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# Divine Wisdom

GOD ALONE IS THE REAL DOER

(Nārada's Instruction to Yudhiṣṭhira)

तस्माज्ज हाङ्ग वैक्लव्यमजानकृतमात्मनः।  
कथं त्वनाथा कृपणा अंतरस्ते च मां विना॥

Therefore, O dear one! give up your infatuation born of ignorance, which makes you feel worried, thinking—how will those helpless people get on without me?

कालकमगणार्थानां देहोऽय पाञ्चभौतिकः।  
कथमन्यास्तु गोपायेत्सर्पग्रस्ता यथा परम॥

To think that one can save or protect another while one's own body, subject to the power of Time, Karma, and Guṇas, is decaying, is like a person in the grip of a python thinking of saving another.

अहस्तानि महस्तानामपदानि चतुष्पदाम्।  
फलानि तत्र महतां जीवो जीवस्य जीवनम्॥

Creatures without arms (or animals) are the food of creatures with arms (or men). Feetless beings (or vegetation) are the food of four-footed creatures (or animals). Even among these, the smaller creatures are the food of bigger ones. Thus one kind of living being is the food for another. (In this wise Nature has made ample arrangement for food for all, and you need not be anxious about your relatives.)

तदिदं भगवान् राजन्नेक आत्माऽत्मनां स्वदृक्।  
अन्तराङ्गनन्तरां भाति पश्य तं माययोरुधा॥

All this universe is the Lord's alone. He is the soul of all souls—the self-revealing Spirit, needing no other revealer (*svayam-prakāśa*). He is what shines as the within and the without. He has become the many by His mysterious power of Māyā.

सायमद्य महाराज भगवान् भूतभावनः।

That Bhagavān, the Origin of all, O King, is now amidst us as the Divine Incarnate.

From the *Srīmad Bhāgavatam*

## In Search of Security

### *Security*

We all long for security knowingly or unknowingly, in the world around us or within ourselves. For, security ensures our existence, and life is dear to all beings. When we know we are safe from all dangers, that we can sway with the wind but never break, we feel secure and stable. Security brings peace and joy, and well-tested security gives a special kind of joy. While secure, our body and mind are relaxed, and there is an easy rhythm in our activities and thoughts. We feel *svastha*, firmly fixed in ourselves.

Conventional security, temporal security, produces one type of happiness, and it depends on assured livelihood, shelter, money, learning, relatives, friends, etc., i.e., on possessions, on self-assertion. But there is another kind of security which is unassailable. That is derived from a disposition that fosters frugality, detachment, generosity, service, etc., i.e., from self-denial.

### *Insecurity*

Today insecurity and agnate anxiety and fear are the widespread ailments in society. It is profitable to know that the world cannot give us a sure-fire security. It can be had, cultivated, only within ourselves. It was dinned into us that we can win our security and happiness from the world *only*. If we had been coached to know the truth that material security is ultimately shaky, no matter how hard we tried to shore it up, and that it is but the first and practical step towards discovering lasting security in our deep within, we would have been better equipped to hold our own against the ravages of insecurity. Nevertheless, now we

can at least try to re-educate ourselves with a proper understanding of security, stability and happiness, and share it with the younger generation as far as possible.

Why is worldly security shaky? Because the things that go to make us feel protected are themselves unstable. For one trying to eke out a living, regular food, employment and shelter are not guaranteed. For those who have all these assured, there is fear of theft, loss, violence, injustice, natural calamities, and so on. There is an interesting proverb: '*Sarso me bhoot*: Ghost in the mustard': When a person is possessed by a ghost or some spirit, shamans try to drive it out by sprinkling on that person mustard

*So, how can we drive away this ghost of a feeling of insecurity and anxiety when the means that are to cure us are themselves under that ghost's power?*

seeds infused with a magical potency through incantations. When this procedure fails, what is concluded is that the ghost has hidden in the mustard itself! So, how can we drive away this ghost of a feeling of insecurity and anxiety when the means that are to cure us are themselves under that ghost's power? Besides, even for those who feel they are rather well guarded against external perils, there is the dread of aging. For those who have sought refuge in reading and scholarship, some support in the mind, there is again the menace of fading memory, of sagging mental vitality. Life itself is such, everything in the world is fraught with transience. Our bodies and minds also, for whose permanency we exert so much in the



first place, are themselves changeful !

But we have been hypnotized by the myth of technological, political and economic supremacy being capable of expelling this 'ghost'. Now are we going to say, 'Well, let me try once more and see if there is a solution out there. After all, governments, scientists and so many others are working hard and overtime to provide us full security, physical and mental. Let me wait a little longer'? We are free to continue insulating ourselves with these hopes. But we should also bear in mind that tension, insecurity, etc. are acute in the West itself, the home of secularism and consumerism. Even 2,500 years ago King Shuddhodana had tried to create this illusion of a perfectly secure world of eternal youth, wealth and power for Siddhartha, the later Gautama Buddha. We know how that illusion was broken by fact when Siddhartha saw disease, old age and death. He was then neither sick nor old himself, but he had the sensitivity to see the universality of that fact and its gist: Both the world and the individual are unsteady; only apparently steady like a river or a flame. And we know where his search for immunity led him.

#### *Review of our past*

We too, particularly those who are quite safe in the physical sense but are feeling restless, tense and worried, should frankly and courageously review the present and past of our lives, and try to learn from others' experiences that we may not have had personally: When young and energetic we tried to find security *in the world*—in food, excitement, variety, adventure, friends, etc. We loved change, and when we found that Nature is slow in change, we invented fast artificial changes—in clothes, games, music, sensual pleasures, and similar things—to match our computer-age psychological clock. Consumerism was found to be an indispensable part of that

mood. We were not interested in learning what Mother Nature wanted to teach us, we were interested in experiencing—seeing, doing, feeling—intensely. Because this *subconsciously* confirmed our continuing existence, 'I am, I am'. Even in our search for friends, attending parties, talking, discussions, wanting appreciation or recognition, etc., there was this unconscious search for confirmation of *our* existence. Unexciting and routine life, loss of friends, criticism, indifference of people, etc. shook our sense of being, we felt lost and unprotected. This was a search for existential security—in change, at the physical level.

When past the vitality and confidence of youth, our search for security became conscious. We then began to build it in a more concrete form. We drew to ourselves *from the world* whatever we thought would fortify us better—through academic qualification, employment, property, savings, shelter, insurance, dependable friends and relatives, and so on.

Slowly we realized the fragility and insufficiency of all these. This is when some of us begin to, are made to, take stock of our lives, to introspect. This unsettles many. Some turn to psychiatrists to get over their problems. Some try techniques prescribed in books on positive thinking and happy living. Some take to serious reading and writing, hoping to be protected by an active mind.

However, these remedies fail in the long run, particularly when the mind begins to weaken. Some try to put up a bold face, fighting off thoughts about what is happening to themselves and what may come. Something similar often happens when people get cornered in a dark alley by an assailant—they just shut their eyes tight, frozen stiff to think of a means of escape. Some are 'intelligent' people. So they devise



ways to divert their minds—to gardening, embroidery, music, evening coffee-bar political debates, training grandchildren in pragmatism, visiting relatives, watching TV...just anything for distraction. Or they just stand out on the balcony kicking their heels and blankly watching the world rush by. They find nothing available to drive out the 'ghost'; nothing they banked upon provides a reliable prop now.

All those who when young got lured into the whirlpool of today's society are like the ones who inadvertently get addicted to gambling or drugs. Very few manage to get out before it is too late. And even for them it takes time to normalize and reorient themselves anew, because the flow of society has accelerated their psychological clock so much that it takes time to slow it down to match their natural biological clock. These

'escapees' from the 'fast society', rarely youngsters, mostly middle-aged and older people, now hunger for rest and protection. In such situations we some-

*In such situations we sometimes find ourselves whistling all alone. But that youthful 'I am on top of the world' melody is gone. Now it sounds more like a whistle from a pot of boiling anguish deep within us.*

times find ourselves whistling all alone. But that youthful 'I am on top of the world' melody is gone. Now it sounds more like a whistle from a pot of boiling anguish deep within us. Our agitated thoughts, which our old friends and relatives and much less our children are in the least interested in sharing, seem to be squeezing the air out of our lungs in a melancholy tune!

*Have we been deceived?*

We may say the world has lured and deceived us. The fact is just the opposite. The world or Mother Nature has always, *ab initio*, been trying to teach us, to remind us, about something else through the phenomenon of change. It is we who failed to learn. The world of objects, activities and

people gave us joy, success, possessions and power. Through these we instinctively perceived the reassuring reflection of our continuous existence, our individuality, and so jumped to the wrong conclusion that it is the world that gives us security. On the contrary, what She wanted us to notice was this simple fact: Only those objects are stable and secure which have their centre of equilibrium, stability, within themselves. When such an object is moved in any way by external forces, the resultant of all the forces acting on it draws it back to its stable position. A force countering the destabilizing forces acts through that centre.

This principle can be applied to ourselves also in a general way. However, we should remember a few things: In human beings security is not a position, it is a feeling; it is in the mind. And this centre of security is a dynamic, living constant. We do not recognize this in the beginning. So it is natural that we depend on external things for security and suffer. There are many who resign themselves to such a state. They are convinced that this is the fact of existence, that it is not possible, except in speculation, to find abiding security.

Since we have made our beds, must we lie in it? Fortunately, no. We do have a rare few amongst us, almost always, who say they have discovered a remedy; that in keeping with Mother Nature's principle, the source of lasting security can be centred within us. For that, however, it is necessary to re-adjust our activities and thoughts, in the same way that an unstable object is made stable by re-adjusting its configuration. Observe these people. They, we see, are not secure and stable in the sense that walls and boulders are. They are in the world, active



as any of us and as human as we are. And yet they feel absolutely secure—in disease, in pain, in loss—under all circumstances. Ask them their secret. In fact, it is an age-long secret: Their security comes from righteous living, honesty, love for all, unselfishness, selfless service to others, detachment: activities and attitudes vastly different from, practically opposite of, all those cherished by ordinary people as solely conducive to security. It gave them a perfectly clear conscience. That is it—the centre of stability and security within! Every time they feel a force of 'want', which is but another name for insecurity, physical or mental, they balance it with some thought and activity appropriate to make the 'resultant force' pass, filter, through their conscience: Hunger? Eat, but am I depriving another creature, or taking more than needed, or wasting? Can I share a little with someone less fortunate? Shelter, clothes and accessories? Work and earn to buy, but have I worked sincerely and earned my due? Do I really need so much? Can I save some money or material to help the poor? Disease? Get treated, but I know this body can be afflicted by it any time. Leisure? Yes, I must have, but shall I waste it in entertainment and sensuality, all for myself and my people, or be of some use to my community, to just one person in the least? And so on.

These are some of the well-tested attitudes that create that centre:

Truth ennobles man.

Economy is no disgrace; for it is better to live on a little than outlive a great deal.

The temperate man's pleasures are always durable, because they are regular; and all his life is calm and serene, because it is innocent.

To give an early preference to honour

above gain, when they stand in competition; to despise every advantage which cannot be attained without dishonest arts; to brook no meanness, and stoop to no dissimulation—these are the indications of a great mind.

None of these extraordinary personalities have said that the world, or disease, aging, loss, violence, death, etc. can be eliminated. But what they say is, the *feelings* these generate—passions, attachment, greed, fear, tension, hatred, insecurity, etc.—can be slowly countered with the aforementioned purified activities and attitudes and finally extinguished to give place to that sparkling conscience, the mother of eternal security.

#### *The poor man's security*

What does this security mean to those who are poor as church mice, the weak, the homeless, the exploited? Nothing at all. Asking them to seek their security 'within

*Their primary insecurity can be removed only by those who have caused it—we ourselves, the educated and the well-provided consumers.*

themselves', to call on God, to think they are the Atman, to consider their lot to be the result of their karma, etc., is like ad-

ding salt to an open wound. Their primary insecurity can be removed only by those who have caused it—we ourselves, the educated and the well-provided consumers; by us who have come to realize that we are insecure in spite of our fairly strong material shield. By curing *our* disease of inner poverty and fears in the midst of outer wealth and stability. If we can emulate the truly secure ones, if not out of a religious motive, then at least out of a compelling desire to become secure like them, the vulnerability of the deprived masses also will vanish. Is it really so that their poverty, illiteracy, overpopulation and greed are the chief causes of *our* anxieties, tensions and diseases? Or that they are endangering our livelihood? Just

the contrary. It is our overconsumption and greed, our embarrassment of riches, that are the causes of their and our vexation. And we have been moulded this way by twenty to twenty-five years of education during the formative period of our life—to seek at any cost individual success, to compete for self-gratification, to make money any way, and to grab at goods. We have ceased feeling we are part and parcel of the organism called Mankind or Mother Nature.

Here we see another secret behind the perfect security of the great ones—their feeling of being united with all existence. Lord Buddha spoke of Nirvana as the solution for all peacelessness and insecurity, and expressed the practical aspect of it in one word—Love! 'Ananda,' he said, 'the whole world is burning. It needs only one thing, Love!' Swami Vivekananda spoke of the realization of the Atman as the key to absolute security, and he expressed its relevance through another word—Service. These two, Love and Service, are what can destroy the root cause of our insecurity—our alienation from the world, from Mother Nature. These alone can rectify our present attitudes with which we look upon the world—its things and even people—as 'resources' for us to use to win security.

#### *Learn to lose*

We already see a number of people from different stations—kings and queens, princes and princesses, former political leaders of great power and influence—turning to this remedial course of life, engaging themselves in some service or other to the

poor and deprived, even to animals and Nature. There are many other people too—lesser in power and influence, but great in love for all beings—who singly or collectively have taken up some form of service to others. There are office employees, bankers, air hostesses, doctors, teachers and students, who have sacrificed their leisure and as much of their savings as possible to work in the slums, among waifs, and among exploited women. Every one of them has earned a wonderful gift—an inner peace and fullness of heart that nothing so far had given them. They are the living proof of the means to true security.

So, those who really want security will have to follow this proven prescription. This is the only way. We hope that with time more and more people will turn to this as a preventive and a cure, so that they themselves benefit and, with a cascading effect, the millions of the poor and dispossessed also benefit.

The great Sufi mystic Bulle Shah has sung:

*Jit jīt umar gawāyī  
Hun tū hār fakīrā;  
Jitte da mūl ādh kasīrā,  
Hāre da mūl lūrā*

A lifetime wasted in the  
pursuit of victory,  
Now, O fakir, learn the art of losing.  
The worth of victory is but half a grain  
That of defeat a diamond glistening.



The righteous [answered him] saying, 'Lord, when saw we Thee an hungred, and fed Thee? Or athirst, and gave Thee drink? And when saw we Thee a stranger, and took Thee in? Or naked, and clothed Thee? And when saw we Thee sick, or in prison, and came unto Thee?' And the King...shall answer and say unto them, 'Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me.'

*Matt. xxv, 31-46.*



# Madhusudana Saraswati on the Bhagavad-Gita

SWAMI GAMBHIRANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue)

## DUTY OF A KṢATRIYA

देही नित्यमवध्यायं देहे सर्वस्य भारत।  
तस्मात्सर्वाणि भूतानि न त्वं शोचितुमर्हसि॥ (2.30)

*Dehī nityamavadhyo'yaṁ  
dehe sarvasya bhārata  
tasmātsarvāṇi bhūtāni  
na tvam śocitumarhasi*

*O descendent of Bharata, since it is certain that this embodied one cannot be killed even when the bodies of all the creatures get killed, therefore you ought not to grieve for all the elements.*

Since *nityam*, it is certain; that *ayam*, this; *dehī*, embodied one, the self having the subtle body as its limiting adjunct; *avadhyah*, cannot be killed; even when *dehe*, the bodies; *sarvasya*, of all the creatures, get killed; *tasmāt*, therefore; *tvam*, you; *na arhasi*, ought not; *śocitum*, to grieve; *sarvāṇi bhūtāni*, for all the elements, both gross and subtle, which have assumed the forms of Bhīṣma and others. There should be no lamentation for the (destruction of the) gross body, because that (destruction) is unavoidable; (and) there should be no lamentation for the subtle body, because, verily like the self, it cannot be killed. Therefore it is not proper to grieve for the gross body, the subtle body or the self. This is the idea.

Thus, in this way, since through non-discrimination (from the self) of the three limiting adjuncts, (viz) the two bodies gross

and subtle, and their cause nescience, Arjuna had the delusion that is common to all beings, which consists in the appearance of even the unreal worldly state as real, as a characteristic of the Self, and so on, therefore the Lord, in order to remove this through discrimination of the three limiting adjuncts, spoke of the real nature of the Self. For the present, with a view to dispelling the personal delusion of Arjuna himself—arising from defects such as compassion and consisting in the appearance of his own caste-duty, called fighting, as unrighteous owing to the abundance of injury etc. in them—, the Lord makes him understand that fighting, though abounding in injury etc., is not unrighteous, because it is his own caste-duty:

स्वधर्ममपि चावेक्ष्य न विकम्पितुमर्हसि।  
धर्माद्धि युद्धाच्छ्रेयोऽन्यत्क्षत्रियस्य न विद्यते॥ (2.31)

*Svadharmamapi cāveksya  
na vikampitumarhasi  
dharmaḥ yuddhācchreyo'nyat  
kṣatriyasya na vidyate*

*Even considering your own duty you should not waver, since for a Kṣatriya there is no other means conducive to bliss than a battle.*

Not only by merely considering the highest Reality, but *api*, even; *aveksya*, considering, examining in the light of the scriptures; *svadharmam*, your own duty, the duty

of a Kṣatriya, consisting in not retreating from battle; *na arhasi*, you should not; *vikampitum*, waver, deviate from righteousness, by mistaking it to be unrighteous. This being so, beginning from '...although these people ... do not see' (1.38) and ending with 'living in hell becomes inevitable' (1.44), what you said about fighting being the cause of sin, and in, 'how shall I fight with arrows in battle against Bhīṣma' (2.4), etc., what was said by you regarding abstaining from killing elders, killing Brāhmins, and so on—all that has been said verily without deliberating on the Science of Ethics.

Why? *Hi*, since; *kṣatriyasya*, for a Kṣatriya; *na anyat vidyate*, there is no other; *śreyah*, means conducive to bliss; *yuddhāt*, than a battle; that is *dharmyāt*, righteous, associated with righteousness in the form of non-retreat (from battle). Because battle, through conquest of the earth, is indeed the means of fulfilling the duty of a Kṣatriya, viz protection of subjects, service to the Brāhmins, etc. So, that alone is more commendable for a Kṣatriya. This is the idea. Thus it has been said by Parāśara,

Indeed, a Kṣatriya should, with weapons in hand, protect the earth righteously while ensuring the safety of his subjects by very strongly punishing (the evil doers) and by conquering the army of the enemies.<sup>1</sup>

and by Manu too in such verses as,

Keeping in mind the duty of a Kṣatriya, a king engaged in protecting his people should not retreat from battle when challenged by an equal, a superior, or an inferior person.

Non-retreat from battle, protection of his people, and service to Brāhmins are

the best means to bliss for a Kṣatriya.<sup>2</sup>

And the word *king* has been established, in the section dealing with *aveṣṭi*,<sup>3</sup> as referring only to the Kṣatriya caste. Therefore there should be no mistake that this is the duty of only the protector of the earth (be he a Kṣatriya or not). In the quoted sentences as well, the use of the words 'A Kṣatriya indeed' and 'the duty of a Kṣatriya' is a clear indication of this. Therefore it has been rightly said by the Lord that, for a Kṣatriya battle is the commendable duty. Like the saying, 'The horses and cattle are animals, and those which are different from horses and cattle are not animals',<sup>4</sup> it has been said by a figure of speech implying eulogy that there does not exist any other means to bliss than a battle. Hence there is no fault. Hereby is refuted the idea that, for undertaking something more praiseworthy than fighting it is proper to withdraw from it; so also (has been refuted the argument), 'Besides, I do not see any good (to be derived) from killing my own people in battle' (1.31).

Is it not that even though fighting be a duty, still it is not proper to undertake it against adorable ones like Bhīṣma, Droṇa and others, that being very censurable?

Anticipating this (doubt) He says:

यदृच्छया चोपपन्नं स्वर्गदाम्पत्यवतम।  
सुखिनः क्षत्रियाः पार्थ लभन्ते युद्धमोदशम। (2.32)

Yadrecchaya copapannam  
svargadāmapāvatam  
sukhīnaḥ kṣatriyāḥ pārtha  
labhante yuddhanūdrśani

1. Parāśara Smṛti, 1.58.

2. Manu Smṛti, 7.87-8.

3. Mīmāṃsā-Sūtra of Jaimini, 2.3.2.

4. Taittirīya Saṁhitā, 5.2.9.4.



*O son of Prthā, happy are the Kṣatriyas who come across this kind of a battle which verily presents itself unsought for and which is an open gate to heaven.*

Since if victory comes fame and kingdom will be attained easily, and in case of defeat heaven will be attained very quickly, therefore, *sukhinaḥ*, happy indeed; are those *kṣātriyāḥ*, Kṣatriyas; who *labhante*, come across, as a challenge; *īdṛśam*, this kind of; *yuddham*, a battle, in the form of confrontation with such heroic persons as Bhīṣma, Droṇa and others, which is a means for attaining palpable results, viz fame and winning a kingdom; (and *upapaśnam*,) which presents itself, *ca*, verily—(*ca* being used) for emphasis—; *yadṛcchayā*, unsought for, without their own efforts—indeed, without being sought for. In this sense He (the Lord) said *svarga-dvāram-apāvṛtam*, an open gate to heaven, an unhindered means to attainment of heaven. Battle results in the achievement of heaven verily without delay, but *Jyotiṣtoma* etc. do so after a long time since they depend on the death of the body and the absence of hindrances. This is the meaning.

By the use of the phrase 'door to heaven' is obviated the apprehension of incurring sin as in the case of *Śyena*-sacrifice etc.; for the *Śyena*-sacrifice etc., though enjoined, are yet tainted by their evil results, because their results, viz death of an enemy (etc.), which are prohibited by the scriptures, 'One should not harm any creature', 'One should not kill a Brāhmin', etc., are producers of sin. Besides, since the injunction does not relate to the result, therefore there is no scope for the logic implied in, 'Prohibition has no application with regard to something that has been enjoined.'<sup>5</sup> The result of battle is

5. *Śyena*-sacrifice etc. have been prohibited on account of their involving injury and hence being sinful. But fighting has not been prohibited thus.

indeed heaven, and that is not prohibited. So has Manu too said,

The kings, in the course of fighting (each other) with utmost energy with a view to killing one another, and not retreating, reach heaven.<sup>6</sup>

But 'fighting' cannot be affected by prohibition, since it is enjoined like the immolation of an animal in honour of Agni and Soma. For, as in the case of using the sacrificial vessel called *śodaśi* (in the *Ati-rātra*-sacrifice) there is scope for being alternatives because of the equal force of the two injunctions ('one takes up the *śodaśi* in the *Ati-rātra*-sacrifice' and 'one does not take up the *śodaśi* in the *Ati-rātra*-sacrifice') about using or not using, so a general injunction (about not killing, for instance,) can become restricted by the special injunction (enjoining killing, for instance, which has greater force).<sup>7</sup> Thus, in accordance with the maxim, 'Prohibition has no application with regard to something that has been enjoined', fighting is not productive of sin. Nor even is there any evil accruing from killing with the adorable ones, Brāhmins and others, such as Bhīṣma, Droṇa and so on, because of their being felons. So does Manu say,

When one finds a felon approaching (inimically), one should certainly kill him without (any other) consideration, be he an elder, or a boy or an aged man or a well-read Brāhmin.

No sin whatsoever is incurred by a

6. *Manu Smṛti*, 7.89.

7. The scriptures state in general, 'Do not kill any creature', and also give the special injunction, 'Fighting should be undertaken'. Therefore the earlier general injunction becomes restricted by the latter special injunction, and thus killing in fighting becomes free from sin.

killer from slaying a felon.<sup>8</sup>

(So also there are the texts:)

When a felon approaches with the intention of killing, one should slay him even though he be well-versed in Vedānta. One does not become 'a killer of a Brāhmin' thereby,<sup>9</sup> etc.

Is it not that, from the saying of Yājñavalkya,

The rule is that, in a case of contradiction between two Smṛtis in worldly matters, reason prevails. But the Science of Morals (*Dharma-śāstra*) is more authoritative than the Science of Political Economy (*Artha-śāstra*),<sup>10</sup>

sin does accrue from the killing of a felonious Brāhmin, because (the instruction) 'one shall not kill a Brāhmin' is a Moral injunction irrespective of any visible result, whereas '(When a felon) approaches with the intention of killing, one should slay him ... One does not become a "a killer of a Brāhmin" thereby' concerns *Artha-śāstra* since it is intended for saving one's own life?

With regard to this the answer is: Like (the injunction) 'One should sacrifice a Brāhmin in honour of Brahṁā', the instruction enjoining battle has indeed a Moral sanction; for in, 'treating happiness and sorrow...with equanimity' (2.38), it will be said that (so far as fighting by a Kṣatriya is concerned) there is no dependence on visible goals (winning a kingdom, for instance). As for Yājñavalkya's utterance, it

relates to the act of killing in an unfair war, etc. for some visible gain. So there is no fault.<sup>11</sup> The writer of the *Mitākṣara* (annotation on Yājñavalkya Smṛti), however, says,

'Where an action relates to both Morals and Political Economy, should anyone resort to *Artha-śāstra* by ignoring *Dharma-śāstra*, then "this indeed" is the injunction on him'—by saying so, Āpastamba has enjoined that he should undertake an expiation extending over twelve years, which fact is referred to by the word 'this'. The import that one understands from this is that, in matters of common conduct that have four facets<sup>12</sup>, one should not transgress the *Dharma-śāstra* (Science of Morals), even for conquering an enemy, by following *Artha-śāstra* (Science of Political Economy) dealing with 'gaining a friend',<sup>13</sup> etc.

Science of Morals (*Dharma-śāstra*) which derives its authority from the fact of its teaching about invisible results. And the adage runs, 'A scripture is that which makes known the invisible.' In the present discussion, fighting is a caste-duty of the Kṣatriya sanctioned by the scripture on Morals, not out of consideration of any visible result such as gaining a kingdom but only as a righteous duty. Hence the authority of the teaching here enjoining battle is higher than that of any social code.

12. Brhaspati has stated the four facets of common conduct thus: 'The first facet is the opponent's point of view, and one's own answer is considered to be the second; the other (third) is action (establishing one's own point of view through evidence etc.), and the conclusion is held to be the fourth.'

13. The value of this is stated in: 'Since gaining a friend is superior to gaining gold and land, therefore one should strive for this by avoiding anger and greed.'

8. *Manu Smṛti*, 8.350-1.

9. *Vasiṣṭha Smṛti*, 3.20.

10. *Yājñavalkya Smṛti*, 2.21.

11. The general rule is that an act having a visible result is regulated by Science of Political Economy (*Artha-śāstra*), it being weaker than



Let this be so; it creates no difficulty for us. Thus then, the utterance of Arjuna, 'For, O Mādhava, how can we be happy by killing our kinsmen' (1.37), is dismissed by the (Lord's) declaration that there is happiness in undertaking the battle (see 2.32).

(Arjuna:) 'Is it not that I am not desirous of the results of the battle, for it has been said, "O Kṛṣṇa, I do not hanker after victory" (1.32), "even for the sake of a kingdom extending over the three worlds" (1.35)? So how can that (battle) be undertaken by me?'

Anticipating this He speaks of the evil arising from not undertaking it:

अथ चेत्त्वमिमं धर्म्यं संग्रामं न करिष्यसि।  
ततः स्वधर्मं कीर्तिं च हित्वा पापमवाप्स्यसि॥ (2.33)

*Atha cettvamimam dharmyam  
saṅgrāmam na kariṣyasi  
tataḥ svadharmam kīrtim ca  
hitvā pāpamavāpsyasi*

*On the other hand, if you will not undertake this righteous battle, then, forsaking your own duty and fame, you will incur sin.*

*Atha* means 'on the other hand'; *cet*, if; out of fear of virtue or of people, *tvam*, you; *na kariṣyasi*, will not undertake, withdraw from; *imam*, this, battle in the form of a confrontation with heroic persons such as Bhīṣma, Drona and others; which is *dharmyam*, righteous—not tainted by the faults of injury etc., or, associated with righteousness of virtuous people—. And this has been shown by Manu:

Bearing in mind the righteousness of the good, one engaged in fighting a battle should not kill the enemies with hidden weapons, nor with weapons that have tips shaped like ears (barbed), nor even with those that are poisoned, nor with

those that are blazing with lighted fire. Neither should one kill him who has ascended some place (for safety), nor one who is a eunuch, nor one who stands with folded hands, nor one who has dishevelled hair, nor one who is seated, nor one who says 'I am yours', nor one who is asleep, nor one who is without his armour, nor one who is naked (without helmet etc.), nor one who is not fighting but is (merely) an onlooker, nor one who is engaged in fighting another person, nor one whose weapons are out of order, nor one who is helpless, nor one who is very much wounded, nor one who is terror-stricken, nor one who is retreating.<sup>14</sup>

He, indeed, who engages in battle by transgressing the righteous behaviour of good people becomes sinful.

But, even when challenged by the enemies, (if you do not undertake this battle) which is in accordance with righteous conduct of good people, *tataḥ*, then, on account of not engaging in a battle sanctioned by such scriptures as, 'One should protect the earth righteously by conquering the enemies' armies'<sup>15</sup>; *hitvā*, forsaking, by not undertaking; *svadharmam*, your own duty; and by forgoing (your) *kīrtim*, fame, gained by fighting against Mahādeva (Lord Śiva) and others; *avāpsyasi*, you will incur; only *pāpam*, sin, arising from the act of desisting from battle, which is forbidden by the scriptures, '(A king) should not retreat from battle',<sup>16</sup> etc.; but (you will not gain) merit and fame. This is the idea.

Or the meaning is, 'By rejecting the merit earned through many lives, you will incur only sin committed by (your) king

(Continued on page 254)

14. *Manu Smṛti*, 90-3.

15. *Parāśara Smṛti*, 1.58.

16. *Manu Smṛti*, 7.87.

## A Fowler and a Serpent\*

(An adaptation from the *Mahābhārata*)

There was an old lady of the name of Gautami who was remarkable for her patience and tranquillity of mind. One day she found her son dead in consequence of having been bitten by a serpent. A fowler, by name Arjunaka, bound the serpent with a string, brought it before Gautami and said, 'This wicked serpent has been the cause of thy son's death. O blessed lady, tell me quickly how this wretch is to be destroyed! Shall I throw it into the fire or shall I hack it into pieces? This infamous killer of a child does not deserve to live longer.'

Gautami replied, 'Do thou, O Arjunaka! release this serpent. It doth not deserve death at thy hands. By killing it, this my boy will not be restored to life, and by letting it live, no harm will be caused to thee. Who would go to the interminable regions of death by slaying this living creature? Those that make themselves light by the practice of virtue, manage to cross the sea of life, even as a ship crosses the ocean. But those that make themselves heavy with sin, sink into the bottom, even as an arrow thrown into the water.'

*The fowler:* I know, O thou lady that knoweth the difference between right and wrong, that the great are afflicted at the afflictions of all creatures. Those who value peace of mind assign every thing to the course of Time, but practical men soon

assuage their grief by revenge. Therefore, O lady, assuage thy grief by having the serpent destroyed by me.

*Gautami:* People like us are never afflicted by such misfortune. Good men are always intent on virtue. The death of the boy was predestined. Therefore I am unable to approve of the destruction of this serpent. Brahmins do not harbour resentment, because resentment leads to pain. Do thou, O good man, forgive and release the serpent out of compassion.

*The fowler:* Let us earn great and inexhaustible merit hereafter by killing this creature, even as a man acquires great merit and confers it on his victim as well by sacrifice upon the altar. Merit is acquired by killing an enemy; by killing this despicable creature thou shall acquire great and true merit hereafter.

*Gautami:* What good is there in tormenting and killing an enemy, and what good is won by not releasing an enemy in our power? Therefore, O thou of benign countenance, why should we not forgive this serpent and earn merit by releasing it?

*The fowler:* A great number of creatures ought to be protected from the wickedness of this one. Virtuous men abandon the vicious to their doom. Let me therefore kill this wicked creature.

*Gautami:* By killing this serpent, my son, O fowler, will not be restored to life, nor do I see that any other end will be attained by

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\* In response to a suggestion, hereafter we shall reprint as and when possible select extracts from the early numbers of this journal. We hope this will be of interest to a majority of the current readership.—Ed.



its death; therefore do thou, O fowler, release that living creature. It came not into life by our order, nor does it live through our sufferance; we have no right to kill it.

The fowler said: 'Nor had it any right to kill thy child, O sacred mother?'

*Gautami:* The death of my child was a predestined affair, it was the will of God and the serpent was only the instrument. And even granting that it was the real and only cause of my child's death, its committing a sin will not justify our doing the same. It fell into error through ignorance, and our killing it will be much more than an error: it will be a sin committed with knowledge and therefore wilfully.

*The fowler:* By killing Vritra, Indra secured the best portion of sacrificial offerings, and so also did Mahadeva by destroying a wicked sacrifice. Do thou, therefore, destroy this serpent immediately without any misgivings in thy mind.

Although thus repeatedly urged by the fowler for the destruction of the serpent, the high-souled Gautami did not bend her mind to that sinful act. The serpent painfully bound with the cord, sighing a little and maintaining its composure with great difficulty, then uttered these words slowly in human voice:

'O foolish Arujunaka, what fault is there of mine? I have no will of my own and am not independent! Mrityu (the God of death) sent me on this errand! By his direction have I bitten this child and not out of any anger or choice on my part. Therefore, if there be any sin in this, O fowler, the sin is his.'

The fowler said, 'If thou hast done this evil led thereto by another, the sin is thine also, as thou art an instrument in the act. As in the making of an earthen vessel, the potter's wheel and rod and other things are all regarded as causes, so art thou, O serpent,

a cause in the matter.'

The serpent said, 'As the potter's wheel, rod and other things are not independent causes, even so I am not an independent cause! Therefore this is no fault of mine, nor am I guilty of any sin! Or if thou thinkest that there is sin, it lies in the aggregate of causes.'

The fowler said, 'Not deserving of life, O foolish one, why dost thou bandy so many words, O wretch of a serpent? Thou deserve death at my hands.'

The serpent replied, 'O fowler, as the officiating priests at a sacrifice do not acquire the merit of the act, even so should I be regarded with respect to the result in this connection.'

The serpent directed by Mrityu having said this, Mrityu himself appeared there and, addressing the serpent, spoke thus:

'Guided by Kāla (Time), I, O serpent, sent thee on this errand, and neither thou nor I am the cause of this child's death. Even as the clouds are tossed hither and thither by the wind, I am, O serpent, directed by Kāla. All influences appertaining to *sattva* or *rajas* or *tamas* have Kāla for their soul, as they operate in all creatures. The whole universe, O serpent, is imbued with this same influence of Kāla. Sun, moon, water, wind, fire, sky, earth, rivers and oceans, and all existent and non-existent objects are created and destroyed by Kāla. Knowing this, why dost thou, O serpent accuse me? If any fault attach to me in this, thou also wouldst be to blame.'

The serpent replied, 'I do not, O Mrityu, blame thee. I only aver that I was influenced and directed by thee. Whether any blame attaches to Kāla or not, it is not for me to say.'

Then, addressing the fowler it said, 'Thou

hast listened to what Mrityu has said; therefore it is not proper for thee to torment me who am guiltless, by tying me with this cord!’

The fowler replied, ‘I have listened to thee as well as to Mrityu and both of you are the cause of the child’s death. Accursed be the wicked and vengeful Mrityu that causes affliction to the good! Thee, I shall kill, that art sinful and engaged in sinful acts!’

Mrityu said, ‘We both are not free agents, but are dependent on Kāla and ordained to do our appointed work. Thou shouldst not find fault with us, if thou dost consider the matter thoroughly.’

Hardly had he said this when Kāla himself appeared on the scene and spoke thus to the party assembled together:

‘Neither Mrityu, nor the serpent, nor I am guilty of the death of any creature. We are merely the immediate causes. The true cause is the past *karma* (action) of that creature. The child here died by the result of its

own *karma* in the past. As men make from a lump of clay whatever they wish to make, even so do men attain to various results determined by *karma*. As light and shadow are related to each other, so are men related to *karma* through their own actions. Therefore none here caused the child’s death, he himself was the cause.’

Gautami said, ‘Neither Kāla, nor Mrityu, nor the serpent is the cause in this matter. This child has met with death as the result of its own *karma*. I too have so acted in the past that my son should now die. Let Kāla and Mrityu retire now from this place, and do thou Arjunāka release this serpent.’

Then Kāla and Mrityu and the serpent and the fowler went back to their respective places, but Gautami who knew the truth smiled and said to herself: ‘What a drama all this is! *Karma* is itself a conventional word. The truth is, not an atom moves but by the bidding of the Lord, nay not an atom is outside Him, and what and where then are life and death?’



## Madhusudana Saraswati on the Bhagavad-Gita

(Continued from page 251)

(Yudhiṣṭira).’ The purport is this: Since these wicked people will certainly kill you when you retreat, therefore, as a result of getting killed while retreating, do not become a mere receiver of the demerits earned by others, abandoning your own merit earned over a long time. So says Manu also:

He, however, who is killed in battle by the enemies while retreating out of fear, incurs all the sins whatever his master might have committed.

And whatever merits this one that is killed while retreating had acquired for the

hereafter, all that his master acquires.<sup>17</sup>  
Yājñavalkya also says:

The king acquires the merits of those who get killed while running away.<sup>18</sup>

Thereby is dismissed what was said (by Arjuna)—‘Sin will certainly accrue to us by killing these felons’ (1.36) and, ‘O Madhusūdana, even if they be killing (us), I do not want to kill these’ (*ibid.*, 1.35). ✽

17. *Ibid.*, 94-5.

18. *Yājñavalkya Smṛti*, 1.325.



# Point of Departure in Sri Ramakrishna

DR. ANIL BARAN RAY

*The writer, who is a Professor of Political Science, University of Burdwan, W.B., discusses some of the characteristic features of Sri Ramakrishna's life and teachings against the backdrop of earlier religious movements.*

## I

The sole concern of Lord Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, was the delivery of mankind from sufferings arising out of *jarā*, *vyādhī* and *mṛtyu*, aging, disease, and death. He discovered the truth that attachment or desire (*kāma*) was at the root of man's sufferings. So, in order to deliver mankind he prescribed renunciation of desires through the practice of the Eightfold-Path or *Aṣṭāṅga-mārga*. To Buddha religion was a way of life. Anybody who cared to be loving, serving, and self-sacrificing was welcome to this way of life. Rituals, or caste, or creed, or socio-economic status had nothing to do with true religion. The well-being of man on earth was the highest path of religion for this supreme lover of mankind and that was the only God that Buddha ever cared for.

Jesus Christ's teaching also was directed towards elevating man. 'If you want the Kingdom of Heaven on earth, give up all thou hast; give it to the poor, and sincerely seek,' said Jesus. While the key words for Buddha were 'conquer yourself', the kernel of Jesus Christ's teaching lay in the words, 'give up yourself'. Coming almost six hundred years after Jesus Christ, Mohammed, the founder of Islam, preached the unity of God, the one and only deity, Allah, and the equality of all believers, or brotherhood of man. Directing his teachings towards character-formation, Mohammed taught men such values as truthfulness, trustworthiness, kindness and piety.

Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, who belonged to both the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries AD, through his teachings sought to overcome religious formalism and separatism born of creed, caste, or colour. He was basically a synthesizer. 'There is neither a Hindu nor a Mussalman' were the first words that Nanak uttered after his enlightenment. He asked the pundits and mullahs to rise above their petty differences due to overemphasizing the necessity of forms and rituals. After all, the Eternal Being was one, and there was no difference in the ultimate goal. In the light of such realization, he taught tolerance and mutual acceptance. 'Realize God in everything, and surrender yourself to the Eternal Being who is One-in-many' was the teaching of Guru Nanak. As a matter of fact, self-surrender to the Eternal was the essence of what Nanak had to teach.

Another teacher of humanity who inaugurated the first renaissance in the sixteenth century was Sri Chaitanya, the founder of Vaiṣṇavism in Bengal. On the one hand, when the depressed classes in Bengal, the lowly, the poor and the downtrodden, suffocated under the high-handedness of the Muslim rulers, they were also oppressed by the conservative caste-ridden Brahmins on the other. It was Sri Chaitanya who saved them and integrated them with the rest of society by bringing all, the high and low, mighty and weak and the rich and poor under the sway of his *sankīrtan* (devotional singing) and bhakti movement. Regardless of caste, creed, might and

wealth, all were equal in the love of Krishna, and all that one needed for deliverance was to utter the name of Hari (Viṣṇu) and rejoice in its chanting. No formalism, no theology, no intricate metaphysics whatever was needed to approach God. Just sing His praises, be totally absorbed in the joy of this and be at one with Him.

The teachings of all these great leaders of religion found fullest expression in the life of the modern *avatār* of Dakshineswar, Sri Ramakrishna, who embodied all of their spiritual qualities. His life was a unique thing; and astonishing was his ability to teach the highest spiritual truths in the simplest language, intelligible and acceptable to one and all.

## II

All great men are products of the cultural tradition and environment in which they live. It is therefore necessary to provide a historical backdrop to understand Sri Ramakrishna and his appearance in Bengal in about the middle of the nineteenth century.

It is well-known history that while the Mughal empire was disintegrating in India and the native princes were determined on how to undo each other, the European races such as the Portuguese and Dutch, Danish, French and English found their foothold in prostrate India with a view to exploiting the country commercially and politically. The British with their industrial and naval supremacy already established in Europe were the most successful of these modern invaders. Coming in the guise of the East India Trading Company, and getting a foothold first in 1757 in the Battle of Plassey, and then in the grant of Diwani (1765) in Bengal, it was only a matter of time when England could convert her 'trading scales', as Tagore aptly expressed it, into a sceptre to rule over the whole of India.

History has shown that whenever the political conquest of a country is effected, it is always followed by efforts toward religious or ideological conversion of the people. The East India Company acted in this way. The missionary brigade that they brought along unleashed all the ferocious power at their disposal against the native culture and poor people of Bengal. Force and allurements went hand-in-hand. The common masses of people, for centuries deprived, diseased and ignorant, fell an easy prey to the missionary onslaughts. Taking care of the 'soul' of the ignorant masses could not be enough for the missionaries. The educated youths of Bengal had to be 'redeemed'. At the same time, they were persuaded by the outsiders that all the forms and rituals of their own religion, Hinduism, were barbaric, that many long-standing Hindu beliefs, customs and traditions deserved to be relegated to oblivion as superstitious relics of a barbarous age, and that Christianity was obviously the 'best religion' for them to follow because it gave the white Christian races power and position and all the practical advantages to be desired in this life, and ensured happiness for them in the other world. In the face of such persuasion and allurements, many educated Hindu young men found the attractions of the foreign religion too much to resist. Why should they stay, they argued, in 'uncivilized and barbarous' Hinduism when the foreign conquerors said there was nothing of substance in it?

In such a declining condition of society and religion in Bengal, Raja Rammohun Roy (1772/74-1833) came forward to rescue society. Traditional religion and education and time-honoured spiritual ideals had to be delivered from the attack of the invading materialistic culture. Deculturation of Indian society had to be stopped. Not that all the new ideas coming from outside were pernicious, but some adjustment of Hindu



mind and society was needed to meet the challenge on a firm footing. Improvements were in order, but all that was old in religion and society did not have to be discarded. The people had to be given a 'new birth' in the sense of learning to re-orient thinking and accommodate the new modern knowledge, scientific and otherwise, that was being flooded over the whole country. That was the whole point of Rammohun Roy's renaissance in nineteenth century Bengal.

Rammohun was a charismatic leader, highly educated and learned in Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic and English, not to mention his depth of study in the Vedas and Vedanta, the Upanishads, Jain scriptures, Koran and Bible. His was encyclopaedic knowledge indeed. He told his compatriots that they were an ancient people with a unique and wonderful civilization behind them, with Vedanta, the noblest and most ancient philosophy of the world, teaching *advaita*, the doctrine of Unity. Why should they fear for the survival of Hinduism simply because such religious non-essentials as idolatry or outmoded social customs like *suttee*, polygamy, child-marriage or casteism were called into question? And why should they not, on the other hand, arm themselves with the treasures of Sanskrit education as well as with modern Western English learning? They might well take up the offensive against weaknesses the outsiders showed in point of character and culture. So the new orientation that Rammohun advocated was directed towards all the vital parts of society, to invigorate them and re-infuse life into them. Rammohun was critical, yet sympathetic. Though he was a radical reformer, he was not destructive. Conscious equally of our rich heritage and also of abuses within it in the past, he

strove to shake the people out of their inertia and make them more active and thoughtful to meet the challenges of the modern world.

The concept of unitarianism that Rammohun discovered, by distilling the essence of the Hindu and other scriptures, and by selecting the good the foreigners had to offer, inspired him to give practical shape to his broad sympathies. He founded the new eclectic Brahmo Religion which, apart from being an exemplification of unitarianism, served a very useful social purpose too: it demonstrated to the educated Hindu youth of modern Bengal the creative genius of the Indian religious mind, and by giving an alternative to merely capitulating to every foreign influence, it inspired in these educated people self-confidence to stand on their own legs and choose for themselves what they wanted. If they were disenchanted with some of the longstanding

The people had to be given a 'new birth' in the sense of learning to re-orient thinking and accommodate the new modern knowledge.... That was the whole point of Rammohun Roy's renaissance...

but outmoded customs and practices of Hindu society, and rituals of religion, it did not compel them to totally throw everything overboard and embrace the for-

eigners' religion. Apart from being intellectually satisfying, the Brahmo religion offered that freedom of thought and action which was much needed by them at the time of clash between the new and the old ideas. The Brahmo Dharma of Rammohun rendered mid-nineteenth century Bengal the same service which Sri Chaitanya's Vaishnavism had done in the sixteenth century. They reformed Hinduism only to save it, only to regenerate it with a fresh power and dynamism, purging it of its inessentials and ineffectuals.

In this Rammohun had an able follower in Devendranath Tagore (1817-1905), who took upon himself the task of giving the



Brahmo Samaj an organized shape in terms of its creed, rituals and *anuṣṭhānas* (observances). The Brahmo periodicals *Tattva-bodhini Sabha* and *The Patrika* helped him to organize the new religion mainly on the basis of the Hindu Upaniṣads. His protege, the renowned Keshab Chunder Sen (1838-1884), one of the intellectuals who inclined towards Christianity in his early life and was much influenced by Sri Ramakrishna and Vaiṣṇavism in later life, became one of the most influential men of the day. He emphasized the eclectic spirit of Brahmoism. He drew selectively from the distinctive central essence of known religions and called the modified form that the Brahmo creed assumed, 'The New Dispensation'. But unfortunately, on the eve of proclaiming the New Dispensation, Keshab Chunder estranged some of his followers and a schism resulted in the Brahmo movement, whose influence by now had spread over a good part of India, in the cities at least. But in whatever form Brahmoism survived, the movement had an impact in creating an awareness of modernity and change among that section of society which regarded itself as the intelligentsia.

Among other movements, the Arya Samaj too, in northern India, led by Dayananda Saraswati, was an attempt to preserve Hindu society and religion from the disintegrative influences of foreign aculturation. Dayananda tried to revive the old Vedic religion with its emphasis on monotheism, the Vedas being the supreme authority, divinely inspired and infallible. As Sen Gupta put it, according to Dayananda:

(Such) movements...could create ripples only in the educated intellectual class. The common masses remained unaffected.

...the Vedas posit only one God who is formless, and if anywhere there are references in the Vedas to more than one God, these should be rejected as later accretions. Dayananda looks upon every other religion as man-made, and he is as hard on corrupt Aryan priests as on Jains who, he says, introduced idolatry in India. He would not recognize later religions, which he thought had no divine authority; thus he is as indifferent to monotheistic Christianity and Islam as to Buddhism, which is inclined towards atheism.<sup>1</sup>

But despite his efforts to move orthodox Hindu society by his own orthodoxy and his criticism of idolatry, stealing the thunder from the foreign missionaries, Dayananda's approach could not be fully successful. His aggressive denunciation of other faiths, Indian and foreign, and narrow attitude, even though backed by his strong personality, could not spread after the founder's passing.

Besides these religious movements, there were the non-religious reform movements also. Derozio and his 'Young Bengal' followers were one of them. They sought to cut themselves loose from every single chain of social custom and tradition. They undoubtedly had a point in criticizing and rejecting some of the lifeless rituals and conventions which sought to stifle the free spirit of man, but being young, they were also prone to committing excesses and the end-result of their movement could not but lead to unrest and confusion in some spheres of social and national life.

1. S. C. Sen Gupta, *Swami Vivekananda & Indian Nationalism* (Calcutta: Sahitya Samsad, 1984) pp. 7-8.



## III

The movements, religious such as the Brahmo movement, and secular such as the Young Bengal movement, no doubt created a stir in the society of nineteenth century Bengal, and stiffened the backbone of the small but vital youth-section of the people. But it is a fact of history that by their being intellectual in nature, such movements could create ripples only in the educated intellectual class. The common masses of people remained unaffected. As a matter of fact, the niceties of most of these movements were beyond the comprehension of the vast masses of the Indian people. It is amidst such historical milieu of the social situation that the significance of Sri Ramakrishna's emergence has to be judged and his point of departure analyzed.

Sri Ramakrishna (1836-1886) was born into the poor but deeply pious Brahmin family of Khudiram Chattopadhyaya in rural Bengal. Named 'Gadadhar' (an epithet of Viṣṇu and meaning 'Bearer of the Mace'), he grew up into a healthy and restless child full of fun and sweet mischief, the next-to-youngest of his two brothers and two sisters. It is true that he had little formal education, but the idea current among many that he was totally 'untaught' is not true. Ramakrishna was an intelligent and precocious child endowed with a prodigious memory. In his biography we read: 'On his father's lap he learnt by heart the names of his ancestors and the hymns to the gods and goddesses, and at the village school he was taught to read and write.'<sup>2</sup> The myth that he was illiterate ought to be discredited once for all, though one of his very early biographers said, 'it is doubtful whether he knew enough Bengali.'<sup>3</sup> Though Ramakrishna

himself said he was untutored in the Sanskrit language, still, he said, he could understand every word when he heard Sanskrit spoken by pundits. 'Untaught' he definitely was not. He could effortlessly recite after only one hearing the religious operas and dramas that were staged in his village. His teachers during childhood were the village *kathaks* (narrators of sacred lore) who read out the *Purāṇas*, the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*, apart from the whole host of ascetics and religious men who passed through the village on their way to pilgrimage at Puri. They often rested a few days at Kamarpukur and were a great attraction for the boy. Gadadhar never missed an opportunity to meet them and hear their stories of religion and travel.

At the age of sixteen Ramakrishna was brought to Calcutta by his eldest brother, Ramkumar, to get training in the school which Ramkumar started there. But the boy who was a keen observer was instinctively disenchanted with the kind of education that fetched one's bread only. He had a life-long aversion, too, to the teachings of pundits who never practised what they studied and preached.

Keeping aloof from the kind of 'mere bread-winning' education he despised, however, did not mean for Ramakrishna the end of all efforts to develop himself. An opportunity soon came his way when the temple of Goddess Kālī was established at Dakshineswar by Rani Rasmani in the year 1855. Ramkumar was appointed priest of that temple and he persuaded his young brother to come along with him. Though Ramakrishna maintained for some time his youthful attitude of disgust and sorrow at his elder brother's having to accept employ-

(Continued on page 269)

2. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1985) 'Introduction', p. 4.

3. Prof. F. Max Muller, *Ramakrishna: His Life and*

*Sayings* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1988) p. 62.



# What Swami Vivekananda Means to Me

STUART BUSH

\*Vedantins in America are intuitively aware that Swami Vivekananda, Sri Ramakrishna's spokesman in the West, catalyzed a profound change in our views of the seeming difference between the religious and the scientific, of what is secular in ourselves and what is spiritual. Sri Ramakrishna comes to awaken a universal *Kundalinī*, and Swami Vivekananda plants the seeds for a new orientation of world thought, and with it the opening of a Golden Age. He has done this especially in America. Or so it seems to us.

He can say later, 'Nobody knows what I did there!' At the Parliament of Religions in Chicago, he is spontaneously greeted as the authentic voice, not just of India, but of something intangible in the hearts of men which is awakening once again, a recapturing of the mystery of themselves, an inner and outer search for the real, an ultimate adventure.

The view at first is personal. Those who are ill-at-ease in a clone, consumer society... 'made of wood, rags and whitewashing', someone said... and who cannot find meaning or satisfaction, (feeling themselves drawn into the grasp of a machine and automated, as it were,) these look up from their distractions and discover

they are ready to hear him.

It is a manner of speaking to be sure. The time in their lives being ripe, they have begun to look into themselves for strength. But who can deny that it is Swamiji who describes it to them. Call it the Advaita. We will discover that it is our birthright, but he is so persuasive it first appears that this wisdom emanates from him.

The Advaita confirms that no outer circumstances, however threatening, are stronger than the man who confronts them. Further, he is not divided against himself by contrast between his ideals and an obdurate and grubby material world. The infinite ground of existence is the same for both, and the emptiness which threatens him is in fact a projection of his own mind reading back as a reality. The *Ātman* is the seat of strength and beauty. We hear Swamiji telling us that the world and its contradictions have a dream quality which we can expose and throw off. And we feel that we could go on listening to this forever.

For the West it is a sea-change in thought. Philosophy, it is said, is ultimately the answer to one question only, 'What is real?' And the traditional, dichotomous explanation of the West... with its penchant for intellectualism... is a conflict for men between two irreconcilable realities, the world and God; and the human situation is in the inherent weakness of the sinner in the light of the perfection of his Maker. Self-reverence eludes the finite man, contradiction and duality prevail. But with Swamiji these theoretical presumptions change out of recognition: The ground of all reality,

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\* This is an extract from *What Swami Vivekananda Means to Me*, a collection of essays and poems of some devotees published by The Vedanta Society of Portland, USA, commemorating the Centenary of Swami Vivekananda's going to America, and released by Srimat Swami Gahananandaji Maharaj, Vice-President of the Ramakrishna Order, on 10 August 1993.



spiritual and material, begins with Oneness.

We have heard in the Vedanta that the admonition of Christ 'to love your neighbour as yourself' finds its rationale only in the Advaita: He is yourself! This intuition of a common ground, and potential of a much greater love in a fragmentized world, rang in Swami Vivekananda's voice when, rising to speak for the first time in the Art Palace in Chicago in 1893, he thrilled his audience by the mere intonation of his words, 'Sisters and Brothers of America', his mood reflecting, as someone has commented, a solemnity of direct vision.

Then, the sessions in Chicago coming to a close, he is everywhere in America, listening and teaching, humorous, affectionate and humble, but always alert to the life around him. He responds to and meets the free thought of modern science; he speaks of a golden thread of truth binding all the world's philosophies and faiths, and he represents in himself the emergence of a worldwide culture in which the spiritual and the practical meet. 'Why do we disagree?' he asked. 'Because our minds have become frog-in-the-well...thinking our well is the whole universe.' It is a heritage of the past, and outmoded world of cultural fiefdoms, mutually exclusive; of theologies rationalized but never experienced; and of secular dogmas of material and social well-being that fall far short of men's need for sanctity...spent doctrines dividing men everywhere from a common ground of understanding; shallows in which there is no rest for the mind. The Swami called it 'the edge of a volcano'.

Here there is an analogy:

A dramatic crisis in our personal life...(the stress of our times is often translated into an intimate, personal

drama)...may reveal to us that self-determination is more verbal than real: As it were, we are being chased down a long corridor by a hungry tiger, and our anxiety is mounting. At the end of the corridor are four doors, each with a promise of escape from the jaws of the tiger if it can be reached in time. Door One is tried; it is locked. Our response is now spontaneous and thalamic. Doors Two and Three are tried desperately; they are also found to be locked. A grace must intervene. Then, with the hot breath of the tiger on our neck, the fourth door is tried and it opens.

The analogy is unsatisfactory, and unfortunately an unresolved unhappiness and mental distress in our lives may not have a happy-ending scenario. But the crisis is real enough for many in transition from the material to the spiritual. Everything is tried; nothing known before can assuage dissatisfaction and pain...there is an imperative need for a new content of reality. A door must open for us on a different mental and moral landscape than ever existed before. And this is experienced collectively too. A culture whose growth has been arrested, whose philosophy has atrophied, moves into disintegration.

Swami Vivekananda exercised a remarkable influence. The Advaita is unity. He awakened it here...we don't know how!

'To love the visible world,' he said, 'is possible only by way of loving the universal, the one unity in which are to be found millions and millions of smaller unities.' Each man needs his *Iṣṭa Deva*, and the smaller unities, whether spiritual or material, will remain, but in a Golden Age they will be known to exist in a context of Oneness. The Swami is inseparable from that vision.



# The Riddle of the Deer in the Forest

## *The Story of King Bharata*

ROBERT P. UTTER

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### 1

The story of King Bharata is one of the world's greatest myths. Contrary to popular belief a myth is factually neither true nor false; it is a story that in the guise of space-time events expresses eternal truths of the human soul. It is thus that we shall consider the story of Bharata. We shall interpret the space-time characters and events as symbols of timeless and impersonal truths, applicable to all human beings everywhere at all times.

In the story of Bharata there are three deer in the forest, and each one is filled with deep spiritual significance. The first deer is the doe which simultaneously gives birth to the fawn and dies of fright when she hears the lion roar nearby in the forest. The second deer is the fawn she gives birth to and which Bharata rescues from drowning in the stream. The third is the deer Bharata was reborn as after he died of old age still doting on his pet deer. Each symbol dramatizes in unforgettable form the dangers, the spiritual lessons, the training, the disciplines, and the rewards involved in the spiritual quest. Above all, they reveal the profound spiritual meanings hidden in apparently trivial outward events of daily life. From an in-depth understanding of the three deer we learn that natural events are not merely mechanical actions of inanimate matter, but are rather living personages speaking divine

revelations to us. Indeed, it is as personages that we must interpret all the beings and events in this story. For not only are they symbols of Bharata's inward life, but they represent God's interaction with man on a profound level. The story is thus limitless in its divine implications.

### 2. *The Basic Story*

The story of King Bharata is told in the *Bhāgavatam*, Sri Ramakrishna's favourite *purāṇa*. It tells how King Bharata was a wise and just king of ancient India, who ruled for the good of all rather than for his own pleasures. Such was his fame that his name has become the Sanskrit name for India herself. The story relates that, as old age approached, King Bharata felt the call of the Divine, the need for something deeper in his life, so he turned his kingdom over to his sons, renounced his throne and his householder life, and retired to the forest to seek the realization of God.

Bharata, now no longer king, spent some time at this spiritual retirement, but, though he calmed his mind and gained a certain amount of dispassion and love for God, he did not achieve direct realization of the Divine within. No amount of spiritual practice brought about the state of true Self-realization. He tried to redouble his efforts, but to no avail. Somehow the inner light he sought was lacking, and he felt unfulfilled.



But God works in mysterious ways, for now a most unlikely event occurred, one that changed Bharata's life forever. Though he was no longer a king, husband, father, or householder, there was yet a clinging to his old self, and this event brought all his old attachments to the surface. A pregnant doe was coming down to the stream to drink, but just then a lion roared in the forest, and in a moment all was changed, not only for the doe but for Bharata as well. For the doe was so startled by the lion's roar that she tried to leap across the stream to escape, but in doing so she gave birth to the fawn she was carrying and died on the spot. Bharata, his heart smitten with pity for the newborn fawn, rescued it from the water and cared for it. In fact, the fawn became almost like a son to him. In caring for the fawn he forgot all his spiritual aspirations and practices. So attached to the fawn did he become that when he died of old age all his last thoughts were on the fawn alone.

Now according to the psychology of reincarnation in Hindu philosophy our last thoughts at the moment of death determine our next life. So Bharata was reborn as a deer because of his doting on the fawn. But he was not merely an ordinary deer, for he remembered his past life as a man. This meant that though he inhabited a deer body he was essentially a man. Yet he was not a man either, for he could do nothing that a man could do except eat and sleep and wander about. All he could do in a human way was to feel remorse for having so doted on the fawn that he lost a human body and could no longer engage in spiritual practice. He tried to compensate for his loss of humanity as much as he could by lingering near the ashramas of holy men, but he could not interact with any human being in any significant way. He had in effect become a deer who was not a deer and a man who was

not a man. He could only wait for death to release him from his imprisonment in the deer body.

What he went through in the deer body is not told in the original narrative, but we can only surmise that his deer life must have amounted to a struggle of epic proportions, comparable only to Arajuna's wrestling with his anguish on the battlefield, Buddha's wrestling with Mara, Job's wrestling with God and Satan, Jesus' being tempted by Satan, and Jonah being swallowed by the whale. The whale that swallowed Bharata was the deer body, and it must have been the battlefields of Kurukshetra and Armageddon and all other battles rolled into one.<sup>1</sup>

What Bharata finally achieved was complete illumination, for after he died out of his deer life he was reborn as the youngest son of a poor brāhmin farmer. But in this life he remembered not only his life as a deer and as King Bharata but many lives before that. He was also born with such aversion to forming any attachments that he would not speak at all. He had no interest in what or when he ate, what he wore, where he slept, or what he did as long as he helped others. He was, in other words, completely indifferent to all external conditions and completely selfless. He was an illumined sage, but no one knew it. His light was veiled 'like fire hidden under ashes', as the *Bhāgavatam* says. Since his parents thought he was mentally deficient, they made him do menial work and fed him on scraps. But as his mind was perpetually on God he did not mind that at all. So he grew up, his spiritual splen-

He had in effect become a deer who was not a deer and a man who was not a man.

1. See Joseph Campbell, 'In the Belly of the Whale', in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, (Cleveland and New York: Meridian Books, World Publishing Co., 1962) pp. 90-4, and ff.



dour completely hidden from the world.

One day a king named Rahugana was travelling through the area carried in a palanquin by bearers. Needing another bearer, the King impressed the former Bharata into his service. But Bharata did not carry the litter smoothly because he tried to avoid stepping on any living creatures in the path. King Rahugana raged at him for being so clumsy. And then the former Bharata spoke for the first time in this incarnation. He gave a long discourse on the nature of God and the terrible condition of all who are ignorant of the Divine Self in all beings. He compared worldly people to travellers lost in the jungle, beset by robbers, wild beasts, poisonous snakes, raging streams, precipitous cliffs, and tangled vines. King Rahugana fell at his feet in awe and begged his forgiveness.

The discourse that the new and completely illumined self of the former King Bharata gave to the astonished King Rahugana is the climax of the story. It is long and complicated, and well worth careful study. Through it we learn at some length the eloquence of the hitherto silent young brāhmin and the breadth and depth of his illumination. He was obviously born illumined in this incarnation. That means he attained illumination at or near the end of his life as a deer. But how was this possible? What in his life as a deer led to the removal of the barriers to his illumination? We shall have to study the symbolism of the three deer in this story in order to understand their spiritual significance.

### 3. The First Deer

The first deer, the doe that died after giving birth to the fawn, is the opening symbol. An integral aspect of this symbol is the roar of the lion which triggered the whole story. What does it all mean? The whole meaning is contained in the one quality we

see in the doe figure: total and paroxysmic terror, the terror that kills at a stroke. There is nothing else contained in the brief encounter we have with her. But this one stroke of deathly terror is enough, for it is universal, cosmic, and quintessential: every

**The real lion is not the physical beast but the inescapable fear of death that leads us to try to overcome death by begetting children. And the real doe is not the jungle denizen but the whole world of time and space that seems to die and give birth to itself continuously everywhere.**

creature of time feels this fear throughout all of its innumerable lives. It is the essence of life; all that live fear death. Life could be defined as the fear of death. Fear is the universal characteristic of all time-bound beings. This fear is a kind of blind knowledge; knowledge that death comes to all, blindness to the immortality of the true Self of all apparently mortal selves. Thus the doe that dies-and-gives-birth represents the essence of time, time that is ever dying and ever reborn. Time is the universal Mother: *Kali, mater, metre, measure*, for the relative world is the apparent measurement of eternity in terms of space and time, and It dispenses life and death to all. The Mother of the universe, Time, is changeless reality seen under the species of time and space. She seems to die, as the doe seems to die, but in dying She seems to give birth to Herself, as the doe gave birth to the fawn in death. So in all religions the world over the Divine Mother gives birth to the eternal Son, Who is the Mother Herself in another form, as Ramakrishna was the Mother's Child, yet one with the Mother who created him.

The first deer, then, is the symbol of the relative world, the world of the pairs of opposites: life-death, good-evil, fear-hope, love-hate, and so on, the whole of relative



existence from which Bharata was trying to escape by his renunciation of his kingdom and his retirement into the forest for spiritual practice. But the first deer symbolizes the fact that escape is not really possible, for the forest is as much within the plane of relative existence as the palace and the city. Bharata cannot find true peace of mind in the forest for there he encounters the roar of the lion, and the doe that dies-and-gives-birth in the same moment. The real lion is not the physical beast but the inescapable fear of death that leads us to try to overcome death by begetting children. And the real doe is not the jungle denizen but the whole world of time and space that seems to die and give birth to itself continuously everywhere. No creature of time can find immortality by having children, for children are mortal too. And this is the profound

...a fascinating psychological paradox. What he could not give to God he now gave to the fawn...but it was the wrong thing to focus on, for it was a finite object. It was thus an intense fusion of folly and sublime wisdom.

lesson Bharata had to learn, for despite his spiritual practice his mind was still rooted in delusion. Bharata went to the jungle to solve his problems; instead, he met there his deepest problems face to face. With the roar of the lion, the death of the doe, and the birth of the fawn, Bharata suddenly found himself fallen through the fragile ice of his own self-efforts and hurled into the raging torrent of all his past *karmas*. The true battle of the soul had now begun.

#### 4. The Second Deer

The second deer, then, the fawn dropped by the expiring doe, reveals to Bharata and to the reader the depth and the strength of that basic and inescapable urge: the desire to have children and to love and nurture them to maturity. This urge too he had

'renounced' when he left his sons in charge of the kingdom and retired into the forest. But now the fawn became another son to him. It turned out that his old tendencies could not be shaken off as easily as he thought. He had given up his own human sons, but now he found a new son in the tiny fawn, and upon this he lavished all his affections. This spark of life, then, became the symbol of all his past *karmas* which he ostensibly had renounced, but which were now bearing their fruit. The fear of death and the desire for life are the centre of all worldly desires: the desire for mate, family, children, wealth, power, fame—all these follow from the fear of death. Bharata had renounced his family, but because of his deep-buried fear of death he now relived his past fatherhood by becoming the father of the fawn.

So devoted to the fawn was he that he forgot all else: his renunciation, his spiritual efforts, his resolve to seek God. The attainment of God-realization requires total devotion to God alone. But now Bharata gave to the fawn that total devotion required to attain God. This was a terrible fall for Bharata, but it is a most striking and fascinating psychological paradox. What he could not give to God he now gave to the fawn. Thus Bharata's exclusive doting on the fawn focused all his mind on one point—but it was the wrong thing to focus on, for it was a finite object. It was thus an intense fusion of folly and sublime wisdom. But then, all our experiences are just exactly this, a mixture of folly and wisdom. Every experience we have is divine, but in our folly we mistake divine gold for ordinary dirt. The earth beneath our feet is God; our folly is to see it as just dirt. Yet all the while it contains all the wisdom and bliss and beauty in the world. So Bharata's doting on the fawn was folly; yet in its concentration it was bliss and wisdom. For it was love, and all love is a spark of the Divine, even when it appears as folly. The second deer thus



symbolizes the whole world of *māyā*; it is deceitful, yet it is also truth-revealing. It confirms the truth of Ramakrishna's promise that everyone will someday realize God. For even Bharata, after all his doting on the fawn, survived the war of the inner world and at last realized God.

### 5. *The Third Deer*

The third deer is Bharata himself—as, indeed are the other two in a symbolical sense. In the third deer Bharata's identity with all the deer becomes strikingly apparent. The third deer represents the fateful outcome of all Bharata's retrogressive dotage on the fawn, the outcome in which he comes to grips with his karmic responsibilities and at last gains control of his own ego and finite mind. It symbolizes the truth that no one can escape the results of his past actions. But it also represents a great deal more than that, for, unsuspected perhaps by Bharata himself, it also represents the quintessence of the intensest form of spiritual practice: total inwardness, a total facing of the innermost truths of the self, a knowledge that the finite self has no more boundaries than a sponge through which the whole ocean of the universe flows, and a total self-abnegation through self-alienation, self-absorption, and self-isolation. Above all, it revealed to Bharata that all three deer are the symbols of the various stages of his own spiritual journey from ignorance to knowledge.

So now he had become one with the same kind of form he had doted on in his previous life. We cannot separate his dotage on the fawn from his reincarnation as a deer. We must ask ourselves this question: What did he think of his beloved fawn after he himself had been reborn as a deer? It is the close juxtaposition in time of these two events, his dotage on the fawn and his imprisonment in the deer body, that we must think deeply about. Not only was the second caused by

the first, but by his incongruous and unbearable birth as a deer he was forced to renounce mentally what he had previously doted on. Thus was renunciation forced upon him by the consequences of his failure to renounce in his human life. Now that he was locked into a deer body for life, did the deer form appear as attractive to him as it had before? He had a deer lifetime to meditate on this question.

If ever a man was locked up in a prison cell, Bharata was so locked up in his deer life. If ever a man was cast away on a desert island, Bharata was so cast away in his deer life. If ever a man was cut off from everyone and everything by physical or mental illness, Bharata was so cut off in his deer life. It is equally true that if ever a man sought out the solitude of forest, desert, or secret cave to undertake extreme asceticism in

The jungle is not the profuse vegetation filled with the animal life which we call the jungle; the true jungle is the treacherous jungle of the mind. And this jungle is what makes us suffer until we understand how illusory it is.... And we can never escape from this jungle of the mind unless we give up all clinging to the ego.

order to find God, Bharata was thus isolated in the secret cave of the deer body. Without so willing it himself he found himself cut off from all accustomed experiences in the deer life. He could do nothing but face the awful reality of the secret self deep-hidden within the dark cave of his own heart. The extreme of spiritual practice by total renunciation was thrust upon him with a vengeance, and the intensity of his soul-struggle was now raging.

Was not, then, his life as a deer the most terrible kind of death? In this deer life Bharata discovered the inseparableness of



life and death. No longer a king, no longer a father, no longer a spiritual seeker, no longer able to communicate with any being, human or animal, Bharata was neither a man nor a deer, neither living nor dead, yet he was both. Both man and deer, yet neither, both living and dead, yet neither, he was locked into the prison of total nothingness. We must conclude, then, that his deer life was a period of intense meditation on the deepest meanings of life and death. He could do nothing outwardly except sleep and eat and wander aimlessly. All his life in the deer form must have been inward only. All he could do was to meditate on the deepest riddle of his extraordinary predicament: *Who or what was he?* Never before had he met this question face to face as he did in his deer life.

It should be clear by now that Bharata had not been ready for sudden illumination when he first went into the forest. His old attachments were too powerful to quickly give up their hold on him and free him from all his former ways. He had to see in some dramatic way what a terrible prisonhouse his desires created for him. This he vividly saw from the point of view of the deer life. He had to give up his self-importance and live a lifetime as a voiceless deer in the forest before he could see that all his former lives were nothing but a heap of fallen leaves. It was not death that freed him from the deer life; it was his deer life that freed him from the ego which had long held him imprisoned in the round of births and deaths for countless thousands of past lives.

From his day-long, night-long, years-long enforced meditations during the deer life Bharata learned that the jungle is always with us. The jungle is not the profuse vegetation filled with the animal life which we call the jungle; the true jungle is the treacherous jungle of the mind. And *this* jungle is what makes us suffer until we understand how

illusory it is, how it continually betrays us with false hopes and desperate desires and deceptive pleasures that never really please. And we can never escape from this jungle of the mind unless we give up all clinging to the ego. It was the total emptiness of the deer life that threw a relentless light on the aridity of the whole life of the ego. No wonder many anchorites have gone into the desert for their meditations and spiritual struggles, for its lifeless wastes vividly symbolize the total nothingness of the life dominated by

**The more he grieved for his lost God, the more His absence seemed to become a living presence. God's absence became the ego's emptiness, and the ego's emptiness became God's fullness.**

the ego. (What the jungle meant symbolically to Bharata we learn from his discourse to King Rahugana in his sage life.)

Another important revelation Bharata received from his deer life was the truth that the more he suffered from regrets and remorse for the loss of his spiritual life, the closer he came to feeling the vast, universal presence of the infinite which he seemed to lack. The more he longed for the apparently absent spiritual Truth, the more he seemed to bring it closer to him by dwelling on the very thing he felt he didn't have. The more he grieved for his lost God, the more His absence seemed to become a living presence. God's absence became the ego's emptiness, and the ego's emptiness became God's fullness, and Bharata discovered, in the solitude of the deer life, that no journey of the self to find itself is either necessary or possible. In the absence of all else he discovered that the God-self he sought is always present. Thus Bharata learned from his deer life the basic paradox of spiritual struggle: the more intensely we grieve for the apparently absent God, the more inten-



sely we joy in His very palpable presence.<sup>2</sup>

But the most important truth of all that Bharata learned from his deer life was that evil is not real in itself. He must have suffered and suffered from his imagined 'imprisonment' in the deer body until the realization finally dawned that no situation, king or beggar, man or animal, was any better or worse than any other. Having the memories of his human life, he was far more than a deer and could reflect philosophically on the meaning of life. He thus learned that all situations offer equal opportunities for living the selfless life. He finally must have seen that what he had imagined to be 'bad' turned out to be for him a way of liberation—liberation from the ego that is filled with imprisoning desires. The real prison is the ego, not any particular kind of body or environment. He thus learned supreme indifference to fate, desires, and changeable states of mind. By being unable to do anything he learned what all prisoners should learn: that all beings are prisoners of desires as long as they are attached to finite things, and that all beings are equally free souls when they realize the true, infinite Self of all selves. Thus from total bondage Bharata travelled the long and agonizing road to freedom in the time period of his deer life. His deer life, which started as a bloody crown of thorns, ended as a crown of endless light. Thus did apparent evil reveal itself as absolute good with no 'evil' opposed to it. This was the ultimate lesson of Bharata's deer life.

#### 6. Apotheosis

When Bharata went into the forest to seek God, he did not know that he was placing himself in the dream-destroying

path of the irresistible, all-awakening Truth. He thought he had to work very hard to realize God, and so he did, but not quite the way he imagined. For God destroyed him and all his illusions of self-effort and self-importance, and swallowed him up as completely as a whale swallows a fish, and by losing his finite self Bharata realized his oneness with God, the Divine Self. Only by ceasing to consciously seek God did he finally find Him. His self-conscious self, his ego, had to be destroyed before the selfless Self could manifest Itself within him. His finite consciousness had to be purged away by a deer-lifetime of isolation and solitude before the illimitable Light could shine within him. His deer life was the funeral pyre on which his mortal mind was immolated in the Fire of Truth, and he emerged from it an egoless Sage.

This illumination must have taken place

One day it was suggested to Sri Ramana Maharshi that no spiritual progress could ever be made without *sādhana*, or discipline. After a pause he made these observations: 'Mind it is that binds man, and the same mind it is that liberates him. Mind is constituted of *sāṅkalpa* and *vikalpa*—desire and disposition. Desire shapes and governs disposition. Desire is of two kinds—the noble and the base. The base desires are lust and greed. Noble desire is directed towards enlightenment and emancipation. Base desire contaminates and clouds the understanding. *Sādhana* is easy for the aspirant who is endowed with noble desires. Calmness is the criterion of spiritual progress. Plunge the purified mind into the Heart. Then the work is over.'

2. See Nityabodhananda, 'Ignorance and its Inscrutable Power', in *Myths and Symbols in Indian Civilization* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1st edition, 1980) Ch. 9, pp. 117-28.



near the end of his deer life, for in his next life as the son of a poor brāhmin farmer he was illumined from birth. In his last illumined period of his deer life Bharata must have come to see his life as a deer as the crucible in which the dross of his ego was burned away to nothing, the chalice which held the elixir of immortality, and the chrysalis out of which the winged celestial being of the sage emerged.

The parable, or myth, of Bharata and his subsequent incarnations is universal in its applications. Bharata is Everyman; each one of us is Bharata, for each one of us goes through numberless follies of attachments, repents and renounces, and finally emerges from his ignorance and realizes his true self, the Eternal Sage.



## Points of Departure in Sri Ramakrishna

(Continued from page 259)

ment in the temple of the low-caste Rani, gradually the spiritual atmosphere of the temple surroundings and the natural beauty and peacefulness of the temple garden led him to relax his objections. At first he agreed to stay on the condition that he would be allowed to cook his own meals and eat by the side of the Ganga.

Ramkumar was able to continue at his duties as priest for only a few months. He fell ill soon and at his request Ramakrishna had to take charge of the worship. Now began the education of Sri Ramakrishna, it seems, at the hands of the Goddess Kālī, the Universal Mother, in right earnest. He actually perceived as he daily performed the ritualistic worship that the image of the Goddess was throbbing with life and con-

sciousness. He would not leave the temple after the worship, but would remain long hours talking, singing, weeping, and praying to the Mother the same way a child would do to its Mother. It was naturally impossible for ordinary men, given to their senses, to appreciate the intensity of the love of this man for God. They took him to be mad and his relations thought that the only way to cure him of his aberrations was to get him married. Thus he was taken back to his native village and married to young Saradamani of a neighbouring village, who was only five years old.

(To be concluded)



*One day Dogen instructed: There is an old saying, 'Reflect three times before speaking.' This means that prior to saying or doing something, you should reflect on it three times. This ancient Confucianist wanted to say that after reflecting three times, if it is considered to be good each time, you should say or do it. When wise people in China say to reflect on things three times, they mean many times. Pondering before speaking, considering before acting; if it is good each time you think about the matter, you should speak or do it.*

*Zen monks also must be like this. Since there might be something wrong in what you think and what you say [without knowing it], first reflect on whether it is in accordance with the Buddha-Way or not, and ponder over whether it is beneficial to yourself and others. If it is good, do it or say it. Practitioners, if you hold onto this attitude, you will never go against the will of the Buddha your entire lifetime.*

From the Sayings of Eihei Dōgen Zenji

# Swami Vivekananda in America—Motivations

DR. SATISH K. KAPOOR

*What made Swamiji prolong his stay in the West after the Chicago Parliament of Religions? Dr. Kapoor, who loves to write on Swamiji, tries to unravel the possible reasons. He is a Reader in the Post Graduate Department of History, Khalsa College, Jabalpur.*

The fact that Swami Vivekananda stayed on in the United States after the close of the first World Parliament of Religions in 1893, in Chicago, while representatives of almost all other religions sailed back to their respective countries, raises some pertinent questions. What motivated him to remain in America? Did he take the decision to prolong his stay after winning laurels at the Parliament or had he gone with some definite objective in mind? Did he come to teach Vedanta to the West, or to collect money for the down-trodden in India? Did he intend to synthesize the East and West somehow?

The questions are multiple and baffling. If one assumes that the big ovations which the Swami received at the Parliament of Religions prompted him to prolong his stay in America, one could very aptly ask: Was he being narcissistic? The taste of recognition usually whets the appetite for more recognition. Did the Swami wish to satiate what the psychologists would describe as his superego, by delivering regular talks through a lecture bureau and making more contacts with the American elite to broaden his area of influence? Did he intend to exploit the curiosity of Americans 'for the abnormal, the occult', which had reached its paroxysm at the end of the 19th century—for amassing money or winning acclaim? None of Swami Vivekananda's biographers has so far explored this psychological aspect.

On the evidence of Swami Vivekananda's epistles it may be argued that attending the sessions of the Parliament was not his sole objective when he left for America.<sup>1</sup> Even after reaching the shores of Lake Michigan—from where he moved to the capital of Massachusetts—he was in two minds and wrote to his follower Alasinga<sup>2</sup> from 'Breezy Meadows'<sup>3</sup> that he was not sure whether he would attend the Parliament: '...I don't know whether I shall go back to Chicago or not. My friends there write me to represent India...but then I refused as I would have to spend all my little stock of money in remaining more than a

1. In an undated letter to Professor Wright (May 1894), Swami Vivekananda wrote: 'I joined the Parliament of Religions having always refused it when our people wanted to send me for it. I came over telling them that I may or may not join that assembly—and you may send me over if you like. They sent me over leaving me quite free.'—*The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989) Vol. 7, p. 464.
2. He was one of the enthusiastic group of young disciples of Madras who raised money for the Swami's passage to America. For his life sketch, see Srinivasan's article in *The Brahmanavadin*, January 1966.
3. Mrs. Katherine Abbott Sanborn's farm near Metcalf where Swami Vivekananda stayed for some time before the commencement of the Parliament of Religions.



month in Chicago.<sup>4</sup> One of the reasons for Swami Vivekananda's reluctance to attend the Parliament might have been his slender finances. 'I have now to fight against impossibilities,' he wrote. 'A hundred times I had a mind to go out of the country and go back to India. But I am determined, and I have a call from Above; I see no way, but His eyes see. And I must stick to my guns, life or death....'<sup>5</sup>

It seems that Swami Vivekananda had a definite aim in mind before he left the shores of India.<sup>6</sup> Even if Charles Carroll Bonney had not conceived the idea of a Parliament of Religions, there was every possibility that the Swami would have undertaken a tour of the West. During the course of his *wanderjahre* in India, Swami Vivekananda was convinced that no nation or individual could live a healthy life by holding aloof from other nations or individuals.

India remained locked in its shell of exclusion and seclusion for long. Impervious to outside influence it developed a myopic outlook and did not weed out obsolescent customs or traditions and did not allow the growth of new ideas. At the turn of the 19th century India looked like a mummy of a once vivacious civilization. Diagnosing the ills of national life as arising from the long stagnation of Indian society,

Swami Vivekananda once remarked that India's fate was sealed the day she invented the word *mleccha* and stopped communication with the outside world.<sup>7</sup> 'Give and take' was the law, he argued, and if India was to rise again she must bring out her treasures and throw them broadcast among the nations of the world, 'and in return be ready to receive what others have to give her.'<sup>8</sup>

As early as September 20, 1892, Swami Vivekananda had expressed such ideas to Pandit Shankar Lal of Khetri: '...We must travel; we must go to foreign parts. We must see how the engine of society works in other countries and keep free and open communication with what is going on in the minds of other nations, if we really want to be a nation again.'<sup>9</sup> The idea remained embedded in his mind in the years that followed. To his Madras disciples he admonished, writing from Yokohama on July 10, 1893: 'Come, be men! Come out of your narrow holes and have a look abroad. See how nations are on the march.'<sup>10</sup>

It can be plausibly argued that the purpose of Swami Vivekananda's longer stay in America must have been his desire to know how and why Western nations became 'the dynamic centres of vast energies'; to study the quintessence of Western culture and to set in motion the process of acculturation which would bring India into the mainstream of international life and blow away the cobwebs of isolation which had clutched its body-politic for long. If Swami Vivekananda had such an objective in mind,

4. Swami Vivekananda to Alasinga, August 20, 1893, *Complete Works*, Vol. 5, p. 12.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

6. After Swami Vivekananda returned from his tour of the West he was asked by a press reporter why he had gone abroad. 'I wanted to get experience,' replied the Swami. 'My idea as to the key-note of our national downfall is that we do not mix with other nations—that is the one and the sole cause. We never had opportunity to compare notes. We were *kūpa-maṇḍūkas* (frogs in a well).' *The Indian Mirror*, February 7, 1887.

7. Swami Vivekananda to Alasinga, October 27, 1894. *The Complete Works*, Vol. 5, p. 52.

8. Swami Vivekananda to Raja Pyari Mohan Mukherjee, November 18, 1894, *The Letters of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1970) p. 172.

9. *The Complete Works*, Vol. 5, p. 5.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

the question of prolonging his stay in America simply because he had won laurels at the Parliament did not arise at all. Never did he become vainglorious. Instead of bragging and boasting he attributed his success to the Almighty. 'His name be praised,' he said, 'who maketh the dumb a fluent speaker—*mūkaṁ karoti vācālam*.'<sup>11</sup> 'If I have done well, He gave me the strength for it,' he wrote to Professor Wright. 'He who was guiding me on the snow tops of the Himalayas and the burning plains of India is here to help me and guide me. Glory unto Him in the highest....'<sup>12</sup> '*Tasya dāsa-dāso'ham*—Oh, I am the servant of the servants of his servants.'<sup>13</sup>

An egoist seeks popularity. Swami Vivekananda never yearned for it. Like Robert South he likened it to the devil's stratagem, 'who like an expert wrestler, usually gives a man a lift before he gives him a throw.'<sup>14</sup> Popularity breeds pride in man which, to use Bolingbroke's terms, defeats its own end by bringing the man who seeks esteem and reverence into contempt.<sup>15</sup> Did not pride thrust Nebuchadnezzar out of men's society, Saul out of his kingdom, Adam out of paradise, Haman out of court, and Lucifer out of heaven?<sup>16</sup> Swami Vivekananda, who believed in the philosophy of Karma Yoga, abhorred the baser craving for popularity which attaches the self to the fruits of one's actions. He had admonished his Madras disciples from

America: 'Calm and steady work and no newspaper humbug, no name-making, you must always remember.'<sup>17</sup>

It is evident that Swami Vivekananda did not become euphoric over his success at the Parliament nor did he extend his stay for merely satisfying his ego. Had it been so, he would not have wept over his 'victory' on the day he was honoured by a rich man of Chicago:

...Here he was entertained right royally; a princely room fitted with luxury beyond anything he could conceive was assigned to him. But instead of feeling happy in this splendid environment, he was miserable. . . . As he...lay upon his bed, the terrible contrast between poverty-stricken India and opulent America oppressed him. . . . At length, overcome with emotion, he fell to the ground crying out, 'O Mother, what do I care for name and fame when my motherland remains sunk in utmost poverty....Who will raise the masses of India! . . . Show me, O Mother, how I can help them!'<sup>18</sup>

It is sometimes argued that Swami Vivekananda had a genuine concern for the pitiable and wretched condition of the desperate and derelict natives of India who appeared to him as emaciated figures, of young and old in tattered rags, whose faces bore deep-cut lines of the despair and poverty of hundreds of years, 'resembling men only in appearance, crushed out of life by being down-trodden by their own people and foreign nations. . . .'<sup>19</sup> It was to ameliorate the lot of these people who bore

11. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

12. Swami Vivekananda to Professor Wright, October 2, 1893, *The Complete Works*, Vol. 7, pp. 451-2.

13. Swami Vivekananda to Shivananda, 1894 (date and month not given), *Ibid.*, p. 483.

14. Tryon Edwards (compiler), *The New Dictionary of Thoughts* (New York: Hanover House, 1961), p. 518.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 518.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 519.

17. *The Complete Works*, Vol. 5, p. 11.

18. *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, by his Eastern and Western Disciples (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1960) p. 315.

19. *The Complete Works*, Vol. 5, pp. 441-2.



melancholy in their eyes that Swami Vivekananda prolonged his stay to raise funds for them.

A study of Swami Vivekananda's letters addressed to his disciples from America seems to corroborate this view. He wrote to Alasinga on August 20, 1893:

Feel for the miserable and look up for help....I have travelled twelve years with this load in my heart and this idea in my head. I have gone from door to door of the so-called rich and great. With a bleeding heart I have crossed half the world to this strange land seeking for help.

In the same epistle he remarked that it was really difficult 'getting into American society and making yourself heard.' But he pleaded that if his patrons could keep him in America for at least six months he would find a plank he could float upon. In a stoical tone he observed:

I may perish of cold or hunger in this land, but I bequeath to you, young men, this sympathy, this struggle for the poor, the ignorant, the oppressed....First I will try in America; and if I fail, try in England; if I fail, go back to India and wait for further commands from [on] High.<sup>20</sup>

On November 2, 1893, Swami Vivekananda asked Alasinga to urge the Raja of Ramnad and other rich men to sympathize with the masses of India. 'Tell them,' he remarked, 'how they are standing on the neck of the poor and that they are not fit to be called men if they don't try to raise them up.'<sup>21</sup>

Admonishing his Madras disciples that

the fate of a nation depended upon the condition of its masses, he asked, 'Can you raise them? Can you give them back their lost individuality?' 'Onward for ever,' he exhorted, 'sympathy for the poor, the downtrodden, even unto death—this is our motto.'<sup>22</sup> '*Śreyāṁsi baluvighnāni*—Great undertakings are always fraught with many obstacles.'<sup>23</sup> That Swami Vivekananda did not deviate from the goal he had set for himself is evident from a letter he wrote to Ramakrishnananda on March 19, 1894: 'I shall try to earn the wherewithal myself to the best of my might and carry out my plans or die in the attempt. "*Sannimittēvarām tyāgo vināśe niyate sati*—When death is certain, it is best to sacrifice oneself for a good cause".' "*Vasantavallokalitam carantam*—Doing good to others (silently) like the spring"—this is my religion,' said Swami Vivekananda.<sup>25</sup>

'I don't believe in a God or religion,' he wrote to Alasinga, 'which cannot wipe the widow's tears or bring a piece of bread to the orphan's mouth. However sublime be the theories, however well-spun may be the philosophy—I do not call it religion so long as it is confined to books and dogmas....Where should you seek for God—are not all the poor, the miserable, the weak, Gods....?'<sup>26</sup>

Regeneration of the masses of India thus seems to have remained the primary concern of Swami Vivekananda even in America. He wanted to accomplish this object by 'raising funds for the development of Indian work' and by inspiring his disciples to take up the work of constructive social reform.

22. *Ibid.*, pp. 29-30.

23. *The Complete Works*, Vol. 6, p. 268.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 255.

25. *The Complete Works*, Vol. 7, p. 484.

26. Swami Vivekananda to Alasinga, October 27, 1894, *The Complete Works*, Vol. 5, pp. 50-2.

20. *Ibid.*, pp. 11-19.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

At the public meetings he addressed before the commencement of the Parliament of Religions, Swami Vivekananda asked for voluntary contributions from Americans for helping his countrymen. Cornelia Conger records that he used to get overwhelmed by the generosity of his audience 'who seemed so happy to give to help people they had never seen so far away.'<sup>27</sup> However, the Swami did not get as much money as he had expected. From his letters it appears that at least till early September of 1893, he did not even find sufficient means to support himself. 'The expense I am bound to run into here is awful,' he wrote to Alasinga on August 20, 1893. 'You remember you gave me £ 170 in notes and £ 9 in cash. It has come down to £ 130 in all....Before you get this letter my money would come down to somewhat about £ 70 or £ 60. So try your best to send some money.'<sup>28</sup>

At the Parliament of Religions Swami Vivekananda ruefully regretted that he came to America to seek aid for his impoverished people and found it an uphill task.<sup>29</sup> But by the end of September 1893 he had realized that lecturing was 'a very profitable occupation' in America and could help him in his future projects. Referring to his earnings from lectures at Chicago immediately after the close of the Parliament, he wrote: 'It is ranging from 30 to 80 dollars a lecture, and just now I have been so well advertised in Chicago, gratis by the Parliament of Religions, that it is not advisable to give up this field now.'<sup>30</sup>

Before September 1894 Swami

Vivekananda had earned about nine thousand rupees in Indian currency which, as he wrote to Alasinga on August 31, 1894, 'I will send over to you for the organization.' He wanted him to start 'a society and a journal' and 'build a temple in Madras which should have a library and some rooms for the office....'<sup>31</sup> Displaying full confidence in his plans for the social rejuvenation of India, he observed: 'Thus we shall progress inch by inch. This is a great field for my work, and everything done here prepares the way for my coming work in England.'<sup>32</sup>

Should one conclude from these facts that Swami Vivekananda stayed in America only to raise funds for his countrymen or, as Miss S. E. Waldo puts it, 'to send help to his fellow sannyasins in India....'<sup>33</sup> ? Of course not. He had a message for the Western world which excelled in science and technology but lacked in spirituality. In his view Western civilization was 'frankly materialistic' and never sought inspiration from religion, which had functioned as its antagonist. 'Its concept of man is merely as a biological organism seeking organic satisfactions and organic survival. Such a philosophy may be a dynamic progressive force in the short run; but it falls far short of the truth about man as ascertained by a scientific and penetrating study of man in depth such as was undertaken by the Vedanta in India; secondly, because it does not explain ethical or aesthetic phenomena

31. *The Complete Works*, Vol. 5, p. 42.

32. It is evident from Swami Vivekananda's letters that he was sending money to his disciples for social work. For example, he wrote to Sharat on May 20, 1894: 'If you all like, you can give to Gopal Rs. 300 from the amount I sent for the Math. I have no more to send now. I have to look after Madras now.' *Ibid.*, Vol. 5, p. 33.

33. *Reminiscences*, p. 123.

27. *His Eastern and Western Admirers, Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1964) p. 144.

28. *The Complete Works*, Vol. 5, pp. 12-18.

29. *Ibid.*, cf. Vol. 1, p. 20.

30. Swami Vivekananda to Mrs. Tannatt Woods, October 10, 1893, *Ibid.*, Vol. 7, p. 456.



or spiritual experience, which involve a view of man deeper than the ego centered in his organic individuality.<sup>34</sup> Swami Vivekananda foresaw that 'these severe limitations in its philosophy of man were bound to turn its successes into ashes in its [the West's] mouth at no distant time.'<sup>35</sup>

It was to usher in the process of give-and-take that Swami Vivekananda stayed on in America. 'As regards spirituality,' he wrote to Haripada Mitra on December 28, 1893, 'the Americans are far inferior to us, but their society is far superior to ours. We will teach them our spirituality and assimilate what is best in their society.'<sup>36</sup> Swami Vivekananda was not eager for fame, nor

did he intend to exploit the craze of Americans for the occult. His mission was to work 'for the welfare of the many, for the happiness of the many—*Bahujana hitāya bahujana sukhāya*.'<sup>37</sup>

Was Swami Vivekananda a synthesist? Almost all his biographers say 'Yes'. If exchange in any form is tantamount to a synthesis, one can very aptly attach this label to him, but he is better seen as contributing to a process in which East and West were to learn from each other without merging.



34. Swami Ranganathananda, 'Swami Vivekananda: India's Emissary to the West', in *India's Contribution to World Thought and Culture* (Madras: Triplicane Vivekananda Rock Memorial Committee, 1970), p. 672.

35. *Ibid.*

36. *The Complete Works*, Vol. 5, p. 27. Swami

Vivekananda expressed similar views to Swami Ramakrishnananda on March 19, 1894: 'As our country is poor in social virtues, so this country is lacking in spirituality. I give them spirituality and they give me money.'

*Ibid.*, Vol. 6, p. 255.

37. *Ibid.*, Vol. 7, p. 118.

My whole ambition in life is to set in motion a machinery which will bring noble ideas to the door of everybody, and then let men and women settle their own fate. Let them know what our forefathers as well as other nations have thought on the most momentous questions of life. Let them see specially what others are doing now, and then decide. We are to put the chemicals together, the crystallisation will be done by nature according to her laws. Work hard, be steady....Keep the motto before you: *Elevation of the masses without injuring their religion.*

*The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. 5, p. 29.



# Sri Ramakrishna, the Visionary

PROF. V. GOPINATH

Hail to Thee, O Sri Ramakrishna, mighty seer!  
Bless this day with Thine ardent faith and cheer!  
Thou invokest the great KALI to appear in flesh,  
And SHE, benign goddess, obliged Thee in Bliss!  
Thou who taught Totapuri the Great,  
The great moral lesson of the Devi Supreme!  
Totapuri, worshipper of GOD unmanifest,  
Became at Thy bidding, Lover of the MANIFEST!  
Thou, Thy Light, with Narendra to CHICAGO went,  
As Vivekananda the Hero he returned to us thence!  
Thou alone taughtest well, in One are Gods all,  
As the lake's water—call it *pāni* or *jal*!  
Thou sayest to all, Don't dwell on sin's weight,  
Chant Hari's name; To be *gone* is sin's fate!  
Thou treated Thy spouse, Sarada, the Mother  
As the all-merciful Goddess, the living divine Power!  
Give me 'power of attorney', to the poet Thou told,  
In no time at all Girish turned to pure Gold!  
Thou told to Hazra, Don't be too smart and dry,  
And Hazra, poor man, did tremble and cry!  
But Hazra, too, at long last gained MUKTI  
All of it possible through his yearning earnest and BHAKTI!  
O Sri Ramakrishna! Not even the thousand-hooded One  
Can succeed in describing Thy one-tale even!  
Thou art our all in all,  
There is none like Thee in the world at all!

O Mother, I have made no charity; I have done no meditation; I have observed no rituals; nor have I uttered any prayer or holy name. I have performed no worship; nor have I purified myself through proper invocations. Therefore, O Thou Mother of the Universe, Thou art my only Refuge; Thou art my only Refuge.

*Bhavanyastaka Stotra*



# Madhavacarya's Refutation of Sankhya

DR. A. C. PALIT

*This is a brief, forceful presentation of one of the fundamental teachings of Advaita Vedānta, that the phenomenon of the changeful creation is a superimposition on Brahman, the changeless Reality. The author, from Calcutta, is a member of the Institute of Electronics and Telecommunication Engineers, and a senior member of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, USA; he is also a deep student of Vedānta.*

Mādhavācārya (1296 ? -1386 ?), the well-known expositor of Vedānta, was also a great statesman, being the prime minister of the renowned Vijayanagara kingdom in Karnataka for several years. When he was about eighty, he became a sannyāsin, and was thenceforth known as Swāmī Vidyāranya. He was elected the head of the Śringerī monastery, founded by Śaṅkarācārya. Among his important works are: *Pañcadaśī*, *Vivaraṇaprameyasamgraha*, *Jīvanmuktiviveka*, *Vaiśikanyāyamālā*, *Sarvadarśanasamgraha*. His younger brother Sāyaṇa wrote the famous commentary on the Vedas.

In *Sarvadarśanasamgraha*, Mādhavācārya surveys as many as sixteen systems of philosophy—from Cārvāka to Śaṅkara. In the last chapter, he points out the fallacies of Sāṅkhya—the system closest to Vedānta—before expounding Śaṅkara's Advaita Vedānta. Mādhavācārya's refutation of Sāṅkhya is more or less a condensed version of Śaṅkara's principal arguments against Sāṅkhya in the first and second *adyāyas* of his *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya*. In what follows, we present a paraphrase of Mādhavācārya's main points in the form of a dialogue between a Sāṅkhya and a Vedāntin.

SĀṆKHYA: The world is a spontaneous evolution of the *pradhāna* or *prakṛti*, the primary, unintelligent<sup>1</sup> matter, without the

superintendence of any intelligent principle.

VEDĀNTIN: The unitelligent *pradhāna* cannot undergo modification spontaneously, just as gold cannot modify itself into a ring without the superintendence of an intelligent goldsmith.

SĀṆKHYA: Experience shows that an unintelligent thing does act purposively without an intelligent superintendent. For instance, the unintelligent milk acts for the nourishment of the calf.<sup>2</sup>

VEDĀNTIN: It is the Supreme Lord (Brahman), possessing special intelligence, who superintends the action of the milk, since the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (3.7.4 and 3.8.9) declares that everything in the world which flows is directed by the Lord.<sup>3</sup>

SĀṆKHYA: An effect is implicitly pre-existent in its cause prior to its production (*satkāryavāda*). Were it not so, something would have to come out of nothing. So if an effect is endowed with certain attributes, it must have a cause endowed with the same attributes. We find that an object such as a jar gives one pleasure when one gets it, causes one pain when one loses it, and leaves someone else indifferent. So we see

1. *Sāṅkhya Kārikā*, 11.

2. *Ibid.*, 57.

3. *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya*, 2.2.3.

that an object is composed of pleasure,<sup>4</sup> pain and indifference, and it must have a material cause composed likewise. We therefore arrive at the general conclusion that the world has a material cause composed of pleasure, pain and indifference. What we call pleasure, pain and indifference are the characteristics of the three constituent elements (*guṇas*) of the *pradhāna*, namely, *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*,<sup>5</sup> respectively. Therefore the threefold *pradhāna* is the material cause of the world.

VEDĀNTIN: Pleasure, pain and indifference are internal (mental) states, distinct from external objects such as sandal, etc. If objects in themselves were made up of pleasure, pain and indifference, then sandal ointment, which is cooling and therefore pleasant in summer, would be pleasant in winter also. Sandal is never anything but sandal. Similarly, saffron used as an unguent, which is warming, would be pleasant in summer also. In the same manner, thorns, which are pleasing to camels (because they eat them), would be pleasing to men also. The fact is that different objects such as sandal, saffron, etc., are causes of pleasure, etc., at different times, etc., but are not in themselves pleasant, etc., by nature. Therefore the reason (*hetu*) advanced for the Sāṅkhya hypothesis (that the *pradhāna* is the material cause of the world) is unproved (*asiddha*).

SĀṆKHYA: There is scriptural authority for the *pradhāna*: it is declared in the *Śvetāsvatara Upaniṣad* (4.5), 'There is one *ajā*, red, white and black, producing manifold offsprings of the same nature.' Here the words, 'red', 'white' and 'black' mean the three *guṇas*, *rajas*, *sattva*, and *tamas*, respec-

tively. *Rajas* is called red because of its colouring or influencing property; *sattva* is called white because it is of the nature of light; *tamas* is called black because it covers and obscures. The word *ajā* means 'unborn', i.e., the primary matter or *pradhāna*. Thus the sense of the passage is that the world evolves out of the *pradhāna* whose constituents are *rajas*, *sattva* and *tamas*.

VEDĀNTIN: The *Śvetāsvatara* passage (4.5) does not prove that the *pradhāna* is the primary cause of the world. In the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (6.4) it is shown that the causal matter consists of fire, water and earth, and that 'The red colour of gross fire (i.e., fire consisting of three parts) is the colour of the elementary fire, its white colour is the colour of water, its black colour is the colour of earth.' These three colours are easily recognized as the colours mentioned in the aforesaid *Śvetāsvatara* passage (4.5). Although the etymological meaning of the word *ajā* is 'unborn', we cannot take this meaning here because the three causal elements (fire, water and earth) are not unborn; they are created by the 'one without a second' (*Chāndogya*, 6.2.). We must therefore take the conventional meaning of *ajā*, namely, 'she-goat'. The causal matter—the source of all beings—is metaphorically represented here as a she-goat, just as the sun is represented in the following *Chāndogya* passage (3.1.1) as honey (because it gives pleasure to the gods): 'The sun indeed is the honey of the gods.'

SĀṆKHYA: The *pradhāna* serves the *puruṣa* in many ways for the latter's welfare, namely, for the enjoyment of the objects of sense by the *puruṣa* and for the *puruṣa*'s liberation.<sup>6</sup>

VEDĀNTIN: Does the *pradhāna* act only for the *puruṣa*'s enjoyment of the objects of

4. Max Muller remarks, 'If the Sāṅkhyas look on certain objects as happy instead of happyfying, we should remember that we also call sugar sweet.'

5. *Sāṅkhya Kārikā*, 12,13.

6. *Ibid.*, 60, *Māthara Vṛtti*.



sense, or only for the latter's liberation, or for both? The first alternative is ruled out because: a) the *puruṣa*, being incapable of accretion (of pleasure or pain), immutable and eternal, cannot in reality enjoy; b) in this case, there is no possibility of the *puruṣa*'s liberation. The second alternative is implausible since: a) the *puruṣa* by nature is eternal, pure, intelligent and free, so there is no question of its liberation; b) if the *pradhāna* does not act for the *puruṣa*'s enjoyment of the objects of sense, such as sound, etc., there would be no opportunity for the evolution of these objects out of the *pradhāna*. The third alternative is not possible because, on the one hand, the *puruṣa* cannot enjoy and, on the other, it is ever-free.

SĀṆKHYA: The goal of the *puruṣa* is the recognition of its total difference from the *prakṛti*. When this happens, the *pradhāna*, having attained its object, desists from activity, and the *puruṣa* is liberated.

VEDĀNTIN: It is not possible for the unintelligent *pradhāna* to act after deliberation. Moreover, the question arises: Is the *prakṛti* annihilated by the force of the *puruṣa*'s discriminative knowledge (*vivekakhyāti*)? If it is, the mundane existence (*samsāra*) of all *puruṣas* ceases at once (because there is only one *prakṛti* but many *puruṣas*). If it is not, there is no liberation for any *puruṣa*. This inconsistency does not occur in Vedānta, according to which ignorance (*avidyā*),

unlike the *pradhāna*, is not one and the same for all individual souls (*jīvās*); it varies from soul to soul. It is totally destroyed only for those souls in whom knowledge arises, not for others. So there is no occasion for the destruction of the entire *samsāra*.

SĀṆKHYA: We cannot say that the world is an appearance superimposed on the one existent Brahman, because the substratum (pure, intelligent Brahman) and the superimposition (unintelligent world) are totally dissimilar, like gold and silver.

VEDĀNTIN: A superimposition is not always similar to the substratum. For instance, non-discerning men superimpose on the sky (space), which has no shape or colour, a shape like the bottom of a cauldron and blue colour.<sup>7</sup> Thus it has been said by Vācaspati Miśra:

The world is an appearance superimposed on the unchanging (*aparīṇāmin*) Brahman; (it is) produced from beginningless impressions (*vāsanās*), and does not depend on similarity (*sārūpya*).

So one should discard the doctrine of real transformation of *prakṛti* (*parīṇāmavāda*), and accept instead the doctrine of illusory appearance superimposed on Brahman (*vivartavāda*).

7. *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* (upodghāta).



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

John xv, 12-13.



# PRACTICAL VEDANTA

## DESIRELESSNESS

Once the great Sikh guru Govind Singh was sitting on the bank of the river Jamuna. A rich disciple came to him and, after saluting his master, offered two golden bangles before him reverentially, imploring him to accept them. Guru Govind Singh took one of the bangles in his hand and examined it, turning it over between his fingers. While doing so, suddenly the bangle slipped from his hand and fell into the river. Noticing this the disciple immediately rushed to the place and dipping his hand into the water tried to recover it. But even after a long search he could not find it. Watching him Guru Govind Singh said, 'My child, you are looking in the wrong place. The bangle has fallen there', and to show him the spot he threw the second one also! At this strange act of the Guru the disciple looked at his face in amazement. Then Guru Govind Singh said, 'Remember, my child, you should never crave for wealth. It only brings bondage to man. No doubt, you offered me the bangles with love, but to me they are as worthless as clay. That is why I wanted to cast them back into clay only.' Hearing these words the disciple felt chastened, realizing how useless it was to tempt the great soul with gold.

## FORBEARANCE

A certain man used to feel jealous of Bhagavan Mahavira, the renowned Jaina prophet. He used to look upon the great austerity, renunciation and non-violence of Bhagavan Mahavira as sheer make-believe, and so used to afflict him in various ways. But the great Mahavira would never get perturbed in the least. At last the man felt defeated and one day came to Mahavira saying, 'Sir, I troubled you in so many ways, but you forbore everything. How could you do that?' Hearing this from the man, tears came to the eyes of Mahavira.

Noticing him weep, the man got all the more astonished and said, 'Lord, why tears in your eyes?'

'My friend,' replied Bhagawan Mahavira, 'my weeping is not due to the great pain you have caused me. It is because of the great suffering you shall have to reap due to your misdeeds done to me. My heart breaks when I think how much suffering an ignorant soul shall have to pass through because of me.' At this the man felt repentant, and begged pardon of Bhagawan Mahavira.