of the state
of the Impersonal Supreme. Lord Kṛṣṇa
proclaims:

Freed from the opposites, and fixed in faith,
Cleave unto Me.
Who cleave, who seek in Me
Refuge from birth and death,
those have the Truth ! (p.66, ch. 7.28)

The *Gītā* mentions that, in the state of
release, duality disappears and the released
soul becomes one with the eternal Self. 'It is
a condition beyond all modes and qualities,
impassive, freed and at peace. If we have a
body clinging to us, nature will go on acting
till the body is shaken off as a discarded
shell. The *jīvanmukta*, or the freed soul pos-
sessing the body, reacts to the events of the
other world without getting entangled in
them.'⁵ Man gains the vision of the One Self
everywhere through Knowledge and devo-
tion. In this eternal state, when the in-
dividual is freed from the delusion of
dualities and experiences release from birth
and death, the supreme truth that 'I am
Brahman' and 'That art Thou' is revealed to
him. Swami Vivekananda, in the last stanza
of 'The Song of the Sannyasin', writes:

Thus, day by day, till Karma's powers spent
Release the soul for ever. No more is birth,
Nor I, nor thou, nor God, nor man. The 'I'
Has All become, the All is 'I' and Bliss.
Know thou art That, Sannyasin bold ! Say—
'OM Tat Sat, OM '⁶

While all things are supported by God,
things of beauty, goodness and truth reveal
Him more than others. Every act of unselfish
love, innocence and purity spring from a frag-
ment of God's splendour. Lord Kṛṣṇa says:

For wheresoe'er is wondrous work,
and majesty, and might
From Me hath all proceeded, Receive thou
this aright ! (p.90, ch. 9.41)

Swamiji states this truth in his poem, 'In
Search of God':

When holy friendship shakes the hand,
He stands between them too;
He pours the nectar in mother's kiss
And the babies' sweet 'mama'.⁷

A person who treads the path of
righteousness never faces defeat. No effort
of a virtuous man is ever lost. Lord Kṛṣṇa
encourages Arjuna to fight for the victory of
dharma:

Here shall no end be hindered,
no hope marred,
No loss be feared: faith—yea, a little faith—
Shall save thee from the anguish of
thy dread. (p. 18, ch. 2.40)

'The victory is sure to come'⁸ if a person
tries to conquer death by truth, compassion,
piety and virtue. Swamiji has expressed this
optimistic attitude of the *Gītā* in:

Not a work will be lost, no struggle vain,
Though hopes be blighted, powers gone;
Of thy loins shall come the heirs to all,
Then hold on yet a while, brave soul,
No good is e'er undone.⁹

Other Poems, p. 19.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 53.

5. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Bhagavadgītā*, p. 76.

6. Swami Vivekananda, *In Search of God and*

7. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

The pleasures and pains, joys and sorrows do not last forever, they come and go. A person should learn to endure them:

Thy sense-life, thrilling to the elements—
Bringing thee heat and cold,
sorrows and joys,
'Tis brief and mutable! Bear with it, Prince!
(p.13, ch. 2.14)

The joys and sorrows of life should be met with perfect equanimity. Vivekananda's poem, 'Thou Blessed Dream', brings forth the same *Gītā* ideal:

If things go ill or well—
If joy rebounding spreads the face,
Or seas of sorrow swell—...
Thou dream, O blessed dream!¹⁰

A person who is desirous of attaining Eternal Life must not be subject to grief and sorrow, and must not be disturbed by the material happenings. A wise person remains the same in pain and pleasure:

The soul that with a strong and
constant calm
Takes sorrow and takes joy indifferently,
Lives in the life undying!
(pp. 13-14, ch. 2.15)

Swami Vivekananda has mentioned this *Gītā* ideal:

Without the fear of pain or
search for pleasure, go
beyond them both, sannyasin bold! Say—
'OM Tat Sat, OM!'¹¹

The *Bhagavad-gītā* not only presents before us a metaphysics (*brahmavidyā*) but also a discipline (*yogaśāstra*). It gives a comprehensive *yogaśāstra*, a practical way of

reaching the Supreme, which includes *jñāna-yoga*, or the way of Knowledge, *bhakti-yoga*, or the way of devotion, *karma-yoga*, or the way of action. Swamiji asserted that, union of the individual soul with the supreme Soul is possible by either work (*karma-yoga*), or philosophy (*jñāna-yoga*), or worship (*bhakti-yoga*), or psychic control (*rāja-yoga*).

In the *Gītā*, *Sāṅkhya* is the *yoga* of Knowledge, which affirms the reality of a Supreme Self, the Lord of all. It lays stress on Knowledge and renunciation of desire. Swamiji in his poem, 'The Song of the Sannyasin', discovers the same characteristics in a perfect sage as are explained by Lord Kṛṣṇa in *Sāṅkhyan Theory and Yoga-Practice*:

In sorrows not dejected, and in joys
Not overjoyed; dwelling outside the stress
Of passion, fear, and anger; fixed in calms
Of lofty contemplation;—such an one
Is Muni, is the Sage, the true Recluse!
(p. 21, ch. 2.57)

Swamiji urged the true sannyasin to 'renounce,/ All heavens, and earths and hells, all hopes and fears'¹² and to be calm without being perturbed by praise or blame. He writes:

Truth never comes where lust and
fame and greed
Of gain reside. No man who
thinks of woman
As his wife can ever perfect be;
Nor he who owns the least of things, nor he
Whom anger chains, can ever pass
thro' Maya's gates.
So, give these up, Sannyasin bold!...¹³

10. *Ibid.*, p. 32.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 18.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 18.

The lines, 'Thine only is the hand that holds/ The rope that drags thee on', and 'let go thy hold of the rope'¹⁴ recalls the fifth verse of chapter 6 in the *Gītā: The True Yoga*:

Let each man raise
The self by soul, not trample down his self,
Since Soul that is Self's friend may grow
Self's foe. (pp. 51-2, ch. 6.5)

Karma-yoga is the *yoga* of action. Lord Kṛṣṇa 'recommends the full active life of man in the world with the inner life anchored in the Eternal Spirit. The *Gītā* is therefore a mandate for action.'¹⁵ Swami Vivekananda's *Karma-yoga* aims at the liberation of the active man of the world. Romain Rolland commented: 'Of the four Gospels of Swami Vivekananda—his four *yogas*—I find the most deep and moving tone in the Gospel of Karma Yoga.'¹⁶ The *Gītā* advocates action with a spirit of detachment, dedication, non-violence, human brotherhood, sacrifice and service, and for the good of humanity. Lord Kṛṣṇa proclaims, 'Action thou shouldst embrace' since 'in performance of plain duty man/ Mounts to his highest bliss' (p. 27, ch. 3.20). According to Śwami Vivekananda, the duty of Indians lies in treading the path of truth and in working for the welfare of mankind. He, in his soul-stirring words, writes in the poem, 'To the Awakened India':

Awake, arise and dream no more!
This is the land of dreams, where Karma
Weaves unthreaded garlands
with our thoughts,
Of flowers sweet or noxious, and none

Has root or stem, being born in naught,
which
The softest breath of Truth drives back to
Primal nothingness. Be bold, and face
The Truth! Be one with it! Let visions cease,
Or, if you cannot, dream but truer dreams,
Which are Eternal Love and Service Free.¹⁷

The *jñāna-yoga* of the *Gītā* also leads to *mokṣa* (liberation). Swami Vivekananda preached the divinity of the soul, non-duality of God, harmony of religions, and unity of all existence. The wise person is 'Freed/ In all his work from prickings of desire,/ Burned clean in act by the white fire of truth' (p. 35, ch. 4.19). The individual who has the universality of outlook born of wisdom (*jñāna*) has 'cast into the fire/ All [his] dross of self' and his 'mean selfishness', and he gives away without turning 'to ask in return';¹⁸ he is a man of true learning.

The teacher of the *Gītā*, in chapter 4, *The Way of Knowledge*, describes the characteristics of a wise person:

Which—quit of fear and hope—
subduing self—
Rejecting outward impulse—yielding up
To body's need nothing save body, dwells
Sinless amid all sin, with equal calm
Taking what may befall, by grief unmoved,
Unmoved by joy, unenvyingly; the same
In good and evil fortunes; nowise bound

14. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

15. S. Rādhakrishnan, *The Bhagavadgītā*, p. 60.

16. Romain Rolland, *The Life and Gospel of Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1970), p. 191.

17. Swami Vivekananda, *In Search of God and Other Poems*, p. 23.

'This undated poem of Vivekananda embraces within these five lines all the principal forms of Yoga; the abstract Advaita, and in the last verses the Yoga of Bhakti and of Karma'—referring to the first and last three-and-a-half lines of the poem quoted in Romain Rolland's *The Life of Vivekananda and the Universal Gospel*. fn. 2, p. 270.

18. Swami Vivekananda, *In Search of God and Other Poems*, p. 44.

By bond of deeds. Nay, but of such an one,
Whose crave is gone, whose soul is liberate,
Whose heart is set on truth—of such an one,
What work he does is work of sacrifice,
Which passeth purely into ash and smoke
Consumed upon the altar !

All's then God! (pp. 38-9, ch. 4. 21-3)

Swami Vivekananda also lays emphasis on these characteristics:

Calmed are the clamours of the urgent flesh,
The tumult of the boastful mind is hushed,
Cords of the heart are loosened and set free,
Unfastened are the bondages that bind,
Attachment and delusion are no more!

Aye! There sounds sonorous the Sound
Void of vibration. Verily! Thy Voice!
Hearing that Voice, Thy servant,
reverently,
Stands ever ready to fulfil Thy work.¹⁹

Bhakti-yoga is the path of devotion to God. It leads man to truth, freedom and union with God. Faith is the basis of *bhakti*. A person who loves God attains Self-realization. Lord Kṛṣṇa has Himself declared in the *Gītā* that, a person whose devotion is single-minded is most dear to Him:

Of these four,
O Prince of India! highest, nearest, best
That last is, the devout soul, wise, intent
Upon 'The one'. Dear above all am I
To him, and he is dearest unto me !
(p. 64, ch. 7.17)

Swamiji 'presents *Bhakti-yoga* as a mystical self-expansion, the highest achievement of the intuitional self.'²⁰ He found in his life 'this truth supreme':

Formulas of worship, control of breath,
Science, philosophy, systems varied,
Relinquishment, possession, and the like,
All these are but delusions of the mind—
Love, Love—that's the one thing, the sole
treasure.²¹

'The *bhakti* emphasis leads to the subordination of knowledge and meditation to the devout mind, and consecration of all works to God.'²² In the view of Vivekananda, the *gopis* (milkmaids) were the true devotees of God, as it has been said by the Lord Himself:

But most of all I love
Those happy ones to whom 'tis life to live
In single fervid faith and love unseeing,
Drinking the blessed Amrit of my Being!
(p. 114, ch. 12.20)

The poet suggests in, 'Thy Love I Fear', that the unswerving devotion of the milkmaids was superior to wisdom. The single urge to give oneself to God is enough to be one with God. Worship of only the Personal Lord, Kṛṣṇa, is enough for liberation:

Thy knowledge, man! I value not,
It is the love I fear;
It is thy love that shakes My throne,
Brings God to human tear.
.....
What learning, they of Vrinda's²³ groves,
The herdsmen, ever got?
What science, girls that milked the kine?
They loved, and Me they bought.²⁴

21. Swami Vivekananda, *In Search of God and Other Poems*, p. 43.

22. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Bhagavadgītā*, p. 296.

23. Vrindavan.

24. Swami Vivekananda, *In Search of God and Other Poems*, p. 82.

The poem, *Thy Love I Fear*, is a translation of a Bengali song by Swami Vivekananda. It formed part of a piece of writing by him:

19. *Ibid.*, p. 55.

20. Carebanu Cooper, *Swami Vivekananda—Literary Biography*, p. 75.

The poem, 'Requiescat in Pace' elucidates the essence of *bhakti* as explained in verse 54 of the *Gītā*, chapter 11—'This verse is the substance of the whole teaching of the *Gītā*':²⁵

Only by fullest service perfect faith,
And uttermost surrender am I known
And seen, and entered into, Indian Prince!

Selfless service to mankind and renunciation, too, are a form of worship. '...if we possess the one great gift of the love of God, we become God's tools, the channels of His love and purpose. When this vast world of living spirits becomes attuned to God and exists only to do His will, the purpose of man is achieved.'²⁶

Thy service true complete thy sacrifice,
Thy home the heart of love
transcendent find;
Remembrance sweet, that kills all
space and time,
Like altar roses fill thy place behind !

Thy bonds are broke, thy quest in
bliss is found,
And one with That which comes as
Death and Life;
Thou helpful one! unselfish e'er on earth,
Ahead ! still help with love
this world of strife!²⁷

A true devotee of God is free from enmity towards all creatures—love for God is exhibited in love for God's creation.

Who doeth all for Me; who findeth Me
In all; adoreth always; loveth all

The Story of the Boy Gopala. Sri Ramakrishna used to like this song very much.

25. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Bhagavadgītā*, p. 289.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 289.

27. Swami Vivekananda, *In Search of God and Other Poems*, p. 21.

Which I have made, and Me, for
Love's sole end,
That man, Arjuna! unto Me doth wend.
(p. 110, ch. 11.55)

The sole aim of such a devotee must be welfare of humanity. The welfare of the world should be our constant spiritual discipline:

Ye fools! who neglect the living God,
And His infinite reflections with which
the world is full.
While ye run after imaginary shadows,
That lead alone to fights and quarrels,
Him worship, the only visible!
Break all other idols!²⁸

The Supreme Being is responsible for both creation and destruction. God is depicted in the *Gītā* as *Kāla*, or Time, perpetually creating and destroying. The terrible and awful form of the Supreme is revealed by Swami Vivekananda in the poem, 'And Let Shyama Dance There':

Lo! how all are scared by the Terrific,
None seek Elokeshi whose form is Death.
The deadly frightful sword,
reeking with blood,
They take from Her hand, and put
a lute instead !
Thou dreaded Kālī, the All-destroyer,
Thou alone art True; Thy shadow's shadow
Is indeed the pleasant Vanamālī.
O Terrible Mother, cut quick the core,
Illusion dispel—the dream of happiness,
Rend asunder the fondness for the flesh.²⁹

(Continued on page 440)

28. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 48-9.

Elokeshi, meaning 'One with Her hair unbraided and dishevelled', is a name of Goddess Kālī.

Vanamālī, literally, 'He who is garlanded with wild flowers'. The Shepherd Kṛṣṇa in His aspect of youthful sport.

The Bounty of the Ramana Way

DR. SARADA NATARAJAN

At the back of all our thoughts and activities, joys and sorrows, hopes and fears, lies the 'I', which is usually taken for granted. But who or what is this 'I'? The answer to this, taught by Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi from personal experience, is the daring straight path to spiritual illumination and bliss. The learned author, an ardent devotee of the Bhagavan and the Editor of the well known monthly, The Ramana Way, gives an inspiring picture of the Sage and his teachings.

What is the picture that comes before one's eyes when we hear the name 'Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi'? What are the images that float through the mind? Of brilliant transmuting eyes and a gentle smile; of a tall, graceful body stretched on a couch or seated with natural poise? Does one remember his exalted state of Self-abidance? Does one recall how he faced and conquered death as a boy of sixteen? He had simulated the experience when gripped by a sudden overwhelming fear of death, and, enquiring into the meaning of death, realized that he was the deathless spirit. All actions on his part thereafter were the unfoldings of a divine drama. So far as he was concerned, there was no change in his state from the moment of awakening. His attention remained unwaveringly absorbed in the Self. Through his arduous journey to Arunachala, upon his reaching there and reporting to Arunachaleswara, 'Father, I have come', there was no change in his Self-abidance. When he had his head shaven, and when he threw away all his belongings and the sacred thread, and wore only a loin cloth there was no change. The days in the underground shrine of Pātāla-lingam were only 'seeming penance', for Sri Ramana has clearly stated that there was no change in his attention which was fixed on the Self. 'Other thoughts might come and go, but the "I" continues like the fundamental *śruti*-note in music,' he said. Yes one remembers all this

when Sri Ramana's name is mentioned.

Other events come to mind. How mother Azhagammal had to return with a heavy heart and a written instruction, having failed to convince her son to come back home with her. His home was Arunachala. He had not even spoken a word to her, but had been persuaded by a devotee to write something. This was the first instruction. So his mother was the first disciple. What a disciple! She surrendered herself completely to him, and how he took care of her when she came to stay! He ripened her in every way to be prepared for the liberation which he himself bestowed on her. On her last day he sat with his right hand on her heart and his left on her head, until all her latent tendencies were exhausted and the mind was absorbed in the spiritual heart. Few months thereafter, he moved to the thatched shed near her *samādhi*—the shrine of Matrubhuteswara. And this is the present Ramanasramam, on the foot of Arunachala's southern slope, near the roadside shrine of Dakshinamurti.

The Guru who taught Self-awareness through silence. This is another portrait of Sri Ramana, who is often equated with Dakshinamurti. It is true his silence was most potent. Devotees describe the grandeur of the evening hour given to meditation. All mental wanderings would be

stilled in the majestic silence of the Sadguru. One Śivarātri night, devotees asked Sri Ramana to explain the *Dakshinamurti-stotra* (hymn). He nodded assent. Moments ticked into hours and none knew the passing of time until morning. Only the vibrant silence prevailed. Could there have been a better commentary on the *stotra*, they wondered.

So, what does one do to get rid of the mind that blocks our awareness of the Self? Control it? Purify it? No, understand its nature... What does it rely on for its existence? What does it feed on? Knowing this, we lay a siege. If we starve it, it will have to surrender.

Yet, the impression which some carry, that he would never speak at all, is certainly a gross misconception. Though silent communication bears Sri Ramana's unique stamp, such was the compassion that he never failed to answer sincere queries. And such has been the divine plan that almost all of what he said, even answers written on sand and slate in the early years, have been preserved for earnest seekers to delve into. His compassion expressed itself not only in the answers he gave, but in his every act: It may be eating the unroasted *dosas* (an Indian dish) offered by an old lady. Or walking up the hill despite a fractured collar bone, climbing to the earlier *āśram*, Skandasram, to satisfy a mason. It may be the insistence on giving *darśan* to devotees even when the excruciating pain of sarcoma racked his body. Or simply looking to the needs of a sick dog when robbers attacked the *Āśram*.

The most eloquent expression of his compassion, by which he is perhaps best remembered, is the direct path to Self-awareness that he has forged. Yes, of all the images of Sri Ramana Maharshi which rise in one's thoughts, this is perhaps the first to most people. He is the wielder of the *Brahmāstra*, the infallible weapon to tackle

the ego, the method of self-enquiry. To many of the spiritual doubts which people placed before him, his answer was another question, 'Who has this doubt? Who asks? You say, "I want to know", "I am confused". What is that "I"? Do you know who you are?' When they answered giving their names as their definition of themselves, he would gently lead them further inward. He would soon make them acknowledge that 'Sarada' or 'Raghu' or 'Brunton', which they had taken to be their self, could not be so. Because those were merely names and forms, and identity which changed in dream and disappeared totally in deep sleep. 'What then is the "I" really?' they would wonder anxiously. He would explain that what underlies all the three states of waking, dream and deep sleep, the unchanging witness to the constant change, is one's true nature.

As to the question, how to become aware of this natural state, that is where Sri Ramana's unique method would come in. He does not differ from the traditional approach in saying that Self-awareness is natural, it does not come and go. Being ever present, it is not something which is to be obtained or attained. What is to be done is to wipe away the wrong notion that one is limited to a given name and form—this misconception or illusion which is called 'ego' is to be got rid of.

So far, Sri Ramana treads the well-beaten path of the great ones, but here he takes another road. He first states that this ego is nothing but the mind—they are synonyms for each other. So, what does one do to get rid of the mind that blocks our awareness of the Self? Control it? Purify it? 'No,' says Sri Ramana, 'understand its nature.' Understanding is the best way to conquer an enemy: know all its strengths and all its weaknesses; then victory is yours. Knowing the strengths and weaknesses does not

mean we should know which thoughts are good and which bad. Far from it. Sri Ramana would joke that it is useless to examine the garbage that is to be thrown out. The mind is to be got rid of, so don't evaluate its contents as good and bad. However, know its nature. What does it rely on for its existence? What does it feed on? Knowing this, we lay a siege. If we starve it, it will have to surrender, says the Maharshi.

What then is the mind? It is a bundle of thoughts, not necessarily related to one another, following in relentless, breathless succession. Since the thoughts are often unrelated and so frequently changing, what is it that gives cohesiveness to the mind? What is the connecting factor that gives us a sense of continuous identity? It is the 'I'-thought, or the root thought, explains Sri Ramana. All thoughts are essentially and equally connected to this 'I'-feeling—'I eat', 'I walk', 'I laugh', 'I sorrow', 'I am curious', 'I wish to talk'. Even when the mind is full of 'others', it is the 'I' who thinks of them. Without the 'I', there can be no other thought. Without the attention of the 'I', there can be no thought either. If I pay attention, I hear music that is blown into my ears; otherwise I do not, however close or loud it may be. People living next to the railway lines hardly hear the sound of trains, because they pay no attention to them. So, there are no thoughts without the 'I' and the attention to them. This 'I'-thought is really the crux of the mind.

On the other hand, our experience seems to be the reverse, that there is no 'I' without our thoughts. All the waking time we are filled with thoughts. When we dream too, it is thoughts that take these forms. When we try to meditate, we seem to be literally attacked by thoughts. Its constant association with thoughts is the weakness of the 'I'.

What then is its strength? Is there an 'I' apart from thoughts? There is, says Sri Ramana, for it is the 'I' which makes us conscious of thoughts, although they seem to rise together. The 'I' is the first thought to rise and the last to set in deep sleep. Yet, the fact that it rises and sets implies that it has a source. This source is consciousness, the Self. The 'I'-thought reflects the consciousness of the Self and links it with a name and form limiting it to that identity. Hence the 'I'-thought is the feeling 'I am so and so'. The identity may change as in dreams or through life, but the process of identification with a name and form remains. If one subtracts this identity, this 'so and so', the 'I'-thought would be isolated and fall back on its strength, the Self.

The next problem therefore is to isolate the 'I'-thought. This is to be effected, says Ramana, through the enquiry, 'Who am I?' When one questions the very validity of the thinker, thoughts naturally cannot survive. If I do not know who I am, then where is the questioning of 'my thinking'? Thus thoughts are dealt with most effectively, and attention is focussed solely on the sense of 'I' minus all the strappings of identity. The 'I'-thought has no *locus standi* of its own. This we have seen when we examined its nature. It is the feeling 'I am so and so', where 'I am' is derived from consciousness, and 'so-and-so' from association with thoughts. When the latter support is snatched away, the 'I'-thought retreats into the former. Thus by focussed attention on the isolated 'I'-thought, Self-abidance results. What remains to be done then is simply to steady the experience through practice. Sri Ramana says of the experience, 'It is an inundation. You are swallowed alive. Yet it is bliss, for you are the very thing that swallows you.' This inundation of bliss is the bounty of the Ramana Way. □

Youth Forum^{*}

Question: How do you define 'Youth'?

Answer: Children cannot think, while old people have lost the power of action. So youth, in contrast with childhood and old age, is defined as that phase of life when we can think and also act up to our thinking.

Question: Is it true of all young people?

Answer: Potentially, yes. They can think and also do as they think.

Question: Do you mean to say that in actual life it is not being carried out?

Answer: I am afraid not. We seldom think. And even when we think, there is no connection between our thoughts and our actions. We are more led by impulses than by any thinking. Swami Vivekananda said humorously: when a man walks, his stomach goes in front; only in old age, when he is bent, does his head go first. But then it is too late.

Question: Can it be remedied?

Answer: Yes, not only it can, but it has to be, and it must be remedied. i) Every young person should feel the importance of thinking. ii) This thinking should be, to use Swami Vivekananda's words, 'as broad as the sky and as deep as the ocean', and whatever is found, by this thinking, to be really beneficial to whole humanity should be acted upon wholeheartedly.

Question: Is it not true that, even if we

think and want to act up to that thought, we are unable to carry it into practice?

Answer: Quite often, yes. But that is because we do not use two more faculties which we possess in our youth; the power of feeling and the power of resistance.

Question: But just now you said that we are often led by our impulses and now you are talking of the power of feeling?

Answer: Yes, they are quite different. Not only are feelings different from impulses, but feeling is different from so-called 'emotion' also. Emotion is mostly biological and leads to 'excitement', while genuine feeling proceeds from the most tranquil heart and leads to constructive steady action. Hence if we learn to feel deeply the conclusions of our thinking, and try to act accordingly, we will have much better chance of success.

Question: What is this power of resistance? And, why are you talking of 'chances'? Do you mean to say that even then there is no guarantee?

Answer: We shall take both these questions together. Swami Vivekananda says: 'A carriage with four horses may rush down a hill unrestrained, or the coachman may curb the horses. Which is the greater manifestation of power, to let them go or to hold them? ...All outgoing energy following a selfish motive is frittered away; but if restrained, it will result in development of power. This self-control will tend to produce a mighty will, a character which makes a Christ or a Buddha.'

So if we develop these four faculties in our youth—broad and deep thinking,

^{*} Questions by Youth, discussed by Swami Pitambarananda, Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission, Chandigarh.

genuine feeling that proceeds from a tranquil heart, action guided by and moulded by such thinking and feeling, and, last but not least, the power of self-control, so that the energies are not frittered away, we will surely succeed.

Question: What is the success you are talking of?

Answer: In the words of Swami Vivekananda, 'Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this divinity within....

Question: How can we practise action and

also restraint?

Answer: We have to restrain impulsive action and practise action guided by reason.

Question: Is it not true that the strongest urge in youth is for freedom? Should we curb that?

Answer: We must analyse and understand what is real freedom.

(to be continued)

Centenary Celebration: Vedanta Society, New York

(Continued from page 412)

Vedanta considers that science is one, but its departments are three. The first is physical science at the sensory level. The third is science of the one infinite Atman at the super-sensory level, not supernatural, and the second is science of values, linking the first and the third. The search for knowledge, says Vedanta, has to start from the first, pass through the second, and find its consummation in the realization of the third. The third is the final evolutionary goal of every human being, *Ātmā vā are draṣṭavyah*, the Atman has to be realized (not merely believed), says Yājñavalkya to his wife Maitreyi, in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*. All scientific truths in any of its three departments are universal, because they are impersonal, *apauruṣeya*. This is the Vedanta that Swami Vivekananda presented to the West as well as to the East in the modern age. This comprehensive grasp of all human knowledge and experience by Vedanta, as presented by him in his lectures and writings in America, England, and India, is highlighted by Romain Rolland in his book, *The Life of Swami Vivekananda and the Universal Gospel* (Advaita Ashrama, 1984), pp. 262-3:

But it is a matter of indifference to the calm pride of him who deems himself the stronger whether Science accepts free Religion, in Vivekananda's sense of the term, or not: for his Religion accepts Science. It is vast enough to find a place at its table for all loyal seekers after truth.

Today, Vedanta is spreading slowly but steadily not only in the U.S.A., but also in Canada, Central, and South America, Australia, Europe, Russia, and Japan. Vedanta is going to be the religion of thinking people tomorrow, had predicted Vivekananda about a century ago. It does not preach any creed or dogma but helps people to grow spiritually by manifesting the divinity within, even while adhering to one's own traditional religion. That truth is expressed by a sentence which says that Vedanta makes a Hindu a better Hindu, a Christian a better Christian, a Jew a better Jew, a Muslim a better Muslim, a Buddhist a better Buddhist.

I convey my best wishes for the success of your centennial celebrations. □

Voice of the People^{*}

About 50 people are crammed into the small room, sitting cross-legged on the floor. Most are women and most are bursting for a turn to speak. Devkali, a woman in her 50s, is chairing the meeting. Each time the group reaches a decision, she notes it in her meticulously kept notebook. Next week, she and two other neighbours, all volunteers and all elected by the community, will meet with the municipal authorities to discuss the decisions made at this meeting—the monthly meeting of the Basti, or Neighbourhood Development Committee.

The Basti meeting is a result of a project, begun six years ago to improve the lives of residents in slum communities of Faridabad and other urban areas throughout India. Funded primarily by the Federal and State governments, with help from UNICEF, the Urban Basic Services for the Poor project is being extended to 500 towns and cities over the next five years.

Slum dwellers are among the most deprived of India's people. Slums have sprung up on any available land, with makeshift shelters appearing in parks, along railway lines and on city pavements. Living conditions are squalid, with few sanitary facilities, limited water supply and high concentrations of people. Sometimes families of six or seven are crammed into tiny huts barely two metres square. Birth and death rates are higher by 40 per cent and illiteracy is almost double the national average.

From the start, the approach has

emphasized mobilizing the communities' own skills and resources. Water supply, sanitary facilities, smokeless chulas (ovens), or stoves, are being provided, along with immunization. The residents identify what is needed and develop the organizational structure necessary to provide it.

Resident Community Volunteers like Devkali have a crucial role in making it work. They must live in the community and be chosen by their neighbours to negotiate with the authorities on their behalf. 'In a way, we are the voice of the people,' says Devkali, 'a bridge between the community and the government.'

Building community participation takes months or years of sustained and patient effort. Devkali believes that the residents of Neelam Bhata are now so fully involved that they no longer need the Community Organizer provided by the municipal authority, freeing this worker to move on to other communities. Devkali laughs when she remembers that it took five months to persuade a group of women, herself included, to leave their homes and attend the first meeting.

The result has been life-changing for the participants. When Devkali and her neighbours describe the impact of the project on their lives, words like 'respect', 'confidence' and 'choice' come up over and over. 'For 45 years of my life, I would tremble if a man spoke to me,' says Devkali. 'Now that I have been chosen to represent my neighbourhood and I go to the local government administration and negotiate with the officials, I don't care if 10,000 men speak to me, I will just answer them back.'

^{*} Report of Gillian Wilcox, reprinted with permission from *The Hindustan Times*, 21 May 1994.

Her confidence comes partly from her role in the project and partly from her newly acquired literacy skills. But she also credits her economic independence, also a result of the project. A year ago she applied for a loan

under the UBSP scheme and set up a small general store. Business has been good and she has had no trouble meeting the monthly repayments of Rs. 200.□

Madhusudana Saraswati on the Bhagavad-Gita

(Continued from page 411)

vipratipannā, bewildered, distracted, on account of having various kinds of doubts and errors from (hearing) the Śrutis, from hearing about diverse kinds of results, without examining their purport; *sthāsyati*, will remain—as a result of giving up that perplexity by realizing their defects through discrimination arising from (mental) purification—; *samādhau*, in the supreme Self; by becoming *niścala*, undisturbed—devoid of disturbances in the form of experiencing the waking and dream states—; (and) *acalā*, undistracted—free from distractions in the form of mental inactivity characterized as deep sleep, faint, stupefaction, etc.—; i.e., when it will become Self-absorbed by giving up the defects of mental inactivity and distractions—.

Or the construction (of the sentence) is: (When your mind) will remain steady in the Self, like a lamp in a windless space, after becoming *niścala*, free from the idea of impossibility (*asambhāvanā*) and the con-

trary thought (*viparītabhāvanā*); and *acalā*, not polluted by dissimilar ideas, as a result of long earnest and unbroken practice of *satkāra* (viz celibacy, study and faith; see *Patañjali-Yoga-Sūtras*, 1.14).

Tadā, then, at the time; *avāpsyasi*, you will attain; *yogam*, Yoga—in the form of identity of the individual self and the supreme Self; the non-relational⁴ realization arising from such sentences as 'Thou art That'; the result of all the yogas. Then, again, owing to the absence of any other goal, you will become self-fulfilled, a man of steady wisdom. This is the purport.

(to be continued)

4. *Non-relational (akhaṇḍa)*—in which there is absence of even the idea of the relationship of unity between the individual Self and Brahman.

This is my commandment, that ye love one another, even as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do things which I command you.

—John xv. 12-13

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be fearful. Ye heard how I said to you, I go away, and I come unto you. If ye loved me, ye would have rejoiced, because I go unto the Father: for the Father is greater than I.

—John xiv. 27-8

PRACTICAL VEDANTA

ONLY THE TRULY BRAVE CAN BE NON-VIOLENT

The legendary Muslim Emperor Harun Al Rashid was renowned for his justice. Once his son was insulted badly by the commander-in-chief's son, who called him names. Feeling extremely hurt, the prince complained to his father. The King consulted his ministers.

'The arrogant fool must be beheaded; he doesn't deserve to live any more.'

'His tongue must be pulled out.'

'He must be banished from the kingdom.'

These were the replies received from the advisors.

Harun Al Rashid now turned towards his son and said: 'You have listened to the opinion of the ministers. Now what do you say?' But the prince preferred not to decide for himself and left the judgement to the King.

The King became grave and said: 'It is easy to punish, but to forgive is extremely hard, and is possible only for those who are truly brave. If you think you can do it, well and good; otherwise you too can retaliate in any of the various ways suggested by the counsellors.'

The prince's face beamed with joy. He said: 'I am a brave son of a brave king. I whole-heartedly forgive my friend, the commander's son, however much he might have offended me.'

LOVE TRANSFORMS

Swami Dayananda was once camping for a few days in a cottage he had built on the bank of the Ganga at Farukhabad. But a *sādhu* living in a hut nearly did not take kindly to the Swami's presence. And he started abusing the Swami everyday with uncharitable words born of pride and jealousy. Swami Dayananda only used to smile them away lightly.

One day somebody brought a basketful of fruits to Dayananda. Choosing carefully a few of the best from them, the Swami asked a disciple to carry them to the *sādhu*. But no sooner than the disciple announced, 'Respected sir! Dayananda...', the *sādhu* shouted at him in utter repugnance: 'What an inauspicious name you have uttered right at the beginning of the day! I am afraid I may not get any alms today due to its evil effect. Go away from here with the fruits, they must have been meant for someone else!'

Taken aback, the disciple slipped away, and coming back to Swami Dayananda, narrated everything. However, the Swami urged him to go back again, saying: 'Tell him that these fruits will help him regain the energy he lost by calling me so many sweet names all these days.'

The message had a startling effect on the *sādhu*. Instead of further irritating him it brought an awakening. 'How could the Swami have remained so unaffected by my cruelty? He can't be an ordinary person,' he mused. Restless with guilt he hurried to Dayananda and, prostrating himself at his feet, begged to be pardoned: 'Your Holiness, please forgive me. Foolishly I mistook you for an ordinary man. But now I find you are God Himself!'

A great soul that Swami Dayananda was, he lovingly embraced the *sādhu* and lifted him up.

News & Reports

CENTENARY CELEBRATION OF SWAMIJI'S CHICAGO ADDRESS & NATIONAL YOUTH DAY OBSERVANCE AT JAYRAMBATI, SRI SRI MATHI MANDIR, DIST. BANKURA, W. BENGAL

On 12 January 1994, Swami Vivekananda's 132nd Birthday, National Youth Day was observed very solemnly through the day-long programme in the Ashrama Compound of Holy Mother's Temple at Jayrambati. Also was celebrated the 100th anniversary of Swamiji's participation in the Parliament of Religions at Chicago in 1893.

The function started at 4:30 in the morning with worship in the temple (*maṅgal-ārati*) and with chanting of the Vedas. At 7:30, a very large procession of about four thousand young men and women was formed, without respect of caste, creed or religious affiliation, and a round was made of the village path. Procession was followed with taking of *prasād* in the Ashrama at noon. A competition for recitation, speeches and musical performances was held for the boys and girls, ages 14 to 25, at 10:00 a.m., and a drawing competition was held for the youngest children. 375 members of 110 schools, colleges, clubs and music schools participated in the function. At 2:00 p.m., Revered Swami Ameyanandaji Maharaj answered questions submitted by the young members of different villages.

At 3:00 p.m. a meeting—*Dharma Sabha*—was held with the object of discussing 'Sarvadharmar Milanbhumī—the meeting ground of all religions'. Swami Purnatmanandaji Maharaj, Editor of the Bengal Magazine, *Udbodhan Patrika*, started by Swami Vivekananda, presided over the function. Dr. Soumen Das, Principal of

Bishop College, Calcutta, Dr. Hossainur Rahaman, Head of the Dept. of History of Mohsin College, Hooghly, and Dr. Dipak Barua, Head of the Dept. of Pali, Calcutta University, were invited to deliver addresses on this subject.

After evening *ārati* (*Sandhyā-ārati*), Sri Gopal Chattopadhyaya, Bani Chattopadhyaya and their party performed the musical programme (*Gītī Alekhyā*).

THE VEDANTA SOCIETY OF NEW YORK,
34 WEST 71ST STREET, NEW YORK, N.Y.,
U.S.A. 10023

Report of Society Activities: April 1 993 - March 1994.

This is the first Vedanta Centre in the United States, having been started by Swami Vivekananda in 1894. Located at the above address (Phone: 212-877-9197), it has been under the charge of Swami Tathagatananda since 1977.

The Swami conducted Sunday morning services; Tuesday evening classes on *Sri Ramakrishna, The Great Master*; and Friday evening classes on the *Bhagavad-Gita*. Group devotional singing, open to the public, was held every Saturday and Sunday evening.

Birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother, Swami Vivekananda, Lord Buddha and Sri Krishna were observed, as well as Easter, Durga Puja and Christmas. The centenary of Swami Vivekananda's appearance at the 1893 Parliament of Religions was celebrated with several special services. The annual Vivekananda Fourth of July Festival took place as usual at the country home of one of the members.

The Swami gave a number of talks

outside the centre—at schools, colleges, temples, and other Vedanta Societies, to groups of devotees, and at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago. The Swami also participated in celebrations of Vivekananda's appearance at the Parliament of Religions held at William Peterson College and Rutgers University in New Jersey, and at the Stony Brook branch of the State University of New York. Guest lectures were given by five visiting Swamis and a Unitarian minister. The Swami authored three books: *Albert Einstein: His Human Side*; *Meditation on Shri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda*; and *Swami Vivekananda's Impact at the Parliament of Religions*. The last of these was published by the Centre.

RAMAKRISHNA ASHRAMA,

GASPAR CAMPOS 1149, 1661 BELLA VISTA,
BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA

Brief report of the Ashrama activities during the year 1993 (Jan.-Dec.)

The Birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother, Swami Vivekananda and Swami Brahmananda, as also of Sri Krishna and Jesus Christ, and festivals like Durga Puja and Kali Puja were celebrated.

A well-maintained shrine consecrated to Sri Ramakrishna provided the right atmosphere for devotees seeking to meditate and pray, and to participate in the regular shrine services.

Readings (in Spanish) from the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* and other holy texts were done regularly on Sundays in the Ashrama. The programmes of the Study-group in Buenos Aires City were also held. Lectures were delivered in Buenos Aires and other places. Interviews also were granted to spiritual seekers.

The Study-groups of Bahia Blanca City, conducted by Dr. Elmer Ricciotti, and of Mendoza City conducted by Mr. Bernardo Duci, continued to function regularly. The

groups of devotees of Sao Paulo, Curitiba and Rio de Janeiro of Brazil, and La Paloma of Uruguay also functioned regularly with various activities.

The Centenary of the Parliament of Religions (1893-1993) was celebrated with the participation of the devotees and friends in Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay.

The Books-Sales section continued to distribute the publications of *Ramakrishna-Vivekananda-Vedanta* literature, with the collaboration of Editorial Kier S. A. A new book, *Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Vedanta* (134 pages) was published. The publication department had 23 titles. The library section continued its service.

We received guests and visitors from different places of Argentina, viz., Bahia Blanca, Bariloche, Cordoba, Mendoza, Rosario, etc. A good number of devotees and friends came from Brazil and Uruguay.

The Swami visited Brazil, Uruguay, and some places of Argentina, and spoke on religious subjects. He had the blessed opportunity to visit India during June-August.

The publication of two Bulletins in Spanish, viz. *Ramakrishna Para Todas* (Ramakrishna for Everybody), published by Silvina Simonovich of Buenos Aires City, and *Vedanta Universal* by Noemi Ricciotti of Bahia Blanca City continued regularly.

The number of Associated Members was: 1) Adherents, 39; 2) Sympathizers, 26.

The cost of living in Argentina has risen. But generous cooperation of some of the devotees and friends in Argentina and Brazil helped greatly to run the Ashrama activities normally, so much so there was no deficit!

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION ASHRAMA,
NARENDRAPUR, WEST BENGAL

*A Short Report on
Ramakrishna Mission's Approach to
Rural Development*

On the occasion of the centenary of Swami Vivekananda's participation in the World's Parliament of Religions at Chicago and that of his Bharat Parikrama, and on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of this Ashrama, a workshop was held by the Lokasiksha Parishad, the Integrated Development unit of the Ashrama. The objective was to review the approaches followed by the different branch-centres of the Ramakrishna Mission in India, to assess success and failure in the light of Swami Vivekananda's vision of integrated development, and to modify or reframe future plans of action in this regard.

So, invitations were offered to all the Ramakrishna Mission branches engaged in rural/urban development in India, and also to a few other organizations working in the same field following the ideas and ideals of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda movement. It was scheduled that the workshop would be held between 21 and 25 December, 1993, in three phases, viz., a two-day discussion at Narendrapur; field visits to Pallimangal, Lokasiksha Parishad and Divyayan activity areas; and validation at Ranch, Bihar.

While a few representatives could not make it convenient to attend the workshop, the following branches and organizations attended the workshop:

- 1) Divyayan, Ramakrishna Mission, Ranchi, Bihar
- 2) Ramakrishna Math, Jamtara, Bihar
- 3) Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Puri, Orissa
- 4) Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, Bhubaneswar, Orissa
- 5) Ramakrishna Mission Saradapith, Belur

Math, Howrah

- 6) Ramakrishna Mission, Agartala, Tripura
- 7) Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Narayanpur, M.P.
- 8) Vivekananda Swasthya Seva Sangha, Calcutta
- 9) Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Manasadwip, 24-Parganas (South)
- 10) Buddha Educational, Vocational & Charitable Society, Bihar
- 11) Girijana Kalyana Kendra, Mysore
- 12) Kalyan, Purulia
- 13) Ramakrishna Mission Lokasiksha Parishad, Narendrapur, and
- 14) Other Unit Centres of Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Narendrapur

On 21 December at 9 a.m. the workshop was inaugurated. After Vedic Chanting by the sannyasins and brahmacharins, Swami Asaktananda, Secretary of the Ashrama, welcomed the delegates and other distinguished persons. The Swami explained in brief how since the early fifties the Ashrama (then located in North Calcutta) embarked upon integrated development in a slum, following the model proposed by Swami Vivekananda. The effort that began thus with a small adult education programme gained tremendous momentum later and ramified. The goal was to help people to be able to solve their problems by themselves. Sri S.S. Chakraborty, Director, Ramakrishna Mission Lokasiksha Parishad, Narendrapur, while explaining the objectives of the workshop, said that Swami Vivekananda's primary concern was welfare of Man. Accordingly, the Mission's major objective is to stand by those who need amelioration of suffering—material or spiritual. It was high time, Sri Chakraborty said, that the Mission reviewed its approaches and activities in the light of Swami Vivekananda's vision of development. The workshop would offer an opportunity for all concerned to assess their performance and the way of working with the people.

The workshop was inaugurated by Swami Lokeswaranandaji Maharaj. In his inaugural address the Swami briefly narrated the history of the growth and development of the Lokasiksha Parishad, and laid stress on 'motivation' of the people for the work on hand. The Swami also alerted everyone about the challenges and risks involved, which were unavoidable parts of the task.

Swami Bhajananandaji Maharaj, Assistant Secretary of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, delivered the keynote address. He drew everyone's attention to the present socio-economic condition of the country, and the relevance of the application of the practical Vedanta advocated by Swami Vivekananda.

Swami Bhajanananda said that, while only 30% of the total population enjoys two-thirds of the Indian GNP, 70% somehow manage to survive only on one-third. He further said that most of the development achieved in the country is limited to the urban areas, and therefore topmost priority should be given to agriculture and allied areas for rural development.

Continuing, he said: Swami Vivekananda in course of his tour of India as a *Parivrājaka* (itinerant monk) experienced the dire poverty and painful ignorance in rural India, and resolved to redress the same. His going to the West was (initially) aimed at seeking financial and technical support to do away with the sufferings of the people.

And it was for this that he wanted even the monks of the Order to be actively involved in development work—to ensure the spiritual as well as the material development of the poor and the downtrodden. He has given us an integral view of life, and if the same could be actualized in individual as well as collective life, then that development he had dreamt of would be possible. It is appropriate that, on the occasion of the centenary of his Bharat-Parikrama and participation in the World's Parliament of Religions, the Lokasiksha Parishad has organized this workshop. This offers an opportunity to all the branch centres to share experiences and evolve common strategies to carry out the work of Swami Vivekananda for India and her people.

Next, Swami Satprabhananda, Assistant Secretary, offered thanks to all present. The workshop then went on with experience-sharing. Each centre presented its approaches and experiences, followed by interactions. This continued till the afternoon of 22 December 1993.

Late in the afternoon the representatives left by the Ashrama bus to Belur Math, and therefrom to Kamarpukur to see the activities of the Pallimangal. From Kamarpukur they proceeded to Purulia to review the activities of the Lokasiksha Parishad through Kalyan, its district-level youth federation, and then to Divyayan at Ranchi. On 25 December the valediction of the workshop was held at Ranchi before the participants left for their respective centres.

All the sacred books, all holy scriptures and ritual and prayers, all the words of the Vedas, and the whole past and present and future, come from the Spirit.

—Yajur-Veda, 4.9.

Books Received

1. *The Gospel of Purity (Brahmacharya)*, by Anthony Elenjimittam, Basic Education Publications, Aquinas Hall, Bombay, 400 050.

2. *The Stars That Guide, An Astrologer's Recollections and Reflections*, by Dr. K. Damodaran Nambiar, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1993. Kulapati Munshi

Marg, Bombay, 400 007.

3. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatā*, Vols. 3 & 4 (Kannada), Ed. by Vidwan H.N. Rangaswamy and others. Bharata Darasana Prakashana, 163 Manjunath Road, II Block, Thyagarajanagar, Bangalore, Karnataka 560 028. Limp. Rs. 20/-, Deluxe Rs. 24/-.

Bhagavad-Gita and the Poetry of Swami Vivekananda

(Continued from page 427)

The worlds are held together by the supreme Spirit. Lord Kṛṣṇa says, 'these hang on Me/ As hangs a row of pearls upon its string...' (p. 56, ch. 7.7). Swami Vivekananda realized this mystic harmony in the universe:

Thou wert my God with prophets old;
All creeds do come from Thee;
The Vedas, Bible, and Koran bold
Sing Thee in harmony.³⁰

The mystical utterance, *Om-Tat-Sat*, which is considered to be the threefold symbol of Brahman, was highly adored by Swami Vivekananda. He was a great sannyasin who sang 'high that note—*Om Tat Sat Om!*'

We can see that Swami Vivekananda has effectively employed in his poems symbols that are found in the *Gītā* also—ether, air, fire, water, earth, chariot, *māyā*, light, darkness, flame, wheel, moon, etc.

The one recurring theme in the poems of Swami Vivekananda is the gospel of the *Gītā*. His poems, like the *Gītā*, are a source of tremendous strength and inspiration so that, like the enraged lion breaking free from a trap-net, we may snap the bonds of *māyā* and gain *mukti*, freedom. His poems reveal the light spiritual of the *Gītā*. He continuously reminds us in his poems to realize that, 'I am Existence Absolute, Bliss Absolute, Knowledge Absolute, I am He.' His message of harmony, hope and peace, found in his poems, will enable us to live as human beings in the true sense of the term.

30. Swami Vivekananda, *In Search of God and Other Poems*, p. 5.

(concluded)

He is the Supreme Brahman, the Self of all, the chief foundation of this world, subtler than the subtle, eternal. That thou art; Thou are That.

—Atharva Veda, Kaivalya Upaniṣad, 16.