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or Awakened India

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Cover: A view of the Himalayas

NOVEMBER 1994

CONTENTS

Divine Wisdom	441
Are Indians Religious?—V <i>Editorial</i>	442
Madhusudana Saraswati on the Bhagavad-Gita <i>Swami Gambhirananda</i>	448
On Gifts of Mayavati <i>Dr. Debashis Chatterjee</i>	452
Parliament of Religions, New York: Tribute to Swami Vivekananda <i>Swami Sarvagatananda</i>	453
Swamiji and Emancipation of Religion <i>Swami Tathagatananda</i>	455
The Concept of Bhakti (Devotion) <i>Dr. S.P. Dubey</i>	463
Bhakti in Jainism <i>Swami Brahmeshananda</i>	469
NBT Moots Readers' Club	474
Practical Vedanta	476
Youth Forum	478
Reviews and Notices	479



PRABUDDHA BHARATA

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

Vol. 99

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No. 11

DIVINE WISDOM

ŚUKA'S HYMN TO THE LORD

यत्कीर्तनं यत्स्मरणं यदीक्षणं
यद्वन्दनं यच्छ्रवणं यदर्हणं ।
लोकस्य सद्यो विधुनोति कल्मषं
तस्मै सुभद्रश्रवसे नमो नमः ॥

Repeated salutations to that Being whose fame consists in His all-purifying sanctity! The corruptions of sin are overcome by those who listen to His excellences, who praise Him, who remember Him, who serve Him, who salute Him, and who worship Him.

विचक्षणा यच्चरणोपसादनात्
सङ्गं व्युदस्योभयतोऽन्तरात्मनः
विन्दन्ति हि ब्रह्मगतिं गतक्लामा-
स्तस्मै सुभद्रश्रवसे नमो नमः ॥

Salutations again and again to that Being whose glory consists in His all-purifying sanctity! By worshipping His feet men of discrimination easily overcome the attachment for the enjoyments of this world and of the hereafter, and attain easily to the Bliss of Brahman.

तपस्विनो दानपरा यशस्विनो
मनस्विनो मन्त्रविदः सुमङ्गलाः ।
क्षेमं न विन्दन्ति विना यदर्पणं
तस्मै सुभद्रश्रवसे नमो नमः ॥

Salutations again and again to the Being whose glory consists in His all-purifying sanctity—without worshipping whom with the fruits of their practices, aspirants who devote themselves to austerity, charity, Yoga, repetition of Mantras, etc. can never attain to the spiritual *summum bonum*.

From the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*

Are Indians Religious?—V

Can religion be strictly private?

In the context of Swamiji's exhortation that Indians should hold on to religion, making it central to individual, social and national life, the third question raised was, *Why religion in public life? It leads to hatred and conflicts.*

Most of what we have to say has already appeared in the April/May '94 editorials ('India: Religious Diversity and Harmony' and 'Global Religious Harmony'), and parts 2 to 4 of the present one. So, here we shall state its gist, and take a look at a few other related issues.

First of all, we think that the very concept of 'religion in private life, and no religion in public life' is artificial. True religion is inseparable from character. Therefore a sincerely religious person cannot cultivate two types of character—one for private life and another for social life. This person's anxiety will be—How to practise religion in collective life also, avoiding conflicts and hatred? We believe this is what your question implies.

However, if someone insists that religion should have no place in social life, then he or she is obviously casual about religion, and is definitely more attached to earthly life. We have discussed this in parts 2 and 3 of the present editorial, reminding the readers how reliance on only secular or humanistic values has spawned several problems.

We had therefore pleaded that religion must pervade our whole life. Without it,

society degenerates. Is there any source other than religion from which we might draw the values collective life requires? Democracy inspires no substitutes for religious values. Nor does secularism—in the Western sense of 'benign neglect of religion', or in the incomprehensible and impractical Indian sense of 'respectful equidistance from all religions'. Are we not seeing that every ideology that fixes our concern only to worldly affairs worsens our humanity?

Notwithstanding the secular and materialistic dazzle, studies are revealing that religious aspiration is intrinsic to humans. There is something in us, some aspect of our being—call it soul, spirit, Atman, or whatever—that is seeking fulfilment following a law of evolution. Religious revivals and mushrooming new religious movements, despite opposition, show that this evolutionary urge cannot be stifled. Therefore, logically and ideally, every detail of our lives, personal and social, should be aligned to the direction of that evolution. This is with regard to the first part of the question.

Causes of disharmony

Now the second part, concerning inter-religious strifes. The most vexing aspects of this problem and their hopeful solution were overviewed in April/May '94. Here we shall consider them in relation to present-time India.

The principal *causes* of our distressing religious conflicts are the following:

First, we do not care to go deep into our religious practices. That is, we do not strive enough to experience the spiritual truths forming the centre of our faiths. If we are honest with ourselves, we may perhaps discover that we are satisfied with the external formalities of religion. Having neither tasted the joys of spiritual life nor received guidance in that direction, we are content with splendid rituals, elaborate worship, prayer, pilgrimages, processions, etc. The whiff of peace these give lulls us into a false sense of piety. At such a level, our preoccupation is more with the world, religion appearing as a promising means to material gain. Rightly has Robert Brault said: 'The object of most prayers is to wangle an advance on good intentions.'

The six causes of religious disharmony are ignorance about spirituality, nonacceptance of religious plurality, conflicting regulations regarding social customs, methods of worship, etc. false notion that organization is a must for religion, conversion, and politics of religion.

Second, we have been unable to come to terms with the humbling phenomenon of bewildering religious plurality. Each group ardently believes that it alone is true and will outlast others. Evidently this is a legacy of imperialism, and the effect of our science-trained mind which says that an entity can have only one definition. The outcome is: religious institutions that are the staunchest defenders of this legacy are preventing us from appreciating the divine beauty of diversity. In spite of our being civilized and rational, we are restrained from asserting that, while characteristic differences among religions will remain, these should not be overemphasized so as to lead to mutual abuse, clash and violence.

The third is not so much the obscure

doctrinal differences among religions, for they have little bearing on daily life. The more irritable cause, which adversely affects us since we live so closely, is the conflicting religious regulations in the matter of food, dress, social customs, methods of worship, etc.

Fourth, we labour under the notion that to be religious we *must* belong to a religious organization. We are prisoners of a long established tradition that we are born with a religious label, and should therefore remain unquestioningly committed to the dictates of our organization. Our religious label takes habitual precedence over the first and foremost fact that we are human beings, who ought to be fully exercising our freedom to choose and reason. Consequently, we are obliged to nurture tailored attitudes, one of which is, 'We are superior'. Hence the competition, condescension, hatred and conflict among the followers of various faiths. The more rigid an organization, and the more priest-dominated, the greater its contribution to unrest.

The fifth is the activity of missionary conversion. This is not totally new to India though. It is common to all religions. It is natural that persons inspired by conviction and joy in their religion should desire to propagate it for universal benefit. As a matter of fact, our tradition says that study of the scriptures and preaching are duties of a religious person. Why? *Dharma-pravṛddhyartham tadavismaraṇārtham ca*: So that *dharma* (religion, righteousness, virtue, universal love, morality) may flourish, and that we may not forget what *dharma* is; so that through frequent discussion we may hold scriptural guidance uppermost in our minds. And we know that sometimes listeners experience a change of heart and embrace a new preacher's faith. With the advent of every holy person, people in small or large numbers have renounced their

original beliefs to follow the new teacher. Even today new groups are being formed, drawing people from existing sects. This has been going on for centuries.

But history shows that whenever missionaries spiced their discourse with abuse of the prevailing faiths, it resulted in religious disturbance. Providentially, this type of irreligious activity had almost disappeared because of the dominant Vedic proclamation of religious harmony in diversity. Unfortunately, today we are witnessing a more frightening form of religious intolerance, conversion and disharmony, introduced by Islam and Christianity. Of course, Islamic conversion has practically ceased, though a great deal of intolerance and suspicion persists between Muslims and followers of the native religions. The tension between Christian missionaries and indigenous religious groups, however, is because of the formers' *methods* of conversion rather than their preaching and service.

The six forces that offer a secular solution are firm governance, modern education, industrialization, democracy, Human Rights Movement, and globalization.

Without mincing words we denounce this type of conversion, because it is totally alien to our culture. It can hardly be condoned as religious activity, since it is largely achieved by offering material inducements and through deceptive abuse of other faiths. Is it not quite mean to try converting people when they are in physical, financial or mental distress, looking upon such situations as God-given opportunities not just to serve but also convert? Beneath the high-sounding theological justification of 'conversion through any means', the ground reality is that the victims are mostly the poor illiterates—innocent people who are ill

equipped to articulate or defend their simple ancestral faiths, or fully comprehend what is happening.

Sixth is the 'politics of religion'. Probably this is the most disruptive factor fomenting religious antagonism. It is driving away thinking people from religion, and distorting the spirit of true religion. The majority of us are unaware of the heinous machinations of this behind-the-curtain villain. Turning to good account the differences among religions, the organizational structure of religions and the priests-created interreligious frictions, politicians are playing one religion against another for their own gain. For, any tightly knit organization—in any field of life at that—is easy meat for them. So, before we allow aversion to religion to grow in us, we should be very cautious and distinguish between interreligious problems engineered by politicians and those arising exclusively because of differences among religions.

Whereas the above is an instance of politicians manipulating differences among religions, there are two shades of another kind: In one, religious organizations compete and quarrel to acquire political weight, using their congenitally loyal members as mere pawns in the game. And in the other, we have politicians propping up new centres of 'religion' to attract as many gullible adherents as possible. The political advantage of patronizing such pockets of influence is obvious. In this case, too, when these 'religious' bodies get involved in political rivalries, the impression created is that of 'religious' conflict.

Thus we are faced with a dilemma: As sure as God made little apples, we are eager for religion. But religion appears to be like a beautiful rose which if we wish to have must be accepted together with its stem of prickly thorns! On the one hand we see so much

good in every religion to satisfy our spiritual hunger. But, on the other, we also see that there is as much chaff which, in the light of new thought and changing social conditions, should be discarded. Since we are organization-bound, how are we to pick only the good and, with trust in our sanity and conscience reject all the elements that we know heighten interreligious ill feelings?

The causes re-examined

There is a way. To arrive at it, we should look more closely at the *cause*. The first one is very often treated as the primary or sole cause, and the antidote prescribed is the usual advice—All problems will dissolve only if individuals seriously take to spiritual life. This is inspiring, but utopian, because it takes away an individual's problem and possibly of the few who may come into close touch with him. It does not clear up the anguish of the millions and the succeeding generations. Explanation: True it is that mystics, who have realized themselves to be spiritual beings distinct from body and mind, are devoid of animosity towards others, and stay out of interreligious wrangles. The power of their spirituality is such. This implies that mere belief in God and the usual practices are insufficient to radically transform our self-perception and conduct. We may continue to be subject to all the human limitations, including the feeling of 'we versus them' towards followers of other faiths.

So, to clean our minds of the deeply ingrained ill feelings against the followers of other religions, we should endeavour for spirituality rather than religiosity. But the spiritual path is a long and arduous one! Thus the unhappy conclusion is that, for quite some more time our minds will continue to be agitated by religious differences. Therefore, until then, the counter-balance against this is a conscious effort to weed out from our mind antipathy to other faiths, no

matter how divergent from our own they appear. And this effort can be sustained only through deep-souled prayer to God for universal harmony. Besides, at no time are all individuals simultaneously and equally deep into spiritual life. And this is precisely why we find people entangled in one or more of the *causes*. Moreover, as we have said, our religious endeavour is inextricably under organizational restrictions.

Thus, this *cause* is not an autonomous one, but is born of 'organized religion'. So too are the next four causes, though the fourth and the fifth often combine with the sixth for mutual benefit. Thus the two overriding *causes* are 'organized religion' and 'politics of religion'. These should be neutralized before the power of peace, goodness, and harmony in religions can flow into social life also. Only then can we hope to be religious, to love God, as *our* heart and reason want.

A secular solution

Now it is easier to propose a solution. We had discussed this under 'Global Religious Harmony' (May '94). Dogmatic, unaccommodative and divisive religious organizations, and the politics of religion can be effectively marginalized through firm governance, universal modern education, industrialization, spread of democracy, a powerful Human Rights Movement, and globalization. For, the focus of these *six forces* is on protection of individual liberty, free thought, religious (and racial) plurality, and the underlying unity of humanity.

Evidence. Inter-religious problems are well under control in societies where some or all of these forces are very active. Such problems are rightly treated as irreligious law and order problems. Besides, such societies have been able to—even the usually devious politicians have been compelled to—extend protection to liberal religious

minded individuals protesting against orthodoxy and bigotry. Singapore is a good example. Also consider most of the Western nations: As religious pluralism grows, the governments are finding it politically wise to briskly reinforce those *forces*. This has kept a tight hand on all contentious religious organizations, and ensured harmony. This trend is slowly showing in Islamic societies too.

Thus, in a world being swept by irreversible pluralism, the message of these *forces* to the quarrelsome institutions is clear: 'Loosen up the hold on your followings; stop persecution; respect, or at least tolerate, individuals' freedom to question, choose or reject. People are quite capable of deciding for themselves which religion they need, and how much of it they want. Accept religious diversity; and stop abusing other religions. Help build a peaceful global family if you can. If not, then you are inconsequential to human hopes.'

Not for India

These forces are already at work in our country and, hopefully, they will succeed in dissipating religious strifes. However, there are a couple of points to take note of: These forces are secular and can be operated only by the State. So, it appears that we have to look up to our government to hasten to fruitfully employ these forces.

From a realistic point of view, this may bring only despair. The general perception is that, it is too much to expect such farsighted and firm decisions from the available lot of politicians. India must sorrowfully wait for some more time for brilliant and determined leaders to blossom forth from her youth, whose first love will be the country, her heritage and the deeply spiritual masses. Nevertheless, a gradual improvement in the religious atmosphere is bound to come, notwithstanding the prevalent politics of religion. For, those

forces, though weak now, have an irresistible dynamics of their own.

So far so good. At first blush it seems that the near future is going to bless us with just what we are hoping for—religious harmony. But, examined closely, we are likely to receive only a curate's egg. Why? Remember, those *forces* are secular. Therefore, even as the government utilizes them with greater resolve and sidelines religious *organizations*, religion too is going to be further kept out of national life. Because, as said earlier, in ordinary understanding, *organization* and *religion* are wrongly but inseparably intertwined. Thus it is likely that the national ethos is going to suffer greater secularization. Now imagine the awkward dichotomy: A secular State and a basically religious-minded population! This must be forestalled, because it is against our national characteristic, viz. religious penchant. What then is the solution?

Vedanta as national philosophy

Before stating the answer, let us first be clear about what exactly our needs are (in the specific context of your question). We want: religion, but with the liberty to tone down or reject practices and doctrines that disrupt harmony; diffuse religious institutions, which will protect and propagate respective traditions without trying to impose unquestioning submission; an attitude of mind which evokes reverence for all forms of religious belief; freedom, without fear of being hounded, to distance ourselves from our organization if we find it entangled in any disharmonious activity; guidance to experience the mystical or spiritual core of religion; a spiritually oriented life consonant with a national ideology that is harmonious with our heritage and our ingrained spiritual urge.

To be sure, none of the existing religions can meet these needs. We feel that Vedanta

alone fully satisfies those expectations. To those who are familiar with Swamiji's ideas, the scope of Vedanta is well known, and it hardly needs emphasizing that Vedanta is neither popular Hinduism nor another 'religion'. Besides, some of its aspects, related to the present theme, have been highlighted in the preceding editorials. We might as well recount the relevant Vedantic ideas to refresh ourselves: all existence is spiritual; the idea of secularism is false; religion is not hereditary but innate; it requires no organizational bindings; at their deepest mystical core all religions are united; religions as preached and practised have each some limitation or other; from them take whatever is rational and can be practised, whatever is conducive to peace with your neighbour, and seek some spiritual experience.

India, however, should adopt Vedanta as the national ideology, desecularizing those forces and giving them a soul.

So, to avert the problem mentioned above, our State should adopt Vedanta as its philosophy. (Please refer to the editorials of the last two months.) It will still be possible—in fact be easier—to employ those indispensable *forces*, because Vedanta desecularized them. Thus, with Vedanta providing a soul to those six forces, the six causes of interreligious ill feelings can be dispelled. In this way, without having to succumb to secularism of the current brand, we can hope to create an atmosphere conducive to an uncompartmentalized, all-embracing spiritual life.

Do you see the outlines of a typically Indian brand of secularism? Not 'benign neglect of religion'; not 'safe equidistance or politically opportunistic distance from all religions'; but 'adoption of Vedanta as the foundational philosophy of the nation;

recognition of the clear-cut distinction between *religion* and *organization*; equal acceptance of and encouragement to all religions; dissemination of the core values of all religions; protection to citizens desirous of practising religion without organizational harassment; firmly showing their place to organizations that fit badly into our culture; and an equal and as great a distance as possible from such organizations'.

Citizen's responsibility

The conclusion of this discussion with a lot of *ifs* and *buts* is, however, not that everything depends on the government. Gone are the days when our rulers were believed to come down to us with the rays of the sun or the moon. In a democratic society each person is equally responsible for its wellbeing. So it is childish to lay the blame for all ills at the door of the government. Therefore, let Indians not remain passive, waiting for the government or politicians to take steps towards harmony. Liberal minded persons from all religions and sects should form a network of regional Vedantic groups. These can work to bring into religion the spirit of science and the democratic freedom of choice, and the spirit of Vedanta into science and democracy—to thus promote harmony and protect people from dogmatic organizations. Since existing organizations are unwilling to properly educate their followers about other religions, these associations for religious harmony could take up that responsibility. Isn't it a fact that even longtime neighbours are often ignorant—sometimes positively wary—of each other's faith? Isn't this because of the misinformation fed to them by their organizations?

Once the initial reactions are courageously weathered, these associations will certainly succeed in awakening a national awareness that disharmony is not

(Continued on page 451)

Madhusudana Saraswati on the Bhagavad-Gita

SWAMI GAMBHIRANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue)

MAN OF STEADY WISDOM

अर्जुन उवाच ।

Arjuna uvāca: Arjuna said:

स्थितप्रज्ञस्य का भाषा समाधिस्थस्य केशव ।
स्थितधीः किं प्रभाषेत किमासीत ब्रजेत किम् ॥

*Sthitaprajñasya kā bhāṣā
samādhisthasya keśava;
Sthitadhīḥ kiṁ prabhāṣeta
kimāśīta vrajeta kim. (2.54)*

O Keśava, what is the description of a person of steady Wisdom who is Self-absorbed? How does the man of steady Wisdom speak? How does he sit? How does he move about?

The person of steady Wisdom is one who has the unwavering realization, 'I am Brahman', who continues in the two states—of remaining absorbed in the Self, and of having his mind roused (from Self-absorption). Hence he asks specifically: *Kā bhāṣā*, what is the description; *sthita-prajñasya*, of the person who is of steady Wisdom; and *samādhi-sthasya*, who is Self-absorbed? The Genitive case is used to indicate the Objective case. *Bhāṣā* means that through which something is described, (i.e.) characteristics. Through what characteristics is a man who is Self-absorbed and who is of steady Wisdom described by others? This is the meaning.

And when his mind has emerged (from *samādhi*), *kim*, how does he; the *sthita-dhīḥ*,

one who is a man of steady Wisdom; *prabhāṣeta*, himself speak—in appreciation or in despise, when he is praised or maligned?

Everywhere (in this verse, the verbs) are used in the Potential Mood, conveying the sense of probability. So also, *kim āśīta*, how does he sit?—which means, how does he regulate the external organs in order to control the mind that has emerged (from *samādhi*)? And when he does not exercise control over them (the external organs), *kim vrajeta*, how does he move about, how does he accept the objects? The meaning is: Of what kind are the speaking, the sitting, and the moving about done by him, which are distinct from those of the unenlightened people? Thus there are four questions: One is with regard to the man of steady Wisdom who is in *samādhi*; three are with regard to the man of steady Wisdom who has emerged (from *samādhi*).

By addressing (the Lord) as 'Keśava', Arjuna indicates, 'You Yourself, as the inner Controller of all, are capable of speaking about such profound matters.'

श्रीभगवानुवाच ।

Śrībhagavān uvāca: The Blessed Lord said:

प्रजहाति यदा कामान्सर्वान्यार्थं मनोगतान् ।
आत्मन्येवात्मना तुष्टः स्थितप्रज्ञस्तदोच्यते ॥

*Prajaḥāti yadā kāmān
sarvānpārtha manogatān;
Ātmanyevātmanā tuṣṭaḥ
sthitaprajñastadocyate. (2.55)*

O Pārtha, when one fully renounces all the desires belonging to the mind, and remains contented in the Self alone through the Self, then he is called a man of steady Wisdom.

The Lord gives the answer to these four questions seriatim, beginning from this verse upto the end of the chapter. *Yadā*, when; one (*prajahāti*) renounces fully, by putting an end to their cause, *sarvān*, all, without remainder; *kāmān*, the desires, particular tendencies of the mind, viz desire, will etc., which have been elaborated in another scripture under five different categories as *pramāṇa* (knowledge), *viparyaya* (illusion), *vikalpa* (fancy, consequent on word-sense), *nidrā* (sleep), and *smṛti* (recollection)¹; (i.e.) when one verily becomes free from all mental modifications; *tadā*, then; he is *ucyate*, called; *sthitaprajñah*, a man of steady Wisdom;— after this the phrase '*samādhiḥ*' one merged in *samādhi*' is understood. By the word *manogatān* (belonging to the mind), the Lord means that desires can be renounced because they are not properties of the Self. If they indeed be properties of the Self, then they cannot be renounced; for in that case they would have been intrinsic like the heat of fire. But they are qualities of the mind, (and) hence they can surely be renounced by renouncing it (the mind). This is the meaning.

(*Arjuna*:) Is it not that a particular kind of contentment, which is recognizable through the sign of serenity of face, is noticed in the man of Wisdom? How can that happen when all desires have been renounced?

Hence He says: *Tuṣṭaḥ*, fully contented—from having gained the supreme human goal—; *ātmani eva*, only in the Self which is identical with the supreme Bliss—but not in the worthless non-Self—; *ātmanā*, through the Self, revealing Itself as the self-effulgent Consciousness, but not as modifications of the mind. Accordingly there is a Śruti, 'When all desires clinging to one's heart fall off, then a mortal becomes immortal (and) attains Brahman here.'² Thus the man of steady Wisdom, who is merged in *samādhi*, is spoken of with such words that describe his signs. This is the answer to the first question.

Now are to be explained the 'speaking', 'sitting' and 'moving about' of the man of steady Wisdom when he emerges from *samādhi*, which are different from those the unenlightened persons. As to that, through two verses He states the answer to the question, 'How does he speak?':

दुःखेष्वनुद्विग्नमनाः सुखेषु विगतस्पृहः ।
वीतरागभयक्रोधः स्थितधीर्मुनिरुच्यते ॥

*Dukheṣvanudvignamanāḥ
sukheṣu vigatasprṛhaḥ;
Vītarāgabhayakrodhaḥ
sthitadhīrmunirucyate. (2.56)*

The monk whose mind is unperturbed in sorrows, who is free from longing for delights, and is devoid of attachment, fear and anger, is called a man of steady Wisdom.

Sorrows are of three kinds: Those caused by sorrow, delusion, fever, headache, etc. are (called) *Ādhyātmika* (arising from bodily and mental causes within oneself); those caused by tigers, snakes, etc. are *Ādhibhautika* (due to created beings); those caused by great storms, excessive rains, etc.

1. See *Paṇḍjālī-Yoga-sūtras*, 1.6.

2. *Kaṭha-Upaniṣad*, 2.3.14.

are *Ādhidaivika* (due to the fury of the elements, etc.).

Duḥkheṣu, with regard to those sorrows, he whose mind (*manas*) does not become perturbed (*udvigna*) on account of his inability to ward off sorrows—when they come as a result of (past) sinful acts that have become fruitful (in the present life) in the form of particular modifications of the mind, which are transformations of *rajas* and are of the nature of anguish—is *anudvignamanāḥ*. It is to the unenlightened person indeed that there comes this kind of mental modification—‘Alas! I am sinful; fie on me who am evil-minded and am subject to this kind of sorrow. Who will remove this kind of sorrow of mine?’—, called anguish, consisting of remorse; it is of the nature of delusion and is born of *tamas*. If this (regret) arises at the time of committing sin, then it will be useful by way of becoming a restraint against that tendency (to sin). But it becomes useless if it comes at the time of suffering, since it is impossible to uproot an effect while its cause is there. Even when the cause of sorrow is present, (regret in the form) ‘Why is it that sorrow comes to me?’, does not arise in a discriminating man of steady Wisdom, because that (regret) is a form of delusion produced by non-discrimination. For, only the sorrow which is consequent on past actions that have commenced bearing fruits (*prārabdha-karma*) is experienced (by such a man of Wisdom), but not so is the delusion as well that follows it (sorrow).

Objection: If it be argued that, since that (delusion) is a cause of some other sorrow, therefore may it not accrue from some other *prārabdha-karma* (past action that has commenced bearing fruit)?

Reply: No, because in the case of a man of steady Wisdom, the material cause of delusion, (viz) nescience, having been eradicated, there is no possibility of

delusion. For there is no *prārabdha* which can be a begetter of the sorrow arising from that (delusion). It will be stated elaborately later on that, even though delusion is absent, the *prārabdha*, which somehow provides for the mere maintenance of the body, can be justified as the recurrence of what has been sublated (*bādhita*) (through Knowledge).

So also, *sukheṣu*, with regard to delights—with regard to the three kinds of delights, which are particular modifications of the mind and are of the nature of fondness, a transformation of *sattva*, and are brought about by virtuous past actions that have begun bearing fruit—; he who is *vigata-spr̥hāḥ*, free from longing, devoid of hankering for future delights of that kind. *Spr̥hā*, longing, verily is a modification of the mind at the time of experiencing delight, born of *tamas* and in the form of a mere vain expectation for the recurrence of that kind of delight, without performing the virtuous act that is its cause; it is indeed delusion. And that arises only in a non-discriminating person, for an effect cannot come into being without a cause. Hence, just as fear, in the form of a vain expectation—‘while the cause exists, let not the effect occur’—, is not possible in the case of a discriminating person, similarly hankering too, of the nature of longing, in the form of a vain expectation—‘may the effect occur (even) in the absence of the cause’—, is not possible. For, the *prārabdha-karma* is the begetter only of the delight.

Or, by the word *spr̥hā* is meant mental modification of the nature of exultation. That too is a mere delusion, a mental modification born of *tamas*, in the form of such exultation as, ‘Oh! blessed am I to whom has come such happiness. Who indeed is equal to me in the three worlds! Through what means, again, may this happiness of mine not leave?’ Hence has it been said in the Commentary, ‘He is free from

exultation who, unlike fire which flares up when fed with fuel etc., does not feel elated by delights.' He (the Lord) also will say, '(A knower of Brahman) should not get delighted by getting what is desirable, nor become dejected by getting what is undesirable' (5.20). That exultation also is not possible in the case of a discriminating person, for it is a delusion.

Similarly, *vīta-rāga-bhaya-krodah*—one who is devoid of attachment, fear and anger. *Rāgaḥ*, attachment, is a particular kind of mental modification, in the form of fondness for objects, arising from the superimposition of the idea of beauty; it is of the nature of intense clinging. *Bhaya*, fear, is a kind of mental modification in the form of helplessness, which comes to a man who thinks that he has no remedy when a force destructive of the object of his attachment presents itself. Similarly, *krodhaḥ*, anger, is a particular mental modification, in the form of flaring

up, that comes to a person who, when a force destructive of the object of his attachment presents itself, thinks himself capable of warding it off. He is such (i.e., *vīta-rāga-bhaya-krodhaḥ*) from whom have been removed all these, since they are forms of illusion. *Muniḥ*, the meditative person, the monk, who is of this kind; *ucyate*, is called; *sthitaprajñah*, a man of steady Wisdom.

It has been stated in a positive way that, a man of steady Wisdom of such characteristics utters words concerning unperturbability, freedom from longing, etc., revealing his own experience for the sake of training his disciples. And thus, any other seeker of Liberation, too, should not be perturbed by sorrow, be not elated by delights, and should be free from attachment, fear and anger. This is the purport.

(to be continued)

Are Indian Religious?—V

(Continued from page 447)

in religion: it is almost entirely a creation of the padres, mullahs, priests, politicians, the superstition of 'organization', and our unawareness of the link between religion and its core, viz. spirituality. Besides, people will learn of the wonderful holiness in the lives of all the prophets and saints, and in the followers of every religion. There is indeed so much for the Hindus to learn from the Christians, Muslims and others, and so too for each of these to learn from the rest. No sooner than religion and spirituality thus get liberated from the myth of 'organization', people's religious lives will be spontaneous and whole, with an inflow of spiritual values and harmony into society.

It is a hundred years since Vedanta was broadcast by Swamiji in Chicago as the

harmonizer of all faiths. The centenary celebrations organized since last year by the Ramakrishna Order are scheduled to be concluded shortly with some functions at Belur Math and in Calcutta. We hope that those functions will really mark the beginning of a movement carrying Vedanta to the masses, which is the chief purpose of Swamiji's advent. This is an appropriate occasion for Indians to draw inspiration and demonstrate that Vedanta can usher in religious harmony, and is much more fruitful than secularism. □

For every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

—Christ, Matt. xxiii.12

On Gifts of Mayavati

DR. DEBASHIS CHATTERJEE

Thy ego-less, joy-full shower of gifts—
The ceaseless chorus of bird songs,
The redolent vales of green,
The balmy, caressing wind,
The cozy warm sun, the serene moon,
The countless sparkling stars,
The endless blue sky, the snowpeaks yonder,
And, above all, the drowning ocean of silence.

All these I saw, felt and sought
With a heart from the crowd I had brought.
Yet, duties and cares, body and mind—
All this ego-stuff I could not gift to Thee.
My life's prayers, my silent tears
I have still to give to Thee.

Tribute to Swami Vivekananda

SWAMI SARVAGATANANDA

Address (slightly adapted) given by the Revered Swami at the United Nations Dag Hammarskjold Auditorium on 6 November 1993 in commemoration of Swami Vivekananda's participation in the World's Parliament of Religions in 1893.

Swami Sarvagatananda is a senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order. He is the spiritual leader of the Ramakrishna Vedanta Society of Boston, and the Vedanta Society of Providence, U.S.A.

We have been hearing about the result of Vivekananda's advent in this country a hundred years ago. Well, I may sound a little bit pessimistic. I have to be, because, what a wonderful religion he has given to us, and what are we today? Two great problems we face: 1) the 'crisis of unbelief', and 2) the 'crime of belief', expressed in religious fundamentalism and intolerance. How to face these two? Really, there is no easy answer.

We seem not to have gained very much. It is because the most important factor in Swami Vivekananda's teachings and writings has been neglected or omitted. I don't know why. Swamiji's best contribution is that *religion is a science*. He has beautifully explained that religion is not based on dogma, or on faith, or on authority; it is a science, he said. If we can pay attention to that utterance of his, that it is a science just like any other science—chemistry or physics—then religion can be verified. The truth of religion can be demonstrated, can be proved beyond doubt.

But what is the meaning of Science? The *external* world we have got, and also the

science of matter. We know it is real; we can see it. Whereas the *inside* world, the mental and spiritual world, is there too. We know it is real, though we cannot always perceive it so clearly with our senses. But what is real, Real in the final sense, cannot have any inside or outside, but must be all one and undivided. That study—to find the Real—is the science of the Spirit, the science of the Soul, the science of the Being, the science of God. Certainly it is a scientific study, as scientific as any other study trying to find out the truths of reality, or of any thing in the natural world.

When you study the Upanishads, there you find certain pronouncements by the ancient saints and seers. Some may take these for dogmas, but they are not dogmas. We do not know who those sages were. Even all their names we do not know, but the revelations received by them have been brought to our awareness, and Vedanta holds that they are verifiable, and must be verified, before anyone should accept them as Truth. Swami Vivekananda said, let us bring out that spirit of enquiry of Vedanta into the world of religion today. He made it

very clear. That truth of the Upaniṣads—of Vedānta—and of all religions, does not stand in fear of anything! Truth stands upon Itself, independent and unassailable. In his oft-quoted and oft-remembered statement in his book *Raja Yoga*, Swamiji wrote:

Is religion to justify itself by the discoveries of reason, through which every other science justifies itself? Are the same methods of investigation, which we apply to sciences and knowledge outside, to be applied to the science of Religion? In my opinion this must be so, and I am also of opinion that the sooner it is done the better....All that is dross will be taken off, no doubt, but the essential parts of religion will emerge triumphant out of this investigation. Not only will it be scientific—as scientific, at least, as any of the conclusions of physics or chemistry—but will have greater strength, because physics or chemistry has no internal mandate to vouch for its truth, which religion has.¹

It is very clear that *Unity of Religions* and *Harmony of Humankind* is truth. In the Upaniṣads, in the Vedas, it is clearly mentioned that God is One; Truth is One; people call it by various names. One sun shines on this planet of ours, and the entire solar system. Call It by any name, it is the same Sun. So the same Spirit resides in all of us—but we cannot perceive it 'out there', so to say. As Swami Vivekananda said, it is within you. You are all that Divine Spirit. It is within you. Only discover It!

Why then cannot you see that Spirit, at this moment? Vivekananda said, it is because your mind is not pure now. On a cloudy day you don't see the sun. But does

anybody take the liberty to say that there is no sun? Of course not. When the clouds move away, the sun shines. But here are the mental clouds; they do not move away so easily as the clouds in the sky. You have to move them away yourself—by the spiritual practices. You have to purify yourself. As Jesus Christ said, 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.' Swami Vivekananda always stressed this point: Be pure! Be guileless! Be simple! Be honest! Be truthful! He has presented us with a discipline that helps us to move up, tackle the problem directly, and gain depth of faith in ourselves—faith in the inner Divine Spirit. Swamiji gave us very clear directions, but we do not keep them clearly in mind because we are worried about so many other things—creating so many different 'mental worlds' to live in! But the scientific mood, the scientific method, and the scientific values—these we are to bring into religion if we want to succeed. This strength and unwillingness to compromise in the discovery of Truth will make us progress, and we will find that religion, real religion, does not depend on dogma or unreasoning beliefs.

We have to discipline ourselves. Swami Vivekananda, therefore, at the end of his lecturing in this country, sat down and wrote, and got compiled, his beautiful four books—the *Four Yogas*. The sum and substance of all you find in his lectures, you find in those '*Four Yogas*': How to gain purity; How to realize God; How to know the Truth. There are four disciplines, based on our own four faculties: Thinking, Feeling, Willing, and Restraining. All these faculties he put to work in those four Yogas. When we follow those teachings, then we gain the supreme peace and the supreme Goal of human life. We praise Swami Vivekananda and tell about his glories, all the wonderful things,

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989), Vol. 1, p. 367.

(Continued on page 468)

Swamiji and Emancipation of Religion

SWAMI TATHAGATANANDA

Considering the lives of the prophets and saints, religion is a great blessing on humanity. Enigmatically, however, it is also seen as a source of disharmony and misery! What is the reason? Is religion to blame, or are we? What should be our approach to religion?—this is the theme discussed with great feeling by the author in the light of Vivekananda's key idea on religion—that it is realization.

The conclusion drawn is: By separating true religion, i.e., its kernel, from pseudo-religion, i.e., its husk, humanity can benefit immensely in every way.

Common bases

Religion, soul and God — these three are variously misunderstood. In spite of peoples' misunderstandings and differences, however, we find some common features in all religions. These are: All have 1) a belief in God who is powerful and benevolent, 2) deep faith in the scriptures and the healthy traditions nurtured by religious culture, 3) provision for the impelling urge to pray, worship, and render selfless service to God, 4) the conviction that the validity of faith is greater than that of reason, 5) a general idea of happiness or suffering after death, according to our good or bad actions (*karma*) on earth, and 6) all cherish the values of unselfishness and renunciation which bring happiness here and in the hereafter. It is generally accepted that peace is to be found by living a calm and peaceful life, and not by increasing desires for enjoyments. All recognize the truth of eventual dissatisfaction with temporal pleasures, and the evanescence of life; and that death inevitably confronts everyone. 'The day of life sinks inevitably into the night of death... Death is the token of time over us.'

Hence in this desert of human life, the comfort of a religious faith, like an oasis, is a necessity. Though one may hesitate to invoke the names of religion and God (these

two words seem to have lost some of their original importance), the fact remains that by cultivating spiritual disciplines—solitude, renunciation and love for the divine spiritual excellences, man by the practice of purity and by prayer and meditation can realize God, the Highest Truth and Reality. Only we are to 'deepen ourselves' in the spiritual life, and not merely 'broaden the surface' as the fashion is in modern times.

Pseudo-religion

Those who are not faithful throw their lives into 'causes' as a substitute for religion—humanism, nationalism, patriotism, science, etc. to escape from the dread realities of life. So, modern day fanaticism has captured our attention. This is far more dangerous than religious fanaticism since it is more materialistic and less possessed of human feeling. Modern fanatics use science and technology to garner power for their aggressions. Man loves his prejudices. 'Politicians today are wanderers in a western wilderness astray from the one true God of their forefathers: to them parochial status occupies the position once occupied by the sectarian church,' said Arnold Toynbee. Having lost the spiritual goal and sense of direction given by authentic spiritual leaders, people are also worship-

ping crude and amazing cults. The contemporary climate of popular religion is vitiated by irrational beliefs in institutions, creed or dogma. Inherited 'faith' in such conventional concepts of religion has been drilled into us.

Consequently religion, for most of the so-called educated, is a regimented system of popular opinion. The resulting pseudo-religious atmosphere becomes a hotbed for the rise of cults and ceremonies which keep the unreflective in darkness. In spite of our so-called enlightenment, our ideas about god and spiritual life have remained mostly uninspired and confused. The lamentable lack of clear conceptualization of the goal of spiritual seeking is the root cause of perversion and the sinister effects of false worship.

Pseudo religion keeps us away from spiritual development—transformation of character, integration of personality and genuine love for holiness and purity. The multitude, conditioned by the narrow ideas of cults, are seen to embrace certain ideas as if to destroy themselves and others through intense fanaticism. 'There has been no lack of existential faith in them. In obedience to their supposed commands, thousands have fasted, burned themselves, cast themselves from precipices, endured shame, fought fanatically, and offered their own children as bloody sacrifices.' Multitudes of people today seriously accept taboos and superstitious ideas for mere psychological satisfaction.

Distortion of religion

The impulse to worship, being innate in us, must manifest itself by paying homage to either God or Satan. Some contemporary religions, in spite of today's broad culture and boasted progressive attitudes, are preoccupied only with protecting their church establishments and defending their

dogmas, often with fanatical militant crews which are intensely hostile and mercilessly brutal. Other so-called religious people passively accept the conventional god of 'sugar and spice, and everything nice'. They would, to use a phrase of Swamiji, bring down God to the level of a municipal scavenger.

The egocentric character of most popular religions lacks the potential of true religion taught by the saints and prophets. Popular religion neither enriches our lives nor deepens our spiritual stature, nor broadens our heart, nor brings us insight regarding the mystery of God within us. 'The perspective is all wrong. Even God becomes a matter of interest to many...largely for what they can get out of him. They treat the deity as a kind of universal 'valet' to do odds and ends for them, a sort of "cosmic bellboy" for whom they push buttons, and who is expected to come running. "God for us" is the slogan of their faith, instead of "Our lives for God". As a result, much current reform appears to be a childish "auxiliary of selfishness".'

Religion has been a great healer as well as a cruel killer...but reflective persons will conclude that true religion alone brings illumination....

'The anti-centripetal force of a selfish life, when it becomes religious, sweeps the whole cosmos in. God himself becomes a nursemaid, or our pet, and religion sinks into a comfortable faith that we shall be fondly taken care of, our wishes fulfilled, and our egocentric interests coddled.' The infantile concept of spiritual life and the practice of religion has caused much trouble to people. Dogmatic theology produces arrogant and militant fanatics. The anti-rational and anti-humanistic character of such religion has tarnished the fair image of God, religion, and the immortality of the

Soul. History is replete with innumerable examples of flagrant violation of the codes of ethics and morality in their religious pursuit.

The enlightened souls, prophets and authentic messengers of Truth, in all historical religions, gave us the seeds of Truth and meant us to cultivate them for our spiritual development. With the passing of time, unfortunately, we have lost the essence of their message. Consequently the original invigourating impulse of genuine yearning for holiness, purity, simplicity and sublimity became conspicuously absent from our consciousness, and our lives overburdened with various taboos, dogmas and irrational morbid practices in the name of religion. 'Truth gets institutionalized, faith dogmatized, worship socialized, and the noble vocation of religion politicized.' As an inevitable consequence, inner spiritual sensitivity becomes fossilized.

Under such tragic circumstances, a few centuries before the renaissance in India, there was a period of degradation in Hinduism. It provoked Swamiji to say: 'What more degradation can there be than that the greatest minds of a country have been discussing about the kitchen for several hundreds of years, discussing whether I may touch you or you touch me, and what is the penance for this touching.'¹ With these prefatory remarks, it will be our humble endeavour to show how Swami Vivekananda emancipated or rescued the eternal spirit of religion from the debris of fanaticism, irrationalism and anti-humanism.

True religion and its scope

Swamiji was quite aware of the sad state

of affairs permeating the religious climate in the world. Religion has been a great healer as well as a cruel killer. This may seem enigmatic to ordinary people, but reflective persons will conclude that true religion alone brings illumination, whereas false religion invariably creates darkness in the human mind. In Swamiji's message, 'Man' occupies the highest place. Hence the true welfare of humankind was his predominate impulse, and a true religion is the only agent for that purpose. Swamiji spelled out clearly the true concept of religion. It has been seen, time and again, that an awakened human being inevitably feels the drag of bondage to matter, and begins to long for total freedom from the things that restrict and bind him—in the outer world as well as in the inner. In ancient times it was discovered, after going through various miserable experiences to find this supreme freedom, that to live beyond and untouched by any kind of negativity was the key which would unlock the mystery of life. Through spiritual illumination human weakness and sense of separation can be permanently transcended.

One would never think that true religious quest for absolute freedom has anything to do with worldly aspirations. But, actually, religion does not destroy the zest for life; rather it purifies, expands and raises our mind—our state of consciousness—and enables us to enjoy life more fully. Life cannot be compartmentalized as secular and spiritual, but real exercise in spiritual practices, and consequent inner growth, influences our attitudes and behaviour and gradually reduces our darkness and stupidity. Our search for truth can be pursued all the time through the varied experiences of life.

Religion as spiritual evolution

Let us try to comprehend the philosophy of life as envisioned by the Upanishads: Our innermost Self, the Ātman, is completely

1. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989), Vol. 3, p. 271.

separate from the psycho-physical complex, which outwardly envelopes the Self, but does not constitute it. Out of this Ātman everything comes—matter, life, mind and reason. They are all sustained by the Ātman—the Supreme Reality. It is the only source of happiness.

True religion teaches us that the goal of life has to be sought in the Ātman only. The world is a vale of tears, but through such experiences an ardent seeker has to find that the world is a vale of 'soul growth' too. Swamiji said, 'Man is like an infinite spring, coiled up in a small box, and that spring is trying to unfold.'² Therefore 'Religion is the manifestation of the Divinity already in man....Religion is the search after the highest ideal.' The impulse that seeks this ideal is a spiritual impulse. This is religion which culminates in seeking unity in God.

Every religion has two aspects, the ethnic or socio-political aspect, and the spiritual or universal aspect.

Human mind has to evolve gradually. Therefore Swamiji never condemned the lower steps of religious discipline. They are necessary steps in spiritual evolution:

To the Hindu, man is not travelling from error to truth, but from truth to truth, from lower to higher truth. To him all the religions, from the lowest fetishism to the highest absolutism, mean so many attempts of the human soul to grasp and realize the Infinite, each determined by the conditions of its birth and association, and each of these marks a stage of progress; and every soul is a young eagle soaring higher and higher, gathering more and more strength, till it reaches the Glorious Sun.³

2. *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 389.

3. *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 17.

Every religion has two aspects, the ethnic or socio-political aspect, and the spiritual or universal aspect. We are born to ethnic religion and most of us die in it by clinging to certain creeds or dogmas, thinking it to be religion. Higher religious pursuit in all traditional religions exhibit two aspects of observance. The primary aspect concerns non-violence, truth, freedom from lower impulses, purity of mind, renunciation, charity, forgiveness, etc. The secondary aspect deals with variable elements which depend upon time, circumstances and social condition.

Consider the kernel and husk, for example, of a grain. When we think of man growing in spiritual stature we think of the analogy of the kernels of ripening corn. When spiritual consciousness deepens and unfolds, the fruits are abundant, and the life fuller and more rewarding. Unfortunately, among the many, the focus is on the husks — the material outward secondary aspects of religion. Overemphasis on the secondary aspects misdirects our focus and inhibits our vital inner growth. This also creates misunderstandings, hostility, narrowness, and religious warfare within the same group or with other religious groups. A myopic adherence to superficial religious ideas is very harmful to a healthy religious ambience of peace, understanding, cooperation, fraternity and true purpose. A profound disservice to the essence of religious purpose manifests in such situations. As Swamiji said, 'the effect is the cause manifested.'

Atheists, agnostics, humanists, idolaters and others are further along on the spiritual path than narrow, parochial, bigoted, anti-rational or anti-human individuals or groups. 'They are bound to their negative God by conditioning, upbringing, church or party-traditions, and by the manipulation of isolated texts of scripture, or by morbid conscience.' 'There is a certain masochistic

pleasure in being crushed by the juggernaut of a negative God.' Again, there is a seeming contradiction in some people's naive attitude toward God. The compassionate and all-merciful God generally invoked by them to improve their lives is also sought after to annihilate their perceived enemies — those not subscribing to their dogmas. Man has justifiably been recognized as a 'worshipping animal'. Hence the dire necessity of rescuing religion from false religion.

Religion as goal

Included among the most important measures proposed by Swami Vivekananda is that, an understanding should be reached that we are to accept religion as a goal of life to facilitate the attainment of freedom from the bondage of life. We are to shed our puerile concepts of God as a child abandons childish toys and behaviour as it matures. Although God is never fully comprehended, we must strive to understand intuitively. He is too great for languages to describe fully. He is the substance behind nature and our own selves. He is the Infinite, and in infinite ways He is manifesting Himself in and through the Cosmos. Swamiji asks:

Is God's book finished? Or is it still a continuous revelation going on? It is a marvellous book, these spiritual revelations of the world. The Bible, the Vedas, the Koran, and all the other sacred books are but so many pages—and an infinite number of pages remain yet to be unfolded. I would leave it open for all of them. We stand in the present, but open ourselves to the infinite future. We take in all that has been in the past, enjoy the light of the present, and open every window of the heart for all that will come in the future. Salutations to all the prophets of the past, to all the great ones of the present, and to all that are to come in the

future!⁴

God is beyond the ken of intellect. God is immanent and transcendent. When this broad idea of God is felt and accepted, the real seeker of Truth cannot afford to confine his loyalty to a denominational God. The more we out-grow our prejudices and narrowness, the more we rise above creeds. A sense of respect and accommodative spirit dawns upon us. We begin to see other religions and their tradition with a friendly attitude. 'Religion must be studied on a broader basis than formerly. All narrow, limited, fighting ideas of religion have to go. All sect ideas and tribal or national ideas of religion must be given up. That each tribe or nation should have its own particular God, and think that every other is wrong is a superstition that should belong to the past. All such ideas must be abandoned.'

Universal religion

As the human mind broadens, its spiritual steps broaden too. The time has already come when any man's recorded thoughts can reach all corners of the earth; by merely physical means we have come in touch with the whole world. So too must the religions of the world become universal and wide.

When spiritual consciousness deepens and unfolds, the fruits are abundant, and the life fuller and more rewarding.

The religious ideals of the future must embrace all that exists in the world that is good and great, and at the same time have infinite scope for future development. All that was good in the past must be preserved; and the doors must be left open for future additions to the already existing store. Religions must also be inclusive, and not look down with contempt upon one another because their particular ideals of God are different.

4. *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 374.

In my life, I have seen a great many

spiritual men, a great many sensible persons who did not believe in God at all—that is to say, not in our sense of the word. And yet, perhaps they understood God better than we can ever do. The personal idea of God, or the impersonal, the Infinite, Moral Law, or the Ideal Man—these all have to come under the definition of religion. And when religions have become thus broadened, their power for good will have increased a hundredfold. Religions, having tremendous power in them, have often done more injury than good, simply on account of their narrowness and limitations.⁵

For the good of humankind it is not desirable to eliminate some contradictory elements, traditional beliefs and practices. Swamiji warned against such a naive interpretation of universalism:

You cannot make all conform to the same ideas; that is a fact, and thank God that it is so. I am not against any sect. I am glad that sects exist, and I only wish they may go on multiplying more and more. Why? Simply because of this: If you and I and all who are present here were to think exactly the same thoughts, there would be no thoughts to think. We know that two or more forces must come into collision in order to produce motion. It is the clash of thought, the differentiation of thought, that awakes thought. Now, if we all thought alike we would be like Egyptian mummies in a museum looking vacantly at one another's faces—no more than that! Whirls and eddies occur only in a rushing, living stream. There are no whirlpools in stagnant, dead water. When religions are dead, there will be no sects; it will be the perfect peace and harmony of the grave. But so long as mankind thinks, there will be

sects. Variation is the sign of life, and it must get there. I pray that they may multiply so that at last there will be as many sects as human beings, and each one will have his own method, his individual method of thought in religion. My idea, therefore, is that all these religions are different forces in the economy of God, working for the good of mankind; and that not one can become dead, not one can be killed.⁶

Reflect upon this. Swamiji further says:

Through high philosophy or low, through the most exalted mythology or the most primitive reasoning, be it through refined rituals or arrant fetishism, every sect, every soul, every nation, every religion consciously or unconsciously is struggling upward towards God; every vision of truth that man conceives is a vision of Him and of none else.⁷

Swamiji on universal religion

Swami Vivekananda gives his plan of a universal religion. First, he cannot approve of the methods adopted by the iconoclastic reformers, those who want to destroy. Rather he asks us to contribute something positive always, both to society and to the individual. Second, he invariably exhorts us to practise the principles of religion in order to have real growth within ourselves. He recommended different paths of *yoga* for different types of persons. Without inner growth, religion hasn't any value. The very soul of religion is experience. In every era, only the illumined souls could touch the hearts of the people. They were the great souls who profoundly affected humankind. Only those established in divine life radiate joy and peace, and transcend all human

5. *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, pp. 67–8.

6. *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, pp. 363–6.

7. *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 383.

weakness.

The most formidable task of Swamiji in this modern age was to focus the image of pure religion of Vedanta with its central principle, the master passion, the chief motivation, of seeking self-knowledge for the welfare of humanity. Swamiji did not proclaim a religion of tradition, of rhetoric, or inferential conviction, but of direct experience of the indwelling spirit. He extolled a religion that offers to the intellect an explanation of the universe, a religion that offers to the conscience a law that regulates every action of life, a religion that offers to the heart an absolutely perfect and loving Being as the object of its worship and service.

...how to transform the dogma-oriented, parochial, and superstitious religion of tradition to broaden our spiritual consciousness?

Swamiji, to whom the invisible world was a matter of direct knowledge and immediate perception, proclaimed the profoundest Truth of one fundamental Reality which provides, pervades and perpetuates all, a Being who is impersonal as well as personal, transcendental as well as immanent. He is the very substance, the very rock-foundation of the whole Universe. He is the Root of our very existence too. Hence life is not an aimless voyage: it is, from time immemorial, not only a wakeful and watchful journey, but a rejoicing and truly transporting pilgrimage.

Religion as realization

The entire problem of religion is here: how to bring forth change in our impure minds, how to transform the dogma-oriented, parochial, and superstitious religion of tradition into something which can enable us to broaden our spiritual consciousness and deepen our love for the

Divine. In this transformation the dross must be eliminated, and the essential elements that remain must satisfy our dual allegiance: to the demands of reason and the demands of the heart as well.

Swamiji brought a new and fresh image of religion by living the eternal principles of authentic religion. He was moulded by the shining and exemplary life of Sri Ramakrishna. About Ramakrishna, Mahatma Gandhi said: 'The story of Ramakrishna Paramahansa's life is a story of religion in practice.' That great Master's message was given by Swamiji thus:

Do not care for doctrines, do not care for dogmas, or sects, or churches, or temples; they count for little compared with the essence of existence in each man, which is spirituality; and the more this is developed in a man, the more powerful is he for good. Earn that first, acquire that, and criticize no one, for all doctrines and creeds have some good in them. Show by your lives that religion does not mean words, or names, or sects, but that it means spiritual realization. Only those can understand who have felt. Only those who have attained to spirituality can communicate it to others, can be great teachers of mankind. They alone are the powers of light.⁸

By experiencing the transcendental Reality behind life and nature, the unity in the midst of the manifold, Swamiji, like his Master, could tell us that, the infinite Truth has been expressing Itself in infinite ways in infinite time. Each aspect of Truth will culminate in giving us the supreme vision of Reality and therefore each is good in its own place. For this unitary vision, it was possible for him to establish harmony between religion and science, reason and faith, mys-

8. *Ibid.*, Vol. 4, p. 187.

ticism and logic, polytheism and monotheism. The toleration that he preached and practised was never the toleration of powerlessness, or the toleration of indifference. It was the toleration of deep and abiding faith in reality, based on his actual experience. He did see God in everything. This experience alone begets true toleration. It springs not from inability, not from non-interference, but from dispassionate equanimity.

Religions are God-made

Swamiji proclaimed that religion has not been the discovery of man, but it is the self-disclosure of God who has assumed the sacred responsibility for fostering the religious spirit in the bosom of each one of His children. The different religions are only the manifestations of one Religion. They are all part and parcel of one Eternal Religion. The apparent difference lies in the forms and the details. The same one God has been revealing Himself to humankind under different names, at different times and in different ages, for the benefit of the people in the different stages of evolution. The whole perspective is changed when the eternal spirit is seen in each being and thing. That is the real image of religion which Swamiji practised sincerely and preached untiringly. Religion is not a mere dogma, it is a way of true life. Dogma degenerates into fanaticism and demoralizes a man. Everywhere Swamiji condemned from the depth of his heart this sort of pseudo-religion. In his famous address at the Parliament of Religions at Chicago he said:

Sectarianism, bigotry and its horrible descendant, fanaticism, have long possessed this beautiful earth. They have filled the earth with violence, drenched it often and often with human blood, destroyed civilizations and sent whole nations to despair. Had it not been for these horrible demons, human society

would be far more advanced than it is now. But their time is come; and I fervently hope that the bell that tolled this morning in honour of this convention may be the death-knell of all fanaticism, of all persecutions with the sword or with the pen, and of all uncharitable feelings between persons wending their way to the same goal.⁹

Religion must be rational

Swamiji's concept of a scientific perspective on religion may appeal to our rational scientific temperament. He says that religion can be approached like any other science, by following reason and rational judgement in pursuit of spiritual truth. One can solve the greatest mystery of life in spiritual consummation—through observation, experimentation, and verification.

The whole perspective is changed when the eternal spirit is seen in each being and thing.

The name of Ramakrishna—the greatest modern scientist in the realm of spirituality—may be recalled. Religion, if pursued with a scientific bent of mind, will yield the greatest secrets of life and reveal the source of existence. It will bring incalculable benefits unto humanity. Real spiritual experiences will release stupendous power to usher in an era of real fulfilment of healthy human desires.

In conclusion, we quote Swamiji to get a glimpse of the emancipated religion:

All truth is eternal. Truth is nobody's property; no race, no individual can lay any exclusive claim to it. Truth is the nature of all souls. Who can lay any spe-

(Continued on page 475)

9. *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 4.

The Concept of Bhakti (Devotion)

DR. S.P. DUBEY

Bhakti is perhaps the most widely practised spiritual discipline. A clear understanding of what it is, how it should be cultivated, which are its different stages, and what are the characteristics of the person who has properly imbibed it is essential for it to bear fruit.

The learned author, who is the Chairman of the Board of Studies in Philosophy, Rani Durgavati University, Jabalpur, presents, true to tradition, a lucid study of bhakti in all its aspects.

'My devotee never perishes.'

—Lord Kṛṣṇa (The *Bhagavad-Gītā*, 9.31)

Bhakti: its importance and definition

Bhakti, or devotion, has a very important role to play in human life. It is one of the most effective integrating forces for us across the boundaries of caste, creed, colour, sex and community. It has tremendous potentiality for international understanding and inter-faith dialogues. In our life love as an emotion plays a vital part, and *bhakti* is another name for love.¹ In this Kali age it is the most effective means to salvation.²

The term '*Bhakti*' (feminine gender) derives from the Sanskrit root '*bhaj*', to serve.³ The suffix '*ti*' is used for love (*sneha*). This term also denotes a forceful separation from our phenomenal surroundings, leading to attachment with one's own revered one (*iṣṭa-devatā*).⁴ Some sort of separation, of course, is essential for the theistic world-view. It requires the distinc-

tion between a 'Thou' and an 'I'. Such distinction is not admissible in absolutistic systems of thought. Hence *bhakti* is meaningful mainly in theistic contexts.

The English term 'devotion' is usually used as a synonym of '*bhakti*', and it would be used in this sense in this paper. Devotion, in its theological usage, has travelled from early Latin '*devotionem*' through French '*devoovere*' to the Middle-English '*devocion*'. It is used to denote a state or quality of being devoted to deities, observances, etc.

The Vaiṣṇava texts treat *bhakti* as an experience beyond definition. But its element of self-less love cannot be denied. It is like a dumb's taste of sweetness, which can neither be described nor concealed.⁵ The *Nārada-Bhakti-sūtras* (N.B.S.), while making attempts to define *bhakti*, state that it is absolute love in God.⁶ The devotee, when under the spell of devotion, pursues nothing but the Lord, hears nothing except Him, speaks to none but to Him, and thinks about no one but the God.⁷ Since *bhakti* is of the form of ambrosia,⁸ by attaining it the person

1. *Sneho bhaktiḥ iti proktā*. Vallabha's *Tattvārthā-dīpa* (or *Tattvādīpa*), p. 65.

2. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata-Purāṇa*, XII.3.52.

3. *Bhaja sevāyām, bhajyate sevayate iti bhaktiḥ*.

4. *Bhañjo mardane bhajyate anyebhyaḥ prthak-kriyate iṣṭe āsajyate iti bhaktiḥ*.

5. *Nārada-Bhakti-Sūtras*, 51-2.

6. *Sā tvasmin paramapremarūpā*. *Ibid.*, 2.

7. *Ibid.*, 55.

8. *Ibid.*, 3.

becomes an accomplished, contented and everlasting soul.⁹ The soul, when possessed by such devotion, neither grieves nor desires nor feels envious of any one.¹⁰ One is able to rejoice in oneself by diving deep into one's own self, and forgets other things.

Several attempts have been made to define *bhakti* in earlier and later periods. Vyāsa understands it as an inclination towards worship etc. of the God (*pūjādiṣvanurāgaḥ*); Garga treats it as attachment to the stories etc. of God (*kathādiṣvanurāgaḥ*); Śāṇḍilya defines it as self-rejoicing (*ātma-ratīḥ*), as well as highest attachment to God.¹¹ Nārada, while elaborating the concept, states that devotion is a dedication of all our sacred and secular activities to the service of God.¹² He also considers devotion as superior to the paths of action and knowledge.¹³ Incidentally, the great Śaṅkara also, in one of his famous poetic compositions, holds a similar view and treats *bhakti* as investigation of one's own nature.¹⁴

As mentioned earlier, *bhakti* has been reckoned as an independent means to salvation in Vaiṣṇavism (both in Kṛṣṇa and Rāma traditions).¹⁵ It is even treated to be the sole means to salvation.¹⁶ The *Bhāgavata-Māhātmya* rejects all other means to salva-

tion except *bhakti*, and milkmaids (*gopis*) are cited as evidence for this fact.¹⁷

Bhakti is regarded as a mental activity (*nūnasī kriyā*) akin to knowledge in the form of love for God (*prīti rūpa jñāna*). It is unceasing meditation done with love of the Supreme Being.¹⁸ The constant flow of love to God has been compared with the uninterrupted flow of oil,¹⁹ or like the Ganges flowing majestically towards the ocean.²⁰

In this Kali age it is the most effective means to salvation.

Bhakti has its earliest sources in the *Rg-Veda*. The hymns to Viṣṇu and Varuṇa amply testify the prevalence of the concept in the early days of the Indian culture. The Heleodorus pillar of Besnagar, near Sāñchī of the Central India, exhibits, perhaps, the earliest and concrete record of the *bhakti*-cult in the country (2nd century BC). The inscriptions mention Vāsudeva as deva-deva. Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa is undoubtedly the most popular object of Vaiṣṇavite devotion.

The exile of Kṛṣṇa from Mathurā to Vraja is a turning point in the history of the *bhakti*-tradition in India. Obviously, Vrindāvana is the most sacred place for the Vaiṣṇavas where *bhakti* dances (*bhaktiryaत्रa nr̥tyate*). The forest of Vrindā (holy basil—*tulasī*—an aromatic herb) is the eternal dancing theatre of Kṛṣṇa and the *gopīs*. The flute dance (*rāsa*) removes the sufferings of the milkmaids, the devotees *par excellence*. Vrindā, the wife of Jalandhara in her early birth, takes thousands of forms to enjoy the

9. *Ibid.*, 4.

10. *Ibid.*, 5.

11. *Parānuraktiḥ. Śāṇḍilya-Sūtras*, I, 2.

12. *Tadarpitā'khlācārātā. N.B.S.*, 19.

13. *Ibid.*, 25.

14. *Mokṣa-kāraṇasāmagryāni bhaktireva garīyasī; svarūpānusandhānaṁ bhaktirityabhidhīyate. Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, 32.

15. *Bhaktiḥ svātantryeṇa muktidātrī. Bhakti-Mūrtāṇḍa* of Gopeśvara.

Bhakti svatantra sakala guṇa khānī. Tulasīdāsa's Rāma-Carita-Mānasa, Uttara-Kāṇḍa, 44-5.

16. *Tayā muktirnacānyathā. Tattvārtha-dīpa*, p. 65.

17. *Na tapobhirva vedaiśca na jñānenāpi karmanā; Hariḥ sādhyate bhaktyā pramāṇam tatra gopikāḥ. B.M.*, II.18.

18. *Suchapūrvāni anusandhānaṁ bhaktiḥ, Vedānta Deśika's Sarvārtha-Siddhi*, II.29.

19. *Rāmānuja on Brahma-Sūtras*, I.1.i.

20. *The Bhāgavata-Purāṇa*, II.ii.11.

dance in unsurpassable measure. And the Lord stays with them to remove their sufferings exclusively.²¹

Four schools of bhakti

In medieval India four major *bhakti* schools were prevalent and, interestingly, all from the South. The *Śrī*-cult was led by Rāmānuja (b. 1017), the disciple of Yāmuna; the Brahma-school was initiated by Madhva (b. 1197); the Rudra-school was formulated by Viṣṇusvāmī (10th century) and the Sanakādika-tradition was headed by Nimbārka (b. 1114). One of the verses of the *Bhāgavata-Māhātmya* tells that *bhakti* was born in Drāvida-land (South India), grew in Kaṇāṭaka, survived in Mahārāṣṭra, tattered in Gujrāt due to alien invasions, but rejuvenated in Vrindāvana.²² The Vṛṣṇis and the Ābhīras propagated the faith throughout the country mainly after Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa, who declares to Arjuna that His devotee never perishes,²³ and about whom the *Nārada-Pañcarātra* informs that He treats the devotees as Himself.²⁴

The feeling of such distinctions as caste, learning, form, family, wealth, profession, etc. is not found in (true) devotees.

Rāmānuja, the most famous philosopher-saint of the *bhakti* tradition, through several of his works (esp. *Śaraṇāgati-gadya*), tried to establish that devotion is the sole means to salvation. The justification for introducing the concept of *bhakti* as the direct and only means to salvation is found in the Upaniṣads and the *Bhagavad-Gītā* (B.G.). The *Śvetāśvatara-*

Upaniṣad clearly uses the term when it says that the mysteries of the Vedānta shine forth to one who has highest devotion for God and the teacher.²⁵ The *Muṇḍaka-* and the *Kaṭha-Upaniṣad*, in exactly the same words, introduce the concept of selectiveness and state that this self cannot be attained by instruction, nor by intellect, nor even through much hearing; it is to be realized only by the one whom the Self chooses.²⁶ The B.G. also endorses the theory by saying that the one who is dear to God is chosen by Himself.²⁷ It also answers the question as to who is most dear to God, by stating that to those who crave for eternal union with Him and meditate on Him, He bestows with love that clear vision (*buddhi-yoga* or *parā-bhakti*) by which they attain Him.²⁸

Types of bhakti

Bhakti has been classified variously. One classification distinguishes between the absolute (*paranīā*) and the secondary (*gaunī*) devotion. The former states the absolute nature, where the devotee surrenders to God and feels attuned with Him. The latter denotes the earlier stages, and has been further distinguished as *ārta* (afflicted), *jñāna* (intellectualized) and *arthārthī* (directed towards objects), depending on the amount of love towards the beloved one.

Rāmānuja admits three stages of *bhakti* depending on its intensity. The first stage is the clear vision of the Lord, known as *parā bhakti* (*supra*), when the unceasing meditation on God is perfected to the extent of its becoming similar to a clear vision *darśana-samānākāra*). After reaching this stage the devotee develops a craving for the vision of

21. Cf. Kālidāsa's epic. *Raghuvaṃśa*, VI. 50.

22. B.M., 48–50.

23. *Kaunteya pratijñāmi hi na me bhaktah praṇaśyati*, B.G., IX.31.

24. *Bhakta-prāṇo hi kṛṣṇasca kṛṣṇa-prāṇa hi vaiṣṇavāḥ*. N.P., II.36.

25. *Yasya deve parābhaktiryaṭhā deve tathā gurau*. Ś.U., IV.23.

26. *Muṇḍaka-Upaniṣad*, III.2.iii; also *Kaṭha-Upaniṣad*, I.2.23.

27. B.G., XI.53–4.

28. *Ibid.*, X.10.

the Lord and is blessed with glimpses of God. This grade is called *para-jñāna*. The third step marks the permanent vision of God (*paramā-bhakti*), when the devotee, not being satisfied with a temporary vision, wishes to have a lasting vision.

The *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa* (B.P.), perhaps the most important text of the *bhakti*-cult, distinguishes nine modes of devotion (*navadhā bhakti*), as practised by Prahlāda in the mythical age, namely, hearing of God's glories, reciting them, constantly remembering Him, attending upon Him, worshipping Him, adoring Him, serving Him, befriending Him and surrendering to Him.²⁹

The virtue of bhakti involves universal charity, sympathy, and friendliness even towards one's enemy.

Bhakti, upāsanā, prapatti

Bhakti as a means to salvation has been called *Bhakti-Yoga* in the B.G. Chapter 12 of this text is devoted to the concept of *Bhakti-Yoga*. It is a rigorous discipline involving the acquisition of spiritual knowledge, ethical values, and observances of religious duties as laid down by the scriptures and ethical codes. It is *maryādā* or *sādhana-bhakti*, and is different from *puṣṭi*, *parā* or *sādhya bhakti*.

There are basically two means to *bhakti*, namely, renunciation (*virakti*) and attachment (*āsakti*). At the former stage the devotee must give up the sense of attachment to worldly possessions, and at the latter one should be involved in worship, prayer etc. (eleven types of attachments are

mentioned in the context).³⁰ *Bhakti*, as the N.B.S. tell us, is accomplished either through the measureless compassion of saints or due to the grace of God.³¹ The favour of the saints, adds the aphorism of Nārada, is possible only because of the divine grace.³²

Upāsanā, or contemplation, performed for the purpose of realizing the ultimate, is known as the Science of Brahman (*Brahma-vidyā*). It is a higher stage of *bhakti*. The *ātmopāsanā* or *samādhi*, as distinct from the traditional adoration (*paramparopāsanā*) is *advaitic* (non-dualistic) in essence. The *Nighaṇṭu* (Vedic glossary) treats *sevā* (service), *bhakti* and *upāsanā* as synonyms.³³

The Upanisads do not use the term '*bhakti*' as a means (*upāya*) for salvation. They use terms such as *jñāna*, *dhyāna*, *upāsanā*, *smṛti* and *vedana*. Rāmānuja is of the view that these terms refer to *bhakti*. They are, of course, general terms whereas *bhakti* is a term bearing a specific meaning, namely, the sole means to salvation. Innumerable texts pronounce that *bhakti* is the only means to salvation.³⁴

Besides *bhakti*, *prapatti* (absolute surrender) is laid down as an alternative means to salvation for those who are not capable of observing rigorous discipline. It is defined as a state of prayerfulness of mind to God, associated with the deep conviction that God alone is the saviour and that there is no way of attaining His grace except by self-

29. *Śravaṇam kīrtanam visnoḥ*

smaraṇam pāda-sevanam;

Arcanam vandanam dāsyam

sakhyam āma-nivṛdanam. B.P., VIII.5.23.

30. Attachments to the glories of the attributes of God, to form, to worship, to memory, to servitude, to parental tenderness, to friendli-

ness, to wife, to absolute separatedness, to absolute identity and to self-surrender.

31. N.B.S., 38.

32. *Ibid.*, 40.

33. *Sevā-bhakti-upāsti-iti Naighaṇṭukokteḥ. Sudarśana Bhaṭṭa (Sūri), Śrūta-prakāśikā, I.1.i.*

34. *Śruti-śata-vihitaḥ mukterupāyaḥ bhaktiḥ. Vedānta Deśika, Tattva-muktākalāpa, II.29.*

surrender.³⁵

In *prapatti* six factors are distinguished, namely, acquisition of the qualities that make one a fit offering to God (*ānukūlyasya sampattiḥ*), avoidance of conduct not acceptable to God (*pratikūlyasya varjanam*), faith that God would protect (*rakṣiṣyafiti viśvāsaḥ*), appeal for protection (*goptrtva varaṇam*), feeling of one's own littleness (*kārpaṇyam*), and absolute surrender (*ātma-samarpaṇam*). The last one is identical with *prapatti* while the others are means to it.³⁶

The grace (*anugraha*) of God has been treated in Vaiṣṇavism to be either conditional or unconditional. Rāmānuja and his follower, Vedānta Deśika (also known as Venkaṭanātha, b. 1268), the founder of the Vaḍagalai (northern) school, hold that God extends grace to meritorious devotees only, and a rigorous discipline is necessary for it. The monkey-theory (*markaṭa-nyāya*) is applied here. The young one has to hold fast to its mother lest it would fall to the ground. The Ālvār saints, on the other, maintain that God's grace is unconditional (*ahetuka*). They subscribe to the cat-theory (*mārjāra-nyāya*) wherein the mother carries the kitten in her mouth. Mahāmuni (b. 1370) represents this view of the southern school known as Teṅgalai. It is interesting to note here that Rāma, while talking to sage Nārada, expresses the same view when he tells that he protects his devotees as mother protects her babies.³⁷

In tune with the *prapatti* theory Vallabh-

ācārya (b.1401) propounds his doctrine of *puṣṭi*. He holds that devotion to God can be attained only by His Grace.³⁸ For him, it may be noted, *mukti* is not the highest goal; the highest goal is ceaseless service of Kṛṣṇa and participation in his *līlā* (sports) in the celestial Vrindāvana. A saint of *puṣṭi* order, interestingly, prefers to remain as a jackal in the Vrindāvana rather than attain *mukti* of the Vaiśeṣika type.³⁹ The B.P. defines *puṣṭi* in clear terms as the grace of God.⁴⁰ It may be noted here that the concept of *puṣṭi* is also based on the Upaniṣadic doctrine of selectiveness (cf. *Muṇḍaka-* and *Kaṭha-Upaniṣd*, *supra*).

Kṛṣṇa Caitanya (b.1485) has personified *bhakti* in his life. He has added extraordinary flavour to the fragrance of the *bhakti* cult. Rūpa Gosvāmi, in his *Bhakti-Rasāmṛta-Sindhu*, develops *bhakti* as joy and contentment in relation to Lord Kṛṣṇa (*ānukūlyena Kṛṣṇānuśīlanam*). This school concentrates on *madhura* (tender) form of devotion.

There is a large number of texts, philosophers and saints in India and in other countries which deserve discussion when one studies the concept of *bhakti* or devotion. But the restrictions of space and time for this paper prohibit the temptations of subtler details.

To conclude, we may note that the Vaiṣṇava saints have done the tremendous job of removing conflicting differences between one another in society. The virtue of *bhakti* involves universal charity, sympathy and friendliness even towards one's enemy. The feeling of such distinctions as caste, learning, form, family, wealth, profession,

35. *Prapattiḥ śaraṇāgatih*. cf. *Aṣṭādaśa-Rahasya-Vivaraṇa*, p.3.

36. cf. Śrīnivāsācārya's *Yatīndra-mata-dīpikā*, p. 7.; also Rāmānuja's *Commentary on B.G.*, VI.14.

37. Tulasīdāsa's *Rāma-Carita-Mānasa*, *Araṇya*, 42, ii-iii.

38. cf. Gopeśvara's *Bhakti-Mārtāṇḍa*, p. 151.

39. *Varaṇ vrindavane ramye śṛgālatvaṁ vṛṇomyaham*;

Na tu vaiśeṣikī muktīm prārthayāmi kadācana.

40. *Posaṇam tadānugrahaḥ*. B.P., II.10.iv.

etc. is not found in devotees.⁴¹ They treat the entire world as the manifestation of God. They are born to sacrifice for the cause of the

Lord. In their sufferings and self-denials they experience life in death and death in life.

41. *Nāsti teṣu jāti-vidyā-rūpa-kula-dhana-kriyādi bhedaḥ*, N.B.S., 72.

Om Namo Bhagavate Vāsudevāya

Tribute to Swami Vivekananda

(Continued from page 454)

but that doesn't help us. But it would be better if we consider what we are today, and think about what we are to do to realize in our heart of hearts the Truth of God and religion; to put it another way, what can we do to realise two things: the Unity of the Divine in both the inner Self and the outer world, and the Unity of Humankind. These two we are to struggle for, and realize within ourselves, to gain depth of character. Vivekananda's contribution will help us in these. He gave so much wealth to us, but we have kept it in the books only!

We read but we don't practise. Swamiji said, an ounce of practice is more meaningful than a ton of beliefs. We have to practise; there is no other way. Simply hearing and reading is not enough. To me it seems the most important thing for us to do is struggle to realize first the unity among ourselves, among humankind. As the second Commandment tells us: 'Love thy neighbour as thyself.' It is equally great, or greater than the first Commandment, for until and unless you love your own neighbour, you cannot love God. In that respect Swami Vivek-

ananda pointed out the unity of humankind. If we hold on to this important concept, we shall all be gainers in religion and the purpose of the United Nations will be fulfilled.

The last hymn in the *Rg-Veda* tells us a prayer:

May we be united in heart
May we be united in speech
May we be united in mind
May we perform our duties
As did the wise men of old.

May we be united in our prayer
May we be united in our goal
May we be united in our resolve
May we be united in our understanding
May we be united in our offering
May we be united in our feelings
May we be united in our hearts
May we be united in our thoughts
May there be perfect unity amongst us.

May we all remember this and try to hold on to our Ideal. Then our lives will be blessed. May God bless us all.□

Instill in us a wholesome, happy mind, with goodwill and understanding. Then shall we ever delight in your friendship like cows who gladly rejoice in green meadows. This is my joyful message.

—*Rg Veda*, 10.25

Bhakti in Jainism

SWAMI BRAHMESHANANDA

To most people Jainism is synonymous with extreme self-denial, asceticism, and ahimsā. But there is much more. The author provides an absorbing study of its deeper aspects, the manner in which its great Teachers have beautifully woven devotion, service and non-attachment, and some of its similarities with Hinduism.

The Swami is a monk of the Ramakrishna Order, living in the Ramakrishna Mission Home of Service, Benares.

What is the place of *bhakti* or devotion in Jainism, which is predominantly a path of knowledge? Can there be *bhakti* in an atheistic religion which denies the existence of God? And if there is something like *bhakti* in Jainism, how does it compare with *bhakti* in other religions? These are some pertinent questions for a *sādhu*, a spiritual aspirant, and for a student of comparative religions. In this essay, we shall try to seek answers to these questions.

Faith and Devotion

There is no mention of *bhakti* in the earliest Jain scriptures. In *R̥ṣibhāṣita* and *Uttarādhyayana*, *śraddhā*, or faith, is mentioned, but there it refers to faith in the precepts rather than in a person.¹ One of the three pillars (*triratna*) of Jainism is *saṃyuk darśana*, or right faith. The word *darśana* connotes seeing or direct perception of truth, but since it is not possible to realize the truth directly in the beginning of one's religious life, faith in the teachings of those who have realized is advocated. This principle of faith later evolved into faith in the prophets, the preceptor and the precept (*deva, guru, dharma*).

1. Dr. Sagarmal Jain, 'Jain Dharma Me Bhakti Ki Avadharana' (Hindi), in *Sraman*, April-June, 1993, p. 22.

Although *bhakti* and *śraddhā*, or devotion and faith, are often considered synonyms, there is a difference. There can be faith without devotion, but devotion cannot exist without faith. Faith is the basis of devotion, while devotion is the more dynamic development of faith. Faith is a passive mental attitude whereas devotion is its active external expression. The etymological meaning of the word *bhakti*, derived from the root *bhaj*, in the sense of *sevāyām*, to serve, also points to its dynamic aspect, and this meaning is accepted in Jainism.

Service and Devotion

According to *Niśītha-chūrṇi*, to rise from one's seat in honour of the *ācārya*, to serve him by holding his staff, wiping his feet, offering him seat, etc., are all *bhakti*.² In Jainism service is called *vaiyāvṛtya*, and it is stressed that *bhakti* must be associated with, and find expression in, *vaiyāvṛtya*. According to Śivāryakoṭi,³ *bhakti* towards the five

2. Jinadasgani, *Niśītha-Chūrṇi*, edited by Vijay Prem Surishwara, quoted by Dr. Premasagar Jain in *Jain Bhakti Kavya Ki Prasthahūmi*, Kashi, Bharatiya Jnana Pitha, 1963, p. 2.

3. Sri Sivāryakoti, *Blagavati Aradhana*, Muni Shri Anantakirti Digambara Jain Granthamala, 8, Hirabag, Bombay, Vikram Samvat 1989, p. 152, quoted by Premasagar Jain, (*ibid.*) p. 4.

adored ones of Jainism, viz. *arihanta*, *siddha*, *ācārya*, *upādhyāya* and *sādhu*, and in *dharma*, can be performed by service alone. He who serves the adherents of the *triratna*, viz. the right faith, conduct and knowledge, performs *bhakti* towards the whole Jain religion. Ācārya Kundakunḍa⁴ also exhorts the monks to undertake the tenfold service with devotion.

According to another definition, service is equated with humility, or *vinaya*, (*sevāyām bhaktirvinayaḥ sevā*)⁵. To honour the monks, to stand from one's seat on seeing them, to salute them with folded hands, to follow them, to offer them seat, to massage their feet, etc.—all come under both *vinaya* and *vaiyāvṛtya*.

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Devotion and Love

These are, however, external expressions of *bhakti*. Essentially *bhakti* is love: love for the ideal and towards him who practises it. According to Ācārya Pūjyapada,⁶ pure love towards the *arihanta* (prophet), the *ācārya* (preceptor), the tenets and the scriptures is *bhakti*. An eminent Jain poet-saint sang:

As cows roam about in the forest to graze,
but their minds remain
attached to their calves;

So may my mind ever remain
attached to the
feet of the Jina (perfected teacher)⁷
even while I am engaged in worldly duties.
As desire always occupies
the mind of the lustful,
may my mind too remain occupied
with the Lord's name.⁸

All attachment and love, be it for an ordinary imperfect mortal or for a liberated perfected Jina, is, according to Jainism, a potential cause of bondage. How then can there be love for the Jina? This question has been answered by Jain *ācāryas* variously. Ācārya Samantabhadra⁹ is of the opinion that just as a tiny drop of poison cannot poison the vast expanse of water in an ocean, similarly the great benefits derived from loving the Jina cannot be tarnished by a tiny speck of sin incurred due to love. A more plausible explanation is that the Jina, being established in his eternally pure and free nature, is identical with the Supreme Self (*param-ātman*). Hence to love him is to love our own natural free state. It is implied here that the Jina must not be considered a personality. To love him as a person is definitely a cause of bondage. He must be seen as the Ideal embodied.

According to Lord Mahāvīra himself, love is a hindrance in the path of liberation. An emotional person may take recourse to love towards a Jina to overcome his passionate human love, but ultimately he will have to get over even this purer, sublime love. The story of Gautama illustrates this fact beautifully. In spite of being the foremost disciple of Lord Mahāvīra,

4. Quoted by Premasagar Jain, (*ibid.*) p. 3.

5. *Abhidhāna-rajaendra-kosha*, Part V, p. 1365.

6. अर्हदाचार्येषु बहुश्रुतेषु प्रवचने च भावविशुद्धियुक्तो-
ऽनुरागो भक्तिः ।

Acharya Pūjyapada; *Sarvārtha Siddhi*,
edited by Pt. Fulchand, Bharatiya Jnana
Pitha, Kashi, Vikrama Samvat 2012, p. 339.

7. Perfected teacher, *Tīrthaṅkara*; *jina*, lit., 'the conqueror'.

8. *Anandaghana*, *Anandaghana-pada-saṃgraha*,
Adhyatma Jnana Prasarak Mandala,
Bombay. Quoted by Premasagar Jain, p. 9.

9. Quoted by Premasagar Jain, p. 10.

Gautama did not get the highest knowledge and *mokṣa*, or liberation, owing to his intense personal attachment to the Teacher, whereas other disciples, much junior to him, got liberated by listening to the teachings of Mahāvīra. To destroy this attachment, Lord Mahāvīra sent Gautama away from him just before his passing away. Not being able to remain at the side of the Lord at the time of death gave a rude shock to Gautama and broke his attachment. He was forthwith liberated.

Ācārya Somadeva¹¹ says: 'May I, O Lord, worship thy lotus feet in the morning, serve the saints and monks at noon, and chant thy glories in the evening.' Thus he summarizes the chief devotional attitude of a Jain devotee.

The practice of image worship had been prevalent in Jainism from the very ancient times. Historical evidence shows that images of the Tīrthaṅkaras, originally twenty-four Teachers, were made as early as the

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Knowledge and Devotion

According to Jainism, devotion and knowledge are not contradictory, but go together. Without knowledge *bhakti* is blind. Contrarily, right faith (*samyak-darśana*) is the foundation of the whole spiritual path which culminates in the awakening of right knowledge (*samyak-jñāna*). According to Ācārya Kundakunda¹⁰, knowledge is already present in the *Ātman*, but he alone gets it who is devoted to the *guru*. In short, the knowledge which bestows liberation is obtained by devotion towards those who possess that knowledge, and that devotion too must be *with* knowledge.

To summarize, *bhakti* in Jainism is based on faith, is closely related to knowledge, manifests in service, and is an important means of liberation.

Devotional Practices in Jainism

These include worship (*pūjā*), recitation of hymns and prayers (*stotra, stava, maṅgala*), salutations and practice of humility (*vandana* and *vinaya*), and celebrations and festivals.

third century BC, while worships with flowers was definitely in vogue by the first century AD. Devotional practices in Jainism were distinctly influenced by those practices in Hinduism, and by the changes taking place in this sister religion. This was allowed by the *ācāryas* because it was realized that, for ordinary householders, it was not possible to concentrate their mind on abstract ideas, and that they needed methods like *pūjā*, hymns, etc. Thus at present we find a number of similarities between the devotional practices of the two religions. At least six of the nine forms of the devotions described in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*¹² are found in Jainism, viz. listening to and singing the glories of the Lord, meditation on Him, caressing the feet, worship, and bowing down. *Dāśya*, *sakhyā* and *ātmanivedanam*, or servitude, friendship and self-surrender are not found in Jainism,

11. प्रातर्विधिस्तव पदाम्बुपूजनेन
मध्याह्नसन्निधिरयं मुनिमाननेन ।
सायंतनोऽपि समयो मम देव
यायात्रित्यं त्वदाचरणकीर्तनकामितेन ॥

Quoted by Premasagar Jain, p. 28.

12. श्रवणं कीर्तनं विष्णोः स्मरणं पादसेवनं ।
अर्चनं वन्दनं दास्यं सख्यमात्मनिवेदनम् ॥

—the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, 7.5.23.

10. Quoted by Premasagar Jain, p. 17.

because they do not fit in with the philosophical concept of the adored Jina or Tirthaṅkaras in Jainism.

Jain lay devotees perform worship of the image or the footprints of the Tirthaṅkaras, the procedure for which is elaborately described in Jain texts. The image is first brushed clean with a special brush made of *khuns* straw. It is then bathed with scented water and dried with a clean fine cloth. Next sandal paste is applied and it is decorated with flowers, garlands and ornaments. Rice grains and fruits, fresh or dried, are then offered on an offering-table placed in front of the image. The rice grains are generally arranged in special designs that have specific symbolic meanings. Finally incense and lighted lamp are waved in front of the image with accompanying hymns, and the worship ends by salutations. Like the worship in Hinduism with five, ten, or sixteen items (*pañca, daśa* or *ṣoḍaśopacāra pūjā*), in Jainism too there is the eightfold or sevenfold worship (*aṣṭaparakāri, satraparakāri*). It is quite evident that this type of worship has entered into Jainism due to Hindu influence.

Singing of hymns is enjoined as one of the six essential duties of a Jain lay or monastic devotee. The Jain hymnal literature is voluminous. It is both in *Sanskṛt* and *Prākṛta*, and in recent times hymns and songs in the vernaculars also have been added. Some of these have become more popular and are sung by millions of Jains every day.

The Tirthaṅkara, the object of worship of a Jain votary—unlike the Hindu God, who is the all-powerful bestower of grace, fulfiller of desires, and destroyer of evil—is an illumined liberated soul, who is beyond praise and blame, who neither curses nor blesses, and who neither showers grace nor rewards or punishes his supplicants. What then is the idea behind singing hymns and

glories of such an impartial witness? It is to purify oneself by remembrance of the virtues and glories of the Lord that such hymns are sung. He represents the Ideal, the Goal, which the hymns flash afresh in the mind of the devotee. It intensifies his faith, purifies his heart and infuses strength to struggle for the goal. These hymns are in a sense praises of the pure, eternal, free nature of one's own Ātman. Their singing is like self-instruction.

It is evident from the philosophy behind the worship of the Tirthaṅkara that, in Jainism there is no scope for selfish devotion or love prompted by desire. However, in the course of centuries, hymns prompted by desires and with promises of material gains and protection from dangers (*phalaśrutis*) have crept in. And strangely enough, such desires of the singer are often fulfilled!

Akin to Vedic invocatory or peace chants, there are a number of formulas and verses, called *maṅgalas*, in Jainism too, which are chanted before the commencement of any work, specially literary works and studies.

Vandana, or the practice of humility by making salutation, by bowing down or by uttering suitable salutation is one of the important devotional exercises of a Jain. In the famous *Navakāra-mantra*, salutation is offered to the five adored ones, viz. the *arilanta* (prophet), the *siddha* (liberated one), the *ācārya* (teacher), the *upādhyāya* (expounder of the scriptures), and the *sādhu* (monk). The characteristics of each one of these are elaborately described in Jain scriptures. Thus the purpose of the salutations is to remind the devotee of the virtues represented by them. Salutation to one's superior in virtue or senior in station attenuates egotism and cultivates humility, which is the foundation of all other virtues. However, to discourage impostors and hypocrites the Jains are very circumspect

about offering their homage. Merely donning the robe or ascending to an office does not make one worthy of honour, if one is without the desired virtues. Hence the question of who should be honoured is discussed in details in Jainism. There are also detailed instructions as to how to salute and what constitutes a faulty salutation.

... (it) has as its ultimate aim the rising above all bonds of love to realize the pure nature of the soul.

The birthdays of the Tīrthaṅkaras are celebrated with all pomp and gaiety by the Jains. Apart from special worships, dramas, dances, musical performances, 'car' festivals, etc. are held on such occasions. to commemorate the mythological 'Indra's worship' at a celestial holy place called Nandīśvara, an eight-day long festival is held every year and is called Nandīśvara Festival.

Divisions of Bhakti

Jain ācāryas have divided *bhakti* into twelve types, depending upon the objects of *bhakti*. These include such beings as the *siddhas*, the Tīrthaṅkaras, the ācāryas and the five adored ones. *Bhakti*, to them, consists in faith, service, worship and chanting of hymns, wherever applicable. The objects are the scriptures, temples, shrines, sacred trees, Nandīśvara, and so on. Finally, states like

death in a state of *samādhi*, *yoga*, character, peace and *nirvāṇa* are also the objects of *bhakti*. To aspire for, pray for, and attempt to attain these states constitutes these types of *bhakti*.

Devotional Attitude

As already mentioned, there is very little scope for the loving worshipper-worshipped relationship, because here the object of devotion is a being free from all feelings of love and attachment. And yet, Jain devotees have been found to adopt the attitude of a servant or even that of a wife towards the *arihanta* for the sake of the practice of devotion. Hymns and poems of a few Jain *sādhakas* testify to this fact. The worship of the infant Jina (*snatra-pūjā*) is also done by devotees. The ultimate aim, however, is the absolute union with the Supreme Self—in other words, the realization of the eternally free and pure nature of one's own Ātman.

Conclusion

A critical survey of Jainism reveals that, although there are a large number of devotional practices prevalent among the Jain devotees, *bhakti* has never been so developed as in the devotional schools of Hinduism by which it has been heavily influenced. *Prema*, or *parā-bhakti*, ecstatic love, is virtually absent in Jainism, which has as its ultimate aim the rising above all bonds of love to realize the pure nature of the soul. □

Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit is indeed willing, but the flesh is weak.

—Christ, Matt. xxvi, 41.
Mark xiv, 38

NBT Moots Readers' Club

MAITREYEE SAHA

In the last couple of weeks, nearly 40,000 primary and secondary schools all over the country received letters from the National Book Trust, proposing the setting up of Readers' Club.

'Dear Principal,' the letter said, 'It is generally said that the education imparted by government/government-aided schools is not complete. Children from such schools do not do as well as those from private schools....The Trust is convinced that the solution lies in getting children interested in reading for leisure, pleasure and fun, and is therefore promoting Readers' Clubs in schools.'

It can be the back of a classroom, or a corner in a verandah—any place in the school can house the Readers' Club, so long as it is airy and has some natural light. Furniture is not necessary. A few simple mats will do. A warm, inviting atmosphere in the Club will make the children want to read books.

As soon as the school decides to establish a Readers' Club, the Trust proposes to send a packet of books worth Rs 50. Subsequently, it will send books worth Rs 25 to the Club if it runs continuously. NBT has formed a separate platform—National Centre for Children's Literature—for this activity.

Four pilot projects have already been run by NBT to find out if the idea of Readers' Club was feasible. The projects were taken

up in Delhi, Bangalore, Bhubaneswar and Guwahati. In Delhi, 25 Municipal Corporation and Municipal Committee schools were involved. It began with a three-day orientation programme for teachers during which they were explained the necessity of such a project.

Mr. Arvind Kumar, Director, NBT, said it was quite normal for teachers in many



corporation schools not to take out the books from the almirahs and let children touch them lest they are torn. During the orientation session, some teachers

even pointed out that there was such a lot of the school syllabus to be completed, that reading books for leisure was tantamount to wasting time.

With attitudes and misconceptions like these, it was not surprising that children did not want to read at all. Readers' Clubs hope to change all this. It will, of course, be difficult to quantify the success of such a project in a short period, but teachers have noticed some obvious changes the clubs have brought about.

Most schools which were a part of the pilot projects reported good response. In most schools, a period is fixed during which students and teacher meet informally to read, discuss and share books. This is done immaterial of whether the school has a library. In some of the schools where the Club met in the morning, it was noticed that the children made it a habit to reach school

* Reprinted with permission from *The Hindu*, Sunday, 21 November 1993.

early.

At another place, in a school located in a slum area, it was noticed that in a few months of the setting up of the Readers' Club, most children had joined nearby libraries. A Community Centre, located next to a school where a Readers' Club was set up, sent a letter to NBT asking how to set up a similar club.

But most teachers have noticed that reading became an enjoyable activity and textbooks seemed less formidable to children. Also, the teachers observed, there was a noticeable improvement in the reading ability of their students. Schools all over the country have to be involved in the movement, and the task is enormous. So the NBT is now trying to involve voluntary agencies to help set up reading clubs.

Promoting the habit of reading has been one of the prime concerns of NBT, and organizing the National Book Week is a part of the effort, says Mr. Arvind Kumar. This year the NBT is supporting 50 booksellers in

putting up stalls to mark the week. Sales are expected to be brisk. Organizers, particularly in Madras, have shown keen enthusiasm and have planned out various activities to mark the week.

According to the NBT director, the sale of books for children was on the increase. The Children's Book Fair held in New Delhi every year is one indicator. From 13 participants in 1987, the number increased to 99 this year.

Added to this is NBT's own efforts at improving the standard of publications. This year the Trust has come out with 750 new titles including translations. No longer are they drab-looking books kept on dusty bookshelves. The Trust has made efforts to improve the quality of printing, and has consciously avoided duplicating titles available in other publications. The results are there to see. Five years ago the Trust was selling books worth Rs 15 lakhs. The amount is Rs 2 crores now. Quite obviously, then, as Mr. Arvind Kumar says NBT is on the right track now. □

Swamiji and the Emancipation of Religion

(Continued from page 462)

cial claim to it? But it has to be made practical, to be made simple (for the highest truths are always simple), so that it may penetrate every pore of human society, and become the property of the highest intellects and the commonest minds, of the man, woman, and child at the same time.¹⁰...No longer will religion remain a bundle of ideas or theories, nor an intellectual assent; it will enter into our very self. By means of

intellectual assent we may today subscribe to many foolish things, and change our minds altogether tomorrow. But true religion never changes. Religion is realization; not talk, nor doctrine, nor theories, however beautiful they may be. It is being and becoming, not hearing or acknowledging; it is the whole soul becoming changed into what it believes. That is religion.¹¹

10. *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 358.

11. *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 396.

PRACTICAL VEDANTA

'His Dream Will Live On' *

ANJUS MENDIRATTA

Rippan Kapur, the self-effacing visionary who founded Child Relief and You, the Organization for helping deprived children, died at his home in Bombay a few weeks ago. Well known across India by its acronym CRY, the organization Kapur founded, has helped reach out to an estimated 50,000 children in its 15 years of existence.

Among the countless human beings in whose lives he made a profound difference with his dreams and actions are children all over India. Kapur was suffering from plastic anaemia, a condition afflicting the bone marrow. He had been ill for the last few months and was in and out of the hospital.

Kapur took time off from his job as a flight purser to set up CRY, with merely an initial capital of Rs 900 (scraped together from friends and relatives) and the family dining table and cupboards as office furniture. He was noted as a silent, behind the scenes worker, who shunned personal publicity but worked ceaselessly to popularize the organization.

When he established CRY, Kapur said: 'We recognize that, on the one hand, there are many people who have the means and the skills to help less fortunate children, but feel overwhelmed by the magnitude of the problem, by the feeling that they cannot do

very much as individuals. And on the other hand are the many agencies doing things to help children, but who are constantly strapped for manpower, funds and infrastructure.'

Born on January 31, 1954, Kapur since his childhood days was said to be a restless spirit. He set up the school social services club at 12. He would read to the blind and visit children in hospital wards. Later, as president of the school Interact club, he organized adult literacy classes at a Worli slum.

After school Kapur kept up his social work. He was sharply aware that far too much remained to be done for children, and felt that instead of starting yet another organization he would attempt to work directly with children. He planned to set up an agency that would help transfer skills and funds from those who had them to those who needed them badly. So, in 1979, CRY was born.

It was set up as a bridge between the people with resources and those with needs. During a stopover in Rome when flying with Air-India, Kapur got the Pope's autograph for CRY's Christmas cards and sold around 328,000 cards that year. An organization put together with merely Rs 50 mobilized resources over Rs 335 lakhs during 1992-93.

CRY workers remember Kapur as basically soft-spoken, though extremely articu-

* Reprinted with permission of the Hindustan Times, the article appearing in the Saturday, 7 May 1994 issue.

late and expressive when it came to talking about his work, but reticent and wary of talking about himself or his own contribution to the cause. In an interview two years ago, Kapur was quoted as having said, 'I don't want CRY to turn into another personality-oriented organization, where the people appear more important than the work itself. I don't think one can be satisfied as long as there are children who need help. One just has to keep going at it.'

This feeling percolated among his staff, each of whom believes that CRY is as much their own baby as anybody else's. CRY has reflected Kapur's own sense of the unexpected and the offbeat, which was the hallmark of the events that CRY organized to raise awareness.

In 1981, for example, they brought in a team of British performing clowns to stage a travelling show called Circus Magic, which entertained poor children through workshops and thus raised money. The most ambitious event was Bal Sawaal organized last year—a travelling festival of hope—for children. Kapur stood behind all these events, keeping himself out of the limelight, but using his fire to inspire and impel rather than aggrandize.

Kapur didn't lack in conviction. Says

Bondona, Branch Manager at Delhi's CRY office! 'Rippan was himself so sincere, motivated, his belief so infectious that other people were motivated, by it too.' Of course, the work sometimes got exhausting, which was one reason why he still held on to his airlines job. 'When I fly, I get some space, some privacy. It is rejuvenating to get away.'

He found his work so fulfilling that Kapur didn't feel the need to marry or set up a family. He resolved never to have children of his own. He believed, 'It would be criminal to bring another child into a world where there are already too many.' He was content to spend the little extra time he had with his mother and brother and, of course, CRY, 'his home, life and family.'

Kapur's work is remarkable because in a self-centred society he is quite out of the ordinary. It happens rarely that a man from a comfortable middle-class family, with no children of his own, comes up with an idealistic concept of CRY and actually gets it working. It cannot have happened without the founder possessing 'a strong vision and tenacity of purpose'. That vision of persistence, dedication and humility for the cause of children has now been institutionalized within CRY. He has left behind a dream with wings to fly. □

Verily I say unto you, Except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

—Christ, Matt. xviii. 1-4
Luke ix. 46-8
Mark ix. 34-7

Youth Forum

SWAMI PITAMBARANANDA

(continued from the October issue)

Question: What is Brahmacharya?

Answer: 'Brahmacharya' has three meanings, or rather three levels of meaning.

Brahman is the Reality Ultimate, which is all-pervading and one without a second. When that is felt, experienced and realized, then one lives in Brahman, moves in Brahman, and has his being in Brahman. This life in Brahman, or living and moving in Brahman, is the primary meaning of 'Brahmacharya'.

In order to live a life anchored in the Ultimate all-pervading Reality, one has to be trained for such a life. This training usually consists of—living with a teacher who is an exemplar of such a life; learning from him the secrets of higher life; study of the scriptures which reveal the nature of the Ultimate Reality; regulating one's life to tone up the body, organs, mind, intellect, and heart; and imbibing moral virtues which enable one to lead a life anchored in Brahman. This training is the second meaning of 'Brahmacharya'.

The third meaning is control of lust.

Question: What is its part in spiritual life?

Answer: Brahman is the Ultimate Reality. On analyzing dream we find that our mind itself takes the form of the objects

as well as the apparent subject, i.e. ourselves, who perceive objects in dream. Similarly, Reality is one, but through the mind it appears to be bipolarized into enjoyer-enjoyed. So long as we are engrossed in this enjoyer-enjoyed mode of thinking, feeling and action, we lose sight of the Reality. This bipolarity is acutest in the physical-mental awareness of the opposite sexes, and it covers the vision of Reality.

Question: Is it not natural to have this awareness of opposite sexes?

Answer: It appears natural today, and is common to man and animals. But one who has the capacity to think and discriminate finds that the nature of the Ultimate Reality, of which he or she is only a 'form', is beyond all sex and beyond all dualism, and that sex is a creation of the body-mind complex. As soon as we attain to the non-dual vision of our real nature, we rise beyond all bodily instincts and find true perfection and bliss. A universal love then flows from us, filling everyone around with bliss.

Question: But what can be done today?

Answer: Life should be planned and regulated with a proper awareness of what has been discussed above.

(concluded)

Reviews & Notices

THE VISIONS AND WORKS OF SRI AUROBINDO (Second Revised and Enlarged Edition), by K.D. Sethana, published by Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry 605 002, 1992, Rs. 125/-, pp. 234.

This work is a collection of 30 essays and letters of the author. A large number of the essays were included in the earlier edition of the book which appeared in 1968. Some of the earlier essays have been revised also.

The essays included in the book have been written within a span of about 50 years. A number of them were already seen by Sri Aurobindo himself and were approved for publication. Most of them, hence, have been printed in *Mother India*, a monthly review of culture from Pondicherry. Further, the mother had encouraged the publishers to bring out the essays in book form.

The main aim of the author of the collection is to bring out the problem of free-will in Sri Aurobindo's vision from the standpoint of practical action within a spiritual context. For Sri Aurobindo, freedom of will is possible only in a divine state. Genuine freedom of will is a quality of the full experience of being a luminous superhuman entity. The author explains how a man is responsible *vis-a-vis* omnipotent and omniscient divine being. The integral yoga of Sri Aurobindo, with its metaphysical dimensions, solves the issue involved. The individual, with the help of yogic *sādhana*, is able to transcend the mental level and enter into the supra-mental. The divine being (*sat-cit-ānanda*) also can, and does, descend to the lower states and helps the individual in treading the ascending path. The individual is free either to expedite or to delay the ascent.

In almost all the essays the author displays an interplay of light and life. For him Sri Aurobindo stands to kindle a vision and initiate a work that bears on the whole human situation, meeting its most central

and recurrent as well as its most external and diverse issue. The author writes with a sense of intimate contact with Sri Aurobindo, as a co-worker with the Master.

The integral yoga of Sri Aurobindo exhorts everyone to 'come and realise' as the Buddha said—'come and see' (*ehi passa*). About his *magnum opus*—*The Life Divine* (which expresses Sri Aurobindo's experiences and realisations) the Master himself writes, "read this book....Every sentence of this book is inspired by a spiritual realisation, using intellect as an instrument."

The author of the collection removes certain misunderstandings regarding mysticism in his letter (in 1947) to Prof. K. He asserts that God-union builds a man world-worker rather than a world-shirker. This may also be treated as a reply to Albert Schweitzer's criticism of Indian thought as life-and-world negating (as found in the book *Indian Thought and Its Development*, 1954). The yoga of Sri Aurobindo is not of a cave-dweller; it is dynamic. Sri Aurobindo's philosophy initiates a balanced and harmonious course—to be a yogi as well as a world-worker.

In one of the essays the author, while talking of the essence in the ontological context, distinguishes between Āchārya Śāṅkara and Sri Aurobindo. He knows that for both these philosophers essence is the reality persisting through all states and changes. It is the permanent underlying oneness which is the self of all. But he finds that in Śāṅkara the opposition between the one and the many is not reconciled, whereas in Sri Aurobindo the phenomenal terms find their origins in the essentials, otherwise the latter would not be their essence. The author also distinguishes between the two great philosophies in the axiological dimension of the essence. He knows that the essence is of ultimate value for both. But he finds them differ as well. For Śāṅkara essence cannot be our absolute perfection unless it is the one to the exclusion of the many. For Sri

Aurobindo, on the other hand, unless we get the final truths of the terms we cannot reach absolute perfection or essence.

The author, interestingly, notes the change in the name of the Master from 'Aurobindo Ghosh' to 'Sri Aurobindo' in the mid-twenties of the century, probably after the victory-day (24th November, 1926), the day of the Overmind's descent into his body-substance.

Virtually all the essays in the collection reveal one or the other salient feature of the vision and work of Sri Aurobindo, the greatest modern yogi and the Master of those who know. The book is commended for perusal by the students of Sri Aurobindo.

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**TEACHINGS OF BRAHMAN
THROUGH THE ATTRIBUTIONS OF
AVIDYA AND MAYA, by Sri Devarao
Kulkarni, published and edited by Sri
Manas Kumar Sanyal, 182 S.N. Roy
Road, Calcutta 700 038, pp. vi+75,
price Rs. 6/-**

The book under review presents a critical study of Śāṅkara's doctrine of Advaita Vedānta which reveals the nature of Brahman through the attributions of avidyā and māyā. According to the author there are many misconceptions about avidyā and māyā in the interpretations by post-Śāṅkara advaitins. For example, some commentators hold the view that ajñāna of avidyā is *Bhāvaroopam* i.e. a positive thing; and that the world or *sr̥ṣṭi* is real; this is called *Dr̥ṣṭi-sr̥ṣṭi-vāda* or *Sr̥ṣṭi-dr̥ṣṭi-vāda* where the mind is considered the creator of the outer world. The author has tried to clear these confusions from the stand point of Śāṅkara's doctrine.

As long as a person is in ignorance about his self (Atman), he is confused about the identity of Atman and Brahman, the all pervading pure consciousness. Ignorance or avidyā has three aspects which obstruct knowledge of one's own true nature. These are: (i) non-perception or non-apprehension called *Tattva-agrahaṇa*, (ii) misconception or misunderstanding called *adhyāsa* which is of

different types such as wrong perception and false perception and contrary perception as a result of avidyā; and (iii) *Samśaya* or doubt about the nature of the Self. The world of names and forms is an everyday experience for the people under the spell of ignorance. However, from the standpoint of the Absolute it is illusory and unreal, because ignorance pertains to the mind. Apparently, avidyā is the cause of *Adhyāsa* or superimposition which leads to *adhyāropita* which is false appearance of the Absolute and this is called māyā. As long as one sees māyā and its effects, one has to accept it as the power (Śakti) of Brahman. When through the method of *apavāda*, the process of negation of the false perception, *avidyā* is dispelled then māyā does not affect one, as mind and intellect are illumined by the knowledge of Brahman. The individual self experiences its identity with the cosmic Self namely Brahman. This is described in the scriptures as "Brahmavid Bahmaiva Bhavati".

The central theme of the present book is reflected in its introduction. The author has delineated the difference between the concept of avidyā and māyā, *adhyāropa*, *adhyāsa*, and *adhyāropita*, and has explained in a simple language various vedantic terms of māyā such as *avidyākalpita*, *anirvacaniya*, and *avidyātmika*. He also explains that terms such as 'Atman', 'Īśvara', 'Brahman' are synonymous terms in Śāṅkara Bhāṣya, but are used differently in different places from the standpoint of *upādhis* or adjuncts which are conjured up by *avidyā*. The explanation of *avidyā*, māyā and the nature of Brahman is interesting, but the author should have explained in detail the method of negation of *avidyā* and māyā which is called *apavāda*. The *apavāda* theory of Śāṅkara, which is called rescission or desuperimposition, helps clear many doubts and misconceptions about the true nature of Brahman.

This book is well written giving appropriate original quotations from Śāṅkara Bhāṣya. The book will be a welcome addition to Vedānta literature.

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