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or Awakened India

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Cover: A view of the Himalayas

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उत्तिष्ठत
जाग्रत
प्राप्य
वरान्निबोधत



PRABUDDHA BHARATA

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

Vol. 99

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No. 7

DIVINE WISDOM

BHAKTI AND MUKTI

अकामः सर्वकामो वा मोक्षकाम उदरधीः।
तीव्रेण भक्तियोगेन यजेत पुरुषं परम्॥

But the one Being to be adored with intense devotion by all—whether they be devoid of all desires, or whether they be desirous of all enjoyments, or whether they be seekers of Mokṣa—is the Supreme Person, the one God of all. (In other words, all the Deities are nothing but His manifestation, and all their powers stem from Him alone. So a man of intelligence worships the Supreme Being alone through all the Deities.)

एतावानेव यजतामिह निःश्रेयसोदयः।
भगवत्यचलो भावो यद्भागवतसङ्गतः॥

The ultimate object of all worship is the generation of unswerving devotion to the Supreme Being. It leads to liberation, the highest destiny of man. By association with holy men devotion develops in an aspirant.

ज्ञानं यदा प्रतिनिवृत्तगुणोर्मिचक्रम्
आत्मप्रसाद उत यत्र गुणेष्वसङ्गः।
कैवल्यसंमतपथस्त्वथ भक्तियोगः
को निर्वृतो हरिकथासु रतिं न कुर्यात्॥

Who will not feel delight in the accounts of the Lord's actions and excellences, listening to which spontaneously generates Bhakti, the experience of which is considered equal to Mukti itself, which bestows illumination that destroys all the blinding passions of the heart and consequently generates nonattachment and the joy of the Spirit?

From the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam

Are Indians Religious ?

Clarification

Emphatically yes! and emphatically no! Before elaborating, let us clarify: 'Indians' refers to the contemporary average Indians, irrespective of religion and sect- or caste-beliefs. And 'religious' means what that term conveys generally.

A dictionary defines religion as 'particular system of faith and worship' and 'human recognition of superhuman controlling power and especially of a personal God or gods entitled to obedience and worship'. The description of 'a religious person' derived from this semantic view can be enlarged by including in it the common man's perceptions also: A religious person believes God has created this cosmos of the living and the nonliving; he considers God as distinct and separate from His creation; he feels that he is entirely different from God, and is a born sinner or one inextricably entangled in worldly cares; further, he is convinced that he is religious since he regularly performs some ritual and prays, and that as a reward he is entitled to receive from God protection, health, wealth, success in his enterprises, and happiness.

Indians are religious

Judging by the above standard an Indian surely appears to be religious: He affirms his faith in God; at home he has a private shrine or a prayer-room, or a wall with images, photographs of God, or a religious symbol before which he performs some ritual daily, e.g., offering flowers, lighting incense or a lamp, reciting prayers, etc.; before setting out of his house on the day's business he

invokes God's support; occasional visits to a temple, a church, or a mosque, and offering some money into the collection-box to please God and as a token of gratitude, etc. are parts of his faith; his piety is evidenced also by his charity to beggars and the handicapped, and so on. We see too an Indian's reverence when he passes by his place of worship—a Hindu shuts his eyes, bows his head, and touches his heart, eyes and forehead, Christians cross themselves, and Muslims do salaam. During religious functions temples, churches and mosques overflow with pious people. These examples are windows to what Indians consider basic to their religion. You can add to these from your own observations. You will agree that similar uncountable acts are performed by the educated and the illiterate, by the rich and the poor, by men, women and children, and by policemen as well as by criminals.

The flicker of faith, like the flash of a glow-worm, is seen in an Indian's profession also: A poor illiterate farmer performs a ritual on his fields before harvesting his God-gifted crop, and also on the day he commences to prepare the fields for the next sowing; a simple rite before axing down a tree, setting out on a hunt, or extracting toddy from a palm is a must for tribals; vegetable-vendors light a few incense sticks and fix them on a piece of vegetable before commencing their day's business; a rickshaw-wallah, before he begins his rounds, is sure to stop by a temple, get some sandal-paste and apply it to all the vital parts of his vehicle, thus invoking God's grace so that the day is accident-free and his earnings

good; large and busy shops have a paid priest to perform some ritual after opening for sales. Before commencing his day's practice, a doctor, too modern and shy to display his religious emotions or perform a detectable ritual, does not fail to cast a pious glance at the small holy picture tucked unobtrusively under the glass-top of his table. Even criminals are known to perform some ritual prior to setting out on their prowl!

And then look at the numberless public places of worship of all shapes, sizes and colours that have come up just anywhere and everywhere—some people rejoice in this, foreseeing a 'tremendous religious revival' just around the corner, which is going to sweep away the nation's materialistic secularism!

Who can say Indians are not religious?

The contrast

But then, if they are so, why are people crying themselves hoarse that places of worship have turned commercial or political? Is there not a general feeling that social corruption has become systemic? Why are women protesting against discrimination and harassment? Are not teachers and professors grieving over students' violence and indiscipline in educational institutions? Can you ignore the unabated exploitation of the poor and the backward?

What a blunt contradiction between people's avowals and actions! We are appalled by the gulf between the thoughts a person has when he is in prayer and when he is dealing with his wife, children, household employees and people in society. A person who was seen praying piously before God for help, mercy and forgiveness is also seen dealing cruelly with even those much weaker than he is. That very grocer who was espied lighting a lamp with pure

ghee before a holy picture in his shop does not think twice before adulterating or shortweighing the foodstuffs he sells. You may also catch sight of him feeding ants, rats and birds as a holy act! It is called *jiva-seva*, service to God's creatures. Fleecing man to feed birds and animals. A sweetmeat seller who began his day with a prayer to God feels it is perfectly alright to mix some addictive to the sweets so that his customers get snared.

The big-money industrialist who finances a so-called pro-people political party ensures that pro-labour laws are not legislated. The druggist who weeps before God for his family's health does not feel any compunction in selling spurious drugs. The

We are appalled by the gulf between the thoughts a person has when he is in prayer and when he is dealing with his wife, children, household employees and people in society.

doctor who had prayed to God to help him graduate feels totally guiltless in bleeding his patients for money. Those who sing about their almighty and omnipresent God find nothing wrong in cringing before even lowranking corrupt public officials. The same politician who visits holy men and pilgrim centres and makes donations there is found to be also involved in various scandals!

The masses

What has happened to this country? The whole nation is pervaded by the stench of hypocrisy, cruelty and corruption. There is a disgusting charade of democracy and religion, camouflaging the injustice against innocents and the heartrending exploitation of defenceless people. The more shocking aspect of all this is that it is downplayed by saying that it is universal.

An acquaintance of ours once exclaimed: 'Swami, who says we are religious? We are not even democratic. Where are the personal and social virtues that a religious person, or at least a democratic person, should manifest? Where are equality, equal opportunity, mutual respect and help? You stay within monasteries and shun politics. So you have a limited exposure to the horrible realities of today's society. Besides, as an organization under Vivekananda you may be finding it easy to carry on your services. But the condition of the people is very depressing. These days it is impossible to live honestly and decently, even if we keep ourselves away from politics and the shady side of society.'

'You may recall President Reagan's "trickle-down" theory. In India, where too the phrase has become current, what trickles down to the supposed beneficiaries of the various developmental plans is a drop or two from the elbows of the "servants of the people" while they gorge themselves! And even that is cleverly drawn back by the corrupt system of licensing innumerable liquor shops, lotteries, etc.—"to enhance the government's revenue". Thus the cycle is going on. Now tell us, Swami, when we have to struggle every moment to earn honestly our livelihood, working in the midst of corruption, violence and harassment at every turn, which God shall we believe in, which God shall we worship? Without some degree of social justice, is it possible to believe in God? The current of injustice, exploitation and immorality now is simply too strong for the common man.'

Indians as functional irreligious

When this is the state of affairs, how can Indians claim to be religious? Can genuine religious beliefs fail to have a bearing on a person's entire life? Should those beliefs be called religious that do not energise a person to be selfrespecting and humanistic? Of

what value are 'religious practices' which even after decades of devout adherence do not generate qualities that are sure products of every true religious discipline—sincerity, love and fearlessness?

Despite today's situation in this country, an Indian will feel offended if he is told that he is not, not really, religious. He is justified in a way: As we said earlier, he is religious within his house. No, not within his whole house: He is religious while in his shrine-room or so long as he is standing before a picture or symbol of God. Then he is religious within the precincts of temples etc. Not during religious functions even. Aside from these, during the major part of the day his religious faculty mysteriously gets

Let no Indian imagine that it is so easy to be religious—merely with a five-minute prayer, with a lavish ritualistic worship...or by feeding birds, rats and monkeys—neglecting human misery....

switched off! A very large area of his life, which he has learnt to call secular, remains unlit by religion, and there he is as much a demoralized victim as a now-willing now-helpless participant in a faceless system breeding irreligion—corruption, jealousy, insincerity, sensuality and greed for money.

We are unable to reconcile this with the fact that this is the Indian whose forefathers had honesty and selfrespect in their blood and could say, 'I can sacrifice my life, but never my promise or honour'; this is the Indian who traces his family roots to an ancient *r̥ṣi*, a wonderfully just king, or an exceptionally noble and brave warrior; or to a poor but brilliant *brāhmin*, a pariah saint, or a wise and upright tribal chief; or, again, to a diligent and wealthy trader renowned for philanthropy, who used his riches as a trustee under God!

Let no Indian imagine that it is so easy to be religious—merely with a five-minute prayer, with a lavish ritualistic worship, with farcical charity, or by feeding birds, rats and monkeys—neglecting human misery and indulging in sensuality and two-facedness. Even intelligent mortals are not taken in by pretence and half-heartedness, let alone God. What the Indian is clinging to as his religion is only a skeleton of the true religion of his forefathers; his is a mindless religion.

Causes of an Indian's religious decay

The mind-set of the contemporary Indian, his social behaviour and the nation's ailments are the consequences of foisting on this country a system of education, a secular political ideology and an economic policy that are based entirely on Western concepts. These are supposed to turn India into a nation as 'ideally progressive, wealthy, pragmatic, rationalistic and scientific minded' as America is imagined to be. Who are responsible for this? They are the majority of India's politicians and bureaucrats whose thoughts are a strange mixture of ill-understood Western concepts and well-assimilated attitudes of Indian feudalism (*zamīndārī*). They are the intellectuals and policy-framers who feel that India's ideals and activities should be moulded in terms of 'production', 'consumerism', 'market', 'import and export', etc. So India is a 'market' and Indians are 'human resources', like natural resources to be exploited as national wealth. (How national wealth becomes the wealth of a few through a 'secret process' is beyond our present concern.) No more are they persons whose individual and collective activities should have that one and only ultimate goal discovered by our forefathers—religion, God, spirituality and Self-knowledge!

However much an Indian may want to be pious in all his activities, the vitiated

social environment smothers him. He has found that he has to 'do as the Romans do', or else he and his family have to starve, or he has to face harassment and assault.

During one of (late President of the Ramakrishna Order) Swami Vireswaranandaji's visits to Gujarat, a Chief Executive Engineer, a disciple of the Swami, confessed tearfully to him: 'Sir, I do my *japa* etc. regularly. I want to be hardworking and upright in my profession. But I am finding it impossible. Contractors have threatened that unless I accept a share of the money they misappropriate by manipulating the payroll, they will eliminate me and throw me into the river. What shall I do? I am prepared to die, but who will look after my family?' We do not know what advice he received, but this is a case in point.

Revival of religion through subjective reform

May be the Indian is finding himself to have been beaten into shape—more aptly, beaten out of shape—to suit the purposes of a corrupt system. But let him not feel defeated and lose his tenuous hold on his ancestors' religion. The average Indian still is doggedly religious at least in his own small way. This itself is a wonder, and a source of hope, considering the inimical forces arrayed against him. Even the poorest of the exploited poor—in glamorous cities, in backward villages and in remote tribal areas—are still able to beam a wonderfully guileless, anxiety-free and fully satisfied smile after a religious ritual or function. The small undying expressions of religious feelings we often see all around suggests that by and large Indians are profoundly religious deep within, and they cannot give it up.

Indians, instead of waiting for external circumstances to change and promote a more satisfactory practice of religion, should create the right conditions. Without expecting the 'system' outside to initiate any

reform, let Indians resolve to breathe their own lives into that skeletal religion now being practised. For this, personal sacrifices must be made. People should begin by making their lives a little more simple and pure; they should become more than a little courageous, practise greater selfcontrol, and renounce their instinct to be over-acquisitive.

An Indian should will to back his claim of being religious by striving to bring the floodlight of religion to illumine all the areas of his life, private and social. Being religious is not like being a dentist or a clerk—who is

May be the Indian is finding himself to have been beaten into shape—more aptly, beaten out of shape—to suit the purposes of a corrupt system. But let him not feel defeated and lose his tenuous hold on his ancestors' religion.

so for a part of the day and is something else, say a painter or a sportsman, the rest of the time. Being religious implies being a man of character. One cannot say one is a person of character for two hours a day at home and in a temple. So in the case of religion. Either one is irreligious or he is—tries to be—wholly religious. One becomes religious in two stages: First, by earnestly practising 'obedience, worship,' etc. in accordance with 'a particular system of faith and worship', as mentioned in the beginning; second, which follows from the first, by succeeding in personally verifying the *belief* in God's existence with which he began; i.e., by having a glimpse of God. The first blossoms into the second only if it is supported by certain virtues. All the religions emphasize that, from beginning to end, these moral qualities are intrinsic to the two stages: An *active* concern for others—manifesting as loving service to them—, truthfulness, sincerity, selfrestraint, etc.

Fearlessness

To all these must be added another special quality which, Vivekananda so stressed, is the decisive proof of a person's faith in God and of his religious evolution—fearlessness. Fearlessness under all circumstances, even in the face of death, and, with particular reference to today's social condition, in the face of injustice, intimidation and coercive tactics of the corrupt; fearlessness not only when one is a part of a mob but even when all alone. (It is surprising that criminals and the immoral, who deny God, are fearless whereas people professing faith in God turn tail in the face of danger!) The general idea is that only faith, humility, self-surrender, meekness, piety, etc. constitute the moral fibre of religion. Swamiji has revealed this longforgotten component of religion—fearlessness.

All the forementioned qualities are equally nourishers and effects of religion. They, particularly selfrestraint, service to others and fearlessness, ensure that religion instead of remaining confined to small areas of life invigorates a person's total individuality and activities. They provide also a reliable method of verifying for oneself the authenticity and depth of one's religious commitment. Besides, they demolish the myth that religion, from first to last, is a personal and subjective affair, or that on the other hand it is entirely a social or community affair.

To explain: For becoming more religious, Indians need not rush to build more temples, churches and mosques, or to organize more public religious functions, etc. Rather, in addition to the rituals etc. in vogue they should each according to his capacity first strive for a subjective reform by practising the above mentioned virtues. The motive for this must be only love for God and religion, and not the ideals of social dynamism and national prosperity, though

in fact both these will follow. For, these ideals have no standard definition: What is considered now as social dynamism or national prosperity will tomorrow prove to be a curse. Western societies chose ideals and motivations other than God. They tried merely social organization, wealth-production, nationalism, etc. Now they are discovering the inadequacy of those ideals in the long run. They are paying a heavy price in the form of deteriorating mental health of their individuals, families and societies, notwithstanding their media blare, glossy

...obedience, worship, faith, humility, active concern for others....To all these must be added another special quality which, Vivekananda so stressed, is the decisive proof of a person's faith in God and of his religious evolution—fearlessness.

advertisements and national posturing. (Please read the recent report on American Society on p. 319 here.)

India's past

Our forefathers, down thousands of years of our civilization, have repeatedly demonstrated that it is possible to interweave wisely individual enterprise, wealth-production, enjoyment, public morality, humanistic governance, religion and wisdom. It is risible that Indians are taking their cue from youthful Western nations which are still experimenting with incomplete knowledge about nature and human beings. Those societies are searching for spiritual ideas that will perfectly harmonize with their present knowledge and ethos, and provide modern man's life and aspirations an axis or a 'newel'. They do not have it, neither in their religious past nor in the few centuries of their national past. India has the wisdom needed for today's world—more urgently for herself—, but is presently ignorant of and indifferent to it: it lies buried

under the effects of 1,500 years of foreign domination, exploitation and humiliation, buried in the Indians' subconscious.

Now it is for us to dig it out, wake upto its great potential, use it ourselves and share it lovingly with the whole world. Here is a beautiful set of adages:

He who knows not, and knows not he knows not, he is a fool, shun him.
He who knows, but knows not he knows, he is asleep, wake him.
He who knows not, and knows he knows not, he is a seeker, help him.
He who knows, and knows he knows, he is a wise man, seek him!

Swamiji's insight

Indians belong to the second category, and the western societies to the third. Let both, chary of the lures dangled by the politicians-industrialists-businessmen combine, listen to the 'wise man' Vivekananda:

Each nation has its own part to play, and naturally each nation has its own peculiarity and individuality. Here in this blessed land the life-centre is religion and religion alone. For good or for evil the religious ideal has been flowing in India for thousands of years, till it has entered into our very blood and tingled with every drop in our veins. Can you give up such a religion? If you give up that spirituality and go after the materializing civilization of the West, in three generations you will be an extinct race. If any nation attempts to throw off its national vitality, the direction which has become its own through the transmission of centuries, that nation dies if it succeeds in the attempt. Religion and religion alone is the life of India, and when that goes India will die, in spite of politics, in spite of social reforms, in spite of (the God of Wealth) Kubera's wealth

poured upon the head of every one of her children. I do not mean to say that other things are not necessary, but what I mean to say is this, that they are secondary here, and that religion is primary.

Before flooding India with socialistic or political ideas first deluge the land with spiritual ideas. We must grow according to our nature. Vain is to attempt the lines of action that foreign societies have engrafted upon us.

Aye, in spite of the sparkles and glitter of Western civilization, in spite of all its polish and its marvellous manifestation of power, I tell them to their face that it is all vain. It is vanity of vanities. God alone lives. The soul alone lives. Spirituality alone lives. Hold on to that. Let others talk of politics, of the glory of acquisition of immense wealth poured in by trade, of the power and spread of commercialism, of the glorious fountain of physical liberty. Slowly they (in the West) are finding out what they want is spirituality to preserve them as nations. They are waiting for it, they are eager for

it. The world wants it, without it the world will be destroyed. They have searched every corner of the world and have found no respite. They have drunk deep of the cup of pleasure and found its vanity.

...little do you know how much of hunger and thirst there is outside India for these wonderful treasures of our forefathers. We talk here, we quarrel with each other, we laugh at and ridicule everything holy. Little do we understand the heart-pangs of millions waiting outside the walls for a sip of that nectar which our forefathers have preserved in this land of India. Go back to the old age, when there was strength and vitality. Be strong once more, drink deep of the fountain of yore, and that is the only condition of life in India.

I believe that by this cultivation of religion, both this country and the West will gain enormously. To me the pursuit of politics is a secondary means in comparison with this. I will lay down my life to carry out this belief practically. □

There was a time when I acquiesced in the silly idea that there is no relationship between faith and prosperity; that when one talked about religion he should never relate it to achievement, that it dealt only with ethics and morals or social values. But now I realise that such a viewpoint limits the power of God and the development of the individual. Religion teaches that there is a tremendous power in the universe and that this power can dwell in personality. It is a power that can blast out all defeat and lift a person above all difficult situations.

—Dr. Norman Vincent Peale

Madhusudana Saraswati on the Bhagavad-Gita

SWAMI GAMBHIRANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue)

ADHERENCE TO DUTY

Thus it has been shown that, by rejecting the battle there will be the non-attainment of fame and merit which are desirable, and also the incurring of sin which is undesirable. Among these, the evil called sin yields the result, pain, after a long time; for it happens in the next world. But the evil in the form of censure by the good people yields its results immediately and is very unbearable. Hence He says:

अकीर्तिञ्चापि भूतानि कथयिष्यन्ति तेऽव्ययाम्।
संभावितस्य चाकीर्तिर्मरणादतिरिच्यते॥

*Akīrtimcāpi bhūtāni
kathayisyanti te'vyayām;
Sambhāvitasya cākīrtir-
maranādatiricyate (2.34).*

People also will speak of your unending infamy. And to an honoured person infamy is worse than death.

Bhūtāni, people, divine sages, men and others; *kathayisyanti*, will speak among themselves in the course of talks; *tava*, of your; *avyayām*, unending, long-lasting; *akīrtim*, infamy, in the form, 'This one is not righteous by nature, this one is not heroic.' The two indeclinable words (*ca* and *api*) are used for conjoining 'destruction of fame' and 'merit'—'Not only will you incur sin by abandoning fame and merit, but you will also acquire infamy.' Or the two indeclinables mean, 'Not only will you

yourself acquire that (infamy), but even people will speak of it.'

Is it not that, since one's death in a battle is a possibility, so for avoiding it even infamy has to be tolerated? For, one's own protection is very much essential. Accordingly has it been said in the *Śāntiparva*,

Through treaty, gift, creation of dissension—through all these or by any one of these, one should try to win over the enemy; one should never wage a war.

Since victory and defeat in a battle of warring parties are seen to be unpredictable, therefore one should avoid war.

When all the aforesaid means become impossible, then one should wage war with all effort in such a way as to conquer the enemy.¹

This itself has been said by Manu also.

And so He (the Lord) removes the doubt, 'What does the sorrow of infamy matter to one who is afraid of death?', by saying, *sambhāvitasya*, to an honoured person, to a person who is greatly honoured as possessing such qualities as 'righteous by nature', 'heroic', etc. which do not belong to others; *akīrtih*, infamy; *atiricyate*, is worse even; *maranāt*, than death.

Ca is used in the sense of *since*. Since this is so, therefore death is preferable to infamy, it being lesser. And you too are greatly

1. *Mahābhārata*

honoured on account of having confronted Lord Śiva and others. Therefore you will not be able to bear the sorrow arising from infamy. This is the idea. Since the text quoted (from the *Śāntiparva*) relates to *Arthaśāstra*, therefore it is weaker than the *Dharmaśāstra*, '(A king) should not retreat from battle'², etc. This is the purport.

(*Arjuna*:) 'Let the indifferent people defame me. But the great chariot-riders, Bhīṣma, Drona and others, will eulogize me because of my being compassionate!'

In answer He says:

भयाद्राणादुपरतं मंस्यन्ते त्वां महारथाः।
येषां च त्वं बहुमतो भूत्वा यास्यसि लाघवम्॥

Bhayādraṇāduparataṁ
maṁsyante tvāṁ mahārathāḥ;
Yeṣāṁ ca tvāṁ bahumato
bhūtvā yāsyasi lāghavam (2.35).

The great chariot-riders will think of you as having desisted from the fight out of fear; and you will earn the contempt of those to whom you had been estimable!

Mahārathāḥ, the great chariot-riders, Bhīṣma, Drona, Duryodhana and others; *maṁsyante*, will think; *tvāṁ*, of you; as *uparataṁ*, having desisted; *raṇāt*, from the fight; *bhayāt*, out of fear of Karna and others, not out of compassion.

(*Arjuna*:) Since they hold me in great esteem, how will they think of me as terrified?

Hence He says: Bhīṣma and others, *yeṣāṁ*, to whom; *tvam*, you; are *bahumataḥ*, highly estimable—thus, 'This Arjuna is

endowed with many qualities'—, those great chariot-riders themselves will think of you as having desisted out of fear. This is the construction. Therefore, *bhūtvā*, having become—'withdrawn from the fight' has to be added here—; *yāsyasi*, you will earn; *lāghavam*, the contempt—'of all' has to be supplied here.

Or: Those very ones to whom you had earlier been highly estimable, you, having been so; *yāsyasi lāghavam*, will become contemptible.

(*Arjuna*:) 'Well, let the great chariot-riders, Bhīṣma and others, not hold me in high esteem. But the enemies, Duryodhana and others, will think highly of me on account of being beneficent to them by withdrawing from the war.'

Hence He says:

अवाच्यवादांश्च बहून्वदिष्यन्ति तवाहिताः।
निन्दन्तस्तव सामर्थ्यं ततो दुःखतरं नु किम्॥

Avācya-vādāṁśca bahūn-
vadiṣyanti tavāhitāḥ;
Nindantastava sāmāthyam
tato duḥkhataram nu kim (2.36).

And your enemies will speak many indecent words while denigrating your might. What can be more painful than that?

Tava, your; enemies (*ahitāḥ*), Duryodhana and others, *vadiṣyanti*, will speak; *bahūn*, many, various kinds of; indecent words (*avācya-vādān*) that are unfit to be uttered—indeed, such words as 'a eunuch', 'insignificant (like sesamum)', etc.; *nindantaḥ*, while denigrating; that uncommon *sāmāthyam*, might; *tava*, of yours, which is well known in the world. But

2. *Manu-Smṛti*, 7.87.

they will not think highly of you. This is the purport.

Or the construction is: Your enemies, while denigrating your *sāmarthyam*, fitness for eulogy, will speak many indecent words.

(*Arjuna*:) 'Well, by desisting from war because of my inability to withstand the more unbearable sorrow (that will arise) by killing Bhīṣma, Droṇa and others, I shall be able to bear the sorrow caused by the belittling of my prowess by the enemies.'

Hence He says: *Kim nu*, what indeed; can be *duḥkha-taram*, more painful, greater; *tataḥ*, than that sorrow arising from being subject to calumny? The meaning is that there is no (greater) sorrow whatsoever.

(*Arjuna*:) 'Well then, there will be slander by the neutrals as a result of killing the elders and others in battle, and there will be slander by the enemies if I desist from the battle! Thus, either way there is a snare (i.e., I am in a dilemma).'

Anticipating this, He (the Lord), with the idea that standing up for battle is itself necessary since gain is inevitable both in the case of victory and defeat, says:

हतो वा प्राप्स्यसि स्वर्गं जित्वा वा भोक्ष्यसे महीम् ।
तस्मादुत्तिष्ठ कौन्तेय युद्धाय कृतनिश्चयः॥

Hato vā prāpsyasi svargam
jitvā vā bhoksyase mahīm;
Tasmāduत्तिष्ठ kaunteya
yuddhāya kṛtaniścayaḥ (2.37).

Either by being killed you will attain heaven, or by winning you will enjoy the earth. Therefore, O Arjuna, stand up with determination for fighting.

The first half (of the verse) is clear. Since you stand to gain even either way, *tasmāt*, therefore; *uttīṣṭha*, stand up; *yuddhāya*, for fighting; *kṛta-niścayaḥ*, with determination, that 'either I shall conquer the enemies or I shall die', for even though there be doubt about either of the results, it is certain that fighting is a duty. Hereby is dismissed (the hesitation of Arjuna), 'We do not know this as well, as to which is the better for us' (2.6).

(*Arjuna*:) Is it not that if the battle is undertaken with the idea of gaining heaven, then it will cease to be a *nitya-karma* (regular, or obligatory, duty)?³ On the other hand, if the battle is undertaken with the idea of gaining a kingdom, then since this comes under the scope of *Artha-śāstra* it will be less authoritative than the *Dharma-śāstra*. So how can sin accrue from non-performance of a *kāmya-karma* (duties meant for achieving some personal gain)? How can killing of elders, Brāhmins and others, aimed at gaining visible results be ethical? And in that case, will not the idea of the verse, 'On the other hand, (if you will not undertake...)' (2.33), be set at naught?

As to this He says:

सुखदुःखे समे कृत्वा लाभालाभौ जयाजयौ ।
ततो युद्धाय युज्यस्व नैवं पापमवाप्स्यसि॥

3. *Nitya-karmas*: Compulsory rites and duties, such as *Agnihotra*-sacrifice, which according to the *Mīmāṃsakas* have no results but lead to sin if not performed; *naimittika-karmas*: occasional rites and duties, such as *śrāddha*, ceremony in honour of and for the benefit of the dead; *kāmya-karmas*: any ceremony performed with selfish motives, e.g. horse-sacrifice for going to heaven. See *Vedānta-sāra* of Sadānanda.

*Sukhaduḥkhe same kṛtvā
lābhālabhau jayājayau;
Tato yuddhāyayujyasva
naivam pāpamavāpsyasi (2.38).*

Treating happiness and sorrow, gain and loss, and conquest and defeat with equanimity, then get ready for battle. Thus you will not incur sin.

'Treating with equanimity' implies absence of attachment and aversion. Without having any attachment for happiness (*sukha*), its cause, viz. gain (*lābha*), and the cause of this, viz. victory (*jaya*); similarly, without having any repulsion for sorrow (*duḥkha*), its cause, viz. loss (*alābha*), and the cause of this, viz. defeat (*ajaya*); *tataḥ*, then; *yujyasva*, get ready; *yuddhāya*, for battle. *Evam*, thus, having given up the desire for happiness or for getting rid of sorrow; and fighting with the idea that it is your own duty, you will not incur *pāpam*, sin arising from killing the elders, Brāhmins and others, and from the non-performance of *nitya-karma*. But one who undertakes battle with selfish motives incurs sin as a result of killing elders, Brāhmins and others; or one who does not undertake, he incurs sin as a result of not performing the *nitya-karma*.

Therefore one who undertakes (the battle) without desiring its fruits does not incur

even both the kinds of sin. This idea has been explained even earlier. But the mention of the results in, 'Either by being killed you will attain heaven, or by winning you will enjoy the earth' (2.37) was in a secondary sense. Hence there is no fault.⁴ So also Āpasthamba writes in his *Smṛti*,

As when a mango tree is grown for fruits, shade and fragrance follow as a (natural) consequence, thus when righteousness is practised (other) desirable ends follow as a (natural) consequence.

If they do not follow, that will cause no damage to righteousness.⁵ Thus since the injunction about fighting does not fall under *Artha-śāstra*, therefore 'sin will certainly accrue to us' (1.36), etc. becomes negated.

(to be continued)



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4. 'If by undertaking battle as a duty you get killed and reach heaven, it will be an unsought for result and hence secondary. If, again, you win the battle and get a kingdom by doing your duty, that too will be an unsought for result and hence secondary.'

5. *Āpastamba-Dharma-Sūtra*, 1.20.3.

Even forgiveness, if weak and passive, is not true: fight is better. *Forgive* when you could bring legions of angels to the victory. Krishna, the charioteer of Arjuna, hears him say, "Let us forgive our enemies", and answers, "You speak the words of wise men, but you are not a wise man, but a coward". As a lotus-leaf, living in the water yet untouched by it, so should the soul be in the world. This is a battlefield, fight your way out. Life in this world is an attempt to see God. Make your life a manifestation of will strengthened by renunciation.

—*The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. 8, p. 227.

Towards the Declaration of a Global Ethic

Leo Lefebure writes in his article, 'Global Encounter', that this Global Ethic drafted by Hans Küng was expected to have been ratified by the presidents of the 1993 World Parliament of Religions and issued by the trustees of the Council for the Parliament.

As other leaders of Religions came to know about it however, they also wanted to endorse it after due consideration and editing. It was not possible for the 150 members of the international Assembly of Religious and Spiritual Leaders, meeting outside the Parliament, to accept it as it stood in this prepared draft as, they feared, its tone was too Western and Christian.

There being no possibility of editing and little time allotted for debate on it in the meeting, finally the Assembly [over 95 per cent] agreed to accept it with the understanding that it would be an initial statement by the Parliament 'toward a global ethic'.

The world is in agony. The agony is so pervasive and urgent that we are compelled to name its manifestations so that the depth of this pain may be made clear. Peace eludes us ... the planet is being destroyed ... neighbours live in fear ... women and men are estranged from each other ... children die! This is abhorrent! We condemn the abuses of Earth's ecosystems. We condemn the poverty that stifles life's potential; the hunger that weakens the human body; the economic disparities that threaten so many families with ruin. We condemn the social disarray of the nations; the disregard for justice which pushes citizens to the margin; the anarchy overtaking our communities; and the insane death of children from violence. In particular we condemn aggression and hatred in the name of religion.

But this agony need not be. It need not be

because the basis for an ethic already exists. This ethic offers the possibility of a better individual and global order, and leads individuals away from despair and societies away from chaos.

We are women and men who have embraced the precepts and practices of the world's religions: We affirm that a common set of core values is found in the teachings of the religions, and that these form the basis of a global ethic. We affirm that this truth is already known, but yet to be lived in heart and action. We affirm that there is an irrevocable, unconditional norm for all areas of life, for families and communities, for races, nations and religions. There already exist ancient guidelines for human behaviour which are found in the teachings of the religions of the world and which are the condition for a sustainable world order.

WE DECLARE:

We are interdependent. Each of us depends on the well-being of the whole, and so we have respect for the community of living beings, for people, animals, and plants, and for the preservation of Earth, the air, water and soil. We take individual responsibility for all we do. All our decisions, actions, and failures to act have consequences. We must treat others as we wish others to treat us. We make a commitment to respect life and dignity, individuality and diversity, so that every person is treated humanely, without exception. We must have patience and acceptance. We must be able to forgive, learning from the past but never allowing ourselves to be enslaved by memories of hate. Opening our hearts to one another, we must sink our narrow differences for the cause of the world community, practising a culture of solidarity and relatedness.

We consider humankind our family. We must strive to be kind and generous. We must not live for ourselves alone, but should also serve others, never forgetting the children, the aged, the poor, the suffering, the disabled, the refugees, and the lonely. No person should ever be considered or treated as a second-class citizen, or be exploited in any way whatsoever. There should be equal partnership between men and women. We must not commit any kind of sexual immorality. We must put behind us all forms of domination or abuse. We commit ourselves to a culture of non-violence, respect, justice and peace. We shall not oppress, injure, torture, or kill other human beings, forsaking violence as a means of settling differences.

We must strive for a just social and economic order, in which everyone has an equal chance to reach full potential as a human being. We must speak and act truthfully and with compassion, dealing fairly with all, and avoiding prejudice and hatred. We must not steal. We must move beyond dominance of greed for power, prestige,

money and consumption to make a just and peaceful world. Earth cannot be changed for the better unless the consciousness of individuals is changed first. We pledge to increase our awareness by disciplining our minds by meditation, by prayer, or by positive thinking. Without risk and a readiness to sacrifice there can be no fundamental change in our situation. Therefore we commit ourselves to this global ethic, to understanding one another, and to socially beneficial, peace-fostering and nature-friendly ways of life.

WE INVITE ALL PEOPLE,
WHETHER RELIGIOUS OR NOT,
TO DO THE SAME.

THE PRINCIPLES OF A GLOBAL ETHIC

Our world is experiencing a fundamental crisis: A crisis in global economy, global ecology and global politics. The lack of a grand vision, the tangle of unresolved problems, political paralysis, mediocre political leadership with little insight or foresight, and in general too little sense for the commonweal are seen everywhere: Too many old answers to new challenges. Hundreds of millions of human beings on our planet increasingly suffer from unemployment, poverty, hunger and the destruction of their families. Hope for a lasting peace among nations slips away from us. There are tensions between the sexes and generations. Children die, kill, and are killed. More and more countries are shaken by corruption in politics and business. It is increasingly difficult to live together peacefully in our cities because of social, racial, and ethnic conflicts, the abuse of drugs, organized crime, and even anarchy. Even neighbours often live in fear of one another. Our planet continues to be ruthlessly plundered. A collapse of the ecosystem threatens us. Time and again we see leaders and members of religions incite aggression, fanaticism, hate, and xenophobia—even inspire and legitimize violent and bloody conflicts. Religion often is misused for purely power-political goals, including war. We are filled with disgust.

We condemn these blights and declare that they need not be. An ethic already exists within the religious teachings of the world which can counter the global distress. Of course this ethic provides no direct solution for all the immense problems of the world, but it does supply the moral foundation for a better individual and global order: A vision which can lead women and men away from despair, and society away from chaos. We are persons who have committed ourselves to the precepts and practices of the world's religions. We confirm that there is already a consensus among the religions which can be the basis for a global ethic—a minimal *fundamental consensus* concerning binding *values*, irrevocable *standards*, and *fundamental moral attitudes*.

1. No new global order without a new global ethic!

We women and men of various religions and regions of Earth therefore address all people, religious and non-religious. We wish to express the following convictions which we hold in common:

We all have a responsibility for a better global order. Our involvement for the sake of human rights, freedom, justice, peace, and the preservation of Earth is absolutely necessary. Our different religious and cultural traditions must not prevent our common involvement in opposing all forms of inhumanity and working for greater humaneness. The principles expressed in this Global Ethic can be affirmed by all persons with ethical convictions, whether religiously grounded or not. As religious and spiritual persons we base our lives on an Ultimate Reality, and draw spiritual power and hope therefrom, in trust, in prayer or meditation, in word or silence. We have a special responsibility for the welfare of all humanity and care for the planet Earth. We do not consider ourselves better than other women and men, but we trust that the ancient wisdom of our religions can point the way for the future.

After two world wars and the end of the cold war, the collapse of fascism and nazism, the shaking to the foundations of

communism and colonialism, humanity has entered a new phase of its history. Today we possess sufficient economic, cultural, and spiritual resources to introduce a better global order. But old and new ethnic, national, social, economic and religious tensions threaten the peaceful building of a better world. We have experienced greater technological progress than ever before, yet we

**No new global order without a new global ethic!
Every human being must be treated humanely.**

see that world-wide poverty, hunger, death of children, unemployment, misery and the destruction of nature have not diminished but rather have increased. Many peoples are threatened with economic ruin, social disarray, political marginalization, ecological catastrophe and national collapse. In such a dramatic global situation humanity needs a vision of peoples living peacefully together, of ethnic and ethical groupings and of religions sharing responsibility for the care of Earth. A vision rests on hopes, goals, ideals, standards. But all over the world these have slipped from our hands. Yet we are convinced that, despite their frequent abuses and failures, it is the communities of faith who bear a responsibility to demonstrate that such hopes, ideals and standards can be guarded, grounded and lived. This is especially true in the modern state. Guarantees of freedom of conscience and religion are necessary, but they do not substitute for binding values, convictions and norms which are valid for all humans regardless of their social origin, sex, skin colour, language, or religion. We are convinced of the fundamental unity of the human family on Earth. We recall the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations. What it formally proclaimed on the level of rights we wish to confirm and deepen here from the perspective of an ethic: The full realization of the intrinsic dignity of the human person, the inalienable freedom and equality in principle of all humans, and the necessary solidarity and interdependence of all humans with each other.

On the basis of personal experiences and the burdensome history of our planet we have learned that a better global order cannot be created or enforced by laws, prescriptions, and conventions alone; that the realization of peace, justice, and the protection of Earth depends on the insight and readiness of men and women to act justly; that action in favour of rights and freedom presumes a consciousness of responsibility and duty, and that therefore both the minds and hearts of women and men must be addressed; that rights without morality cannot long endure; and that *there will be no better global order without a global ethic*. By a global ethic we do not mean a global ideology or a single unified religion beyond all existing religions, and certainly not the domination of one religion over all others. By a global ethic we mean a fundamental consensus on binding values, irrevocable standards, and personal attitudes. Without such a fundamental consensus on an ethic, sooner or later every community will be threatened by chaos or dictatorship, and individuals will despair.

2. A fundamental demand: Every human being must be treated humanely

We all are fallible, imperfect men and women with limitations and defects. We know the reality of evil. Precisely because of this we feel compelled for the sake of global welfare to express what the fundamental elements of a global ethic should be—for individuals as well as for communities and organizations, for states as well as for the religions themselves. We trust that our often millennia-old religious and ethical traditions provide an ethic which is convincing and practicable for all women and men of good will, religious and non-religious. At the same time we know that our various religious and ethical traditions often offer very different bases for what is helpful and what is unhelpful for men and women, what is right and what is wrong, what is good and what is evil. We do not wish to gloss over or ignore the serious differences among the individual religions. However, they should

not hinder us from proclaiming publicly those things which we already hold in common and which we jointly affirm, each on the basis of our own religious or ethical grounds.

We know that religions cannot solve the environmental, economic, political and social problems of Earth. However they can provide what obviously cannot be attained by economic plans, political programmes, or legal regulations alone: A change in the inner orientation, the whole mentality, the 'hearts' of people, and a conversion from a false path to a new orientation for life. Humankind urgently needs social and ecological reforms, but it needs spiritual renewal just as urgently. As religious or spiritual persons we commit ourselves to this task. The spiritual powers of the religions can offer a fundamental sense of trust, a ground of meaning, ultimate standards and a spiritual home. Of course religions are credible only when they eliminate those conflicts which spring from the religions themselves, dismantling mutual arrogance, mistrust, prejudice and even hostile images, and thus demonstrate respect for the traditions, holy places, feasts and rituals of people who believe differently.

Now as before, women and men are treated inhumanely all over the world. They are robbed of their opportunities and their freedom; their human rights are trampled underfoot; their dignity is disregarded. But might does not make right! In the face of all inhumanity our religious and ethical convictions demand that *every human being must be treated humanely!* This means that every human being without distinction of age, sex, race, skin colour, physical or mental ability, language, religion, political view, or national or social origin possesses an inalienable and untouchable dignity, and everyone, the individual as well as the state, is therefore obliged to honour this dignity and protect it. Humans must always be the subjects of rights, must be ends, never mere means, never objects of commercialization and

industrialization in economics, politics and media, in research institutes and industrial corporations. No one stands 'above good and evil'—no human being, no social class, no influential interest group, no cartel, no police apparatus, no army, and no state. On the contrary possessed of reason and conscience, every human is obliged to behave in a genuinely human fashion, to do good and avoid evil! It is the intention of this Global Ethic to clarify what this means. In it we wish to recall irrevocable unconditional ethical norms. These should not be bonds and chains, but helps and supports for people to find and realize once again their lives' direction, values, orientations and meaning.

There is a principle which is found and has persisted in many religious and ethical traditions of humankind for thousand of years: *What you do not wish done to yourself, do not do to others.* Or in positive terms: *What you wish done to yourself, do to others!* This should be the irrevocable, unconditional norm for all areas of life, for families and communities, for races, nations and religions. Every form of egoism should be rejected: All selfishness, whether in the form of class thinking, racism, nationalism, or sexism. We condemn these because they prevent humans from being authentically human. Self-determination and self-realization are thoroughly legitimate so long as they are not separated from human self-responsibility and global responsibility, that is, from responsibility for fellow humans and for the planet Earth. This principle implies very concrete standards to which we humans should hold firm. From it arise four broad, ancient guidelines for human behaviour which are found in most of the religions of the world.

3. Irrevocable directives

i) Commitment to a culture of non-violence and respect for life.

Numberless women and men of all regions and religions strive to lead lives not determined by egoism but by commitment to their fellow humans and to the world

around them. Nevertheless, all over the world we find endless hatred, envy, jealousy and violence, not only between individuals but also between social and ethnic groups, between classes, races, nations and religions. The use of violence, drug trafficking and organized crime, often equipped with new technical possibilities, has reached global proportions. Many places still are ruled by terror 'from above'; dictators oppress their own people, and institutional violence is widespread. Even in some countries where laws exist to protect individual freedoms, prisoners are tortured, men and women are mutilated, hostages are killed.

a) In the great ancient religious and ethical traditions of humankind we find the directive: *You shall not kill!* Or in positive terms: *Have respect for life!* Let us reflect anew on the consequences of this ancient directive. All people have a right to life, safety, and the free development of personality insofar as they do not injure the rights of others. No one has the right physically or psychically to torture, injure, much less kill, any other human being. And no people, no

Commitment to a culture of non-violence and respect for life.

Commitment to a culture of solidarity and a just economic order.

Commitment to a culture of tolerance and life of truthfulness.

Commitment to a culture of equal rights and partnership between men and women.

state, no race, no religion has the right to hate, to discriminate against, to 'cleanse', to exile, much less to liquidate a 'foreign' minority which is different in behaviour or holds different beliefs.

b) Of course, wherever there are humans there will be conflicts. Such conflicts, however, should be resolved without violence within a framework of justice. This is true for states as well as for individuals. Persons who hold political power must work within

the framework of a just order and commit themselves to the most non-violent, peaceful solutions possible. And they should work for this within an international order of peace which itself has need of protection and defense against perpetrators of violence. Armament is a mistaken path; disarmament is the commandment of the times. Let no one be deceived: There is no survival for humanity without global peace!

c) Young people must learn at home and in school that violence may not be a means of settling differences with others. Only thus can a culture of non-violence be created.

d) A human person is infinitely precious and must be unconditionally protected. But likewise the lives of animals and plants which inhabit this planet with us deserve protection, preservation and care. Limitless exploitation of the natural foundations of life, ruthless destruction of the biosphere, and militarization of the cosmos are all outrages. As human beings we have a special responsibility—especially with a view to future generations—for Earth and the cosmos, for the air, water and soil. We are all intertwined together in this cosmos and we are all dependent on each other. Each one of us depends on the welfare of all. Therefore the dominance of humanity over nature and the cosmos must not be encouraged. Instead we must cultivate living in harmony with nature and the cosmos.

e) To be authentically human in the spirit of our great religious and ethical traditions means that in public as well as in private life we must be concerned for others and ready to help. We must never be ruthless and brutal. Every people, every race, every religion must show tolerance and respect—indeed high appreciation—for every other. Minorities need protection and support, whether they be racial, ethnic, or religious.

ii) Commitment to a culture of solidarity and just economic order.

Numberless men and women of all regions and religions strive to live their lives in solidarity with one another and to work for authentic fulfilment of their vocations. Nevertheless, all over the world we find

endless hunger, deficiency and need. Not only individuals but especially unjust institutions and structures are responsible for these tragedies. Millions of people are without work; millions are exploited by poor wages, forced to the edges of society, with their possibilities for the future destroyed. In many lands the gap between the poor and the rich, between the powerful and the powerless is immense. We live in a world in which totalitarian state socialism as well as unbridled capitalism have hollowed out and destroyed many ethical and spiritual values. A materialistic mentality breeds greed for unlimited profit and a grasping for endless plunder. These demands claim more and more of the community's resources without obliging the individual to contribute more. The cancerous social evil of corruption thrives in the developing countries and in the developed countries alike.

a) In the great ancient religious and ethical traditions of humankind we find the directive: *You shall not steal!* Or in positive terms: *Deal honestly and fairly!* Let us reflect anew on the consequences of this ancient directive; No one has the right to rob or dispossess in any way whatsoever any other person or the commonweal. Further, no one has the right to use her or his possessions without concern for the needs of society and Earth.

b) Where extreme poverty reigns, helplessness and despair spread, and theft occurs again and again for the sake of survival. Where power and wealth are accumulated ruthlessly, feelings of envy, resentment, and deadly hatred and rebellion inevitably well up in the disadvantaged and marginalized. This leads to a vicious circle of violence and counter violence. Let no one be deceived; There is no global peace without global justice!

c) Young people must learn at home and in school that property, limited though it may be, carries with it an obligation, and that its uses should at the same time serve the common good. Only thus can a just economic order be built up.

d) If the plight of the poorest billions of humans on this planet, particularly women and children, is to be improved, the world economy must be structured more justly. Individual good deeds, and assistance projects, indispensable though they be, are insufficient. The participation of all states and the authority of international organizations are needed to build just economic institutions. A solution which can be supported by all sides must be sought for debt crisis and the poverty of the dissolving second world, and even more the third world. Of course conflicts of interest are unavoidable. In the developed countries, a distinction must be made between necessary and limitless consumption, between socially beneficial and non-beneficial uses of property, between justified and unjustified uses of natural resources, and between a profit-only and a socially beneficial and ecologically oriented market economy. Even the developing nations must search their national consciences. Wherever those ruling threaten to repress those ruled, wherever institutions threaten persons, and wherever might oppresses right, we are obligated to resist—whenever possible non-violently.

e) To be authentically human in the spirit of our great religious and ethical traditions means the following:

We must utilize economic and political power for service to humanity instead of misusing it in ruthless battles for domination. We must develop a spirit of compassion with those who suffer, with special care for the children, the aged, the poor, the disabled, the refugees and the lonely. We must cultivate mutual respect and consideration, so as to reach a reasonable balance of interests, instead of thinking only of unlimited power and unavoidable competitive struggles. We must value a sense of moderation and modesty instead of an unquenchable greed for money, prestige and consumption. In greed humans lose their 'souls', their freedom, their composure, their inner peace, and thus that which makes them human.

iii) Commitment to a culture of tolerance and a life of truthfulness.

Numberless women and men of all regions and religions strive to lead lives of honesty and truthfulness. Nevertheless, all over the world we find endless lies and deceit, swindling and hypocrisy, ideology and demagoguery:

Politicians and business people who use lies as a means to success; mass media which spread ideological propaganda instead of accurate reporting, misinformation instead of information, cynical commercial interest instead of loyalty to the truth; scientists and researchers who give themselves over to morally questionable ideological or political programmes or to economic interest groups, who justify research which violates fundamental ethical values; representatives of religions who dismiss other religions as of little value and who preach fanaticism and intolerance instead of respect and understanding.

a) In the great ancient religious and ethical traditions of humankind we find the directive: *You shall not lie!* Or in positive terms: *Speak and act truthfully!* Let us reflect anew on the consequences of this ancient directive: No woman or man, no institution, no state or church or religious community has the right to speak lies to other humans.

b) This is especially true for those who work in the mass media, to whom we entrust the freedom to report for the sake of truth and to whom we thus grant the office of guardian. They do not stand above morality but have the obligation to respect human dignity, human rights and fundamental values. They are duty-bound to objectivity, fairness and the preservation of human dignity. They have no right to intrude into individuals' private spheres, to manipulate public opinion, or to distort reality. (It is true also) for artists, writers and scientists, to whom we entrust artistic and academic freedom. They are not exempt from general ethical standards and must serve the truth. (This is valid) for the leaders of countries, politicians and political parties, to whom we entrust our own freedoms. When they lie in the faces of their people, when they manipulate the truth, or when they are guilty of venality or ruthlessness in

domestic or foreign affairs, they forsake their credibility and deserve to lose their offices and their voters. Conversely, public opinion should support those politicians who dare to speak the truth to the people at all times. Finally, (it is true) for representatives of religion. When they stir up prejudice, hatred and enmity towards those of different belief, or even incite or legitimize religious wars, they deserve the condemnation of humankind and the loss of their adherents. Let no one be deceived: There is no global justice without truthfulness and humaneness!

c) Young people must learn at home and in school to think, speak and act truthfully. They have a right to information and education to be able to make the decisions that will form their lives. Without an ethical formation they will hardly be able to distinguish the important from the unimportant. In the daily flood of information, ethical standards will help them discern when opinions are portrayed as facts, interests veiled, tendencies exaggerated, and facts twisted.

d) To be authentically human in the spirit of our great religious and ethical traditions means the following: We must not confuse freedom with arbitrariness or pluralism with indifference to truth; we must cultivate truthfulness in all our relationships instead of dishonesty, dissembling and opportunism; we must constantly seek truth and incorruptible sincerity instead of spreading ideological or partisan half-truths; (and) we must courageously serve the truth and we must remain constant and trustworthy, instead of yielding to opportunistic accommodation to life.

iv) Commitment to a culture of equal rights and partnership between men and women.

Numberless men and women of all regions and religions strive to live their lives in a spirit of partnership and responsible action in the areas of love, sexuality and family. Nevertheless, all over the world there are condemnable forms of patriarchy, domination of one over the other, exploitation of women, sexual misuse of children and forced prostitution. Too frequently,

social inequities force women and even children into prostitution as a means of survival—particularly in less developed countries.

a) In the great ancient religions and ethical traditions of humankind we find the directive: *You shall not commit sexual immorality!* Or in positive terms: *Respect and love one another!* Let us reflect anew on the consequences of this ancient directive: No one has the right to degrade others to mere sex objects, to lead them into or hold them in sexual dependency.

Earth cannot be changed for the better unless the consciousness of individuals is changed first. We pledge to increase our awareness by disciplining our minds by meditation, by prayer, or by positive thinking.

b) We condemn sexual exploitation and sexual discrimination as one of the worst forms of human degradation. We have the duty to resist wherever the domination of one sex over the other is preached—even in the name of religious conviction; wherever sexual exploitation is tolerated, wherever prostitution is fostered or children are misused. Let no one be deceived: There is no authentic humaneness without a living together in partnership!

c) Young people must learn at home and in school that sexuality is not a negative, destructive, or exploitative force, but creative and affirmative. Sexuality as a life-affirming shaper of community can only be effective when partners accept the responsibilities of caring for one another's happiness.

d) The relationship between women and men should be characterized not by patronizing behaviour or exploitation, but by love, partnership and trustworthiness. Human fulfilment is not identical with sexual pleasure. Sexuality should express and reinforce a loving relationship lived by equal partners. Some religious traditions know the ideal of a voluntary renunciation of the full use of sexuality. Voluntary renunciation also can be an expression of identity

and meaningful fulfilment.

e) The social institution of marriage, despite all its cultural and religious variety, is characterized by love, loyalty and permanence. It aims at and should guarantee security and mutual support to husband, wife and child. It should secure the rights of all family members.

f) To be authentically human in the spirit of our great religious and ethical traditions means the following: We need mutual respect, partnership and understanding, instead of patriarchal domination and degradation, which are expressions of violence and engender counter-violence. We need mutual concern, tolerance, readiness for reconciliation, and love, instead of any form of possessive lust or sexual misuse. Only what has already been experienced in personal and familial relationships can be practised on the level of nations and religions.

4. A Transformation of Consciousness!

Historical experience demonstrates the following: Earth cannot be changed for the better unless we achieve a transformation in the consciousness of individuals and in public life. The possibilities for transformation have already been glimpsed in areas such as war and peace, economy and ecology, where in recent decades fundamental changes have taken place. This transformation must also be achieved in the area of ethics and values! Every individual has intrinsic dignity and inalienable rights, and each also has an inescapable responsibility for what she or he does and does not do. All our decisions and deeds, even our omissions and failures, have consequences. Keeping this sense of responsibility alive, deepening it and passing it on to future generations, is the special task of religions. We are realistic about what we have achieved in this consensus, and so we urge that the following be observed:

1. A universal consensus on many dis-

puted ethical questions (from bio- and sexual ethics through mass media and scientific ethics to economic and political ethics) will be difficult to attain. Nevertheless, even for many controversial questions, suitable solutions should be attainable in the spirit of the fundamental principles we have jointly developed here.

2. In many areas of life a new consciousness of ethical responsibility has already arisen. Therefore we would be pleased if as many professions as possible, such as those of physicians, scientists, business people, journalists, and politicians, would develop up-to-date codes of ethics which would provide specific guidelines for the vexing questions of these particular professions.

3. Above all, we urge the various communities of faith to formulate their very specific ethics: What does each faith tradition have to say, for example, about the meaning of life and death, the enduring of suffering and the forgiveness of guilt, about selfless sacrifice and the necessity of renunciation, about compassion and joy. These will deepen, and make more specific, the already discernible global ethic.

In conclusion, we appeal to all the inhabitants of this planet. Earth cannot be changed for the better unless the consciousness of individuals is changed. We pledge to work for such transformation in individual and collective consciousness, for the awakening of our spiritual powers through reflection, meditation, prayer, or positive thinking, for a conversion of the heart. Together we can move mountains! Without a willingness to take risks and a readiness to sacrifice there can be no fundamental change in our situation! Therefore we commit ourselves to a common global ethic, to better mutual understanding, as well as to socially beneficial, peace-fostering, and Earth-friendly ways of life.

We invite all men and women, whether religious or not, to do the same. □

Global Encounter

LEO D. LEFEBURE

This insightful firsthand report, providing a very good survey of the Parliament's proceedings, first appeared in The Christian Century, September 22-29, 1993. The author teaches theology at the University of St. Mary of the Lake in Mundelein, Illinois, USA; he is also a member of the research committee of the Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions. Besides, he is the author of The Buddha and the Christ, published by Orbis.

In 1893 a young man from India went to the podium at the Art Institute of Chicago, threw open his arms, and exclaimed: 'Sisters and Brothers of America!' The crowd went wild, applauding vigorously for several minutes. Recalling the deep sense of religious tolerance in his own heritage, the speaker lamented the scourge of religious hatred and bigotry, and concluded: 'I fervently hope that the bell that tolled this morning in honour of this convention may be the death-knell of all fanaticism, of all persecutions with the sword or with the pen, and of all uncharitable feelings between persons wending their way to the same goal.' The brief address by Swami Vivekananda, a Hindu disciple of Ramakrishna from Calcutta, on the opening day of the 1893 World's Parliament of Religions captured the imagination of the audience and installed him as the premiere attraction of the first world-scale interreligious gathering. Vivekananda hailed the assembly as a vindication of the doctrine of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*: 'Whosoever comes to Me, through whatsoever form, I reach him: all men are struggling through paths which in the end lead to Me.'

The first Parliament, held in conjunction

with Chicago's Columbian Exposition, appeared like a meteor in the sky. It attracted attention from large crowds and the press and then quickly vanished from the awareness of most religious groups in the U.S. Much of the success of the 1893 gathering was due to the sheer novelty, for Americans, of seeing representatives of Asian religions in their colourful robes and hearing addresses that were, to Americans, surprisingly moving and persuasive. One member of the Chicago press commented: 'Those we are accustomed to call heathen are not so heathen as we thought. Under some lies the idea of God. Under all of them lies his morality. What will the outcome be?' Many shared the mood of hope and optimism for an irenic future. At least one representative, Christophore Jibara, the archimandrite of the apostolic and patriarchal throne of the Orthodox Church in Syria, worried that the sheer presence of so many religions together could produce doubt against all their claims. To avoid this, Jibara urged that 'a committee should be selected from the great religions to investigate the dogmas and to make a full and perfect comparison, and approving the true one and announcing it to the people.' He was confident that this project would be 'easy to do in

America, and especially in Chicago.'

A second Parliament of the World's Religions met in Chicago in late August and early September 1993. It attracted more than 7,000 representatives of religious traditions from around the world. In the intervening century, the hopes for an end to religious hatred and violence have not been realized, but the religious population of Chicago and the U.S. has changed radically. There are more Hindus than Episcopalians in the Chicago area, more Buddhists than Hindus, and more Muslims than Jews. Americans in 1893 were encountering representatives of Asian religions for the first time; in 1993 local communities of these faiths organized the welcome for foreign visitors. A century ago Jews and Catholics looked to the Parliament to find greater recognition and acceptance in American life; at this year's event religious movements such as the Fellowship of Isis, the Covenant of the Goddess, and the Lyceum of Venus of Healing sought attention and respectability alongside older, more established traditions. In the procession at the Closing Plenary Session in Grant Park one man carried a sign that proclaimed defiantly to the crowd: 'The GODDESS: you'll never forget HER again!'

The ambitious goal of the 1993 Parliament was to focus on the critical issues facing humanity and to call for a united religious response. In the opening plenary address, Robert Muller, former deputy secretary general of the United Nations, called for establishment of a permanent institution similar to the UN to allow for ongoing cooperation and dialogue among religions. In the next plenary address Gerald O. Barney, a fusion-energy physicist and founder of the Millennium Institute sought to bring a clarity of focus and determination of purpose to the Parliament by outlining the prospects for humanity moving into the 21st century. Using slides and charts, Barney

painted a frightening picture of increasing misery and conflict if many current trends continue. The growth of populations, the abuse of the earth's resources, and constraints on agricultural production threaten to create misery on an unprecedented scale.

At the core of the crisis, Barney asserted, is a failure of vision. The usual economic definition of success has failed, and we no longer know what success or failure means. Barney pleaded for help from religious leaders in shaping a new dream, a 'sustainable' faith tradition. Barney challenged religious leaders to reflect on how to meet the legitimate needs of the growing human community without destroying the

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resources of the earth, on how to re-define the meaning of progress in relation to the entire community of life, on how to relate to those who differ from us and eliminate interreligious hatred, and on how to reinterpret each faith tradition in relation to the new scientific truths about the earth which bear spiritual significance.

At the conclusion of Barney's remarks, Rabbi Herman Schaalman, a president to the Parliament and co-chair of the Jewish Host Committee, spoke for most if not all participants: 'Now we all know why we have come. We have heard from the soul of a man for whom all the earth is home. Now we have been challenged as I have never heard anyone challenge me, and I dare say I'm speaking for each of us here.' For me and many other participants, Barney's address was the most powerful presentation of the entire Parliament. The speech crystallized the aim of the event and set forth a clear and compelling agenda for interreligious

cooperation for the sake of all life on the planet. The tensions that surfaced later in the week could not diminish the cogency of Barney's plea for leadership. In the closing plenary address the Dalai Lama reiterated many of Barney's themes, calling for harmony among religions, 'nonviolent population control' ('We need more monks and nuns!'), respect for all forms of life and a just distribution of the earth's resources.

Participants in the Parliament responded to Barney's challenge in a variety of ways. Many signed on to a computer network and database for ecological issues. Symposia were held on 'Cosmic Beginnings, Human Ends', 'Religion and Violence', and 'Ethics, Values and Spirituality in the Workplace'. A conference on pluralism explored the issues of 'Identity, Conflict and Globality', and media panels discussed 'New Paradigms for Media in the 21st Century'. Approximately 750 major presentations, seminars and lectures explored the resources of religious traditions for responding to critical issues. While some presentations appeared strange to Western Christian sensibilities (one Indian guru taught his audience the proper sounds to make during the critical 30 seconds of dying that decide the worth of one's life), others discussed the impact of religions on business in a global economy, the role of religions in causing and healing conflict, and the relation of religions and science. The silence of meditation and prayer, the rhythms of chant and song and dance, and the images of art and film graced the gatherings with a sense of the Mystery that transcends all words. For most participants, the presentations, the activities, and the contacts made or renewed with people from around the world were the core of the Parliament. From what I and others observed, the experience of most participants was overwhelmingly positive.

Given the long history of religious

conflict, it would have been surprising if the week had proceeded without stresses. Some religious groups chose not to attend: there were few evangelical Christians or Orthodox Jews present. Pure Land Buddhists from Japan wondered why more Japanese were not participating. Mainline Protestant groups were not prominent. Harvey Cox called for dialogue within each religious tradition between those who have been involved in interreligious dialogue and those who have no interest in such dialogue.

Organizers of the Parliament knew they were taking a risk when they offered a forum for personal stories and testimonies of suffering from dispossessed communities around the world. The session featuring 'Voices of the Dispossessed' was twice disrupted by shouting from the audience. First, Ghulam Nabi Fai, executive director of the Kashmiri American Council, was interrupted by shouting by Indians but was allowed to continue and complete his remarks on the sufferings of Kashmirians. Later, Gurmit Singh Aulakh, a Sikh from Punjab, India, was recounting the sufferings of the Sikhs when shouting resumed on a

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broader scale, and some men moved toward the stage. Before the speech, Aulakh had been asked not to be inflammatory, but some Indians present found his account one-sided and offensive. The speech was interrupted, the stage was cleared, and Aulakh was not permitted to continue. During a tense interruption, people began to sing 'We Shall Overcome'. Eventually the programme resumed with the soothing voice of a Navajo woman, Jennie Joe, recounting the suffering of her people. A Native American circle dance on stage

brought the session to a close.

The week also saw withdrawals by some cosponsoring groups. The Orthodox Christian Host Committee cancelled its participation in the Parliament because of 'the distinctive participation of certain quasi-religious groups with which Orthodox Christians share no common ground. It would be inconceivable for Orthodox Christianity to establish a perceived relationship with groups which profess no belief in God or a supreme being.' The official communique, issued on the stationery of the Greek Orthodox Diocese of Chicago, did not specify the groups, but it appeared to be the presence of neo-pagans that gave offense. The communique noted that Orthodox Christian representatives participated fully in the original Parliament, but it did not point out that Buddhists who did not believe in God also participated in that 1893 gathering. Not all Orthodox Christians withdrew. The most prominent Orthodox Christians present, Paulos Mar Gregorios, Metropolitan of Delhi of the Syrian Orthodox Church of the East and a past president of the World Council of Churches, participated in the signing of the statement 'Toward a Global Ethic' and in the Parliament's closing plenary session.

On September 2 four Jewish organizations, the Anti-Defamation League, the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress, and the Jewish Community Relations Council of the Jewish United Fund of Metropolitan Chicago, withdrew cosponsorship of the Parliament because Minister Louis Farrakhan of the Nation of Islam was allowed to speak at the invitation of the African-American Host Committee. Not all Jewish participants followed this lead. A presentation by a Jewish scholar on Abraham Heschel's view of other religions continued as planned. Rabbi Herman Schaalman and Professor

Susannah Heschel, daughter of Abraham Heschel, both appeared on stage during the closing plenary.

Other groups met separately during the Parliament. The local host committees helped organize an Assembly of Metropolitan Religious, Spiritual and Civil Leaders. This group, composed of about 130 religious leaders from the Chicago metropolitan area, agreed to form a Metropolitan Task Force, chaired by Jeffrey Carlson of DePaul University, to increase inter-religious communication and cooperation on local issues. Participants described the local Assembly meeting as going very smoothly and offering solid grounds for hope.

There was, however, conflict in another body that met during the Parliament. The trustees of the Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions convened an international Assembly of Religious and Spiritual Leaders to foster future collaboration, to endorse a 'Global Ethic' statement, and to advise the trustees on common values and future projects. This body consisted of over 150 members chosen by the Council, the local host committees of the different traditions and the cosponsors. The Assembly met separately from the everyday activities of the Parliament.

Prior to the Parliament Hans Kung had written an initial draft of 'A Global Ethic', which was revised after widespread consultation with religious leaders. According to Catholic representative Thomas Baima, trustee of the Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions and Spiritual Leaders, the statement was originally to have been issued by the Council and endorsed by the presidents of the Parliament. As other leaders learned of the statement, many wanted to endorse it, and so the Council trustees decided to present the statement to

the Assembly of Spiritual and Religious Leaders for endorsement. Baima explained: 'Within the Assembly, the document was intended to provoke discussion regarding the issues it raised, but not to be the subject of editorial work. We needed a way to carry the issues facing the world at this moment before the Assembly. The statement seemed to be the vehicle to do this. But this is not what happened.'

What happened at the meeting of the Assembly on September 4 was a confusing and frustrating descent into chaos. There was no possibility of editing the statement on ethics and little debate regarding the statement itself. Because some representatives feared that the tone of the statement was too Western and Christian, it was proposed to endorse the text as an initial statement *toward* a global ethic. Over 95 percent of the Assembly accepted the document with this understanding. The statement decries the needless agony of the world and the role of religion in contributing to unnecessary suffering. The religious leaders 'affirm that a common set of core values is found in the teachings of the religions, and that these form the basis of a global ethic. We affirm that this truth is already known but yet to be lived in heart and action.'

The Assembly had no authority to pass resolutions, and thus no procedure to debate or amend them. Though not intended to be a deliberative body, the Assembly appeared to take on this character as resolutions were made and a show of hands taken to determine the sense of the Assembly. Some members chafed under the restriction of its mission and sought to use the Assembly as a forum for their own concerns. One resolution condemned the papal decision of 1493, which divided territories in the Americas between Catholic monarchs, as responsible for the genocide of 145 million indigenous people. A show of hands

drew majority support for this resolution, but other representatives were upset that there was no procedure for challenging the assumption of the statement regarding the alleged cause-effect relation of one papal decision to genocide. Despite the confusion, the Council for the Parliament, the presidents of the Parliament, and the overwhelming majority of the Assembly did agree to issue the initial statement 'Toward a Global Ethic'. The final outcome may well be of value as a basis for discussing ethical issues in a pluralistic society. The Muslim community, for one, is planning to offer constructive criticism of it.

But for most participants and presenters, the Parliament was a profoundly enriching opportunity to broaden horizons, ... to learn about other traditions, and to face together the challenges before humanity.

In the background of all discussions, and in the foreground of some, was the question of interpreting the plurality of religions. The most common model invoked in plenary sessions was the affirmation of one God behind all religions, often with little apparent awareness that this assumption was problematic to many. Swami Gahanananda of the Vivekananda Vedanta Society asserted that Allah, God and Brahman are all the same, and called for the Parliament to move 'from harmony to unity': 'The containers are different; the content is the same.'

Not all participants accepted the theistic resolution of diversity into unity. Buddhists, led by Samu Sunim of the Zen Buddhist Temple in Chicago, voiced their astonishment and dismay at being included in one religion under God, since they pursue their religious path without believing in or relying on God. The Dalai Lama distinguished between 'godly religions' and 'godless

(Continued on page 312)

A Critique on a Global Ethic

DR. SAMPOORAN SINGH

A scientist by training and profession, the author convincingly indicates how the much heralded 'global ethics' can be brought into being and can be accepted universally. Dr. Singh's ideas on the potentiality of conjoined science and religion are worthy of deep consideration.

The year 2000 is approaching. Basically it is the two-thousandth anniversary of the birth of Jesus, socially it is a bi-millennium of our civic calendar. And our generation, which is privileged and called upon to welcome the new millennium, is bound to make it a planetary jubilee, a Holy Year. The twentieth century represents by far the greatest turning point in history and human destiny. The final appraisal of our situation is registered by a Nobel-prize winning biologist, Jacques Monod, in the words: 'The nineteenth century scientism saw a track leading infallibly upward to an empyrean noon hour for mankind, whereas what we see opening before us today is an abyss of darkness.'¹

It is a sobering thought that we are a privileged generation, not only because we may be the first to see the dawn of the third millennium after Christ, but because we may well be the last to inhabit this planet. Can we accept the second possibility as passive spectators and drift mindlessly towards disaster, or towards its rendezvous

with the ultimate apocalypse?² The decision lies with you on what you do in the next 2,000 days. If we want the first alternative, we have to explore the new frontiers of the inward cosmos, or the Christ Consciousness (global Consciousness) unfolding in cosmic dimensions and bring about a radical transformation or mutation in our psyche. We have to work for the collective liberation of man in history!

The centennial—and second—1993 Parliament of the World's Religions, which met at Chicago from August 18 to September 5, 1993 is one of the greatest events that took place at the end of this century and millennium. In issuing a Declaration towards a 'Global Ethic', it observed that, 'Peace eludes us...the planet is being destroyed...children die!' The recommendation in a nutshell is that 'Earth cannot be changed for the better unless the consciousness of individuals is changed first. We pledge to increase our awareness....' Another such declaration has been made in early 1993.³ This paper explores in depth global ethics in the light of modern physics.

1. Jacques Monod, *Chance and Necessity* (New York: Vintage Books, 1972), p. 171; in 'Synthesis of Science and Religion' (Bombay: The Bhaktivedanta Institute, June 1988), p. 127.

2. Karan Singh, in *Odyssey of Science, Culture and Consciousness* (New Delhi Abhinav Publications, 1990), p. 8.

3. Sampooran Singh, *Science, Human Values,*

Science and Global Ethics

Such declarations usually provoke deep thinking and taking-stock, both in retrospection and envisioning the future. We opine that the Parliament looked at the fringes of the human challenges and did not touch the core of the challenges. It ignored the hard scientific facts, which are as under:

a) Fritjof Capra concluded, 'I believe that the world-view implied by modern physics is inconsistent with our present society, which does not reflect the harmonious interrelatedness we observe in nature.'⁴ ...Obviously we have to explore the causes which have led to the construction of our present society.

b) Physicists have come to see that all their theories of natural phenomena, including the 'laws' they describe, are creations of the human mind: properties of our conceptual map of reality, rather than of reality itself, or, in other words, parts of the map, not of the territory.⁵ Albert Einstein concluded, 'Our new idea is simple: to build a physics valid for all coordinate systems' or all frames of reference of the mind-brain spectrum. Obviously the answer to our challenges is embedded in understanding the psychodynamics or transpersonal psychology of our mind-brain system and not in religious traditions, concepts, ideals, and so on.

c) Ervin Laszlo concluded, 'The new physics and the new cosmology do not recognize discrete things and independent events in the universe, only ripples upon ripples, waves upon waves, interpenetrating and propagating in a seamless sea.'⁶

d) Electroencephalograph (EEG) recordings during meditation and psychotechnologies give concrete evidence of physical changes: higher levels of integration in the brain itself, more efficient processing, different 'harmonics' of the brain's electrical rhythms, and shifts in perceptual ability.⁷ When one is thinking, there is beta-rhythm, which indicates that one is more attentive to the external world than to the inner field. When thinking is replaced by quiet contemplation, there is alpha-rhythm, which suggests a relaxed state.

e) When thinking is going on, the brain cells discharge their potential asynchronously—not together but haphazardly, in conflict. Thought itself is a form of conflict and therefore it lowers the amplitude of the brain waves. So thinking is not the highest form of activity. The production of alpha waves is an indication that there is synchronous discharge of energy from the brain cells—they are all discharging this electrical potential at more or less the same time.⁸

f) The researches on meditation, biofeedback, relaxation techniques, and rest-and-renewal response suggest shifts in the parasympathetic reactions. The ability to shift the body into a parasympathetic phase—the new state of mind is called 'restful alertness'—decreases the long-range stresses. The mind-brain system can exist in several states—two important states are immanent quantum energy potential and transcendent quantum energy potential.

g) Meditation, chanting and similar techniques increase the coherence and

Value Education and Peace (New Delhi: New Man and New World Movement (India), Sept. 1993), pp. 76-87.

4. Fritjof Capra, *The Tao of Physics* (New York: Bantam Books, 1988), p. 298.

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 277, 147.

6. Ervin Laszlo, 'Emerging Concepts of the

Cosmos', *The Scientific and Medical Network, Network Newsletter* No. 49, August 1992.

7. Marilyn Ferguson, *The Aquarian Conspiracy* (London: J. P. Tarcher, Inc. 1980), p. 67.

8. Sampooran Singh, *The Human Survival: The Emergence of a New Global Civilization* (Chandigarh: Faith Publishers, 1993), p. 15.

harmony in the brain wave patterns; they bring about greater synchrony between the hemispheres, which suggests that higher order is achieved.⁹

h) The brain activity is integrated at a higher level. Roger Sperry concluded:

When the brain is whole, the unified consciousness of the left and right hemispheres adds up to more than the individual properties of the separate hemispheres.

When parts come together in a new whole, this new whole exhibits features—emergent properties—that can't be predicted as a rule from the parts, and cannot be explained entirely in terms of the parts.¹⁰

i) All extra-sensory perception, para-normal powers, psychic powers, and emergence of higher values indicate different states of the mind-brain system, or different expressions of higher quantum potentials of consciousness.

j) The construct of the mind is the only 'actuality' where the (mind's) transcendence potential is in abeyance and its only linkage is the immanent potential. It represents the relative field of consciousness. The construct of the mind is a time-space matrix which has no potential to bring in transformation in the human psyche. So all thought-structures, beliefs and ideals are sterile in bringing transformation in the human psyche. Dag Hammarskjöld said, 'I see no hope for permanent world peace. We have tried and failed miserably. Unless the world has a spiritual rebirth, civilization is doomed.'¹¹

k) F. M. Lehmann concluded, 'A true

natural scientist, seeking systematic order in his world of experience, asks no questions about the beginning of this order, about the beginning of Life, of Time, and Space, and the Universe. The beginning of Order is not his concern if no observation is involved.'¹²

l) Arthur Eddington puts it succinctly, 'We have two kinds of knowledge, which I call symbolic knowledge and intimate knowledge.'¹³

m) The very crux of twentieth-century physics is the recognition that the observer cannot be excluded from his observations: he is an intrinsic participant in them. As Sullivan put it, 'We cannot observe the course of nature without disturbing it.'¹⁴ Andrade wrote, 'Observation means interference with what we are observing.... observation disturbs reality.'¹⁵ It was abundantly clear to these physicists that objective measurement and verification could no longer be the mark of absolute reality, because the measured object could never be

So thinking is not the highest form of activity.... Meditation, chanting and similar techniques increase the coherence and harmony in the brain wave pattern... higher order is achieved.

completely separated from the measuring subject—the measured and the measurer, at this level, are one and the same. It implies that objective science can never give the true ethics or true human values.

n) Physics tells us that the outer

9. Marilyn Ferguson, p. 79.

10. Roger Sperry, in *Bulletin of the Theosophy Science Study Group*, India, February & April 1988, p. 23; and June & August 1988, p. 27.

11. Dag Hammarskjöld's foreword to Robert Muller's *Source Book for the Parliament of the World's Religions*, Chicago, 1993.

12. F. M. Lehmann, 'Two Kinds of Natural Science', *The Scientific and Medical Network, Newsletter*, August 1993, No. 52, p. 17.

13. Arthur Eddington, in Commins and Linscott, *Man and the Universe* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1969), p. 453.

14. J. W. N. Sullivan, *The Limitations of Science* (New York: Mentor Books, 1949), p. 140.

15. E. N. da C. Andrade, *An Approach to Modern Physics* (New York: Doubleday, Anchor Books, 1957) p. 255.

(objective field) and the inner (subjective field) are interrelated, interpenetrated and inseparable. Objective science must restructure itself to take subjective research in its fold. The integration of objective research and subjective research is called true science. True science explores 'all coordinate systems' or 'frames of reference' of the mind-spectrum. It implies an investigation of the unit of perception, the cartographing of inner space, and the transcendence of psychological imbalances; it implies a study of the field of man's self-awareness, of the realm of his consciousness, of his being the subject and not the object.

Humanist Technology of Science of Life

We stand on the brink of a new age, Lewis Mumford said, the age of an open world, a time of renewal when a fresh release of spiritual energy in the world-culture may unleash new possibilities. 'The sum of all our days is just our beginning.'¹⁶ The emerging science accepts consciousness and that is epochal. Karl Pribram said, 'Brain-science must deal with the awareness of awareness. It could no longer afford to shut out that part of the world which we call as [*sic*] subjective.'¹⁷

Biologist T. H. Huxley once wrote, 'Sit down before fact like a little child, and be prepared to give up every preconceived notion, follow humbly whenever and to whatever abyss Nature leads, or you shall learn nothing.'¹⁸ A child follows the natural method of observation. But as it grows, its memory gets stirred, and that pollutes the observation because past memory grafts itself on the fact, leading to distortion of the fact to non-fact.

The hard facts of science compel us to have a deeper look at life and it suggests as under:

a) The 'outer' and the 'inner' are not two separate movements, but it is a unitary movement, one whole flow. One starts with the outer and then the inner without interfering in thought flow. When one is aware of his own inward activities, watch what you are thinking and never let one thought escape without observing the nature of it, the source of it. If you do not feed any energy to thought flow, then thought blossoms and withers away. It implies a radical transformation of the content of consciousness, and this we call mutation.

b) Prigogine stated that 'the behaviour of a reality (is) unrelated to our beliefs, our ambitions, or our hopes.'¹⁹ Erwin Schrodinger stated, 'A moderately satisfying picture of the world has only been reached at the high price of taking ourselves out of the picture, stepping back into the role of a non-concerned observer.'²⁰ This is the foundation of objective research and the same is true for subjective research. Both objective research and subjective research excludes I-ness or ego.

c) We have to jettison the Cartesian-Newtonian world-view and imbibe a holistic and ecological world-view. This is possible only when one revels in a non-dual frame of reference.

d) The answer to human problem is embedded in *direct perception* (intuition). Insight or intuition is the perception of the wholeness.

e) The old paradigm, based on intellect, is the trinity of scientific knowledge,

16. Lewis Mumford, in Marilyn Ferguson, p. 42.

17. Karl Pribram, in Ken Wilber, *The Holographic Paradigm and Other Paradoxes* (Boulder, Co. USA: Shambhala, 1982), p. 17.

18. T. H. Huxley, in Ken Wilber, pp. 15-16.

19. Ilya Prigogine and Isabelle Stengers, *Order Out of Chaos* (New York: Bantam Books, 1984), p. 5.

20. Erwin Schrodinger, *What is Life? & Mind and Matter* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1967), p. 128.

human reason and universal morality; and the new paradigm is the trinity of human wisdom, quantum logic and love (ethical and spiritual values); and this involves a quantum jump from mutilated perception to pure perception.

f) A psychological revolution—preferably under the auspices of the United Nations—will result in our transcending all psychological imbalances; it will usher in a new age where every human being can have peace, freedom and bliss.²¹

g) There cannot be a global order without a global ethic. And that global ethic will emerge from a non-dual frame of reference in the mind-spectrum.

h) We want to nurture a new instrument of non-dual thought. For forging the new instrument, the very foundation of perception and the very source of response require a total transformation, a mutation.

Objective science must restructure itself to take subjective research in its fold.... There cannot be a global order without a global ethic. And that global ethic will emerge from a non-dual frame of reference in the mind-spectrum.

Many physicists have realized that we need the understanding of life directly, instead of in the abstract, linear terms of representational thinking. And understanding of life directly happens in the non-dual frame of reference. This understanding results in the mutation of the human psyche, which leads to a quantum jump from a symbolic-dualistic frame to a non-dual frame of reference in the mind-spectrum. The non-dual frame has the capacity to bestow a global ethic. And a global ethic will blossom into a global order. The seeds of human survival

are embedded in a global ethic, in a global order.

i) To the view of Gregory Bateson and Erwin Schrodinger on the unitary nature of the mind can be added the opinion of Kurt Godel. The physicist Rudy Rucker interviewed Godel, who confirmed that there is only one Mind (non-dual frame of reference) that sustains all the various appearances and activities of the world.²² The non-dual frame of the Mind-spectrum perceives the true nature of thought, the implicate order of thought, the content of Consciousness. It expresses itself as global ethic and global order.

Concluding Comment

The socio-economic-political systems, the institutionalized religions and the reforms in the external world have so far failed to transform man because they deal with the symptoms in the external world. The disease is embedded in the human psyche, in the human consciousness. So, only a radical and total transformation of the human mind can bring about a new psyche. It is the integration of spirituality and science that can bring in mutation in the human psyche and thus resolve all human challenges.²³

What we need is scientific observation, and more observation. It is seeing oneself by oneself, it is seeing the mind (conditioned) by the mind (pure). It is to understand the psychodynamics or transpersonal psychology of one's own mind-brain system. Understanding comes only through witnessing the psychodynamics of the mind-brain system—through self-knowledge or

21. Sampooran Singh, *The Self and Its Mind Brain Equipment*, 1987; *Science and Spirituality Booklets: One to Five*, 1988; *The Human Survival*, 1993; and *Science, Human Values, Value Education and Peace*, 1993.

22. Rudy Rucker, *Infinity and the Mind* (New York: Bantam Books, 1983), pp. 177-83.

23. Sampooran Singh, 'Science and Spirituality Dimensions', *Jain Vishva Bharati Institute Research Journal*, Vol. XIX, No. 1, April-June 1993, pp. 1-15.

awareness of one's total psychological process. Only truth can liberate the mind from its own ideation. Thus education, in the true sense, is to understand oneself. It is understanding oneself which can resolve all psychological imbalances. We need a restructuring of science and our educational system.

We cannot afford to escape our responsibility to mankind, because any escape is at our own peril. Let there be deep sharing with an open scientific mind. Let us initiate a deep dialogue on integration of spirituality and science and take up further research in the light of the discoveries from the frontiers of modern science.

We are sanguine that if man takes one

step, Nature will take one thousand steps to help him. Nature will send help as and when it is sought in right earnestness. Nature is always benevolent. Let us undertake a collective experiment to save ourselves from annihilation.²⁴ We want a psychological revolution, in which the whole human race has to participate and every man is an equal partner. The psychological revolution will regenerate or rejuvenate the human mind so that it perceives the new dimension of an integral and all-inclusive Consciousness, which can guarantee human survival along with all fauna and flora.□

24. *Ibid.*, 'The Urgency for Transformation of the Human Psyche', Background Paper, National Meet, December 8-9, 1990, p. 21.

Global Encounter

(Continued from page 306)

religions'. Catholic Brother David Steindl-Rast, O.S.B., confessed: 'I have been a little uneasy with all this God-talk, especially when God is referred to as "He". It leaves out not only my Buddhist sisters and brothers but many others for whom the term "God" is more of a barrier than a help.'

The results of the Parliament remain to be seen. The event manifested the diversity of religious life in the U.S. on a scale that would have been unthinkable even 30 years ago. The Millennium Institute actively promoted its agenda of long-term, global thinking; and the Parliament may serve as a stimulus to wider discussion of critical issues facing all humanity. The Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions will

continue to work under the guidance of a newly elected board of trustees. The Council intends to cooperate with the Chicago Metropolitan Task Force on local issues and will consider items on the international agenda. Efforts are being made to establish an international organization, though some forces in existing international inter-religious bodies are reluctant to see a new structure emerge. The value of the statement 'Toward a Global Ethic' will depend on what consensus it commands and on what groups use it and to what effect. The difficulties of the week made clear the numerous obstacles to the project of interreligious cooperation. But for most participants and presenters, the Parliament was a profoundly enriching opportunity to broaden horizons, to deepen awareness of the processes of globalization, to learn about other traditions, and to face together the challenges before humanity.□

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Point of Departure in Sri Ramakrishna

DR. ANIL BARAN RAY

(Continued from the previous issue)

The first part of this article was a close study of the religious leaders and movements that preceded and, in a way, heralded the advent of Sri Ramakrishna. In this concluding instalment the author dwells on the special features of Sri Ramakrishna's sādhanās and his teachings.

Two things of much significance may be mentioned about Sri Ramakrishna's life up to this time: One, by his realizing by direct experience Goddess Kali as being the Mother of the Universe, we may know that he was a Knower of Brahman. As he often said, Kali to him was Brahman. In other words, the Unmanifested, Imperishable divine Reality, the formless transcendental God worshipped by the Vedantists and called *Brahman*, he called by the name of Kali. Thus worship of a temple image led Ramakrishna to a state far transcending what is commonly understood as idol-worship. Second, Sri Ramakrishna's marriage remained ever-unconsummated in the worldly sense. For the rest of his life he regarded Saradamani Devi with the same purity of attitude as he regarded his own mother and the worshipful Mother of the Universe, and at one time he actually worshipped his wife as the Goddess, demonstrating to all people that an absolutely pure and spiritual attitude can be maintained even in the so-called 'wedded life'. Moreover, not only in this but, as we shall see later, by accepting for his *guru* or teacher a woman, he far outdistanced all other prophets and Incarnations in point of setting a high goal and example for human beings.

The marriage did not tone down the madness of the young priest for God. When he came back to resume his priestly duties

at Dakshineswar his love and longing for the Universal Mother was increased a thousand-fold. His incessant prayer to Her was that he be ever conscious of Her guiding and protecting presence. Gradually his worship became so intense that it was impossible for him to attend carefully to all the rituals, and Mathuranath, Rani Rasmani's son-in-law and manager of her estate, relieved him of his duties and appointed Hridayram, a nephew of Sri Ramakrishna, to the priestship. Thus released from the cares and responsibilities of the temple duties, Sri Ramakrishna now devoted himself fully to a course of ascetic exercises (*tapasyā*) that lasted for about twelve years, during which time he never had a wink of sound sleep and the Universal Mother Herself was his Teacher. He said, 'I used to tell my Mother, "Mother, I could never learn from these erring men; but I will learn from Thee, and Thee alone." ' ¹

And what did he learn during all these years of austerity in which his body suffered terribly? He learnt at first hand from the Mother of the Universe² that one could not realize the highest Truth without giving up the love of one's body and egoistic self, and

1. Prof. F. Max Muller, *Ramakrishna: His Life and Sayings* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1988), p. 41.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 41.

that renunciation of desires and intense all-consuming love of God are the most efficacious means that lead one to the attainment of spiritual Knowledge. He who had once refused to eat the food served at the instance of a *śūdra* woman (Rani Rasmani) lest he should be degraded by it, had now in his spirit of religious yearning and self-mortification gone to the length of visiting the quarters of the servants and sweepers living at the fringe of the Dakshineswar temple premises, and washing their closet with his own hands, constantly telling himself that they were none but the Divine Mother Herself in so many forms. All are the manifestations of God, all contain sparks of the Divine Lord. Once the Divine Mother destroyed all ignorance and gave him *vidyā* (Knowledge), he realized that the Universal Mother alone really exists and that all else are Her manifestations in different forms and degrees.

Having given Sri Ramakrishna knowledge of the oneness of God and teaching him that the highest consciousness and the highest happiness lay in achieving identity with the Supreme Self, the *Paramātmān*, the Divine Mother ordained that he would next receive his education from a *pravrajikā*, a woman, a *sannyāsini*, known as the Bhairavi Brahmani. She was well-versed in the philosophies and mythologies of India, and learned in yoga. 'Ramakrishna had been informed by the Divine Mother that the Bhairavi would come and teach him the certain way to attain perfection.'³ That there was a divine ordination in the coming of the Brahmani could be told from her pronouncement on meeting Ramakrishna upon her arrival at the temple precincts, that it was he whom she had been searching for so long and that the mission she had so long been carrying on would be complete only with her imparting whatever knowledge she had

to him. She made Sri Ramakrishna practise different sorts of yoga and taught him the ways of deep concentration of thought which enables one to control one's passion fully and thus achieve that mastery over body and mind and that fearless and unbiased disposition which is essential to the realization of the whole truth. These disciplines in which Sri Ramakrishna achieved perfection in a remarkably short time enabled him to re-establish the validity of many long-ignored scriptures of *paurāṇic* Hinduism, lifting them above criticism and reproach by detractors who dared attack them in their ignorance.⁴

The philosophy of the Vedānta forms the bedrock of all that Sri Ramakrishna had to teach later, and this philosophy he learnt from the Vedantic *sannyāsi*-saint, Totapuri. After he learnt from the Divine Mother through prayer and penance the oneness of all, and from the Bhairavi Brahmani through the practise of yoga the complete mastery of body and mind, he had this great monk as his teacher. Totapuri showed Sri Ramakrishna the path to Perfection in Vedānta, giving him vows of *sannyāsa* (monasticism) as a part of it. Hardly had Sri Ramakrishna commenced to practise meditation under Totapuri's guidance than he attained the *Nirvikalpa* state of *samādhi*, the highest experience of God-realization which makes one totally illumined within, but unconscious of the physical world and all objects—even one's own body, for as long as it lasts. The disciple's mind merged into union with absolute Existence-Knowledge-Bliss.

Amazed at seeing Sri Ramakrishna attain in three days what had taken him

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 43-4.

4. One can appreciate the truth of this in the chapter, 'Tantric Sadhana', *The Life of Sri Ramakrishna* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1977), pp. 104-111.

forty years of hard austerity to realize, Totapuri exclaimed that henceforth he would regard Ramakrishna rather as his friend and equal than as a disciple. The stern ascetic who had never stayed in any place for more than three days before this, now remained in Dakshineswar for as many as eleven months, sharing with Sri Ramakrishna the highest truths of religion and in the process bringing about their mutual enrichment. When Totapuri the great *advaitin* wondered why Sri Ramakrishna, now endowed with the highest Vedantic experience of Brahman, continued with his devotion to the Divine Mother, Goddess Kali, Sri Ramakrishna would explain that Brahman and Kali—*Brahma* and *Brahma-Śakti*, God and His Power, were one and non-different (*abheda*). Kali, the *sākāra* (lit., with form), was the *līlārūpa*, the active, creative form of that one Brahman, which as the inactive, *nirguṇa* (attributeless), was the *chaitanya-svarūpa*, or Sat-cit-ānanda—Existence-Knowledge-Bliss, the nearest one can come to describing the Indescribable!⁵

5. It is instructive to take note of the following observation of Swami Tapasyananda on this point: 'Totapuri did not at first have any respect for devotional discipline, evidently because his knowledge had not become complete. But in association with Sri Ramakrishna, he realized the Divine Mother as a reality and came to recognize that Brahman is both personal and impersonal.' See Swami Tapasyananda, *The Spiritual Quest*, (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1992), p. 66.

In later years Sri Ramakrishna reasoned in a somewhat similar vein with the Brahmo leaders who refused to accept that God could be worshipped in many forms and under many names: If God is everywhere and in everything, then why cannot He be in an idol as well? Indeed Sri Ramakrishna's philosophy had room for, both *Nirguṇa Brahman* (indeterminate and formless Absolute) and

After the Vedantic experience of complete union with the divine Reality, Sri Ramakrishna was faced with a choice: Would he like to remain in that non-dual blissful state of *nirvikalpa-samādhi*, or would he like to bring his mind down to dwell in the world of men to serve, love, and enlighten mankind? Fortunately for

...by accepting for his guru or teacher a woman, he far outdistanced all other prophets and Incarnations in point of setting a high goal and example for human beings.

posterity, by a miracle his body was preserved and after six months in the superconscious state, the Divine Mother appeared to him and ordered him to remain in *bhāvamukha*,⁶ a state between the Divine and the Relative where he would be always

Saguna Īśvara (determinate God with form). The underlying philosophical concepts of Sri Ramakrishna, according to Swami Tapasyananda, are as follows:

- a) There is a Supreme Being who is Satcidānanda.
 - b) He is both Impersonal and Personal. These are two aspects of His being, equally important, neither of them sublated or sublatable, but realizable as one or the other.
 - c) He may be conceived as formless or as having any form, and is responsive to devotional love, worship and self-surrender.
 - d) He incarnates Himself from age to age for the redemption of man.
 - e) All these Incarnations, though different in expression, are manifestations of the one Being.
 - f) The Incarnation is divinity, not in the Vedantic sense but in a devotional sense, i.e., He is not a *jīvakoti* but an *Īśvarakoti*. See: *The Spiritual Quest*, pp. 199-200.
6. *Sri Ramakrishna, The Great Master* (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, 1952), pp. 390-1; 1978 edition, pp. 442-3.

(or nearly always) conscious of both *this* world and the infinite Beyond. From this exalted plane Sri Ramakrishna lived for the welfare of mankind and taught his disciples for as long as he lived. His special bestowal of spiritual power and love however, fell upon Swami Vivekananda (Narendra, as he was then known), and the band of spiritually-minded young men who later became *sannyāsins* (monks) and took Ramakrishna's name as the name of their new Order. The Master's message to the world through the beloved disciple was that to work for the enlightenment and welfare of mankind is preferable even to gaining one's personal salvation. Sister Nivedita wrote that once in his boyhood, Narendra had been asked by Sri Ramakrishna what was his highest ambition in life.⁷ The boy promptly answered, 'To remain always in *samādhi*.' The Master, it is said, received this with a smile—'I thought you had been born for something greater, my boy!' he said.

Vivekananda carried the Master's torch and teachings to far corners of the earth. The essence of this message was that God is Real and attainable by man, by the pure mind, and that the world, though illusory and ungraspable by our sense-bound mind, has spiritual underpinnings. To serve the world, therefore, in a spirit of unselfish renouncing-love is the best way for most people to live. For through such unselfish service and love comes purity of heart by which God is attained. The world is *māyā* (unreal) only from the standpoint of the ultimate Reality, but that does not mean that one should hold the world as totally worthless. Sri Ramakrishna taught not abstention from life and action but performance of duty in a detached spirit. Indulge in right action with all your strength and energy, but keep above

it, he would say. And this was his teaching to Swami Vivekananda, who absorbed in his own life so much of the life of his Master that it seemed as though they were but one single spiritual personality. Sister Nivedita observed:

It was said to me lately by one of the older generation that 'Ramakrishna had lived for the making of Vivekananda. Is it indeed so? Or is it not rather impossible to distinguish with such fixity between one part and another, in a mighty utterance of the Divine Mother-heart? Often it appears to me, in studying all these lives, that there has been with us a soul named Ramakrishna-Vivekananda, and that, in the penumbra of his being, appear many forms, some of which are with us still, and none of whom it could be said with entire truth, that here ends, in relation to him, the sphere of these others, or that there begins his own.'⁸

The remarkable feature of Sri Ramakrishna's life was his determination to get to the ultimate truth. But he was firm to go to the heart of any matter. 'Is it true? Is it real?' was a question that always rang in his ears. For example: The conflict between the Śaktas, the worshippers of Kali, and the Vaiṣṇavas, the lover-worshippers of Krishna, was in India like the conflict between the Catholics and Protestants in Europe. Sri Ramakrishna had to see for himself whether there was any substantial or valid reason for such mutual antagonism. The Divine Mother revealed Herself to him, which had proved the truth of Her worship. Could he possibly find the revelation of Sri Krishna too, by loving and worshipping Him the way the Vaiṣṇavas do? Sri Ramakrishna's method was entirely empirical, and he took up Vaiṣṇavism. He took as his model the passion-free and all-giving love

7. Sister Nivedita, *The Complete Works of*, (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1982), Vol. 1, pp. 39-40.

8. *Ibid.*, pp. 67-8.

of Radha for Krishna. In order to realize this love he dressed himself in women's attire for many days, thought of himself as one of the handmaids of Lord Krishna, and at last succeeded in gaining the Ideal. He saw the beautiful form of Sri Krishna in a trance and was satisfied.⁹ Another point to note is that Sri Ramakrishna did not pontificate. He did not tell people that it was useless to quarrel over their respective Gods, or their conceptions of the *one* God. He *showed* them with the *example of his life* that the worship of Krishna was as good as the worship of Kali, and that there was one God under different names that all worshipped. We should not say that he took up the religious disciplines of all the paths and sects in order to teach others. It was a natural desire with him to know about all these, and he was being guided by the Universal Mother in all that he did. For what ultimate purpose the Divine Mother made him do all that, She

These disciplines in which Sri Ramakrishna achieved perfection in a remarkably short time enabled him to re-establish the validity of many long-ignored scriptures of paurānic Hinduism, lifting them above reproach by detractors who dared attack them in their ignorance.

knew. But we understand that the method of Sri Ramakrishna was empirical, experimental and scientific, and the idea behind is 'to practise and realize a thing first,' before preaching it to others. He would not advise people 'to do it' before showing them first 'how to do it'!

By turns, Sri Ramakrishna realized Kali, practised the Tantra-*sādhana*s, realized the goal of the Vaiṣṇavas by worshipping Rāmlālā and Sri Krishna, and by following the *madhura-bhāva* of Sri Chaitanya. Afterward he attained the Ideal of the Vedantists

and followed the teachings and paths of Mohammed and Christ, achieving through each of these last the vision of God. Thus, Sri Ramakrishna's conclusion that all religions are true and that they are but different paths to reach the One goal, called by various names, was not reached in a day, but reached only after a long and laborious period of practice and absorption in the various disciplines. This led to tangible visions and realizations. It was not that the doctrine 'different religions are but different paths reaching to God' was never known in India before, but not until Sri Ramakrishna was it ever so clearly demonstrated. Sister Nivedita observes:

The doctrine that 'different creeds are but different paths to reach God', propounded in a general way, was not new in India. But taught as this man taught it, with his strong contention that it was the actual duty of men to follow their own faith, for the world gained by many-centredness; with his intense conviction, 'In whatsoever name or form you desire to know God, in that very name and form you will see Him'; with his assurance that rites and ceremonies contain religious experience, as the husk contains the germ; and above all, with that love that said of every faith, 'Bow down and adore where others kneel, for where so many have worshipped, the Lord will manifest Himself'—it was unique in the world's history.¹⁰

Sri Ramakrishna's final experience was that the entire world is *filled* with God and there is nothing *besides* Him. There is no place where he is absent and no life where He is not the inner Dweller and Guide. As his vision was universal—seeing God in the high and the low, the animate and the

9. Max Muller, p. 50.

10. Sister Nivedita, *The Complete Works of*, Vol. 1, p. 486.

inanimate, the rich and poor, in man and in woman, in the good and even in the wicked and sinful—, so his teaching was not confined within any boundaries. Furthermore, Sri Ramakrishna declared that the unitary vision of God is open to all, is the birthright of all, and will one day be realized by all. Through purity, renunciation and love, everyone must find the Supreme Lord. Thenceforth, no conflict between science and religion, 'my' religion and 'your' religion, 'our culture' and 'their culture', etc. Sri Ramakrishna by his realization and teaching of absolute fearlessness in the love of God, unified all peoples and all religions so that all will help each other. Thus he gave leadership to modern India and to the world.

Through his teachings and those of Swami Vivekananda and the monks, the danger to India and to Hindu religious culture caused by the influx of foreign religions and materialistic sciences was largely neutralized. And though once prostrate, India now commenced to send religious and cultural ambassadors to the outside world.

By drawing all together...Sri Ramakrishna effected what should be called 'spiritual socialism'.

Sri Ramakrishna allowed people from all walks of life and strata of society to come to him and gather strength. People came in large numbers—the highly educated men of Calcutta, the women of noble families and those as well from the villages. Sri Ramakrishna talked to them from morn till evening, month after month, taking no rest even during the nights, for some of the more earnest seekers would stay back and spend the night with him. Here was Sri Ramakrishna's departure: he was a man of the masses. His light spread to one and all, especially to the teeming millions steeped in poverty, disease and ignorance, who

remained untouched by the earlier reform movements in Bengal and elsewhere in India. To the highest intellectual, to the unread and untaught villager, his sympathy went out, and all felt his influence. Indeed, his method, a dialogic one, was in service to all. By drawing all together—the high and the lowly, the mighty and the weak, the lofty and the fallen, and by showing reverence and respect to all the social aspects of man (i.e., the spiritual advancement of the individual must be harmonized with his service to society)—Sri Ramakrishna effected what should be called 'spiritual socialism'. This role that Sri Ramakrishna played had the effect of holding together a variegated society divided up in many ways and graded in castes. In harmonizing their discords and in giving them a common background of ethical life and spiritual single-mindedness, he built up a *unity of outlook* among the people which was to overshadow all diversity.

In a nutshell, Sri Ramakrishna gave the essence of life, and the essence as well of living ever beyond weakness, fear and death. His greatest contribution to humanity is really in instilling faith in the immortality of the human Soul, or Atman, and faith in Brahman, the unchanging eternal Reality of God sustaining the world. But he also created a vision of a perfect form of culture, apparently religious, but comprehensive enough to cover other aspects of life as well—one which contains the germs of solution to all the ills afflicting us socially and politically today. Let the homely wisdom of this man of universal experience and universal teaching, in the simplest language intelligible to the high and the low, permeate our national mind and character.

(concluded)



Cry for Return to Family Values in the U.S.A.

(C. Raja Mohan reports from Washington to *The Hindu*, Madras, 14 February, 1994)

The call for individual morality, self-control, sexual abstinence and a return to traditional virtues appears a bit piquant in a country that has revelled in extreme individual gratification. But that precisely is the emerging clarion call of the conservative thinkers in the United States. The new slogan is not unlike the 'back to basics' campaign launched by the Conservative Party in Britain. But it has stronger ideological roots in the U.S. and could have a different political outcome.

The American people are 'behaving badly' and 'that may bring this country to ruin', says Mr. William J. Bennett, who served as Education Secretary in the Bush administration and is a leading light of the Republican right. In a book, *The Index of Leading Cultural Indications*, released last week, Mr. Bennett chronicles the chilling decline of morality in the U.S....

The depressing statistics on rising violent crime, 'catastrophic' increase in illegitimate births and the breakdown of the family presented by Mr. Bennett are well known and debated to death in the U.S. The importance of his book lies in demanding a return to traditional religious and family values, and mounting a political challenge to the prevailing liberal social orthodoxy. *The Book of Virtues*, a collection of old moral tales recently published by Mr. Bennett, is already on the bestseller list in the U.S.

Shocking trends: Among the shocking social trends presented by Mr. Bennett are: illegitimate births increased by more than 400 per cent since 1960 to 21.8 per cent of all white births and 67.9 per cent of all black births in 1991. In Washington, 66.3 per cent of all births are now out of wedlock.

Single-parent families constitute 28.6 per cent of all families with children compared to 9.1 per cent in 1960. In 1972, there were 494 teenage pregnancies for every 1,00,000 unmarried teenagers. In 1990 the number was 992. About 40 per cent of the teenager pregnancies a year are terminated through abortion. About 20 per cent of teenage girls are expected to have at least one child by the age of 20.

In 1960, the rate of violent crimes was 16.1 per 10,000 of the population. Now it is 76.8. While crime has soared, the expected prison sentence for serious crimes has decreased by more than 60 per cent since 1954 to eight days. Further, three out of every four convicted criminals do not serve time. Since 1965, the juvenile arrest rate for violent crimes has tripled, making children the fastest-growing segment of the criminal

population.

If these trends continue, 'we will face social chaos or a total police State. Unless we take steps now, we'll be looking for someone on horseback—or a tank—to restore order', says Mr. Bennett. To overcome the ethical decline and cultural regression, Mr. Bennett, currently a distinguished fellow at the Conservative Think-Tank Heritage Foundation in Washington, urges a comprehensive reform of the criminal justice, social welfare, child support and public school system. But at the heart of the reform suggested are individual morality and self-control.

In putting across a sharp polemic, Mr. Bennett provides a cutting edge to the conservative position on a number of issues which dominate the political agenda: crime, gun control, welfare reform and family values. The answers Mr. Bennett provides run head-long against the traditional solutions espoused by the American liberals since the 1960s.

Liberal-conservative divide: The ongoing debate between the liberals and conservatives is sharply drawn. On crime, the liberals are for addressing the 'root causes', while the conservatives emphasize deterrence through punishment. The liberals insist on stronger laws for gun control, as the conservatives call for 'self-control'. On teenage pregnancies, the liberals are for sex education and free distributions of condoms in schools, while the conservatives call for a return to abstinence from pre-marital sex. The conservatives attack the current liberal welfare system which rewards teenage and unwed mothers with government doles. They call for reinventing the social stigma attached to illegitimacy, and ending a welfare programme that has encouraged 'babies mothering babies'.

Two years ago, when the rednecks of the Republican Party talked about 'culture wars' and raised slogans of family values, there was a backlash from the middle classes who were frightened by the liberal rhetoric. But the pendulum may be swinging the other way. Concerns over crime and social decomposition are beginning to overtake economic anxieties....

(Courtesy, *The Hindu*, Madras)

Some more equally alarming reports have appeared recently revealing unforeseen trends in American society, which in different degrees prevail in other Western countries also.

The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms has

found that now there are 200 million guns in private hands in the States. More and more police departments, seeking better equipment, are trading existing weapons for new ones, allowing police guns to be sold cheap to anyone with a few dollars.

Two researchers, Joseph Sheley and M. Dwayne Smith, have listed what American public schools' teachers rate as top disciplinary problems among students: In 1940 they were — talking out of turn, chewing gum, making noise, running in the halls, cutting into lines, dress-code violations, and littering. In the '90s the problems are drug abuse, alcohol abuse, pregnancy, suicide, serious humiliation of female co-students, robbery, and assaults!

Another report says that the biggest growth industry in the U.S. now is gambling. More and more luxurious casinos are being built in Las Vegas and other gambling centres. States are now advertising lotteries or gambling in some form. Half-a-million jobs have

been created by the gambling industry to raise money in lieu of levying taxes.

Against this background we have another stunning report showing the grievous lack of foresight and insight in persons holding responsible positions—which is true of many 'leaders' in India also—: The U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia circuit struck down as unconstitutional a government regulation prohibiting indecent radio and television programmes broadcast between 6 p.m. and midnight. *Although psychologists have pointed out the deadly effect of violence and pornography on the young*, the Court said the ban would violate free speech!

It is high time Indians woke up and faced some hard questions: What is progress and development? What is prosperity? What is meant by a 'free society'? How does an individual's life become fulfilled truly?

—Ed.

PRACTICAL VEDANTA

A RULER DOESN'T OWN THE COUNTRY

Emperor Naushervan of Iran was a very just ruler. He was particular about even the smallest details of right conduct, specially about his own.

Once while on a journey with his attendants, he had to rest in the vicinity of a village away from the town. He was hungry and ordered some food. When the food was prepared for him he found it less savoury. The Emperor ordered one of his attendants to fetch salt from the nearby village. As the servant was about to leave, the King instructed him to make the full payment for the quantity of salt he brought. The servant hesitated and turning towards the King said, 'Your Excellency! Who would accept money for an inexpensive thing like common salt?'

'None the less, you make the payment', said the King. 'My Lord,' pleaded the servant, 'It would hardly matter to the person who would give the salt. On the contrary, he would consider it a privilege to be of service to the Emperor.'

Naushervan became grave. He spoke authoritatively: 'Don't forget that small events are the precursors of large events and minor evil paves the way for major ills. If I pluck a fruit from this tree, my soldiers would not leave a single fruit intact on it. May be, they would even cut it down for fuel. A fruit may be inexpensive, true, but such a small mistake by the ruler could lead to such great injustice. A ruler must always be extremely careful.'

