

VOL. 100 FEBRUARY 1995

ISSN 0032 - 6178

Centenary of

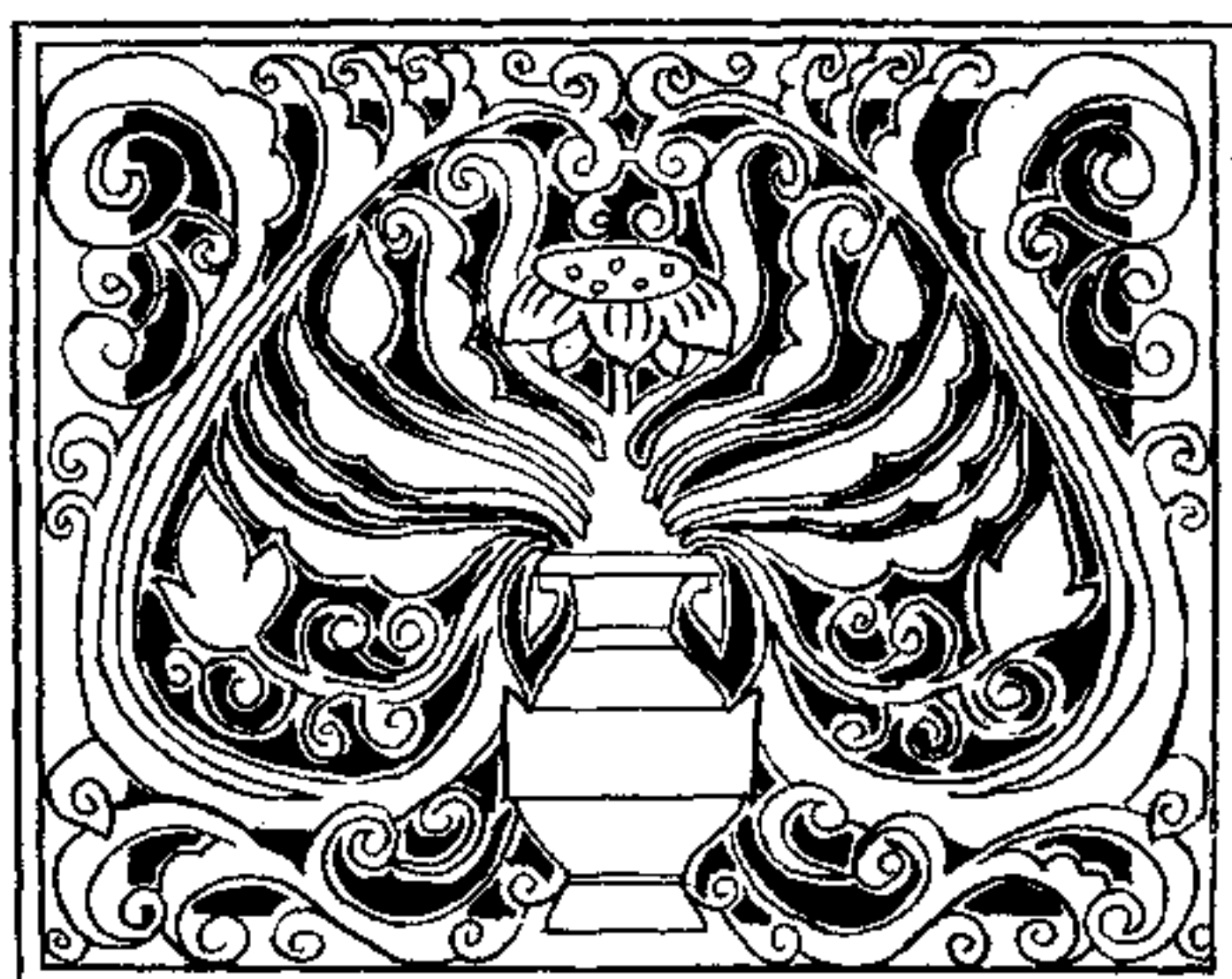
100

Prabuddha Bharata
1896 - 1995



Prabuddha Bharata
or Awakened India





PRABUDDHA BHARATA

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

Editorial Office
P.O. Mayavati, Via Lohaghat
Dt. Pithoragarh 262 524, U.P.

Publication Office
5 Dehi Entally Road

Phone (91)(33)244 0898
(91)(33)245 2383
Fax (91)(33)245 0050



Rates of Subscription (inclusive of postage)

Annual Life
(30 Years)

India	Rs.	30	Rs.	500
Sri Lanka & Bangladesh	Rs.	120	Rs.	2000

U.S.A. & Canada				
Air Mail	\$	20	\$	300

Other Countries				
Air Mail	£	15	£	225

Cover: Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati
Inset: Prabuddha Bharata Office

FEBRUARY 1995

CONTENTS

A Hymn in Praise of Sri Ramakrishna <i>Swami Gargananda</i>	417
Editorial	418
PARLIAMENT OF RELIGIONS: BELUR MATH	
Inaugural Address of Most Revered President Maharaj <i>Swami Bhuteshanandaji</i>	424
Awakened India <i>Pravrajika Atmaprana</i>	427
The Transcendent Experience <i>Eugene Taylor</i>	434
Tiruvalluvar: Poet, Philosopher and Humanist <i>Dr. K.J. Iyengar</i>	444
Song of the Bhakta <i>Mrs. Saraswathy Sathasivam</i>	449
India: A Hundred Year Since 1893 <i>P.D. Shastri</i>	450
<i>Practical Vedanta</i>	457
<i>News & Reports</i>	458
<i>Reviews & Notices</i>	461
Letters	
From Our Readers	455
From Our Students	433

उत्तिष्ठत
जाग्रत
प्राप्य
वरान्निबोधत



PRABUDDHA BHARATA

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

Vol. 100

FEBRUARY

No. 2

A Hymn in Praise of Sri Ramakrishna

(Pajjhatikā-metre; Chāyā-nāṭa; Tritāl)

SWAMI GARGANANDA

रामकृष्ण हे करुणासिन्धो जय जय
जय मंगलमय भुवने ।
माया-नरवर हे परमेश्वर शरणं देहि श्रीचरणे ॥

O Ramakrishna! the ocean of grace, who are full of auspiciousness, victory to you in this world. O supreme Lord, who through (the power of) Māyā have assumed a form of one who is foremost among men, grant me refuge at your feet.

विशुद्धमूर्तिः प्रेममयस्त्वं भक्ते प्रसन्नचित्तः सततम् ।
भक्ति-मुक्ति-चिरशान्तिनिदानं दीनदयालो धराङ्गने ॥

On this earth, your courtyard, you have come as an embodiment of extraordinary purity. You are full of love (for the Divine and also for all the beings which are manifestations of that Divine); ever favourably inclined towards devotees; a source of devotion, liberation and constant peace; and compassionate towards the lowly.

लीलामय हे सदार्तवत्सल कीर्तन-चञ्चल
भावसमुज्ज्वल ।
त्रिभुवनतारक धर्मस्थापक पार्षदवेष्टित निज-सदने ॥

O you who are engaged in divine sport; always affectionate towards those who are suffering; deeply moved by devotional singing; aglow with spiritual moods; the saviour of the three worlds; who have re-established religion; who in your original state are in the company of divine associates;

ब्रह्मसनातन शिव नारायण देव निरञ्जन
भवभयवारण ।

भक्तपरायण मोहनिसूदन वितरसि करुणां दीनजने ॥

You who are the eternal Brahman; who are Śiva and Nārāyaṇa; who are the blemishless effulgent one; the dispeller of the fear of transmigration; the transcendental goal of devotees; and the destroyer of delusion,—shower your grace on us.

आशीरभयं तव करकमले परमार्थं दुर्लभपदयुगले ।
हे ज्योतिर्मय तव प्रकाशो भवतु
भवतु मम हृद्गणे ॥

Blessings and protection (for us) are in your hands. The highest good (of our life) lies at your feet, attaining (shelter at) which is greatly difficult. O effulgent one, may you surely become manifest in my heart. □

* Sri Ramakrishna's birthday is on the 3rd of the following month.

** The composer is a monk of our Order.

Śraddhā

Walking along the busy Dharmatola street of Calcutta, I suddenly noticed on the pavement a cobbler at work: Head bent low over a shoe gracefully held in his hand, he was carefully refixing its sole which had partially come apart. Like an artist, he was applying every stitch with full attention, making sure each time that it was firm and in place. More striking than this, he was so absorbed in the work that he was utterly oblivious of the noisy vehicles and pedestrians rushing past him. Even the jarring clangs from the smithy hardly ten feet away seemed not to be reaching him at all. As I stood and watched for about five minutes, I could not help wondering what distinguished one human being from another.

What made this poor illiterate cobbler stand apart from thousands of his brothers-in-profession whose sloppiness must have irritated us on many occasions? What prompted him to be so self-forgetfully meticulous though his customer was nowhere in sight to oversee the repair? Among thousands of their class, what marks out a priest, a teacher, a student, a clerk, a policeman, or a humble municipal sweeper? Or a husband, or a wife?

Importance of Śraddhā

The first answer that came was, *śraddhā*. The *Bhagavad-Gītā* explicitly states that a person is what his *śraddhā* is. It is *śraddhā* that distinguishes one person from another. *Śraddhā* is the essence of personality. So a discussion on *śraddhā* may benefit all of us who wish to understand ourselves and

improve. For, are we all not eager to develop our efficiency, concentration, and dedication in whatever we undertook? That apparently insignificant cobbler possessed these enviable qualities without even having ever heard of this word *śraddhā*. So, with a proper understanding of *śraddhā* we may be able to inculcate his qualities to a far greater degree. As the *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad* (I.1.10) says: यदेव विद्यया करोति श्रद्धया उपनिषदा तदेव वीर्यवत्तरं भवति — *yadeva vidyayā karoti śraddhayā upaniṣadā tadeva vīryavattaram bhavati*, which freely translated means—only that which one does with proper understanding, *śraddhā* and spiritual insight becomes more powerful. That cobbler, had he received education (*vidyā*) in leather technology design, business management etc. and understood what *śraddhā* is and what the spiritual mystery (*upaniṣad*) of work and life and human existence is in the context of this vast universe, might have become not only an expert shoemaker but also another saint like Kabir, or a sage like Raikva, the bullock-cart owner-driver of the *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad*.

Swamiji has emphatically said that *śraddhā* is what gives strength, cohesion, and direction to personality and enables people to persevere dauntlessly their cherished goals despite adversity; and that it is *śraddhā* that ensures success in life and also leads one to spiritual knowledge. The Upanisads consider it to be as indispensable to spiritual life as are legs for walking or eyes for seeing.

What it is

What then is this *śraddhā*? In secularized translation it is conviction, faith, firm belief, or confidence. But in Vedānta it is an intuitive or a rationalized acceptance of spiritual realities, of some conscious spiritual power superior to the material and sensate. In any case, *śraddhā*, we see, implies first of all a consistent attitude. Another of its aspect becomes clear from the way the word is used in the Indian languages: a person seen to be doing his work with enthusiasm, love, attention, tenacity, sincerity, courage, and modesty is said to be full of *śraddhā*. Thus *śraddhā* is never passive. It is a dynamic and charged attitude of mind that shows in the behaviour and works of its possessor; it colours one's being, determining not only the actions and their quality but most importantly the motives. So, *śraddhā* is a sort of a reservoir of energy that fulfils its purpose and nourishes itself by trying to make us behave according to it. If we fail to harmonize our *śraddhā* and actions, the former flies away! Therefore the *śraddhā* or conviction a person may profess to possess does not deserve to be called so if it is contradicted by his actions.

... it is *śraddhā* that ensures success in life and also leads one to spiritual knowledge. The Upanisads consider it to be as indispensable to spiritual life as are legs for walking or eyes for seeing.

This naturally raises the question: Is there a difference between *śraddhā* and character? The answer is, *śraddhā* or conviction is deeper, and it determines character. It is an idea or a set of closely related ideas behind 'attitude'. It lies at the core of our being and, since it is dynamic by nature, makes us interact in a particular way with the outside world. This manner of interaction is our 'character'—our characteristic on the basis of which others put a stamp of identity on

us. *Śraddhā* is like a gem whose light shines through and guides our faculties. 'Character' is the manifestation of this light as seen from outside by others.

Types of *śraddhā*

The quality of this gem of *śraddhā* depends on the stuff it is made of—i.e. on the 'object', 'focus', or 'core' of the 'idea' or the set of closely related 'ideas'. It depends on the answer to the question—*śraddhā* or conviction about, faith or confidence in *what*? Translated as *conviction* etc., the 'object' may be secular or religious—prime importance of physical strength, money, beauty, health, hard work, discipline, team work, loyalty, honesty, self-respect, a political ideology, nationalism, freedom, humanism, or God, and so forth. Which of these becomes the nucleus of a person's *śraddhā* is difficult to foretell, but every one with a fairly well-formed personality has a unique nucleus. Ordinarily we classify people as 'devoid of', 'of average', or 'of strong' conviction, by judging the intensity and consistency of the influence of their professed conviction on their conduct. For instance, one who is 'convinced' or 'believes' in honesty, may or may not be honest in all situations; one who is 'convinced' of loyalty and sanctity of marriage may or may not be consistently loyal. Hence the classification as 'weak' or 'strong'. Similarly with other 'convictions'

Vedānta, on the other hand, while accepting the horizontal scale of intensity and consistency, adds a vertical spiritual scale of classification: The divine spiritual Reality is manifest in this universe in three principal degrees of a descending order—*sāttvika*, *rājasika*, and *tāmasika*—corresponding to similarly termed three media of Its manifestation. The *sāttvika*, or the 'nearly purest', manifestation of Reality occurs through the various gods and deities, who are *sāttvika*; the *rājasika* manifestation

through *yakṣas* and *rakṣas* (semi-divine beings), who are *rājasika*; and the *tāmasika* through the *bhūtas* (spirits) and *pretas* (ghosts), who are *tāmasika*. A human being is identified according to the class of divine manifestation he feels deeply convinced he should placate to enhance his condition in life. For example, a spirit-ghost-worshipper, who seeks occult powers, is *tāmasika*, i.e., his conviction or *śraddhā* is *tāmasika*. His attraction for ghosts and spirits is innate or cultivated, and belief in them becomes central to him. His belief or *śraddhā*, and therefore he himself are classified as *tāmasika*. As a consequence of his *tāmasika śraddhā*, the type of work he is inclined to, his motives, the type of food he prefers, the kind of joys he seeks, his goal of life, type of rituals, and so on take on a *tāmasika* character. Similarly

The nucleus of śraddhā

On taking a close look at the two ways *śraddhā* is classified, we find that the 'object' or 'core' of some *śraddhās* are self-centred, prompting actions meant for worldly personal gain—as for instance, the 'conviction' that ghosts and spirits are to be worshipped for occult powers. Humanity accords the lowest place to such people. Some 'convictions' are formed around universally beneficial unselfish ideals—for example, honesty and humanism; or belief in gods and deities, the *sāttvika śraddhā* which, as taught in the *Gītā*, impels its possessor towards self-discipline, charity, modesty, etc. People with such convictions are a blessing to society.

There is one more significant point to

A self-confidence imbued with moral values is necessary for a healthy successful life. Even a secular 'nucleus' for this self-confidence—such as pride in noble parentage, some particular skill, nationality—is of immense value, because it protects śraddhā, of all types, induces its owner to surrender to it; it brings that person under its control and inspires him to act in conformity with it. Thus the person is saved from straying into the dark alleys of life.

with the other two types. (See *Bhagavad-Gītā*, Chapters 16 to 18.) Since a human being is constituted of *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*, either of these three constituents become predominant depending on which medium of the spiritual Reality's manifestation he adores.

All this is, no doubt, unfamiliar territory for us today. But it is enough to notice the speciality of the Vedantic classification: First, *śraddhā* in Vedānta is built around the acceptance of some sentient spiritual power greater than human effort and will. Second, if we can inculcate the *sāttvika śraddhā*, we are just a step away from the divine Reality. So, we shall now consider the 'object' of *śraddhā*.

note: We had said above that *śraddhā* shows as certain qualities in a person's actions—as sincerity, enthusiasm, concentration, etc. But a selfish *śraddhā*, e.g., one centred on money, brings forth those qualities only in a particular field. For instance, that cobbler we referred to may fail to be enthusiastic, sincere and so on if he were made to do some other work. A teacher who experiences himself as full of *śraddhā* in his profession may find it difficult to cope with a different field of activity.

However, we do come across some rare people whose *śraddhā* remains constant irrespective of the work they undertake: they are equally energetic, dedicated, creative, self-giving and modest in every activity, even in the most insignificant ones.

A high official with this kind of *śraddhā* may say that he feels equally comfortable while cleaning his room, or performing *pūjā*, or visiting his lowest grade employee who might have fallen sick at home, and so on.

The *śraddhā* of this type is indeed the highest and desirable. If we study people with such *śraddhā*, we will notice some common characteristics in their conduct: a very high degree of modesty, dignity, unselfishness, self-discipline, serenity, and courage. The 'object' or 'nucleus' of this *śraddhā* will be some universal idea—humanism, a sense of equality, or a sense of unity with others, etc.

Whether these people are conscious of it or not, whether they will agree or not, their *śraddhā*, from the Vedantic viewpoint, is the most developed form of *sāttvika-śraddhā*. Many of these people may admit only having a conviction in the existence of some spiritual power in the universe. The rest of this class, in all likelihood, will admit their conviction that God exists. This is the fourth *śraddhā*, which is called *Bhagavat-śraddhā*—*śraddhā* born from firmly accepting the existence of *Bhagavān*. *Bhagavān* does not mean just an anthropomorphic God. It means: 'The supreme Being who possesses *bhaga* in the fullest degree'; *bhaga* meaning rulership, sense of justice, adoration-worthiness, grace and beauty, universal love, and freedom.

It is also called *Ātma-śraddhā*, faith in one's true nature as the Self; conviction that our being is essentially identical with the supreme Being in whom we exist at all times. This is the *śraddhā* of Naciketas, which is different from the three *śraddhās* mentioned in the *Gītā*, and which Swamiji recommended to all of us as the best since it leads to God-realization or Self-realization. When Swamiji taught that we must cultivate faith in *ourselves*, he no doubt meant faith in *our Self*. But he also appreciated all the levels

of this faith—from the conventional sense of self-confidence to the highest—found in people at different levels, because it is self-confidence which is the foundation of all other forms of *śraddhā* and gives them dynamism in the form, 'Yes, I can and shall put my conviction into practice.'

Fruits of śraddhā

At the lower levels, *śraddhā* as *self-confidence* is more comprehensible. As such it is essential for translating knowledge and formal learning into action. A self-confidence imbued with moral values is necessary for a healthy successful life. Even a secular 'nucleus' for this self-confidence—such as pride in noble parentage, some particular skill, nationality—is of immense value, because it protects: *śraddhā*, of all types, induces its owner to surrender to it; it brings that person under its control and inspires him to act in conformity with it. Thus the person is saved from straying into the dark alleys of life. *Śraddhā* works as a sort of a lens, focusing our faculties and our energies, preventing useless self-dissipation. Isn't this what is implied by integration of personality or development of individuality?

Further, according to Vedanta, every kind of *śraddhā* brings us not only horizontal or temporal growth, i.e. success of one kind or another, but also vertical growth into higher classes of *śraddhā*. This means a corresponding transformation in the 'nucleus' of *śraddhā*—from a *tāmasika* one to the *sāttvika*; from one that is formed of self-interest into that of enlightened self-interest into one which at the best is constituted by the self-less idea of Atman or God or Bhagavān. Thus *śraddhā* has the greatest potential of finally leading us to spiritual realization. A verse recited before *Rāma-nāma-bhajan* is sung reveals this truth:

भवानीशङ्करो वन्दे श्रद्धाविश्वासरूपिणौ ।
याभ्यां विना न पश्यन्ति सिद्धा स्वान्तःस्थमीश्वरम् ॥

*Bhavāni-śaṅkarau vande
śraddhā-viśvāsa-rūpiṇau;
Yābhyāṁ vinā na paśyanti siddha
svāntahsthamīśvaram.*

I bow down to Bhavānī (Pārvatī, Mother Goddess, Śakti) and Śaṅkara (Śiva), the embodiment of śraddhā and viśvāsa (trust), without which the spiritual aspirants do not realize the spiritual Power sustaining the universe, which (Power) exists (also) within their own being.

How do we acquire śraddhā?

Considering the qualities which become manifest in the conduct of a person possessing some śraddhā, there seem to be many without it. Can those devoid of śraddhā acquire it, or is it inborn?

From one point of view, it is inborn. People with śraddhā will simply say they have it, they do not know how they got it. It does not appear to be inherited. A child of parents with political or secular convictions may show religious convictions; parents strongly believing in the primary importance of wealth may beget a philanthropic child; an offspring of Marxist parents may become a crusader for democracy, or a monk or a nun! A Hiraṇyakaśipu may father a Prahlāda. So śraddhā, it seems, is inborn.

From the Vedantic point of view, however, which accepts *karma* and rebirth, śraddhā is acquired. We had pointed out that śraddhā consists of a powerful idea or a set of closely related ideas. Of the myriads of thoughts that arise in us, only some get transformed into speech and actions. The resulting experiences, again, reinforce only a few of these thoughts that found expression as speech and actions. Through numerous experiences over successive lives,

these reinforced thoughts crystallize into one idea or a set of ideas, which we call conviction or śraddhā. So śraddhā is the distilled essence, the precipitate of our experiences. And these experiences include what we read and also what we hear from others.

In that case, since all have had countless experiences, every human being should be having śraddhā—to the same extent and of the same kind. But this is not so: Some are practically devoid of it, in some it is weak, and in some intense; and the śraddhā of each is unique. What is the explanation? It is this: It is not enough to have experiences. For the precipitate, the butter or the distilled essence of śraddhā to form, the process of distillation or churning should be there. And this is the process of discrimination, which means we must have a certain degree and type of intelligence. So we come to the most important point: Vedānta says that this discriminative intelligence is a gift of the Divine, as hinted in the verse quoted above. The supreme Being grants this capacity in varying degrees, and hence the varieties of śraddhā. Whosoever is seen to have śraddhā, even in the least and of whatever type, should be known to have been graciously put on the path of spiritual progress, since śraddhā evolves into higher types, finally yielding spiritual experience.

So all should try to acquire śraddhā, exercising our available intelligence and power of discrimination. The simple way of doing this, as Swami Premananda, a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna has said, is to persistently question ourselves, 'What have I learnt?', as we pass through the welter of experiences. To this self-effort for acquiring and strengthening śraddhā we may add three more aids. One is to read books related to the śraddhā or its nucleus we feel we already have to some extent. For example, one whose śraddhā is built around 'equality' will

find it intensifying if he reads a number of books on democracy, humanism, etc. Another whose conviction is of the form, 'Health is wealth', will find it growing if he studies relevant literature.

The other is to select an appropriate human model who embodies our conviction: We said that *śraddhā* is basically an attitude of mind at the centre of which is a powerful idea. Though an idea is generally abstract, the 'idea' involved in *śraddhā* is living because it is ours. It becomes more powerful if it is made to rest on a form, a 'hero' who has practised that idea. In fact, when we search for ways to translate *śraddhā* into action, our minds get filled with human images depicting the possible ways in which it can be worked out. For example, while trying to cope with his life, that cobbler we referred to might find his mind filled with the images of his respected father's way of doing things; one striving to live up to his conviction in rectitude might find it helpful to think of a Harischandra or a Gandhi or a Lincoln; a young couple wishing to put into practice their conviction about fidelity may find it helpful to dwell on the forms of their noble parents. Similarly, our conviction about God can be intensified by dwelling on the form of, say, Sri Ramakrishna. So on and so forth.

Lastly, a *śraddhā* can be acquired or an existing *śraddhā* nourished by associating with like-minded people with powerful convictions. This is why, for example, holy

company and service to one's guru are recommended.

So, utilizing our present intelligence and discrimination, we can extract *śraddhā* from our experiences and go on building it up till its power takes possession of us, eventually making us feel one with it.

At the far end of this road, which perhaps may run through several lives, lies the highest reward of *śraddhā*: Self-knowledge.

In summary: *śraddhā* is a powerful idea formed deep in our being as the essence of our past experiences. It synchronizes our faculties, integrates our personality, and makes our thoughts and actions consistent. By exercising our intelligence and discrimination to understand our experiences, *śraddhā* can be intensified. It can also be enhanced by study, by choosing a suitable 'hero' image, and by associating with those possessing strong convictions. The consequences of *śraddhā* are wide-ranging, the most important of which are: by preventing haphazard dissipation of our energies, it enables us to pursue our goals; dedication, enthusiasm, perseverance, alertness, confidence, etc. are the concomitants of *śraddhā*; since *śraddhā* enforces self-discipline, it makes us evolve into the *sāttvika* type, often without our being aware of it; and finally, having carried us so far, it bestows spiritual knowledge, for, *śraddhā* and *viśvāsa* (trust in the redemptive power of *śraddhā*) are really parental gifts from Śakti and Śiva. □

People pay heavily for the valuable worldly goods;
but, alas, none is anxious to buy the invaluable name of God.

Kaji Nazrul Islam

Inaugural Address of Most Revered President Maharaj^{*}

SRIMAT SWAMI BHUTESHANANDAJI

Brothers and Sisters,

It gives me great joy to meet you all—the distinguished representatives of different religions and other participants of this Parliament of Religions organized under the auspices of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission. I extend to every one of you my loving greetings and cordial welcome.

My joy is all the more because this Parliament is being held on the holy grounds of Belur Math, by the side of the temple of Sri Ramakrishna. This temple stands as a vibrant symbol of harmony of religions lived and taught by Sri Ramakrishna.

Swami Vivekananda spoke of his Master as 'a man whose whole life was a parliament of religions'. Long before the Chicago Parliament of Religions was thought of, people belonging to different religions and sects used to go to Dakshineswar and discuss religious topics with Sri Ramakrishna. His realization of the essential truth of all religions had given Sri Ramakrishna a deep sense of identification with all religious groups. He could embrace Muslims, shake hands with Christians, sing

with Saktas, dance with Vaishnavas and worship with Brahmos.

The present meeting has been described as a Parliament of Religions. It is intended to commemorate Swamiji's participation in the World Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in 1893. Here we have to remember that a parliament differs from a seminar or other discussion groups in which scholars merely discuss some common subject. In a parliament of religions, representatives of different religions come together in a spirit of freedom, equality and mutual respect in order to expound their own respective religions. They do this on the assumption that they have certain common commitments. In this Parliament, let us remind ourselves that there are certain major issues which need the whole-hearted attention of the followers of all religions.

In the first place, there is now an alarming rise in immorality and violence. Religions of the world have a joint responsibility in checking the moral degradation and spiritual bankruptcy of mankind.

Secondly, it should be the common concern of the religions of the world to uplift the poor and the downtrodden, especially in developing countries like India. Poverty and suffering know no distinctions of creed, caste or race. Every religion has its share of

^{*} Delivered on 14 November 1994, on the occasion of the concluding programme of the Centenary Celebration of Swami Vivekananda's Chicago Addresses, 1993-94.

suffering people.

Then there are thousands of people who are seeking the ultimate Goal, the highest Truth. Religions of the world are called upon to fulfil the spiritual aspirations of these people whose number is steadily on the increase.

However, in countries like India, the most serious problem that needs the immediate attention of all thinking people is religious conflicts and communal disturbances which have become a regular feature of the social scene. This is a very unfortunate development in India because, from very ancient times, harmony had been the hallmark of Indian culture. For centuries

His realization of the essential truth of all religions had given Sri Ramakrishna a deep sense of identification with all religious groups. He could embrace Muslims, shake hands with Christians, sing with Saktas, dance with Vaishnavas and worship with Brahmos.

various racial and linguistic groups, schools of philosophy and religious sects had interacted peacefully to produce the composite culture of the land. It is clear that secularism and legislation alone are not enough to solve the problem of religious conflicts. We need a more positive and wider concept of harmony. Swami Vivekananda has shown that a solution to the problem of religious conflicts can be found in the field of religion itself.

Swamiji looked upon religion as a fundamental factor in civilization. And especially in the case of India, Swamiji believed that religion is the backbone or life-centre or life-blood of the nation. To quote Swamiji's words, 'Every improvement in India requires first of all an upheaval in religion.

Before flooding India with socialistic or political ideas, first deluge the land with spiritual ideas.'

The real problem is lack of understanding of the true nature of religion. According to Swami Vivekananda, every religion has a higher, transcendental aspect, and a lower, cultural aspect. At the transcendent level all religions reveal a fundamental unity. This insight is Sri Ramakrishna's great contribution to world culture. In the history of world religions, Sri Ramakrishna was the first and only prophet to actually follow the spiritual paths of different religions. He found that all paths ultimately led to the same realization. From his experiences he arrived at three fundamental truths of religious life:

There is only one ultimate Reality which is known by different names in different religions; this ultimate Reality can be realized by different means; and this realization is the supreme goal of human life and the real essence of all religions.

These three truths form the foundation of Sri Ramakrishna's doctrine of *dharma samanvaya* or Harmony of Religions. These truths may be found in some form or other in most of the scriptures of world religions. But they lacked the power to inspire harmony of religions until Sri Ramakrishna realized them in his life. Through his realization Sri Ramakrishna has endowed the doctrine of harmony of religions tremendous power. This power will manifest itself more and more in the world in course of time, as predicted by Swamiji at the close of his address at the final session of the Chicago Parliament.

Sri Ramakrishna did not teach merely the transcendental unity of all religions. Even with regard to the lower or cultural aspect of religions also he has shown how to

attain harmony.

Sri Ramakrishna saw the Divine in all beings and so he treated all human beings with respect, irrespective of their creed, caste or race.

He also taught that we should see each religion through the eyes of its followers. When he practised Islamic sadhana, he actually lived like a Muslim; when the thought of Christ possessed him, he did not go to Kali temple for a few days. We need not go to that extent, but we should at least avoid judging the followers of other religions by the narrow standards of our own religion.

At the same time, Sri Ramakrishna appreciated *iṣṭa niṣṭhā*, devotion and steadfastness to one's own religion or spiritual ideal. We may read and know about different religions and show love and sym-

held in Chicago in 1893 as a messenger of his Master and of the spiritual wisdom of ancient India.

The Chicago Parliament of Religions marked a turning-point in the cultural history of the modern world, and it was mainly Swami Vivekananda's participation that made it so. In that Parliament the followers of all religions were treated with equal dignity, but the presupposition of the equal validity of all religions was not there. The idea that all religions are equally true or valid in so far as they lead to the same ultimate Goal was Swami Vivekananda's contribution to the Chicago Parliament. And Swamiji had got it from his Master. This idea is now being accepted by more and more thoughtful people all over the world.

The present Parliament is of a smaller scale. But many distinguished religious leaders and outstanding scholars, from dif-

According to Swami Vivekananda, every religion has a higher, transcendental aspect, and a lower, cultural aspect. At the transcendent level all religions reveal a fundamental unity. This insight is Sri Ramakrishna's great contribution to world culture.

ferent parts of the country, are taking part in this Parliament. We are honoured by their presence here; we greatly appreciate their generous spirit and cooperation, and we are thankful to them for sparing their valuable time for us.

pathy for all, but everyone should stick to his own chosen path. As Swamiji has said, we should, like a plant, be rooted in our own inherent nature but should be open to the sun of knowledge and the wind of change.

It was Swami Vivekananda who understood fully the true universal significance and immense possibilities of Sri Ramakrishna's life and teachings. Swami Vivekananda's main mission in life was to interpret and proclaim to the world the message of Sri Ramakrishna. Swamiji brought out the practical implications of Sri Ramakrishna's views on religion and adapted them to the needs of modern times. He appeared on the world scene of the Parliament of Religions

held in Chicago in 1893 as a messenger of his Master and of the spiritual wisdom of ancient India.

Lastly, let this Parliament be inaugurated in the name of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda who have ushered in a new age of enlightenment, inter-faith harmony and peace. I invoke their blessings on all the participants. May our deliberations help foster greater understanding, harmony and goodwill among the followers of different religions. □

'Awakened India'

PRAVRAJIKA ATMAPRANA

Last month we had published three articles on the Prabuddha Bharata, each presenting one aspect of the journal. In the following article—which unfortunately we could not publish then—the author discovers some of the most important thoughts of Swami Vivekananda lying condensed in the name of the journal and in the poem, 'Awakened India', he had sent to the journal when its number—the first after a month's break in its publication due to the untimely demise of its first editor, B.R. Rajan Iyer—was all set to appear from Almora.

Pravrajika Atmaprana is the Secretary of the Ramakrishna Sarada Mission, New Delhi and Editor of Samvit.

In 1896, the *Prabuddha Bharata* or *Awakened India* made its first appearance. Today, in 1995, the journal has entered its hundredth year of publication.

For ten decades it has spread spirituality emerging from the Vedanta and Sri Ramakrishna's life and teachings. From India its life-giving waters have inundated most parts of the world. The *raison d'être* of Swamiji's life's work was to make the Vedanta philosophy practical in the light of Sri Ramakrishna's life. For, in his words:

The life of Sri Ramakrishna was an extraordinary searchlight under whose illumination one is able to really understand the whole scope of Hindu religion. He was the object-lesson of all the theoretical knowledge given in the Shastras. He showed by his life what the Rishis and Avatars really wanted to teach. The books were theories, he was the realization. This man had in fifty-one years lived the five thousand years of national spiritual life, and so raised himself to be an object-lesson for future generations. The Vedas can only be explained and the Shastras reconciled by his theory of Avastha or stages—that we must not only tolerate others, but posi-

tively embrace them, and that truth is the basis of all religions. Now on these lines a most impressive and beautiful life can be written.¹

Practical as Swamiji was, he knew that it was difficult to bring out such a book. He thought, therefore, of starting a journal, and for that purpose he wanted a group of young men who would come together and dedicate themselves to this work. The first step in any endeavour is to remember that practice is more important than preaching. In an inspiring letter, he wrote to his disciples on 28 May 1894:

Great things can be done by great sacrifices only. No selfishness, no name, no fame, yours or mine, nor my Master's even! Work, work the idea, the plan, my boys, my brave noble good souls—to the wheel, to the wheel put your shoulders! Stop not to look back for name, or fame, or any such nonsense. Throw self overboard and work. Remember, 'the grass, when made into a rope by being joined together, can even chain a mad elephant.' The Lord's blessings on you all! His

1. *Letters of Swami Vivekananda* (Mayavati, April 1993), p. 184f.

power be in you all—as I believe it is already... My blessings on all. Tell all the noble souls in Madras who have helped our cause that I send them my eternal love and gratitude, but I beg to them not to slacken. Throw the idea broadcast, do not be proud, do not insist upon anything dogmatic, do not go against anything—ours is to put the chemicals together, the Lord knows how and when the crystal will form.

Once he organized the faithful disciples of Madras, he was sure they would be able to start a journal. Through 1894 he kept stressing that a journal was an important medium with which to broadcast views and news and they should start it soon: 'Start the journal and I will send you articles from time to time.'² And again, 'If you could start a magazine on Vedantic lines, it would further our object. Be positive, do not criticize others. Give your message, teach what you have to teach, and there stop. The Lord knows the rest.'³

On 15 July 1895, his friends and disciples from Triplicane, Madras, announced their desire to start the journal. The announcement was signed by G. Venkataranga Rao, M.C. Nanjunda Rao and M.C. Alasinga Perumal. On the 27th of July, *The Indian Mirror* published an announcement. It read:

Under the advice and with the encouragement of Swami Vivekananda, it is proposed to start a weekly journal to be named the *Brahmavadin*. The main object of the journal is to propagate the principles of the Vedantic religion of India, and to work towards the improvement of the social and moral conditions of man by steadily holding aloft the sublime and universal ideal of Hinduism. The power of any ideal in filling human hearts with inspiration and the love of the good and the beauti-

ful is dependent on how high and pure it is; and it shall be the endeavour of the *Brahmavadin* to portray the Hindu ideal in the best and truest light in which it is found recorded in the historical sacred literature of the Hindus. Mindful of the fact that between the ideal of the Hindu Scriptures and the practical life of the Hindu people, there is a wide gulf of separation, the proposed new journal will constantly have in view how best to try to bridge that gulf, and make the social and religious institutions of the country accord more and more with the spirit of that lofty divine ideal... As Hinduism believes in the gradual evolution of human perfection and in the harmony of religions, the *Brahmavadin* shall have no quarrel with other religions, but shall always try to do its best to uphold the work of strengthening and ennobling man, under the banner of whatsoever religion such work may be accomplished. All truth is one, and must be perfectly concordant, and the only thing that any religion has to hate is vice.⁴

The religious awakening that the *Brahmavadin* brought about prompted Swamiji to get started yet another journal from Madras, the *Prabuddha Bharata* or *Awakened India*. Its prospectus was signed by another group of Swamiji's disciples. They were P. Aiyasami, B.R. Rajam Iyer, G.G. Narasimhacharya and B.V. Kamesvara Iyer. Its first issue was published on the 1st of July 1896, under the able editorship of B.R. Rajam Iyer. It was conceived of as a supplement to the *Brahmavadin*, and its publication was warmly welcomed. The editor of *The Indian Mirror* wrote:

We are pleased to find, that Swami Vivekananda is so thoroughly absorbed in the work of reviving the Vedantic philosophy and spreading a knowledge of its truths among the advanced thinkers of Europe and America; and we do not know how sufficiently to thank him for his labours. We believe, therefore,

2. *Ibid.*, p. 127.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 190.

4. Basu, Shankari Prasad, and Ghosh, Sunil Behari, *Vivekananda in Indian Newspapers* (Calcutta, 1969), p. 75.

that the more we have of such journals as the *Brahmavadin* and *Awakened India*, the better it will be for us all.⁵

The group who brought out this journal also kept Swamiji's command: 'Be positive, do not criticize others.' *The Journal of the Mahabodhi Society* admired this non-antagonistic attitude, and significantly reviewed it in its October 1896 issue as follows:

We have received the first three copies of *Awakened India*, an interesting and instructive Journal published from Madras under the advice and direction of Swami Vivekananda. We welcome our new contemporary, which is a notable addition to the theological and philosophical literature of the Hindus. The objects and methods of the journal are set forth in the opening article. It says that the attention

sorts of narrowness and exclusive ideas of religion. For it says, 'The end of existence is not blind irrational religion, nor is it barren intellectual science, it is the harmonious blending of the head and heart, of love and light, of faith and knowledge.' The *Awakened India* is pre-eminently a Journal of the Hindu Revival. The subject discussed are all very useful and interesting; and the wealth of thought, nobleness of tone, and breadth of views are visible to a marked degree.⁶

Deep Significance of the Thought-Culture of India

Swami Vivekananda was not a missionary, and his publications were not for propagation of any esoteric doctrine. As a rishi he looked deep into India's future, had a thorough knowledge of its past and a conscious understanding of its present. He clearly defined India's future plan of work:

One chief characteristic of the paper is that it has no prejudice or bigotry against any religion. 'For what humanity is to man', the paper explains, 'what existence is to the living beings, that Vedanta is to all religions, it is their common essence, their inner unity.' Vedanta has no quarrel with science and civilization. What it says is, that science should get spiritualized and religion get rationalized, and that each should have its place, and that there should be no conflict between the two, any more than between the eyes and ears of man.

of the Western World has been turned towards India, this time not for gold, but for more lasting treasures contained in her ancient sacred literature...

One chief characteristic of the paper is that it has no prejudice or bigotry against any religion. 'For what humanity is to man', the paper explains, 'what existence is to the living beings, that Vedanta is to all religions, it is their common essence, their inner unity.' Vedanta has no quarrel with science and civilization. What it says is, that science should get spiritualized and religion get rationalized, and that each should have its place, and that there should be no conflict between the two, any more than between the eyes and ears of man. The paper is free from all

'This is the theme of Indian life-work, the burden of her eternal songs, the backbone of her existence, the foundation of her being, the *raison d'être* of her very existence—the spiritualization of the human race.'⁷

Swamiji was convinced that, as foreign invasions could not kill the Indian nation, it will always stand deathless till, of course, it did not give up its spirituality. These invasions, however, took their toll. They made the Indian people beggars by looting their wealth; they tried to change their cus-

5. *Ibid.*, p. 99.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 330.

7. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Mayavati, 1992) vol. 4, p. 315.

toms and manners; they made deep inroads into their lives and religious beliefs, but they could not crush them. Because, as Swamiji said, India 'has its own quota yet to give to the general store of the world's civilization.' And what is that? The thought-culture for which the world should be grateful to India. In his poetic language Swamiji said: 'Like the gentle dew that falls unseen and unheard, and yet brings into blossom the fairest of roses, has been the contribution of India to the thought of the world. Silent, unperceived, yet omnipotent in its effect, it has revolutionized the thought of the world, and yet nobody knows when it did so.'⁸ Swamiji was well aware that this thought-culture was at a discount when education was imparted in English-medium schools during the British rule. With a view to remedying this sad state of affairs, Swamiji wanted to give 'life-giving elixir' to his own people and also to thinkers in all parts of the world. This was the deep significance of his lectures and writings.

All was going well when Swamiji heard in May 1898 that B.R. Rajam Iyer, the editor of the *Awakened India*, died. The publication of the journal stopped after the June issue. It was a terrible shock to Swamiji. India, which was awakened anew after Sri Ramakrishna's advent and his own work in the West during the Parliament of Religions and thereafter, had to begin its forward march. He resolved to continue the publication of the journal. On 17 July 1898, he wrote to Swami Brahmananda: 'Much of the progress would be achieved if the journal could be started in Almora—poor Sevier would keep himself busy, so too the local people of Almora.' His biographers recorded:

The Swami had always had a special affection for it, managed as it was by his

Madras disciples at his behest. He now wished to revive it with the help of Mr. and Mrs. Sevier and Swami Swarupananda. He said to Mr. Sevier: 'Sevier, you said you would work for the good of India. The climate of Bengal will not suit you. So why don't you stay somewhere near Almora and undertake to conduct *Prabuddha Bharata*? The Journal has got over three thousand subscribers. It was first printed on my advice, and has gradually become a notable instrument for the dissemination of Vedantic knowledge. I don't wish that it should be discontinued. And I am giving you a capable editor. Swami Swarupananda has particular experience in that line and with the help of yourself and Swami Turiyananda he will easily be able to run it.'⁹

Transfer to Mayavati

As always with Swamiji, not much time was lost between a resolve and its execution. In June 1898, the journal's editorial and printing work were transferred from Madras to Almora—a distance of fifteen hundred miles. In the September 1945 issue of the *Awakened India* an interesting description, as written by Sant Nihal Singh, was published:

As the summer rains of 1898 were drenching the heights known as Almora, the hillmen living on that Himalayan range were witnessing a sight such as had never before been vouchsafed them or their forbears. Up the cart-road, still primitive, were being borne, from the nearest railhead, numerous packing cases, strapped to the back by ropes slung somewhat athwart his forehead, each of them was being conveyed by a short but sturdy carrier. There, when opened, the case was yielding masses of tiny sticks of lead. One end of each was crested with a letter of the English alphabet, or some other mystic

8. *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 274.

9. *Life of Swami Vivekananda* (Mayavati, 1981), vol. 2, p. 350f.

sign or symbol...

What madness this! Who but a lunatic would think of setting up a printing-press in this remote spot? Judging from the number of boxes and cases, it is, moreover, going to be an establishment of some size.

What can be the object behind that endeavour? Hardly one in a hundred thousand persons or thereabouts could tell one English letter apart from another. Who, then, was to benefit from such activity? Whoever heard of such madness?

Such a brainwave could have originated only with a man of the Swami Vivekananda's perceptions and daring. Who else could have found men with the material resources and spiritual enthusiasms to help him to establish a printing establishment in that remote place?

The first issue was to appear on the 1st of August, 1898. Swamiji was then in Kashmir with Sister Nivedita, Mrs. Ole Bull and Miss Josephine MacLeod. It was natural for the editor to expect that Swamiji would write something as a blessing or a message for it. Swamiji did send one. But was it a blessing or a message? And how did he express it? To quote Sister Nivedita's words would be most appropriate here. She wrote:

At this time, the transfer of the *Prabuddha Bharata* from Madras to the newly established Ashrama at Almora was much in all our thoughts. The Swami had always had a special love for this paper, as the beautiful name he had given it indicated. The value of the journal, in the education of Modern India, was perfectly evident to him and he felt that his Master's message and mode of thought required to be spread by this means, as well as by preaching and by work. Day after day, therefore, he would dream about the future of his papers as about the work in its various centres. Day after day he would talk of the forthcoming first number under the new editorship of Swami Swarupananda. And one afternoon he

brought to us, as we sat together, a paper on which he had 'tried to write a letter, but it would come this way!' ¹⁰

And that was his poem 'To the Awakened India'.

Swamiji's Commandment

'Prabuddha Bharata' is the Sanskritised phrase for 'Awakened India'. In Swamiji's vision, India was already 'awakened'. For was it not the Eternal India, whose very existence down the ages was due to the Eternal Truth—*Sanātana Satya*? The Eternal Truth that the Vedic sages realized centuries ago was the Spiritual Oneness of all. Truth never dies, though after fulfilling its immediate work for mankind during a certain period it seem to lie torpid. After every fresh shower of enlightenment, however, it springs up again. It buds. It flowers. It seeds. And thus it lives generation after generation. Swamiji saw his Master living this Vedantic Truth, and experienced it himself that the world with its variety of races, languages and creeds is one home, as the *Atharva-Veda* revealed:

जनं विभ्रती बहुधा विवाचसं नाना धर्माणं पृथिवी
यथौकसम्। (XII.I.45)

How can India or the world forget about it?

'The world in need awaits, O Truth! No death for thee!'

Hence Swamiji desired to give to India and through it to the world a universal message. With his dynamic writings he kept this journal alive. His poem carries his message, nay, a Commandment, to his people. India had to come out of its state of torpidity. 'Once more awake' was his divine com-

10. *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita* (Calcutta 1967), vol. 1, p. 323.

mand, and India did awake. As Romain Rolland in his masterly style summed up:

Imagine the thunderous reverberations of these words!...The storm passed: it scattered its cataracts of water and fire over the plain, and its formidable appeal to the Force of the Soul, to the God sleeping in man and His illimitable possibilities! I can see the Mage erect, his arm raised, like Jesus above the tomb of Lazarus in Rembrandt's engraving: with energy flowing from his gesture of command to raise the dead and bring him to life...

It is impossible to change in a moment the habits of a people buried in a Dream, enslaved by prejudice, and allowing themselves to fail under the weight of the slightest effort. But the Master's rough scourge made her turn for the first time in her sleep, and for the first time the heroic trumpet sounded in the midst of her dream the Forward March of India, conscious of her God. She never forgot it.

From that day the awakening of the torpid Colossus began. If the generation that followed saw, three years after Vivekananda's death, the revolt of Bengal, the prelude to the great movement of Tilak and Gandhi, if India today has definitely taken part in the collective action of organized masses, it is due to the initial shock, to the mighty 'Lazarus, come forth!' of the Message from Madras.¹¹

Once awakened, India had to go forward. 'Resume thy march.' Not with violence, but 'with gentle feet' that would not disturb even 'the road-side dust', and 'yet strong and steady, blissful, bold and free.'

This has been India's tradition from Buddha to Gandhiji. Swamiji's line of thought was identical with Buddha's who vowed before renouncing:

I lay aside these realms
Which wait the gleaming of my naked sword:
My chariot will not roll with bloody wheels
From victory to victory, till earth
Wears the red record of my name. I choose to
tread its paths with patient, stainless feet,
Making its dust my bed, its loneliest wastes
My dwelling, and its meanest things my mates;
Clad in no prouder garb than outcasts wear,
Fed with no meats save what the charitable
Give of their will, sheltered by no more pomp
Than the dim cave lends or the jungle-bush.
This will I do because the woeful cry
Of life and all flesh living cometh up
Into my ears, and all my soul is full
Of pity for the sickness of this world;
Which I will heal, if healing may be found
By uttermost renouncing and strong strife.¹²

When India obeyed, Swamiji said once again, 'Then start afresh'. Invasions after invasions by foreigners had, in the march of history, tried to crush India, but the spiritual undercurrent of its life could not be dried. With undaunted spirit he said: 'This is the land from whence, like tidal waves, spirituality and philosophy have again and again rushed out and deluged the world, and this is the land from whence once more such tides must proceed in order to bring life and vigour into the decaying races of mankind.'¹³

With this immense faith he said:

All things come back to the source,
They spring, their strength to renew.

11. *The Life of Vivekananda and the Universal Gospel* (Mayavati, April 1992), p. 113f.

12. Arnold, Sir Edwin, *The Light of Asia* (London, 1945), p. 61f.

13. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, vol. 3, p. 285.

India is the birthplace of lofty spiritual ideals. His poetic mind roams over India's Nature. The Himalayas, the rivers, the trees too bring this message of peace, joy and strength. Swamiji does not forget to remind India that behind this diversity in creation is Mother—the Great Universal Power—which 'Makes of One the world', and yet, in the same breath, teaches about 'The One in All'. In this conception of the Supreme One, distinctions of lands, nations, even creeds disappear. God is One. In the *Atharva-Veda* a rishi says that the Lord of our own land is also the Lord of foreign lands: यः संदेश्यो वरुणो यो विदेश्यः । (IV.xvi.8)

The rishis, the *avatars*, the saints, the Masters all taught this. That is why Swamiji said: 'They bless thee all.' And with the blessings of one such Master, he too went to another land. He knew that the message of his Master which he would deliver would clear clouds of doubt, ignorance and

vainglory from the minds of many. India had to give this message. Spirituality is not poetry, or a dream or a vision. It is something solid:

And tell the world:

Awake, arise, and dream no more!...

Be bold and face the Truth!

Be one with it!

A revolutionary idea! Can this Truth be manifest in ordinary human lives? Why not? Deathless India will stand as long as that spirit shall be part of its background and the message of 'Eternal Love and Service Free' will be given unto the world. When Swamiji was living, he taught this Truth to the editors of the *Prabuddha Bharata* or *Awakened India* and this made their task easy and joyful. It is this inspiration that has carried the journal through a hundred years and enables it to carry his message to the world even today. □

FROM OUR STUDENTS

THE WORLD I WOULD LIKE TO LIVE IN

P. Rajesh Kannan, III B.A. English Lit.

Ramakrishna Mission Vidyalaya, Coimbatore

God created the world for human beings to enjoy their life with all facilities. But still they are in crisis due to their own actions and thoughts. The world now is full of violence. This is due to many reasons. One main reason is religion. Due to several religions, the peace is squashed. The world which I would like to live in must be a peaceful world. For that we people must find solution for the problems. Everyone knows the reason for every evil act. So they should act correctly when their turn comes.

Religious conflicts are spread wide in the world. According to my belief, the solution for this is, all the religious leaders should join together and, since they all know that there is only one God with different names, they all should find a single name to that only God, by discussion. Secondly, a single way of worshipping that God should be found, and only that method, should be practised all over the world. Thirdly, only common ideas should be preached and other ideas must be banned. So this method may be a suitable one, according to me. For this the people also must cooperate.

Today religion plays a great role in the world's decay. Religion also makes men lazy. There should be a law that those who do not practise this method must be punished strictly. But in the name of God or religion many evil acts are being practised. Misusing this, some higher authorities take people on wrong paths. Some people who find it difficult to work survive in the name of God. Tagore, in his poem, 'Leave this Chanting', makes a point: leave these kinds of chanting and these kinds of bhajans and telling of beads which wastes our time; but come forward to serve mankind and find God in it. According to me this is cent per cent correct.

Nowadays the world is highly mechanical. There is no time for entertainment though we work hard. People still do not know what is life. Even though their wishes are fulfilled, still they have some tension. When people think that only the soul is more important than property, then only there will be peace. They must think that they will be alive only for some decades, and if they realized that they won't be able to take with them their position or property, or name and fame, and if they begin to realize that—that others shouldn't be wounded, either physically or mentally—thereafter, Peace can fill the world. This is the world which I prefer to live in. □

The Transcendent Experience

EUGENE TAYLOR

Reproduced below is a slightly edited version of the author's keynote address delivered at the annual retreat of the Vedanta Society of Northern California on 31 May 1993. Eugene Taylor, Ph.D., Lecturer in Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, presents here a masterly and useful summary of the famous philosopher-psychologist William James's discoveries in the psychology of religious experiences, very helpful to the understanding of religious pluralism. Taylor's observations in the concluding part are indeed stimulating.

I am grateful for the opportunity to come before you today to speak on the psychology of the transcendent experience. The problem is, however, that I feel a little like the man who survived the great Johnstown flood, that great disaster which occurred in Pennsylvania in 1889. The man's survival, it seems, was his greatest accomplishment. When this man died and went to Heaven, Saint Peter met him at the Pearly Gates and told him he could enter, but on one condition; that he give a lecture to all the inhabitants of Heaven. The man said no problem. After all, he had supervised the great Johnstown flood. Saint Peter said that such a lecture subject would be fine, except he warned the man, 'But remember, Noah will be in the audience!'

So I feel a little like that man coming before you today, bringing coals to Newcastle. I am but a fragile ship, filled with a few intellectual ideas, floating at the moment in an infinite sea of bhakti yogins. I hope I will have something to contribute to your already deep knowledge of this subject.

William James

In order to help me in my task, I would like to introduce you, if you are not already familiar with them, to the ideas about transcendence put forward by the American philosopher-psychologist, William James.

William James was one of our greatest American thinkers. He was born in 1842, during the Transcendentalist era and died in 1910. Ralph Waldo Emerson was, in fact, his Godfather. William's own father, Henry James, Sr., was a one-legged, well-to-do philosopher of religion and follower of the Swedish mystic, Emanuel Swedenborg. Henry James Sr's main job in life was raising his children, which drove each one of them into their own unique forms of psychoneurosis. William's younger brother Henry, the famed novelist who wrote such books as *The Americans*, *Daisy Miller*, and *The Golden Bowl*, coped with this parental stress by moving early in his life to England, where he stayed for almost half a century, eventually becoming a British subject. Brother William, for his part, escaped the suffocating religious influence of the father by fleeing into positivistic science. He stayed in that frame of mind long enough to sustain such severe mental and emotional damage from the inherent nihilism of the subject, that he nearly committed suicide in 1870.

William eventually recovered only by believing to believe in free will and by committing himself to the possibility that the mind is much more than the mere body. He also found a job teaching psychology at his Alma Mater, my own dear Harvard. He went on to make major contributions to the scientific study of consciousness; he helped

launch psychology as a modern scientific enterprise; and he pioneered in what we would now call the fields of abnormal psychology, parapsychology, and the psychology of religion. He is perhaps best remembered as author of *The Principles of Psychology* (1890) and *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902), and as the main spokesperson for the American philosophical movement called pragmatism. Pragmatism, for those of you who do not know it, James conceived as a philosophical method for testing beliefs in terms of their outcome.

James and Vivekananda

We know that James was intensely interested in religious subjects, as he collected numerous spiritual autobiographies and read extensively, even in the Asian literature on comparative religions. He also met Swami Vivekananda and established a relationship with him that subsequently became important for American psychology.¹ They may have known each other before 1896, but we know they were together in March of that year when Vivekananda lectured at Harvard on 'The Vedanta Philosophy'. James had several of Vivekananda's reprinted lectures in his library, and he referred to the Swami favourably in *Talks to Teachers on Psychology and to Students on Some of Life's Ideals* (1899) and *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902).²

James and Vivekananda had many mutual acquaintances. One among them

was the Frank Sanborn family. The Sanborns had befriended Vivekananda when he first arrived in Massachusetts in 1893. Frank Sanborn, meanwhile, had been a younger member of the Concord Transcendentalist circle in the 1850s and 60s, where he had started a controversial school based on the mixing of young men and women. William James's younger brothers, Wilkinson and Robertson, attended this school. Also because of Sanborn's influence these two younger James's were persuaded to enlist as officers leading the first Massachusetts Black regiment in the American Civil War under Robert Gould Shaw.

James and Vivekananda also knew Mrs. Ole Bull, who held the now historic Cambridge Conferences on Comparative Religions in her fashionable Brattle Street home; they both knew Charles Rockwell Lanman, the Sanskrit scholar and professor of the history of religions at Harvard; James was acquainted with Sister Nivedita, the Irish born disciple of Vivekananda, and he knew, as well, Wincenty Lutoslawski.

Lutoslawski, the eccentric Polish philosopher and Plato scholar, was perhaps the most interesting of the lot. He stopped by Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1893 on his way to the World Parliament to meet the great Professor James. Later, after Lutoslawski had become a disciple of Vivekananda, he would try to convert James to fasting and yoga. He used to come by and visit James, much to Mrs. James's disappointment. She finally put her foot down and expelled him from the house when she found him doing nude yoga on the porch. James's only reply to Lutoslawski's attempts to make an adept out of him was that he would personally forego the ascetic practices of the East; writing and lecturing, James proclaimed, were to be *his* yoga!

1. Eugene Taylor, 'Swami Vivekananda and William James', *Prabuddha Bharata*, Sept. 1986, pp. 374-85.

2. Eugene Taylor, Prem Shankar, and Uma Parameswaran, 'William James and Swami Vivekananda: Implications for a Dialogue between Eastern and Western Psychology', Paper presented at the 91st annual meeting of the American Psychological Association,

Lutoslawski, on the other hand, mightily influenced James's ideas about pluralism, for which James repaid the favour by writing a preface to Lutoslawski's *World of Souls* posthumously published in 1927. In his presidential address to the American Philosophical Society in 1906, James also cited Lutoslawski's miraculous recovery from nervous illness by protracted yoga practice as one of the best examples he had seen of our ability to tap into inner reservoirs of power and energy normally held in abeyance.

James on Religious Experience

It is to James's *Varieties of Religious Experience*, however, that I would particularly like to direct your attention with regard to our topic today.³ These were the Gifford Lectures on Natural Religion given each year at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland, and James was the first American to

...James defined religion as that which lies within the individual...James maintained that the subconscious was the doorway to religious awakening...that the truths of these ultimately transforming experiences are always tested in terms of their fruits for life.

have the honour of giving them. The first part he delivered in June of 1901 and the second in June of 1902, after which the lectures appeared for the first time in print.

James came before his audience, he said at the outset, not as a theologian or a philosopher, but as a psychologist, interested in the phenomena of religious experience. His data was not to be extensive tables of numbers, or abstract theological systems, but rather personal accounts of religious awakening, drawn from what he

called the *documents humaine*, the living human documents.

While James had focussed on a cognitive psychology of consciousness in his *Principles of Psychology* (1890), that is, what is at the centre of everyday waking awareness, he looked into the reality of the subconscious in his 1896 Lowell Lectures on *Exceptional Mental States* (Taylor, 1982). Here he defined the reality of a spectrum of states within us. He particularly focussed on the psychopathological—conditions of hysteria, neurasthenia, and what we would call today the psychoneuroses, touching only lightly on true insanity.⁴ But in his *Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902), he gave primacy to transcendent spiritual awakening.

To understand how he approached this subject, it is important to know that James defined religion as that which lies within the individual. What occurs in books, what the priesthood tells us, and the ecclesiastical history of all the churches, all this is secondary to what the individual experiences. And because religion lies within, James said that he was only going to talk about inward experience. In this way, he could keep his topic focused on the *psychology* of religion.

There is a second point you should also know; namely, James maintained that the subconscious was the doorway to religious awakening. By this he meant that most of us spend a great deal of our waking life in a state of consciousness devoted to survival of the bodily organism. Sense data and the cognitive ordering of it are primary activities that go on unendingly in the process of perpetual adjustment. Below the surface of everyday waking consciousness, however, we find this spectrum of states ranging from pathological to transcendent. Sometimes

3. William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: Longmans, 1902).

4. Eugene Taylor, *William James on Exceptional Mental States: Reconstruction of the Unpublished 1896 Lowell Lectures* (New York: Scribner's, 1982).

trauma, conflict, or just plain exhaustion causes an opening of the internal doors of perception and the reality of the subconscious depths to our personality is revealed to us. On the other hand, the concerted practice of spiritual disciplines also gives us access to these inner states. Spontaneous experiences can also happen to a person. In any event, it is the opening of this door, James said in 1902, whether voluntary or involuntary, that leads to the possibility of religious awakening. Exploration of the personal subconscious, in other words, is the route by which we come to experience spiritually transforming states of consciousness.

There is a third point to make about James's understanding of the mystic or transcendent state; namely, that the truths of these ultimately transforming experiences are always tested in terms of their fruits for life. But before we go further into that idea we should say that James devoted an entire chapter of his book to the transcendent experience, in which he gave an analysis of its primary characteristics and then followed with numerous personal accounts.

The first mark of the transcendent or mystical state, James said, was its ineffability... Another characteristic of the mystic state, according to James, was its noetic quality... James named two other features of mystical states, their transiency and the utter passivity of the subject when experiencing them.

His enumeration of the qualities of the transcendent represent the core of what I am trying to communicate to you today.

The first mark of the transcendent or mystical state, James said, was its ineffability. Descriptions of it characteristically take us to the limits of language and then clearly point beyond conceptual thought. Such states are ones of feeling, not of intellect, and for this reason they are

impossible to describe to persons who have not also had them. If you have had them, simply suggesting the general direction they go in is often enough for listeners to call forth their own flood of ecstatic associations and wondrous images. If you have not had them, then to hear them described is like hearing someone speak a foreign language you do not understand. It is simply not possible to grasp what they are referring to. Yet the ability to try and express their nature under any circumstances and to any audience, the psychologist, Abraham Maslow once said, is what makes poets out of us all.

Another characteristic of the mystic state, according to James, was its noetic quality. Noetic, within classical Greek philosophy, meant something like visionary understanding. For James the term referred to states of insight into depths of truth unplumbed by the discursive intellect. Inchoate, piercing, and extraordinarily subtle, they are states of knowledge that come, in other words, from the deepest regions of the psyche. They may, in fact, be the very source of our ability to carry on normal everyday rational discourse. They are on the order of illuminations or revelations which carry with them a sense of permanent authority over all other forms of knowledge for the remainder of the person's natural life.

James named two other features of mystical states, their transiency and the utter passivity of the subject when experiencing them. In the first case, James said, accounts show that the transcendent opening may occur briefly—for only a few minutes, or perhaps hours but they rarely last more than a few days. Yet though they may go away, the memory of them recurs, and each time they are called forth once again, they are susceptible to further growth and development. As for passivity, James meant that regardless of what voluntary operations may precede them, when mystical experiences do occur, it was as if the person was grasped and held by a superior power—

something larger and more all-encompassing than the normal waking self takes over.

Amazingly, James then gave numerous examples from Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Sufi mysticism. He included as well a variety of secular sources ranging from philosophers to reformed alcoholics. He attempted to make his conception of the mystic state generic, in other words, advocating in the end the need to construct a comparative cross-cultural psychology of mystical states.

Just what exactly was the ultimate nature of these states? James tried to articulate an answer in several places. One was an important letter he wrote to Henry William Rankin from East Northfield, Massachusetts. Rankin, an invalid writer on religious topics and a former student, had first written to his old professor in the mid-1890s. He offered James materials on alleged cases of demon possession, which James, in turn, eagerly incorporated into his lectures on psychopathology. A continuing correspondence then developed between the two. When James first received his invitation to give the Gifford Lectures on Natural Religion in 1897, Rankin further provided a number of books on religious autobiography. James carried these books around for almost six years before returning them, after duly acknowledging Rankin's aid in the preface to *The Varieties*.

As he carted the books around, James would write an occasional postcard to Rankin, and Rankin would reply with a twenty-page letter, attempting all the while to convert James to Presbyterian missionary Christianity. James, in turn, would always counter with some diverting comment, at one point admitting that he remained pretty firmly fixed in the line of Henry James Sr.'s Swedenborgian approach to religious experience.

One gets the impression in reading the letters that James was striving to articulate his own personal theology in drafting his

lectures. This interpretation finds confirmation in an oft-quoted letter that appeared in Henry James Jr.'s collection of William James's *Letters* in 1920, and which the psychologist of religion, Walter Houston Clark, identifies as the seminal statement where James finally broke loose from his father's theological apron strings.⁵ Not coincidentally, this letter is also one of James's epistemological statements on the nature of the ultimate:

To Henry W. Rankin

Edinburgh, June 16, 1901

Dear Mr. Rankin,—I have received all your letters and missives, inclusive of the letter which you think I must have lost some months back. I profess-ed you because I had read your name printed with that title in a newspaper letter from East Northfield, and supposed that, by courtesy at any rate, that title was conferred on you by a public opinion to which I liked to conform.

I have given nine of my lectures and am to give the tenth tomorrow. They have been a success, to judge by the numbers of the audience (300-odd) and their non-diminition towards the end. No previous 'Giffords' have drawn near so many. It will please you to know that I am stronger and tougher than when I began, too; so great a load is off my mind. You have been so extraordinarily brotherly to me in writing of your convictions and in furnishing me ideas, that I feel ashamed of my churlish and chary replies. You, however, have forgiven me. Now, at the end of this first course, I feel my 'matter' taking firmer shape, and it will please you less to hear me say that I believe myself to be (probably) permanently incapable of believing the Christian scheme of vicarious salvation, and wedded to a more continuously evolutionary mode of thought. The reasons you from time to time have given me, never better expressed than in your letter before the last, have somehow failed to convince. In these lectures the ground I am taking is this: The mother-sea and fountain-head of all religions lie in the mystical experiences of the individual, taking

5. Walter Houston Clark, Personal communication.

the word mystical in a very wide sense. All theologies and all ecclesiasticisms are secondary growths superimposed; and the experiences make such flexible combinations with the intellectual prepossessions of their subjects, that one may almost say that they have no proper intellectual deliverance of their own, but belong to a region deeper, and more vital and practical, than that which the intellect inhabits. For this they are also indestructible by intellectual arguments and criticisms. I attach the mystical or religious consciousness to the possession of an extended subliminal self, with a thin partition through which messages make interruption. We are thus made convincingly aware of the presence of a sphere of life larger and more powerful than our usual consciousness, with which the latter is nevertheless continuous. The impressions and impulses and emotions and excitements which we thence receive help us to live, they found invincible assurance of a world beyond the sense, they melt our hearts and communicate significance and value to everything and make us happy. They do this for the individual who has them, and other individuals follow him. Religion in this way is absolutely indestructible. Philosophy and theology give their conceptual interpretations of this experiential life. The farther margin of the subliminal field being unknown, it can be treated as by Transcendental Idealism, as an Absolute mind with a part of which we coalesce, or by Christian theology, as a distinct deity acting on us. Something, not our immediate self, does act on our life! So I seem doubtless to my audience to be blowing hot and cold, explaining away Christianity, yet defending the more general basis from which I say it proceeds. I fear that these brief words may be misleading, but let them go! When the book comes out, you will get a truer idea.

Believe me, with profound regards, your
always truly,

Wm. James⁶

We see here that James again makes a

concerted effort to link the transcendent with the farther reaches of consciousness. Also, he avoids claiming the mystical as some unique province of Christianity, nor does he exclusively identify mystical awakening with any other religious tradition. If anything, he made the claim that such occurrences happen to individuals, not specifically to traditions, they cut across all outward categories of race, nationality, gender, and age, and they are found everywhere, if we would just look for them. They are not rare. Rather, they occur to perfectly normal people all of the time. Only in certain individuals, however, do they occur intensely enough to attract public or even historic attention.

'By Their Fruits Ye Shall Know Them'

We are left now with a final but somewhat complex point which I would like to make, again borrowing quite heavily from James. This is his idea that the truths of these ultimately transforming experiences are to be tested in terms of their fruits for life. 'Not by their roots, but by their fruits ye shall know them', he said, borrowing from the Sermon on the Mount in the Gospel of St. Matthew. It is not where a belief statement comes from that determines its validity, James said. A truth is not false simply because someone who was poor, or uneducated, or unknown said it. It is not more true because a person in some position of power and authority said it, or merely because it was written in some book. Rather, the ultimate truth of a belief is to be measured not in terms of where it comes from but solely in terms of its effects on enhancing the moral and aesthetic quality of our daily lives. Expressed in terms of the individual, a religious belief which comes from a person's insights cannot be judged as more or less valid than an idea taken over from someone or somewhere simply on the basis of source alone. The test of a belief, James said, is in terms of the action it

6. Henry James, Jr. (ed.), *The Letters of William James* (Boston: Atlantic Monthly Press), vol. 2, pp. 148-50.

inspires.

Here we have the articulation of his pragmatic maxim—that beliefs are always tested in terms of their consequences. Pragmatism, however, cannot be clearly understood without reference to James's idea of noetic pluralism—that unitive experiences are possible within all individuals, while still being radically different between them. Nor is pragmatism completely comprehensible without recourse to James's metaphysic of radical empiricism—that all reality exists as a function of some state of consciousness experienced somewhere by someone.

The pragmatic method, nevertheless, has since become the philosophical idea James was best known for. He used it not only as a way to evaluate ultimate truth claims, but also a means toward the reconciliation of apparently conflicting truth statements made between individuals. If radically opposite statements led to the same outcome, then for all functional purposes, they were equivalent.

James deduced from this that radically different viewpoints can lead to the same

Rather, the ultimate truth of a belief is to be measured not in terms of where it comes from but solely in terms of its effects on enhancing the moral and aesthetic quality of our daily lives.... The test of a belief, James said, is in terms of the action it inspires.

ends. He was therefore a cultivator of uniqueness within the individual, and he called, as well, for the preservation of unique cultural world views. Pragmatism had practical consequences for James, because it meant that we did not all have to believe in one catechism or way of thought; but rather, that many different ways of believing could still all lead to the same consensually validated way of behaving. For James hated bigness; he loathed its impersonality and its obliteration of important detail. He stood,

instead, for the integrity of the person and for the primacy of experience. He believed that each one of us had a duty to do his or her level best as far as the development of character was concerned. Self-knowledge was the key to make any kind of lasting and significant contribution to the whole of society. And, like the basic teachings of Vedānta, or Sāṃkhya Yoga, or the Buddhist tradition before him, he understood that self-knowledge comes not from what others tell you about yourself, but from the illuminating quality of the transcendent experience. He was for ending the war within, between the intellect and the emotions, between mind and body, between matter and spirit. Outwardly, he was also for world peace, the first step toward which he believed could be taken by finding what he called effective moral equivalents of war.

On the Spiritual Significance of Rice

I want to leave you with one last hopeful thought about the transcendent experience. This thought is the fanciful product of one of my deeper states of meditative contemplation, a 'what-if' condition, a kind of thought experiment of the possible even though improbable, concerning the route by which the awakening of a world-wide spiritual consciousness might take place.

The way I envisioned it, the awakening will begin in the United States, as difficult as that possibility must appear to many. I say this because in my view such an awakening can only begin in a spiritual democracy that promotes a dialogue between world religions through the iconography of the transcendent—through the mystical, higher, and more illuminated possibilities of human consciousness. This presumes that a new dialogue will have blossomed in America between psychology and religion, between science and the humanities, and between Christianity and world religions, which in turn might lead to communication between such systems as scientific

positivism and the Buddhist epistemology of Emptiness (*sūnyatā*).

In any case, the route by which this spiritual awakening might spread from the United States would occur, first, along the paths that the Western intellectual tradition has historically used to enter Asia; that is, through the Middle East. From there, I gleaned from within my intuitive vision, this great awakening might then follow the path by which Buddhism spread from India into all the rest of Asia.

I should also say that I envisioned this awakening in the form of a metaphor; what came to me was the spiritual significance of rice. The metaphor evolved from thinking about the controversy between the United States and Japan over the present trade imbalance between these two countries. But in a larger sense, I also took the phrase to emblematic of all the problems that the West traditionally has had in comprehending the Asian world view. You remember that Japan currently enjoys a tremendous trade surplus, while the United States faces a huge trade deficit. The problem seems to be that the Japanese will not open their domestic markets to foreign competition and one of the primary disputes between the two countries concerns this matter of rice. The Japanese see rice as a sacred symbol of their traditional culture. The United States wants to unload great quantities of their own inferior brand of rice onto the Japanese market. For the Americans, the issue of rice symbolizes an end to the monopoly of the *kiretsu*, giant partnerships between Japanese business conglomerates and the state. But it also means an end to the operation of small Japanese family-owned stores in local neighbourhoods. These will be replaced instead by the large Western supermarket food chains. In other words, the heavenly order of things linking individual lives to the family, the family to the community, and the community to the larger traditional culture will be disrupted. Thus,

the metaphor of rice says volumes about the Western *mis*-understanding of the Asian world view.

The Japanese, on the other hand, view rice as a holy object. Rice is adapted to every part of Japanese culture. Its cultivation represents their ancestral connection to their lands and to the Gods. They not only cook with it and eat it, they make cloth with it, they make dyes for decoration, ink for writing, they make rice paper toys, rope for carrying things, wrapping paper, and kites. Rice permeates their society and represents everything to them that is Japanese. Rice, for them, has spiritual significance.

So when Westerners say they want to flood the Japanese market with inexpensive refined white rice for purposes of economic development, the traditional Japanese householder must shudder. To do so means that an object within their temple has been desecrated, their unique tradition has been stepped on, their essential nature, what is at the core of their spirituality, has been denied. The wound reaches into the very fabric of their society, affecting every thread, because it is an unthinking insult against their moral outlook.

I grant that inherent prejudice may also affect their outlook; they may even capitulate in the end for purely pragmatic reasons. Yet the different definitions of what rice means point to the vast differences between the two cultures. The issue is certainly as much of an indictment of our ignorance and naivete as it highlights their apparent stubbornness to change.

But I ask you to contemplate for a moment what the world would be like if a spiritual awakening were to finally take place, an awakening of international proportions, unprecedented in the history of human thought. And imagine further that this awakening were to start, of all places, in the United States. I do not think that this is entirely a too far-fetched possibility, given the current ground swell of interest in

spirituality in the American counter-culture and especially its friendliness toward Asia. The present day counter-culture is, as I have suggested elsewhere, not a new phenomenon, but rather the most recent occurrence of a spiritually oriented and visionary folk-psychology reaching back to the very founding of the American colonies.⁷ This folk-psychology is, in turn, the most important contribution that American culture has made to the even longer history of a visionary and mystical tradition in the West.

The nearest example of this American folk-psychology for our purposes is the present Vedanta movement in the United States. With the exception of several hundred devoted Judeo-Christian converts, it is probably true to say that Hindu Vedanta has never really succeeded as a religion with Americans. But, we have only to think of Aldous Huxley and Gerald Heard in Southern California, or the circle of Harvard and Boston University professors around Swami Akhilananda in Boston, or this very meeting of almost a thousand people today in Olema, to understand how Vedanta has been, and will continue to be, quite successful wherever it is communicated to Americans in the form of a psychology of character development that is based on meditation and the experience of transcendence.

I cannot pretend to elevate contemporary spirituality associated with American folk-culture to a height it may not deserve in pragmatic reality. I can only conjecture what the American scene would be like if this outlook actually began to have more of a positive effect on contemporary Western consciousness.

Should such an awakening take place in

the West, instigated by some segment of the American population, and having to do with some new reconciliation between spirit and matter, I would like to conjecture for a moment about the probable route that such an awakening might take in the further evolution of a world-wide spiritual consciousness. I should also say that the hope of this awakening is based on a forecast I have recently made concerning the possibility of a new kind of dialogue opening up between Eastern and Western cultures.⁸

In my opinion, this exchange will begin when the Judeo-Christian, Greco-Roman, Western European, and Anglo-American world view finally opens itself up to Islam. Islam remains the great enigma to the West, partly because it is historically linked to certain elements of the Christian world view, yet it also represents a completely

...it meant that we did not all have to believe in one catechism or way of thought; but rather, that many different ways of believing could still all lead to the same consensually validated way of behaving.

misunderstood branch of the Semitic tradition. Moreover, as numerous social experiments within American folk-psychology suggest, because they both emphasize an inwardly oriented mystical psychology of transcendence, one major route to Islam for the Christian West may be through a dialogue between respective devotees of the Jewish Kabbalah and Islamic Sufism. If so, we should rejoice in the present move toward peace in the Middle East.

At the same time, Sufism historically is also the gateway to the real heart of Mother India. What we in the West know of Indian spirituality has come from only those

7. Eugene Taylor, 'Our Roots: The American Visionary Tradition', *Noetic Science Review*, Fall, 1993 (Pub. by the Institute of Noetic Sciences, 450 Gate Five Rd Suite 300, Sausalito, California).

8. See for instance, Eugene Taylor, Review of Peter Gay's *Freud, a life for our time*, in *Commonweal*, 21 March 1989.

expressions that are largely the product of Aryan and Northern Indian culture and, more narrowly, from just those expressions which are monistic and theistic in outlook; that is, most like our own Judeo-Christian roots. Meanwhile, the essence of religious consciousness in India is anything but one single expression. Rather, it appears to be a limitless profusion of unique expressions. Probably at one time or another, nearly every form of worship possible has been adapted into a religion on the Indian sub-continent. So much so that Vivekananda once said that some day he hoped that there would be as many religions as there were people on the face of the earth. However, in the same manner as the great accomplishments of Gandhi, for the West to see clearly into its inmost reaches, Hinduism will have to somehow reconcile itself with Islam.

Only then, by unlocking the heart of Indian spirituality will Western consciousness understand the transition from Hinduism to Buddhism. To awaken to Buddhist thought is to initiate one of the great epistemological dialogues of the future, the comparison between the Western positivistic science of matter and the Buddhist epistemology of the spirit. It will truly be a dialogue worth waiting for because of its far reaching implications for the coming transformation of Western science.

Through India and Buddhism, the West will then be able to enter in new ways into Southeast Asia. Perhaps then we shall see a new rapprochement with the war-scarred cultures of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. Also through India, the birthplace of Buddhism, the West will finally comprehend the true inward meaning of Tibet.

Should Tibet ever be restored to its freedom and should the Dalai Lama's call for his country ever become a reality, Tibet would become the world's largest nuclear free zone and the world's largest preserve simultaneously dedicated to human rights and religious freedom. Should this come about,

the liberation of Eastern Europe will look pale by comparison, because for the first time, a spiritual ethic will reorient the geopolitical climate of the entire region. In order for this to happen the Chinese Communist occupation of Tibet must come to an end.

For only through Tibet, will Western spiritual consciousness finally be able to enter into the indigenous spiritual domain of China. There, it will encounter Confucianism and Taoism for the first time, on their own terms. In classical Confucianism we will find numerous affinities with American Pragmatism, and in Taoism, the American counter-culture assures us, we may perhaps find deep and penetrating analogies to the new physics. In Confucianism we will find an ethics that will look like the happy blend of humanistic psychology and Skinnerian behaviourism and in Taoism we in the West are already discovering such systems as Qi Gong, their indigenous form of mind-body medicine.

From China, Korea and Japan will finally open, not in terms of material and economic development, since that is already happening, but in terms of the West finally understanding the unique inward world view of these most ancient cultures. We will then comprehend the internal teachings of Shinto and be able to enter into the world-view of such uniquely Japanese expressions as that of Zen. Not American-Zen, but Zen consciousness as the Japanese see it.

When this opening happens we in the West will finally see the internal core of how the various Asian traditions uniquely view themselves. By then, adding to our already vast knowledge of logic, analysis, and how to control the material environment, we will have come to appreciate the subtle relation between institutions, insights, and the transcendent experience. Only then will Western consciousness finally understand the vast spiritual universe contained in something so humble as even a single grain of rice. □

Tiruvalluvar:

Poet, Philosopher and Humanist

DR. K.J. IYENGAR

Tiruvalluvar is one of the finest products of the human civilization, combining in himself the poet, philosopher and sage. His greatest gift—to the poor and the rich alike—is the Tirukural, which is replete with practical wisdom. It has drawn worldwide appreciation because of its universal appeal. The following piece, though brief, gives a fair idea of the life and teachings of the saint. You are sure to be reminded of the other weaver-saint, Kabir.

Dr. Iyengar, a retired officer of the Government of Maharashtra, is a free-lance writer of short stories, sketches and reviews.

Two thousand years ago a colossus of the stature of Aristotle and Socrates was born in Tamil Nadu, a poet who gave to the world 'a good book, the precious life-blood of a master spirit'. The poet is Tiruvalluvar and the book *Tirukural*.^{*} Tiruvalluvar as a poet defies classification and transcends every limit of time and space.

Rajaji, the first Governor-General of India, an astute statesman and an incisive thinker, was a great admirer of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and has given us in Tamil *Ramakrishna-Upanishadam* which is quite popular in the South. Similarly Rajaji translated the *Kural* into English—a selection of a large number of gems of Tiruvalluvar's living verses for the benefit of the non-Tamil readers—giving a comprehensive idea of *Tirukural* a justly famous classic of Tamil literature.

Rajaji writes in his preface:

Tiruvalluvar's approach to moral doctrine is marked by a very thorough knowledge of human psychology and a desire to help imperfect men with practical hints in the struggle against evil. Throughout we can see how the poet brings everything down to the level of

practicality without losing hold of the ideal.

In short, Tiruvalluvar can truly be termed 'an incomparable Poet-Saint' of India.



Anusha Nakshatra Day in *Vaikasi* Month according to the Tamil Almanac (corresponding to May-June of the English Calendar) is the birthday of Saint Valluvar. Every year it is a day of celebrations throughout Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka and for the Tamils throughout the world, for no place is foreign to a true student and follower of Tiruvalluvar as his maxims are universal in appeal.

Tiruvalluvar scrupulously avoided taking sides in religious and philosophical controversies. It is a tribute to his universality that every school of philosophical thought and religious denomination proudly acclaims Tiruvalluvar and *Tirukural*.

Even in Tamil and Tamil Nadu, written evidence about his life, work and activities is meagre. His works being essentially universal, internal evidence from his own writings is scanty. At best, it can only be

^{*} *Tiru* is a prefix, like *Sri*, used to show respect.

inferential and pure guess-work. Legends have taken the place of recorded history. However, Tiruvalluvar lives splendidly through the few bare acknowledged facts about him and better still through his monumental *Tirukural*.

Meagre Details

Recognized facts about Tiruvalluvar are quite few:

He was the child of a Brahmin father named Bhagawan and a pariah mother Adi, who had been brought up by another Brahmin, and given in marriage to Bhagawan. Six other children are named as the issues of this union, all of whom have dabbled in poetry. He was weaver in Mylapore (a part of the present Madras City), having chosen weaving as the most innocent of all professions. He lived a happy family life until the death of his wife Vasuki who was a model of every wifely virtue. Then he is said to have renounced the world and become an ascetic. A small book on the mysteries of wisdom, called *Jnanvetti*, is also attributed to him, but internal evidence and the evidence of style seem to point against his authorship of it.

Inspiring and ennobling legends have gathered round the harmonious family life of Tiruvalluvar and Vasuki. Being a good judge of the essentials of a happy family and an adept in the mechanics of plain living, he managed to live in peace with himself, his wife and the entire world.

Domestic Life

His own pathetic testimony shows how ideal was his domestic life. On the death of his wife, feelings got the better of his philosophical bearings and made him lament:

O loving one! O thou who usedst to cook delicious dishes for me and who never disobeyed me! Who wouldst chafe my feet at night, and sleep after I had slept,

and wake before I had woken! Art thou going away from me now, artless one? When shall these eyes know sleep gain?

A glance at the historical setting of Valluvar's age gives us the perspective to appraise his contribution to humanity.

Consensus of opinion among Tamil scholars veers round fixing the Second Century BC as the period of Tiruvalluvar. This was the epoch which marked a new phase in the history of mankind. There was a shift of power from Mesopotamia and the eastern Mediterranean region to the new Roman Empire and the nascent Empire of China. India occupied a pivotal position between these two virile Empires.

One who touches Kural will feel that he is touching not a book, but a man—it is so alive and pulsating.

Troubled Times

In India the great Magadha Empire was in decline and there was a rush of learned men, artistes, builders, artisans and craftsmen from the North to the South. Considerable trade flourished between South India and Europe. Most of this trade was carried by Indian ships manned by Dravidians. In the extreme south of India it was a period of rumblings and reverberations of the Chera, Chola and Pandya Kingdoms. Particularly in the Pandyan Kingdom, it was the later Sangham period, the heyday of Tamil literature, and Tamil culture was at its zenith.

Being a humble weaver by profession and also fully conscious of his obscure social background, the prevailing atmosphere and circumstances of his times, Tiruvalluvar had no ambitions to set the world right. He did not grumble as Confucius did, that 'no intelligent ruler arises to take me to his master'. Unlike Kautilya, he was not in anxious search of a Chandra Gupta Maurya in Tamil Nadu to push himself up.

Tiruvalluvar was not itching to emphasize any dogmas or theological subtleties. He was quite content to practise certain simple virtues, fixing his attention on moral improvement as a means to happiness in the present, and further in another life.

Poet's Urge

As a poet, however, he could not resist the urge to express himself in words of imperishable grace. The product of his poetic genius is *Tirukural*.

Obviously Tiruvalluvar was aware of the Old Testament injunction: 'Of making many books, there is no end.' He concentrated on writing just one book. In range of conception, Valluvar was Himalayan: In depth of expression, oceanic. *Kural* contains all through 'thoughts that breathe and words that burn'. It is a sublime symphony in words.

One who touches *Kural* will feel that he is touching not a book, but a man—it is so alive and pulsating.

Tirukural is a book of knowledge: knowledge of right and wrong, knowledge of the problems of good and the perils of evil. It is equally a book of power, but the right kind of power: power to base one's actions on upright principles leading to peace and happiness all-round.

Brevity is the essence of Valluvar's precise and incisive expression. His rendering of encyclopaedic themes is the acme of perfection in the art of terse and condensed writing of inimitable charm and exquisite beauty. He has accomplished it with such finesse that a renowned Tamil critic of recent times says:

The ability with which the poet (Tiruvalluvar) manages the caesura in these short verses is something masterly. It is within the compass of these seven feet that our author has compressed some of the profoundest thoughts that have ever

been uttered by man. And how like a master he plays on this tiny instrument! Sparkling wit and humour, the pointed statement, fancy, irony, the naive question, the picturesque simile, there is not one of these and others of the thousand tricks of the born artist that our author has not employed in this perfect masterpiece of art.

Trivarga

Trivarga or the threefold objects of life, viz., *Dharma* (Righteousness), *Artha* (Wealth) and *Kama* (Love) have not been etched in words by many a giant among the poets of the world as vividly as Tiruvalluvar has done.

The masterly weaver of Mylapore, with his nimble fingers, with the loom of a generous heart, with human values as warp, the greatest good of mankind as woof, and with the enchanting play to-and-fro of the shuttle of divine poetry, has woven that wonderful piece of fabulously rich fabric *Tirukural*.

Tiruvalluvar was not a prolific writer; nor is *Tirukural* a voluminous tome. It contains just one thousand three hundred and thirty finely chiselled couplets in one of the most difficult forms of literary composition—the poetic medium of strophe. The bare text of *Kural* has been printed and published in the form of a small pocket diary, four inches by three inches, with less than a hundred pages. In this tiny book will be found all that is imperative for one to know. In other words, whatever is not found in *Kural* is not worth seeking. And whatever topic Tiruvalluvar has touched, he has embellished.

Tiruvalluvar had that rare gift of making himself and others happy in spite of not very helpful external circumstances. As a human being, he did have his full quota of woeful struggles. It is from such internal conflicts that the essence of experience is drawn. Inner strifes form the very spice of life for a



Tiruvalluvar

poet. They constitute the raw material for an artist in words. Tiruvalluvar's unique greatness is evident from the manner in which he has transmuted his personal and private agonies into something rich and strange, something universal and impersonal.

Tiruvalluvar was no visionary, not a mere idealist, nor a day-dreamer chasing the rainbow. He saw with the 'seeing' eye as Carlyle would put it, not with the eye of a gaper or a dozer, but with that of a born observer with sharp imaginative insight.

Tirukural is a book loved and cherished by peasant and prince alike. Though Valluvar had no aspiration for court patronage, it is a matter of indisputable his-

tory that *Kural* was the Bible of many outstanding later Tamil rulers.

Several Translations

Tirukural has been translated into Latin, German, Telugu, and many times over in French and English, by several authors. Some of the translators themselves have admitted that they could not bring out in their finished product the nuances of thought and the fine shades of meaning of the original.

The late Shri V.V.S. Iyer, that daring patriot of action, a famous Tamil scholar and a remarkable linguist, in his preface to his English rendering of *Kural* says:

Very few in the world outside the Tamil country have heard the name of the poet (Tiruvalluvar) whose work is presented here in a new English garb. And yet, he is one of those seers whose message is intended not merely for their age or country but for all time and for all mankind. Tiruvalluvar has given to the world a work to which in perfection of form, profundity of thought, nobleness of sentiment and earnestness of moral purpose, very few books outside the grand scriptures of humanity can at all be compared.

M. Ariel, a French translator and admirer of *Tirukural*, says that *Kural* is 'one of the highest and purest expressions of human thought.'

Mr. Grover, another enthusiastic translator of *Kural*, writes: 'As essentially the highest type of verbal and moral excellence among the Tamil people as ever Homer was among the Greeks.'

Difficult to Translate

The real problems of translation of *Tirukural* must be emphasized here. Had either John Dryden or Alexander Pope translated the *Kural* into English, what jewelled poetry, metaphors, similes and images could have been permanently recaptured in English from the Tamil original! English literature would have been enriched beyond measure. Tamil language and thought would have gained immense international recognition: and mankind would have been all the better for it. Tiruvalluvar's appeal through Tamil, a decidedly limited medium in the world as we see it today, is a significant loss to humanity as a whole—its culture, arts and civilization, and all that leads to the realization of the higher values of life as such.

Be that as it may, here are a few maxims of Tiruvalluvar, but those who dive deep

into *Kural* are sure to find numerous other gems of the purest ray serene.

On Love

'The unwise say love avails with the virtuous alone;
Against evil also, the same is the resource.'
'Bodies of loveless men are frame-works of mere bones and skin;
Body is the real seat of life only if love resides within.'

On Wisdom

'Wisdom seeks the truth of all things which are heard or uttered.'
'To befriend the world is wisdom; and wisdom is not inconstant like the flower that blossoms and fades.'

On Ignorance

'What availeth one's garment if one's defect lie naked to the world?'
'He who seeks to enlighten a fool befools himself.
For the conceited fool thinks that he knows every thing.'

On True Knowledge

'Seek the truth on which everything rests;
You will be free from all the ills that assail life.
'The deeper you delve into the earth, the greater will be the flow of water.
Likewise knowledge is in proportion to your learning.'

On Learning

'The learned alone are said to possess eyes;
But they are only sores in the face of the unlettered.'
'No country and no place is alien to the learned.
How is it that persons remain in ignorance to the end of their lives?'
'The precious undecaying wealth of a man is his learning.
All other riches are no wealth at all.'

On Ambassador

'Love, wisdom, ability to talk with full knowledge, are the three indispensable qualities of an ambassador.'
'A skillful ambassador who wishes to gain his mission among the authorities of other countries wielding enormous power, must be more learned than the learned.'
'Only those who have wisdom, personality and mature scholarship must be sent on a mission.'
'The envoy must be learned, fearless, persuasive

(Continued on page 454)

Song of the Bhakta

MRS. SARASWATHY SATHASIVAM

The author, from Colombo, Sri Lanka, writes: 'This poem has been strongly influenced by Swami Vivekananda's beautiful poem, "Song of the Sannyasin". It is allegorical in character, and seeks to portray our journey through many incarnations, always yearning for union with the God-head, through good times and bad. When our karma is all exhausted, when ignorance is overcome and true knowledge is acquired, then we reach the Lotus Feet of our Lord, our Love. Then do we have Sat-cit-ānandam. What more can we want? What else is there?

Oh! My Love, My Love, can it really be
That someday, I shall come to Thee?

My Lord, My Love.

The mountains are high, and the path is steep,
I dare not look down on the abyss so deep,

My Lord, My Love.

The stones are sharp, they hurt my feet,
But my heart whispers that we soon shall meet,

My Lord, My Love.

The sun at times, a benediction it seems,
At others, with molten wrath, at me gleams,

My Lord, My Love.

The breeze, gently swirling around, me it blesses,
The howling wind, with cruel intent, pulls at clothes and tresses,

My Lord, My Love.

What if all this doth cause pain and distress?
It is only of the moment; fleeting agony and duress,

My Lord, My Love.

For when Life's work is fulfilled
And Karma's dictates stilled,

My Lord, My Love.

Then, My Love, My Love, it surely must be
That, that day I shall come to Thee

My Lord, My Love.

India: A Hundred Year Since 1893

P.D. SHASTRI

All the major religions of the world have by the very fact of their continuity shown that they have the power of self-renewal inherent in them to meet the demands of changing times. Such self-renewals occur with the emergence of great spiritual personalities. This is true of Hinduism (Sanatana Dharma, or Vedanta) also, whose latest renewal began with the appearance of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda.

The author, of Chandigarh, presents a broad historical view of this phenomenon.

The date was 11 September 1893. The grand occasion was the World's Parliament of Religions, at Chicago. On this scene rose the star of India, Swami Vivekananda. As he opened his speech with the words: 'Sisters and brothers of America', his irresistible personality, superhuman spiritual vigour and divine sincerity, sent such a stir through the hearts of the Americans, that the world has never been the same since. A new chapter had been added to the religious history of the world. His lectures which began at the inaugural session on September 11 and continued till the closing session on September 27, thrilled the world as seldom before. It seemed that this cyclonic sadhu from India had put the globe in his pocket and walked away with it!

What was the reason for holding this Chicago conference of all religions? Surely not to make a comparative study of various religions and to spotlight the common points among them, because many speakers tried to prove that theirs was the only True Religion revealed by God and all others were impostors—false faiths inspired by Satan. The chief purpose was to blow the trumpet of Christianity, for the Christians then ruled the world. Those were the days of imperialism—which means the rule of one country over another. The biggest imperial power was England; it was said that the sun never sets on the British Empire, so wide-spread was their Empire over all the

five continents. Earlier, even America, Canada and Australia were parts of the British Empire. But there were other empires belonging to such countries as Germany, France, Holland, Portugal and Spain. They were all Christian powers; the mighty missionary, Bible in hand, was the pioneer and promoter of the Empire-builders. The huge continents of Asia and Africa had been parcelled out to these empires. It was a strange irony that in this atmosphere, Hinduism, the religion of India, a conquered country, stole the limelight at the Chicago Parliament and came to be regarded as the Mother of All Religions.

After Swamiji's visit to America, he went to the countries of Europe where he continued to conquer the hearts and minds of many. Though he established only two Vedanta Societies (the name given to the Ramakrishna Math in the West) in America, one in New York and another in San Francisco, after his passing other centres came into being through his indirect influence. His work was expanding even more in India.

From the time of Swamiji's first appearance on the world stage, large segments of humanity seem to be on the march under the flag of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. The message of India is being spread world-wide. Among those inspired by simply reading about Vivekananda was the great French savant

Romain Rolland, who wrote a book on Sri Ramakrishna as well as on Swami Vivekananda.

Swamiji seemed to embody all that was the best in India. As the poet Rabindranath Tagore said, 'If you want to understand India, then study Vivekananda.' It seemed that in this special sphere, Vivekananda was India and India was Vivekananda.

India's Contribution

Swami Vivekananda said, 'Now you understand clearly where the soul of true progress is. It is in religion. Because no one was able to destroy that, therefore the Hindu nation is still living.'

England conquered India only in a soldier's sense. In religion, civilization, and culture, Bhārat has always been the conqueror. Even today, although those who want higher studies in science and technology go to the West, those of either East or West who seek spirituality, peace of mind and true bliss go to the ashramas of the Hindu sages and saints. 'The sages of India have been almost innumerable, for what has the Hindu Nation been doing for thousands of years except producing sages.' (Vivekananda).

Aurobindo Ghose, another saint of India said:

The going forth of Vivekananda marked out by the Master as the heroic soul destined to take the world between his two hands and change it, was the *first visible sign to the world* that India was awake, not only to survive but to conquer.

Re-interpreting Religion

Tennyson says:

The old order changeth,
yielding place to new,
And God fulfils Himself in many ways,
Lest one good custom should
corrupt the world
Time moves forward with breathless speed.

The world neither progresses nor regresses; it just changes. Fanatics and fundamentalists believe that Time has stood still since their Holy Book came into existence, and that the ideas given there are timeless, true for all times and all places. If anyone such as Rushdie or Taslima Nasreen suggests some changes on the position of women or on other topics, the orthodox demand his or her head. Yet during the last 200 hundred years, the world has changed past recognition—it has seen greater changes than in the 2000 years previous to that. Thus, some elements are sure to become outdated or obsolete in the quick march of time.

The greatest fallacy of the fanatics is their belief that their gospel or scriptures contain the last word. The truth is, our conception of Reality changes, and also time-bound half-truths need frequent updating and correction. For example, the clothing that suits the sweltering heat of summer is unsuitable for winter.

Hinduism is the world's most ancient living religion. Also it has no single Founder or Prophet. It has no date of birth before which it did not exist as do all other religions. Also its scriptures, the Vedas, are recognized by all as the earliest religious tradition extant of the human race.

What is the secret of this unique longevity of the Hindu religion? The secret is that reformers like Swami Vivekananda and Swami Dayananda have been re-interpreting it from time to time, removing the dead wood of the past and ushering in new modes of thought and conduct that are in tune with the changed conditions of the new ages. Thus Hinduism retained her vitality and capacity to adjust according to the changed circumstances and rejuvenated itself from time to time. Ancient truths were expressed in the changed idiom of the day. The Hindu religion has been compared to River Ganga; it has been there from eternity, but its water is changing and becoming fresh all the time—change with absolute con-

tinuity.

Our principle has been that our Holy Books such as the Vedas, the Upanishads, the *Gītā*, and the rest should remain intact; but each age should give them an interpretation suited to the needs of the changing times. Once the *Gītā* stood for *Sāṅkhya* or *Advaita* (the world is a dream, and all successes, failures and victories are dream events, which vanish when we wake into the Truth of Jñāna); or *sannyāsa* (become a sannyasi and renounce the world—for, *sannyāsa* is taught in the *Gītā*'s last, the eighteenth,

Swamiji looked at the eternal principles of Hinduism in a new light—seeing God in the wicked, in the miserable. Serving them is a way of worshipping God, he said. This idea of social good is in tune with the socialist thinking of today. In the *Gītā*, Arjuna said to Bhagawan Krishna, 'Show me God.' Krishna's reply was that these numberless heads, arms, legs, etc. (common humanity) are the rūpa (form) of God. Serving them means serving God.

Hinduism has the vastness and depth of

Hinduism has the vastness and depth of the ocean—it is all things to all men. Those who believe in different forms of God, or in no God at all, or in nirākāra, the formless God, or in idolatry—all co-exist in this universal commonwealth of Hinduism.

chapter, as the supreme ideal and philosophy). Today the *Gītā* is generally accepted as the Karma-Yoga Shātra (The Gospel of intense but desireless action). B.G. Tilak gave this changed interpretation, and many others such as Gandhiji, Vinoba, Desai, Radhakrishnan, and a whole host of later scholars accepted it. Swami Dayananda gave to the Vedas an interpretation much different from earlier authorities—Sāyana, Shridhara, Ubbata, and others. Vivekananda's change of emphasis is well known: Our four Purushārthas (objectives in life) are *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kāma* and *Moksha*. The traditional view of *Moksha* did not appeal to Vivekananda; it seemed to mean selfish bliss for oneself, and not being concerned about what happens to suffering human beings. Emphasizing the concept of the oneness of existence, Vivekananda said:

May I be born again and again and suffer thousands of miseries so that I may worship the only God that exists...the sum total of all the souls; and above all my God the wicked, my God the miserable, my God the poor of all races, of all species is the special object of my worship.

the ocean—it is all things to all men. Those who believe in different forms of God, or in no God at all, or in *nirākāra*, the formless God, or in idolatry—all co-exist in this universal commonwealth of Hinduism. Our tolerance of all opinions (even of opposition) is our most prominent trait.

The Twentieth Century

The religious age of rishis and mahatmas, of seers and saints has passed, as all ages pass, but the Message remains. Science as the rival to religion appeared on the world's stage, and with its marvels and miracles, its inventions and discoveries, swept mankind off its feet and off its balance. It was advancing into the territory of God and religion, making conquests every day. It had a big beginning, but its glorious victories yet lay in the womb of the future. The masses were dazzled and nonplussed, but still clung to old beliefs, old values and the old cultural milieu.

Then came World War I (1914–18). It was the first war on a world scale and crores of people died, either directly on the battlefield or in the aftermath of epidemics, diseases, famines, etc. When the war ended in 1918,

England emerged victorious, with greater power and self-confidence. It was becoming greater and greater, but India was sinking deeper and deeper into poverty and misery. As Gandhiji said, 'Before the coming of the British, India was called the Golden Sparrow—a very rich country.' India had her own ships which carried products of her industry to distant lands (the Dacca muslin was the pride of the world). The Hundis (Bills of Exchange) issued by business houses in India were honoured even in foreign countries.

The British destroyed all that. India's indigenous industries were ruined in order to create a monopoly market for British products. India was reduced to an agricultural colony of England; she supplied raw materials to England, and England sold her machine-made goods to India and the whole world. The wealth of India flowed to England. The masses here became poorer and poorer. But they were deeply religious, and they put the blame of their misfortunes not on the British looters but on their karma or on God's will. People here found refuge in religion whereas in other societies they resort to revolutions.

Two decades after Germany was defeated in World War I, it rose again. Under the leadership of Hitler and his Nazi Party, in collaboration with Japan, Germany started World War II. At first Hitler was winning victories all along the line, till Soviet Russia and the United States joined England as allies. America dropped two atom bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945, and the War ended with victory for the Allies. England won this war, but lost her world-wide Empire, because she had become weak and bankrupt.

India's sufferings were terrible before and during the war years. All through the British Rule, there had been frequent epidemics (plague, malaria, influenza, etc.), and also famines that took a toll of millions

of lives. But the last famine, the Bengal Famine of 1943 in which 2 million Indians died of starvation, was the worst.

India's Independence

The British entered Bengal (Plassey) in 1757, and began its rule there. Punjab was the last province to bow to the British, in 1850, ten years after the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. So their rule lasted 190 years in Bengal and a little less than a hundred years in Punjab.

Mahatma Gandhi is called the Father of the Nation, the architect of India's freedom. Other colonized countries had to fight bloody wars of independence. Not so India under Gandhiji. His was a non-violent fight: no armies, no military, no cannon or other weapons of war. Gandhiji wrote a new chapter in the history of the world. He believed that we lost our freedom because we lost our character; to regain our freedom, we must win back our national character. Under Gandhiji's leadership, lakhs of freedom fighters went to British jails, hundreds were hanged. Many Indian people struggled on without the slightest hope or expectation of any gain, practising pure Karma Yoga—noble action without any thoughts of reward. As Jawaharlal Nehru wrote: 'For a whole generation, the nation was operating at a higher moral plane.' This was a lesson for the future for a war-weary world.

15 August 1947 dawned on India and the world. On the ramparts of the historic Red Fort in Delhi the Union Jack went down and India's tricolour was hoisted by free India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, to the joyful raptures of the people. On this great occasion he said, 'Long ago we made a tryst with destiny, and now we have fulfilled our dream.' However, the victory was not complete, for the country was divided and Pakistan came into being. Now there seems to be total chaos in the world. The reason? The decline of real religion and a

living belief in God. Religion taught us to live for others, to be unselfish, to help the weak and the suffering, to cast out pride and self-aggrandizement. Gandhiji said, 'I must reduce myself to a zero.'

But today the uniting cement of love is

India is immortal, if she persists in her search for God.

vanishing. Ours is a civilization of death, chaos, and self-aggrandizement. All religions preach peace and love; in actual practice, too many people take to war and killing.

What then is the remedy? Remember the life-giving words of Vivekananda, 'AWAKE, ARISE AND STOP NOT TILL

THE GOAL IS REACHED.' 'Arise, awake! Awake from this hypnotism of weakness. None is really weak; the soul is Infinite; Omnipotent and Omniscient; stand up, assert yourself, proclaim the God within you. Do not deny Him.'

Or again, 'Come up, O lions, and shake off the delusion that you are sheep.' 'The history of the world is the history of a few men, who had faith in themselves. That faith calls out the divinity within. As soon as a man or a nation loses faith in himself or itself death comes.' 'The Voice of Asia (India) has been the voice of religion. The voice of Europe has been the voice of politics.' 'India is immortal, if she persists in her search for God.'

Yes, India is immortal. □

Tiruvalluvar: Poet, Philosopher and Humanist

(Continued from page 448)

and expedient.'

'A true envoy delivers his message even at the risk of death.'

On Modesty

'Common to all human beings are food and clothing and other necessities of life. But what distinguishes them is modesty.'

'Lack of decorum disgraces a home; lack of modesty destroys everything good.'

On Real Nobility

'Love, modesty, impartiality, sympathy and truthfulness are the five pillars of nobility.'

'The touchstone of nobility is to accept defeat even at the hands of inferiors.'

Message for the Moment

Tiruvalluvar has a message for the harassed world at the moment. We are at the cross-roads of our bewildering civilization. Nuclear war threatens to destroy mankind without any vestige. Human values have lost their worth. Mankind is perched

perilously on the mouth of a volcano about to erupt.

It is at this moment of grave crisis in human civilization that Tiruvalluvar's one simple *Kural* demands serious consideration and willing compliance by all concerned in the interests of humanity in general:

'Verily they are blind, those who show not consideration towards others; and there are none that truly see but are indulgent to others' faults.'

To conclude, according to Sage Tiruvalluvar, 'The world exists because of the existence of the most beautiful virtue called kindness.'

There is still hope of a better, brighter and braver new world if we but hearken to Saint Tiruvalluvar. □

Has India Awakened?

Lt. Col. R.K. Langar

The question which comes in the minds of those who have an inclination towards higher values of life is whether India has made any progress in the last 100 years. We gained freedom forty-seven year ago and there were high hopes that as free citizens of a democratic country we would live freely and mould our lives based on the teachings of our religion as well as of the great saints which our country has produced. But things have not turned out as expected. Our moral standards have declined appreciably. Violence has now become a part of our life. There is no respect for human life. We have made progress in the fields of medical science, technology, industry, and agriculture but we are facing more problems in our country than ever before. We are no longer pure and noble. Let us study the problems of our country under different heads and examine ways and means of solving them.

Politics: Our political system is not well organized. Far too many political parties are joining together and some are breaking away from one another—in both cases, for some selfish reasons. People have lost faith in our political leaders. Our political leaders give the impression that they are not concerned about the welfare of the masses. Their main aim appears to be to keep their seats intact till the future elections. People are looking forward to some honest and strong political leaders who can rule the country by their personal examples. Till such a time as such political leaders emerge on the scene not much can be expected from the present set-up.

Religion: India is basically a country of religions. In our country religion plays a pivotal role in our culture. Religion is the keynote of Indian culture. Out of our 17 national holidays, 14 of them are based on religious festivals. But despite all this our people are not religious in the real sense. Most of the Hindus associate religion with the rituals. Vedanta, which has made a strong impact in the West, is not well-understood in our country. Though we find almost all the Hindus doing some sort of worship in their homes, they do not permit religion to influence their lives. On the one hand religion is completely mixed with our culture, and on the other hand we do not understand the real meaning of our

religion. Such a situation does not encourage us to mould our lives according to the teachings of our religion. We have to find ways to make our Hindu community learn and practise the greatness of Vedanta and the Bhagavad-Gita.

In our country people belonging to different religions are living together which often causes religious conflicts. We have to make sure that people belonging to one religion tolerate the religions of the other people. Our people must realize that no two religions can be identical. All religions do not proceed on the same lines but what all religions seek is the same. We have to look for unity in different religions rather than looking for uniformity in them. Unity in diversity applies very much to our religions. India is a vast country where cultural habits and customs of people differ from state to state and also within each state. We have to teach our people that all diversities are inter-related. We have to perceive oneness in all, through our spiritual understanding.

Education: In the field of education our country has made some progress. A lot of new educational institutions are coming up, which is an encouraging sign. Fifty-two per cent of our population is literate now and by the turn of the century we hope to provide education to all. But our women are lagging behind in education. Nearly two-thirds of our women are still uneducated, whereas only one-third of the male population is illiterate. This wide gap in education between women and men gives an upper hand to men and a subordinate position to women. Due to a comparatively poor education our women, specially rural women, remain at a low state of development. We have to ensure that our women are not neglected in the field of education.

Our education system suffers from one major drawback: it confines itself to book-knowledge. Due to our existing examination system education imparted in our educational institutions gives more weight to memory than to understanding. This does not stimulate the imagination of an average student. In our eagerness to prepare students to pass examinations we are ignoring moral and spiritual education which is so necessary to build the character of students. Swami

Vivekananda said that the aim of education should be such that it makes one powerful enough to face the challenges of life. He wanted education to contribute to character building. We should teach our students moral traits like honesty, selflessness, equality, obedience, sincerity, self-control and adherence to duty. For this, a dedicated effort is required from our teachers, which of course is lacking nowadays.

Status of Women: The uplift of women is one of our major tasks. Atrocities committed against women—specially rural women—are being constantly reported. While urban women are making efforts to improve their status, rural women, due to lack of education, still remain under the strong influence of blind beliefs, rustic notions and superstitions. Most of our women are still considered to be child-bearing machines and have no say in the size of the family. The economic dependence of women on men also makes women powerless. The main concern of the parents is to find a suitable match for their daughters as soon as they grow up. The girls are not educated to the extent that they become self-sufficient and economically independent. If the girl is well-educated and exposed to the world outside and not confined within the four walls of her parent's house, she is better equipped to face the challenges of life. Our women should be fully aware of their legal rights as citizens of our country, which gives equal status to both men and women.

Our Government is now making some effort to empower woman by trying to awaken their hidden potentials. Reservation of jobs for women, nomination of seats for women in the Panchayati Raj, and opening of banks exclusively for women are some examples of steps taken by the Government to raise the status of women. Our women must realize that they are not weak. They may be biologically weaker than men, but at all other levels of human personality—mental, intellectual and spiritual—women are quite capable of outshining men. Women have to manifest their inner strength, to face the world bravely rather than remaining objects of pity. In the society of the future there should be no division between men and women.

Society: Our society is beset with a number of problems. A large number of our people are still poor. Corruption is all-pervading in our society. Corruption includes all such acts that are causing deterioration of

our moral values. People measure everything in terms of material gain and show little concern for human values. The high cost of living caused by inflation is encouraging the low-income group members, to increase their income without much consideration for the legitimacy of the means employed. Casteism, regionalism, communalism have made deep inroads in our society. People have become very selfish and we show very little concern for others. Our population is increasing unchecked specially in the villages; this will put tremendous pressure on our existing resources. Casteism has also entered our political system. Demands for creating separate areas within the states for a particular group of people is giving rise to the tendency of separatism. There is violence everywhere which is moving us rapidly towards chaos. The down-hill slide of civilization has to be checked before we become immune to morality. This will only be possible if we all try to become good ourselves instead of finding fault with others. Society is made up of individuals, and if individuals are good, society is bound to turn towards goodness. Heads of Government, heads of organizations, heads of institutions, and heads of all departments however small they may be, have to set the trend in fighting the evils of society. They are morally bound to ensure that their personal conduct is free from all shortcomings. They have to set examples in their respective organizations by adhering to right and just actions.

For uplifting our villagers we have to follow what Swami Vivekananda taught one-hundred years ago. Swami Vivekananda wanted us to set in motion a machinery which should move from village to village and advise the people on how to improve their condition. He gave the motto 'Elevation of the masses for the regeneration of India.' We could constitute a sort of task-force at each district level which would periodically talk to our villagers and teach them ways and means of elevating themselves.

What our country needs is a moral revolution which can remove the ills from our society. We have to spread the message of Love which is the essence of our religion and culture. We have to remould our lives based on the teachings of Vedanta and the *Bhagavad-Gita*. If we all remove our own shortcomings without waiting for others to do it first, our country will regain its past glory and we shall become a source of inspiration for the whole world. □

No Rose without thorns.
No man is without errors.
No answer is also an answer.

—A German proverb

PRACTICAL VEDANTA

THE POWERS OF FALSEHOOD AND TRUTH

The pious Muslim elder, Imam Ahmad Hambal, was indeed a personification of dispassion, learning, and wisdom. Free from unthinking belief, he considered the Holy Quran a scripture authored by man, and being a courageous and upright person, he never shrunk from speaking against bigoted Muslims and immoral Kajis. Naturally this provoked many vindictive people, who lost no time in complaining to the Khalif against the Imam for defiling the sanctity of the Holy Quran.

The old Hambal was arrested and made to wait by the door of the Khalif's palace until the trial began. As he stood there with a heavy heart filled with despair and sorrow at the cruelty and injustice perpetrated by the supposed protectors of the law, he noticed a sentry (who was on duty) approaching him carefully. Coming very close, the sentry whispered: 'Don't get frightened, Hambal! Show your courage in the face of this oppression. I too was once arrested on a charge of stealing. They whipped me a thousand times to force me to admit my crime, but I refused to yield! Such was the determination and courage that filled me. But all that was after all only to assert a lie! Shouldn't it be easier for you to be firm for the sake of truth?'

The dark shadow of fear immediately disappeared from Hambal's mind. Choking with emotion, he said to the sentry: 'Brother, you are perfectly right. You have so kindly awakened me at the right time!'

And so he calmly faced the farce of a trial. Summarily pronounced guilty of dishonouring the Holy Scripture, he was ordered to be whipped a thousand times as a punishment. But as the lashes mercilessly tore him, he bore them with a serene mind. Even when the severity of the torture brought him close to death, he could hear ringing in his ears the inspiring words of his thief-guru: 'I was prepared to die for a lie. Can't you for the sake of truth?'

News & Reports

THE 85TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION

Synopsis of the Governing Body's Report for 1993-94

The 85th Annual General Meeting of the Ramakrishna Mission was held at Belur Math on Sunday the 18th December, 1994 at 3.30 p.m. Revered Swami Bhuteshananda, President of the Ramakrishna Mission was the chairman of the proceedings. A synopsis of the report of the Governing Body for 1993-94, placed before the members is given below. The report has stated the statistical data about the Ramakrishna Mission activities. By way of additional information it has given a brief outline of the activities of the Ramakrishna Math also.

CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS

The Centenary of Swami Vivekananda's epoch-making appearance at the Chicago Parliament of Religions (1893-1993) was celebrated in most of our centres in India, including interior and tribal areas, with parliaments of religions, public meetings, seminars, youth conventions, Bhakta Sammelans, processions, elocution, quiz, recitation and drawing competitions, sports meets, football and cricket tournaments, dramas, theatrical performances, cultural programmes, exhibitions, publication of books and souvenirs, free distribution of our literature, film shows, installation of larger-than-life-size bronze statues of Swami Vivekananda, distribution of scholarships, books, uniforms and nutritious diets to students, blood donation, dental and eye camps, besides a variety of other programmes. It was heartening to note the overwhelming response of all sections of the public, in particular the youth. Outside India, the occasion was celebrated in Argentina, Canada, Fiji, France, Holland,

Japan, Mauritius, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, United Kingdom and in several cities of U.S.A. The programmes included interfaith meets, parliaments of religions, symposia, retreats, musical soirees, musical tributes to Swami Vivekananda, slide, film and video shows, dramas, theatricals, publishing of books, etc. Many important dignitaries participated in the various programmes.

ACTIVITIES

Relief and Rehabilitation: In the year under report, the *Ramakrishna Mission* undertook extensive relief and rehabilitation programmes involving an expenditure of Rs. 129.54 lakhs. Besides relief articles worth Rs. 21.58 lakhs were distributed. The following *primary relief* operations were conducted in different places in which 1,91,578 people were served:- *Distress Relief* in Rajasthan and in West Bengal, *Disturbance Relief* in Bangladesh, *Drought Relief* in Bihar, *Earthquake Relief* in Maharashtra, *Fire Relief* in Andhra Pradesh, Assam and West Bengal, *Flood Relief* in Assam, Punjab, and West Bengal, *Medical Relief* in West Bengal, and, *Tornado Relief* in West Bengal. *Rehabilitation Projects* were undertaken in the Latur District of *Maharashtra*, in the districts of Purulia, Jalpaiguri, Hooghly and South 24 Parganas (Sagar Island) of *West Bengal* and in the Kanyakumari district of *Tamil Nadu*.

During the same period, the Ramakrishna Math conducted *Cyclone and Flood Relief* in *Tamil Nadu* and *Pondicherry*, *Drought and Flood Relief* in *Gujarat*, and *Flood Relief* in *Uttar Pradesh*. In all, a sum of Rs. 4.48 lakhs was spent and 2893 families were served.

Welfare Activity: The Mission spent a

sum of Rs. 1.59 crores by way of providing scholarships and stipends to a large number of students, medical aid to poor patients, and monetary help to aged and destitute men and women. This was in addition to the huge sums spent by our educational institutions for the benefit of poor students and by our hospitals and dispensaries for the treatment of poor patients. The slum rehousing project at Rambagan in Calcutta and the massive sanitation project in Midnapore District deserve special mention.

Medical Services: The *Mission*, during the year under review, worked through its 9 hospitals with 1691 beds (57,705 in-patients and 19,93,416 out-patients), 67 out-patient dispensaries (20,38,898 cases) and 20 mobile dispensaries (5,50,209 cases), mostly in rural and tribal areas, spending a sum of about Rs. 10.26 crores.

Under the *Math* centres, there were 5 hospitals with 358 beds serving 11,470 in-patients and 1,60,328 out-patients, 24 dispensaries (6,90,359 cases) and 7 mobile dispensaries (1,28,956 cases).

The *Mission* and the *Math* centres conducted several free eye-camps and dental camps. The *Mission* conducted a TB Sanatorium at Ranchi, a TB Clinic at New Delhi, 2 old age homes, and 4 Nurses' Training Centres (Seva Pratishthan, Vrindaban, Itanagar and Lucknow). The *Math* conducted one old age home at Barisha and a Nurses' Training Centre at Tiruvananthapuram.

Educational Work: Through its educational institutions of various types the *Mission* aimed at imparting man-making and character-building education. True to the tradition, the academic results of the *Mission's* educational institutions were also brilliant. In 1993-94 the *Mission* had 5 degree colleges, 4 teachers' training colleges, 5 junior basic training institutes, 10 higher secondary schools, 30 secondary schools,

128 schools of different grades, 4 polytechnics, 7 junior technical and industrial schools, 83 hostels and students' homes, 5 orphanages, 2 institutes of agriculture, 1 school of languages, 1 computer centre, 1 blind boys' academy, 1 librarianship training centre, 4 rural development training institutes, and 6499 non-formal education centres, night schools and the like. The total number of students in all these institutions was 1,99,845 of whom 77,906 were girls. The *Mission* spent a sum of Rs. 32.44 crores for this purpose.

Under the *Math* centres 7604 students were taught in 1 B.Ed. college, 1 Sanskrit college, 1 school of languages and in a total of 29 schools, students' home and other educational institutions.

Spread of Spiritual and Cultural Ideas: This was accomplished through a large number of libraries and reading-rooms, lectures and seminars, films of religious and cultural value, regular classes, public celebrations, occasional exhibitions, etc. The publication departments of the *Math* and the *Mission* centres did appreciable work in this regard. The *Math* centres maintained temples, organized lectures, retreats and devotees' meets. Thousands of people were inspired to accept higher values of life by coming into contact with different *Math* and *Mission* centres.

Work in Rural and Tribal Areas: Rural and tribal welfare work has come to occupy a prominent place in the scheme of services rendered by the *Mission*. With its limited funds and workers, the *Mission* has been doing its utmost for serving the poor and backward people as also tribal people in different parts of the country. This is accomplished in three ways:

- (a) through our centres located in rural and tribal areas primarily set up for this purpose;

- (b) through our urban centres, which have taken up development projects in rural and tribal areas, and,
- (c) through our educational and medical institutions in urban areas where rural folk form a significant percentage of the beneficiaries.

The *Mission* spent a sum of about Rs. 3.62 crores specifically for rural and tribal development work, apart from the huge expenditure incurred by the educational and medical institutions located in rural and tribal areas.

The rural development training institutes at Narendrapur, Narainpur, Saradapitha (Belur) as also the Krishi Vigyan Kendra and Divyayan at Ranchi (Morabadi) trained youth for work in rural and tribal areas in modern methods of agriculture, dairy and poultry farming, etc. The centre at Ranchi (Morabadi) has taken up massive rural development project by way of extension and follow-up of the training programmes of Divyayan. The centre at Narendrapur is conducting numerous integrated rural development projects in several districts of West Bengal. The centres at Cherrapunjee, Shillong, Along, Narottam Nagar, Itanagar and Narainpur have won the love and esteem of the tribal people of the respective areas for their educational and medical work. There was further advancement in the extensive tribal welfare projects undertaken by the Narainpur centre in the Abujmarh area of Bastar district, Madhya Pradesh. The centre in Bombay continued its comprehensive rural development project at Sakwar with vocational training, medical service and other programmes.

The *Math* centres at Bangalore and Mysore undertook integrated rural development projects. *Math* centres of rural and tribal areas also conducted medical and educational service activities.

Under the *Pallimangal* activities of the Headquarters, a pilot project, initiated in 1980, continued in the villages in and around Kamarpukur and Jayrambati in West Bengal, conducting soil analysis, training for destitute women in weaving and rolling of incense stick, training in spinning in mini jute mills and medical services including eye-camps.

The statistics relating to these institutions are included under 'Medical service' and 'Educational service'.

Foreign Work: The *Mission* centres in France, Switzerland, Mauritius, Singapore, Fiji and Sri Lanka carried on cultural work in addition to spiritual ministration. Some education work was also conducted by a few of them.

In the *Math* centres in Argentina, Canada, Japan, Netherlands, United Kingdom, Russia, and the United States of America our Swamis gave lectures at the centres and also in colleges, universities, etc. on invitation, conducted religious classes, observed religious festivals with special worship, organized seminars and held retreats. Some of them also brought out useful publications on philosophical subjects and spiritual teachings.

The 8 *Math* and 8 *Mission* centres in Bangladesh were engaged in conducting religious classes, discourses, daily worship and prayer, dispensaries, schools, students' homes, libraries and relief work such as distribution of milk, clothing, etc.

During the reporting period a *Mission* centre was started at Limbdi in Gujarat, and a *Math* centre was started in Moscow. Including these newly added centres and excluding the Headquarters at Belur Math, the *Mission* and the *Math* had 82 and 77 branches respectively, in India and abroad. □

Reviews & Notices

PRIMER OF UNIVERSAL HEALING, Ramesh I. Kapadia, Navjivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad-380 006, pp. 89, Rs. 60/- (U.S. \$ 9.95).

It is well known that mental stress is a major precipitating factor in the development of coronary heart disease, and over the past two decades or so, various techniques like biofeedback, relaxation exercises and yoga exercises have been tried, along with conventional medical therapy, on such patients.

The book under review recounts the observations of a Cardiologist, who uses deep breathing exercises (not the conventional pranayama), shava-asana, and meditation along with the usual medications and dietary restrictions. The patients are also encouraged to participate in group sharing experiences. Meditation is for five minutes, which in this context is to 'sit and remain aware of normal breathing'!

While there is no denying that all the above procedures, singly or together, can have a relaxing effect on the body and ease mental tension, the author's claims seem somewhat exaggerated.

For instance, he states that after five minutes of meditation the 'mind ceases to be narrow self of the individual, but it expands into a universal mind'. He also claims that the External Reality postulated by the rsis of yore, and which is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent is realised by this 'simple technique of shava-asana and meditation taught in this programme'.

Talking of Time and Space, the Cartesian and Newtonian models, Einstein and other contemporary physicists appear to be the fashion of the day and Kapadia too devotes a part of the book to this. However, one sees absolutely no connection between these and coronary disease or the present therapeutic programme except that Kapadia's patients can imagine a 'lake of time' instead of a

'river of time'!

More than two decades ago Dr. Udupa of the Benares Hindu University and Dr. Shanti Lal Shah (the latter a Cardiologist) also experimented with shava-asana on patients with coronary disease and other stress-related disorders. The author would have done well to mention them.

The programme has been on for just a year and the number of patients only twenty-two. Kapadia should not have got caught in 'Time' and be in such a hurry to publish the results. The drawback in the study is, there is no control group undergoing conventional therapy or bypass surgery but without the benefit of the Universal Healing Programme.

The book contains clear diagrams of the recommended exercises, which is its positive aspect.

Dr. Kamala S. Jaya Rao, Hyderabad

MEDITATION ON SRI RAMAKRISHNA AND SWAMI VIVEKANANDA, by Swami Tathagatananda, Standard Literature Co. (P) Ltd., E-9, Connaught Place, New Delhi 110 001, 1993, page 201, price Rs. 75/-.

The book is collection of twenty essays written by a scholarly monk. The essays deal with the Vedantic ideas of spirituality as practised and preached by Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. Religion of Vedanta is a 'practical science' of spirituality which has been aptly demonstrated in the life of Sri Ramakrishna. Swami Vivekananda has preached this noble 'spiritual science' which is being heartily accepted by the thinking world for the solution of all problems of modern humanity.

Modern intellectual world is becoming aware of and to accept the 'spiritual science' for the best utilization of the 'material science' for the universal benefit of the humanity at large. It is the 'practical Vedanta' which can assure this. The

Vedanta further shows the way to reach the goal where all demands are totally met with. Sri Ramakrishna and Vivekananda are the way to reach this goal. This book is 'a rambling excursion on the realms of universal ethics, perennial philosophy and the fundamental themes of universal religion'.

Of the twenty essays seven mainly deal with Sri Ramakrishna, his sadhana and teachings, six with the thoughts of Swami Vivekananda on Hinduism and practical Vedanta, three with the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna and Mahendranath Gupta (Sri M.), one with fundamentals of Hinduism and the rest with allied thoughts on spirituality and culture.

These essays have special importance and relevance today, when we are remembering the significance of the centenary of the Chicago Parliament of World Religions at which Swami Vivekananda put forth the Vedantic ideals to change the thought current of the world. He showed us a greater goal of human life for a better human understanding and for a better world to live in. The author and the publisher deserve our thanks for the timely publication.

Dr. Satchidananda Dhar, Calcutta

STUDIES IN ANCIENT INDIAN MEDICINE, by Dr. Aparna Chattopadhyay, Published by Dr. Aparna Chattopadhyay, New A/2/1 Principals' Colony, Banaras Hindu University, VARANASI, 221 005; 1993; Rs. 90/-.

The book under review is a collection of research papers by the author who is a retired Reader of History. Essentially this is a study of ancient Indian history and culture as it emerges from our ancient medical literature written by Sushruta, Charaka, Vagbhatta and others. The *Ramayana*, the Greek observations about our ancient medical system, the *Dharmashastras*, and other ancient works are utilized by the author for corroborative data.

A very striking and glorious picture of India's culture, society and people emerges from these papers. The surgeons were perfect, rendering selfless service to the patients. People practised high principles as

described in our scriptures. They enjoyed excellent health; strict care was taken for public health. People were fond of good food, and virtues were highly regarded as conducive to health and happiness.

On the whole, the book makes an interesting reading, notwithstanding the typographical and printing errors. We hope that the publisher will take more care about proofreading in a future edition.

Dr. Chetana Mandavia, Rajkot

THE BHAGAVAD-GĪTĀ, with Translation, and Commentary in the words of Sri Aurobindo; edited by Shri Parmeshwari Prasad Khetan; Published by Sri Aurobindo Divine Life Trust, Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan, 333 001; First Edition, 1992; pp. 469; Rs. 125/-.

The *Bhagavad-gītā* is the most popular text of the Hindu tradition throughout the world. Although the seven hundred verses contained in the text form a part of the great epic *The Mahābhārata*, they have their own identity and independence as well. These verses, along with the *Upaniṣads* and the *sūtras* of Bādarāyaṇa, form the triune fountain-head (*prasthāna-trayī*) of the Vedāntic systems. The uniqueness of the *Gītā* lies in the fact that its teachings are directly revealed by God himself to Arjuna representing mankind. Thus, it is a perennial source of inspiration to humanity. The text is potentially such that it can inspire and satisfy one and all.

The first available commentary on the *Gītā* is that of Ācārya Śaṅkara, written in the 8th century. Several Ācāryas and reformers have commented on the text. Even today people are available who are busy in understanding and interpreting the text in their own ways. The text has been a matter of some debate as to its present form (as available in the Śaṅkara-*bhāṣya*; the other version being the Kashmir recension of the *Gītā* having some changes). It is now universally agreed that the *Bhāṣya*-version is the authentic one. But there is another interesting debate regarding its authorship. Whether the existing version is written by a single person named Vyāsa or is composed by a

number of persons has been the issue. The German scholars are inclined to the latter view. Richard Garbe maintained that the *Gītā* was originally a *Sāṅkhya* treatise and its present form was produced by a Vedāntin. He distinguished two layers: original or older (the *Sāṅkhya*), and the expanded, by a Vedāntin. His pupil, Rudolf Otto (1869–1937), carried further his master's task and distinguished nine layers, one original and eight separate and distinct treatises added at times and in various places. Further, several individuals interpolated a few verses here and there.

But another group of scholars, interested primarily in the actual content of the text, found the text harmonious. Franklin Edgerton, W. Douglas, P. Hill, E. Lamotte, R.C. Zaehner, et al belong to this group.

The Indian Ācāryas and scholars mainly differ over the point of whether the *Gītā* propounds action, knowledge, or devotion as the sole means to salvation. Śaṅkara finds it advocating the path of knowledge. Rāmānuja treats it as predominantly devotional. Bal Gangadhar Tilak holds that the primary aim of the text is Karma-Yoga.

Sri Aurobindo is one of the most important Indian thinkers of the modern period. He considers the *Bhagavad-gītā* to be integral. The text integrates all the three paths, of course, in some hierarchy. He also treats the message of the *Gītā* to be the basis of the great spiritual movement. He has given a new interpretation to the text which has increased its influence considerably. He admits that the *Gītā* is primarily a Gospel of Action, but action culminates in Knowledge, that is, in spiritual realization and quietude, and of actions motivated by devotion, that is, a conscious surrender of one's whole self into the hands of the Supreme and subsequently into the being of the Supreme.

Sri Aurobindo does not treat the *Gītā* as a weapon for dialectical warfare. To him it is a gate opening on the whole world of spiritual truth and experience and the view it gives embraces all the provinces of the Supreme region. It maps out, but it does not cut up or build walls to confine our vision. It teaches the following of the Divine Life:

the abandonment of all *dharma*s to take refuge in the Supreme alone. The Supreme is the *Puruṣottam*, beyond the Self and *Prakṛti*. The supreme words of the *Gītā* thus are: '*Sarva-dharmān parityajya māmekaṁ śaraṇam vraja. . .*' This is the *mahā-vākya*, the *carama-śloka*, and the most secret and supreme statement of the *Gītā*.

For Sri Aurobindo the first step of the individual towards spirituality is obviously Karma, as stated earlier. It is the self-less sacrifice of the human actions (Karma-Yoga). In Jñāna-Yoga, self-realization, and the knowledge of the true nature of the Self and the world are insisted upon. The path of action does not disappear, but continues here. The last step is Bhakti-Yoga. Here insistence is on devotion, but knowledge is not subordinated, only raised, vitalized and fulfilled, and still the sacrifice of works continues. The double path becomes the triune way of action, knowledge and devotion. And the fruit of the sacrifice, the one fruit still placed before the seeker, union with the divine Being and oneness with the Supreme Divine Nature, is attained.

The volume under review is the commentary on the *Bhagavad-gītā* by Sri Aurobindo, with the exception of eight passages from the works of the Mother. Editorial insertions are limited to the addition of a word or phrase here and there for the sake of continuity. These are printed in bold type.

The work is exceptionally important. The edition is praiseworthy. All those who aspire to understand the Song Divine must have a look at the text. The scholars of Aurobindo and Indologists in general will find the publication rewarding. The volume is brought out in a nice cover and flawless print.

Dr. S.P. Dubey, Jabalpur

ĀDYA SHRI SHANKAR-
ĀCHĀRYA: ĀVIRBHĀV KĀL
(*Samikshā va Nirmay*) (Hindi) By
Vārānasi Rajagopal Sharma. Pub. Shri
Adishankara 12th Birth Centenary
Celebrations Committee, Shri Shringeri
Shankar Math, Kalady (Kerala)—
683 574; pp. xxiv + 79; Rs 25/-.

This book deals with the question of determining, as exactly as possible, the date of Ādya (original) Śrī Śaṅkarācārya, as there have been a number of varied opinions in this regard, placing it between 6th century BC and 9th century AD. All the views are not supported by cogent facts. Some are motivated to serve their own purposes. The question assumed importance since the Central and State Governments in India, as well as various other important institutions observed for one year, from 1988 to 1989, the 12th Birth Centenary Celebrations all over India, taking 788 AD as his date of advent, which is accepted by most of the eminent scholars, historians, and orientalists. There were and have been opposition to this date from some quarters, especially from the followers of the Kanchi Kamakoti Peetha, who have their own version of Śrī Śaṅkara's life and activities. They claim that the date of birth of Ādi Śaṅkara was 509 BC; he founded that Peetha to supervise his other Maths; he lived his last days there, and passed away at Kanchi in 476 BC.

The present author was entrusted by the publishers with the task of determining the correct date through proper research. He has done the work in a thorough-going manner, and has critically examined the periods of all the persons referred to in the writings of Śrī Śaṅkara, and the references to, and quotations from, the works of others in them and their periods. He has shown that Śaṅkara has referred to and criticized the Buddhist scholar Dharmakīrti, who flourished during the first half of the seventh century AD (p. 28). Kumārila Bhaṭṭa was a junior contemporary of Dharmakīrti, and flourished during the latter half of the seventh century AD (pp. 30-2). Ācārya Śaṅkara had met Kumārila in his last days, and had defeated Kumārila's brilliant young disciple Maṇḍana Viśvarūpa Miśra in debate—who became a disciple of Śaṅkara after that under the name Sureśvarācārya. Hence Śaṅkara's period must be towards the end of the 7th or early part of the 8th century AD (p. 34).

Further, it is shown that Vāchaspati Miśra, who has commented on Śaṅkara's *Brahma-Sūtra-Bhāṣya* in his *Bhāmati-Tīkā*,

wrote his dated work, *Nyāyasūchi-Nibandha*, in 841 AD. Thus Śaṅkara's date is limited to the period between the late 7th and early 9th centuries AD. If it can be determined exactly how far removed was Vāspati Miśra from Śaṅkara, then the date of the latter can be more accurately fixed. Now the evidence above places him at the end of the 7th century. Hence several scholars would date his from 688 AD to 720 AD, instead of 788 to 820 AD.

However, the author quotes some works which definitely state that Śaṅkara was born in 788 AD and passed away in 820 AD. Since this date is supported also by some historians, reputed scholars, and orientalists, and the Govt. of India has accepted this date, the author accepts this in his conclusion.

The book has also examined external evidences that are presented to project the date of Śaṅkarā, and shown how far they are relevant. It also examines the claims of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham that Śaṅkara was born in 509 BC, established the Peetham to supervise his other Maths, and lived at Kanchi till his passing away in 476 BC. A number of Governmental Notifications and other evidences are given to show that the Kanchi Math is of recent origin, only a few centuries old, and was shifted from Kumbhakonam to Kanchi, and the Maths at these places had been the sub-centres of the Sringeri Math.

However, the controversy may not end since powerful vested interests are involved, who are not interested in objective evidences. The readers of the book may form their own opinions.

Swami Mukhyananda, Belur Math

Books Received.

1. EUREKA: WAY FOR A NEW GLOBAL SOCIETY 1993; pp. 28; Rs. 10/-
 2. WAY FOR REGAINING PARADISE 1994; pp. 125; Rs. 30/-
- Author & Publisher: Manindra Chandra Acharyya, Viswa Samhati Bhawan, 2/4/3 Vidyasar Upanibesh, P.O. Bagha Jatin, Jadavpur, Calcutta 700 086.