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“उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत।”

“Arise ! Awake ! And stop not till the Goal is reached.”

## TEACHINGS OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA

By M.

Householders and God-realization—The problem of evil—Hiss but don't pour out your venom—The power of faith—Knowledge, devotion, and Yoga—Four classes of men.

Friday, June 15, 1888. It was a holiday on account of the Hindu religious festival, Dashaharâ. Among the devotees who visited Sri Ramakrishna at Dakshineswar on that day were Adhar, M., Rakhal's father, and the latter's father-in-law. They were seated on the floor of the Master's room. The father-in-law of Rakhal's father was a devotee of God. He asked the Master, 'Sir, can one realize God while leading the life of a householder?'

Master (with a smile): 'Why not? Live in the world like a mud-fish. It lives in the mud, but remains unstained. Or live in the world like a loose woman. She attends to her household duties, but her mind is always on her sweetheart. Do your duties in the world, fixing your attention on God. But this is extremely difficult. I said to the members of the Brahma Samaj, "There are jars of pickles and pitchers of water in the room. And in the same room the typhoid

patient is kept. How can one expect the patient to recover? The very thought of spiced pickle brings water to the mouth." To a man, woman is like that pickle. The craving for worldly objects, which is chronic in man, is like the pitcher of water. There is no end to this craving. The typhoid patient says, "I shall drink the whole pitcher of water." It is extremely difficult. There is so much confusion in the world. If you go this way, you are threatened with a shovel; if you go that way, you are threatened with a broomstick; again, in another direction, you are threatened with a shoe-beating. Besides, one cannot think of God unless one lives in solitude. The goldsmith melts gold to make ornaments. But how can he do his work well if he is disturbed again and again? Suppose you are separating rice from bits of husk. You must do it all by yourself. Every now and then you have to take the rice in your hand to see how clean it is. But how can you

do your work well if you are called away again and again?’

*A devotee* : ‘What then is the way, sir?’

*Master* : ‘Yes, there is a way. One succeeds with strong renunciation. Give up at once, with determination, what you know to be unreal. Once, when I was seriously ill, I was taken to the physician, Gangaprasad Sen. He said to me, “You will have to take this medicine, but you can’t drink any water. You can take pomegranate juice.” Everyone wondered how I could live without water; but I was determined not to drink it. I said to myself, “I am a Paramahansa<sup>1</sup>, a swan, and not a goose, I shall drink only milk.”

‘You have to spend a few days in solitude. If you but touch the “granny” you are safe. Turn yourself into gold and live wherever you please. After realizing God and divine love through solitude, one may live in the world as well. (To Rakhals father) Therefore I ask the youngsters to stay with me, for they will develop love for God by staying here a few days. Then they can very well lead the life of a householder.’

*Devotee* : ‘If God is responsible for all our actions, then why should people speak of good and bad, virtue and vice? One commits sin also by the will of God.’

*Another devotee* : ‘How can we understand the will of God?’

*Master* : ‘Virtue and vice exist, without doubt. But God Himself is unattached to these. There may be good and bad smells in the air, but the air is not contaminated by them. This is the very nature of God’s creation : good and bad, real and unreal. Among the trees in the garden one finds mango, jack-fruit, and hog plums also. Haven’t you noticed that even bad men are needed? Suppose there are wicked tenants on an estate. Then the land-

lord must send a ruffian to control them.’

The conversation again turned to the life of the householder.

*Master* (to the devotees) : ‘You see, by leading a householder’s life one needlessly dissipates one’s mental powers. The loss thus incurred can be made up if one takes to monastic life. The first birth is given by the father; then comes the second birth, when one is invested with sacred thread. There is still another birth at the time of being initiated into monastic life. The two obstacles of spiritual life are lust and greed. Lust diverts one from the way leading to God. Man does not know what it is that causes his downfall. Once, while going to the fort, I couldn’t see at all that I was driving down a sloping road; but when the carriage entered the fort, I realized how far down I had come. Alas! Lust keeps man deluded. Captain says, “My wife is full of wisdom.” The man possessed by a ghost does not realize it. He says, “Why, I am well.”’

The devotees listened to these words in deep silence.

*Master* : ‘It is not lust alone that one is afraid of in the life of the world. There is also anger. Anger arises when obstacles are placed in the way of desire.’

*M.* : ‘At meal-time, sometimes a cat stretches its paw to take the fish from my plate. But I cannot show any resentment.’

*Master* : ‘Why? You may even beat it once in a while. What’s the harm? A worldly man should hiss, but he shouldn’t pour out his venom. He mustn’t actually injure others. He should make a show of anger to protect himself from enemies. Otherwise they will injure him. But a Sannyasin need not even hiss.’

*A devotee* : ‘I find it is extremely difficult for a householder to realize God. How few people can lead the life you prescribe for them! I haven’t found any.’

<sup>1</sup> The word also means one belonging to the highest order of monks. ‘Hansa’ or swan is a symbol of the Supreme Soul.

*Master* : "Why should that be so? I have heard of a Deputy Magistrate named Pratap Singh. He is a great man. He has many virtues: compassion, meditation, devotion to God. Once he sent for me. There are certainly people like him.

"Sādhanā is absolutely necessary. Why shouldn't a man have inner unfoldment if he practises spiritual discipline? But he doesn't have to work hard if he has real faith—faith in the words of the Guru. Once Vyāsa was about to cross the Jumna, when the Gopis also arrived there, wishing to go to the other side. But no ferry-boat was in sight. They said to Vyasa, "Revered sir, what shall we do now?" "Don't worry," said Vyasa, "I shall take you across. But I am very hungry. Have you anything for me to eat?" The Gopis had plenty of milk, cream, and butter with them. Vyasa ate them all. Then the Gopis asked, "Well, sir, what about crossing the river?" Vyasa stood on the bank of the Jumna and said, "O Jumna, if I have not eaten anything to-day, then may your waters part so that we may all walk to the other side." No sooner did the sage utter these words than the waters of the Jumna parted, making a way for them. The Gopis were speechless with wonder. "He ate so much just now," they said to themselves, "and he says, 'If I have not eaten anything!'" Vyasa had the firm conviction that it was not himself, but the Nārāyana who dwelt in his heart, that had partaken of the food.

"Shankarāchārya was a Brahmajñāni, to be sure. But at the beginning he also had the feeling of differentiation. He hadn't absolute faith in the unity of existence. One day, as he was coming out of the Ganges after finishing his bath, he saw an untouchable, a butcher, carrying a load of meat. Inadvertently the butcher touched his body. Shankara bawled out angrily, "Hey there! How dare you touch me?" "Revered sir," said the butcher calmly, "I have not touched you, nor have you touched me. The Pure Self cannot be the body

nor the five elements nor the twenty-four cosmic principles." Then Shankara came to his senses. Once Jarhabharata was carrying the palanquin of king Rahugana and at the same time giving a discourse on Self-knowledge. The king got down from the palanquin and said to Jarhabharata, "Who are you, pray?" The latter replied, "I am 'Not this, not this'—I am the Pure Self." He hadn't the slightest doubt about his being the Pure Self.

"I am He", "I am the Pure Self": that is the conclusion of the Jñānis. But the Bhaktas say, "All this is the glory of God." Who can recognize a wealthy man without his power and riches? But it is quite different when God Himself, gratified by the aspirant's devotion says to him, "You are the same as Myself." Suppose there is a king seated in the court. His cook enters the hall, sits on the throne, and says, "O king, you and I are the same!" People will certainly call him mad. But if one day the king, pleased with the cook's service, says to him, "Come, sit near me. There is nothing wrong in that. There is no difference between you and me!" and then if the cook sits with the king on the throne, there is no harm in it. It is not good for ordinary people to say, "I am He." The waves belong to the water. Does the water belong to the waves?

"The upshot of the whole thing is that Yoga is not possible unless the mind becomes quiet, no matter what path you follow. The Yogi has controlled his mind; he is not under its control. When the mind is quiet the Prāna stops functioning. Then one gets Kumbhaka<sup>2</sup>. One may get this Kumbhaka through Bhakti-yoga as well. Through love of God also the Prana stops its function. In the Kirtana the musician sings, "Nitāi āmār mātā hāti." Repeating this, he goes into a spiritual mood and cannot utter the whole sentence. He simply says, "Hati! Hati!" When

<sup>2</sup> Retention of breath. It forms a part of Prānāyāma, as prescribed in Rāja-yoga.

that mood deepens he says only, "Ha ! Ha !" Thus his Prana stops through ecstasy, and Kumbhaka follows.

'Suppose a man is sweeping the courtyard with his broomstick, and another man comes and says to him, "Hallo ! So-and-so is no more. He is dead." Now, if the dead person is not related to the sweeper, the latter goes on with his work, remarking casually, "Ah ! That's too bad. He is dead. He was a good fellow." But the sweeping goes on all the same. However, if the dead man is his relative, then the broomstick drops from his hand. "Ah !" he exclaims, and he too drops to the ground. His Prana has stopped functioning. He can neither work nor think. Have you not noticed among women, that if someone sees a thing, or listens to some words in speechless amazement, the other women say to her, "What? Are you in ecstasy?" In this instance, too, the Prana has stopped functioning and so she remains speechless, mouth agape.

'It will not do merely to repeat, "I am He, I am He !" There are certain signs of a Jnani. Narendra has big protruding eyes. (Pointing to a devotee) And this man also has good eyes and forehead.

'By no means all men are on the same level. It is said that there are four classes of men : the bound, the struggling, the liberated, and the eternally free. It is also not a fact that all men have to practise spiritual discipline. There are two kinds of perfect beings : the eternally perfect and those who achieve perfection through spiritual discipline. Some realize God after much spiritual austerity, and some are perfect from their very birth. Prahlâda is an example of the eternally perfect. It is said that the Homâ bird lives high up in the sky. She lays her egg there, and it begins to fall. While falling, the egg is hatched and the chick comes out. The chick also continues to fall, but it is still

so high in the air that it grows wings as it falls. As it comes near the earth its eyes open, and it realizes that it will be dashed to pieces by hitting the ground. No sooner does it find this out than it shoots up towards the mother, crying, "Where is mother? Where is mother?"

'Eternally perfect sages like Prahlada also practise meditation and prayer. But they have reached the fruit, God-vision, even before their spiritual practices. They are like gourds and pumpkins which grow fruits first and then flowers.

(Looking at Rakhal's father) 'Even though an eternally perfect soul is born in a low family, still he retains his innate perfection. He cannot be anything else. A pea-seed germinating in a heap of cowdung still grows into a pea plant.

'God has given to some greater power than to others. In one man you see it as the light of a lamp, in another, as the light of a torch. At one scratch I recognized the utmost limit of Vidyasagar's intelligence. When I told him of the different degrees in the manifestation of power, he said to me, "Sir, has God then given greater power to some than to others?" At once I said, "Yes, that is true indeed. If there is no difference of degree in the manifestation of power, then why should your name be known far and wide? You see, we have come to you after hearing of your knowledge and compassion. You haven't grown two horns, to be sure!" With all his fame and erudition, Vidyasagar said such a childish thing as, "Has God given greater power to some than to others?" The truth is that when the fisherman draws his net, he catches first big fish like carp. Then he stirs up the mud with his feet, and small fish come out—minnows, mud-fish, and so on. So also, unless a man knows God, "minnows" and the like gradually come out from within him. What can one achieve through mere scholarship?'

# RESURGENT HINDUISM

## V. THE SOCIAL APPROACH

BY THE EDITOR

Ages have their own norms as well as their own brahmins.—*Parāshara Smṛiti*.

### I

In the last World War, when the French had retreated to the Marne in 1914, General Joffre ordered his army to stop falling back and begin an offensive. After this new battle had raged furiously for two days, Joffre received this impressive message from General Foch who commanded his centre :

My centre gives way. My right recedes. The situation is excellent. I shall attack.

That offensive saved the French Capital. Look at the Hindu society! Its centre gives way. Its right and left recede. Is not the situation excellent for an attack? It is in a determined forward march that our future lies. We have retreated too far back, till we are fighting with our backs to the wall. And there, again, we have been too long on the defensive, till the initiative seems to have passed for ever out of our hands. Now is the time to act—to press forward with all our reserve forces and not to worry too much about the defensive ramparts worn out and tattered, the watch-towers dilapidated and shattered, and the protective gates out of joints and battered. Let us leap forward with new hopes coursing through our entire being and new visions beckoning us to a glorious goal. Let us believe that though India has fallen low, a high destiny—higher even than in any past epoch—awaits her just beyond that hurdle, only if she cares to have it. World forces are in our favour, and internal forces also are shaping towards the same consummation. The only prerequisite for such an end is that we must fully gird our loins with the faith

that we deserve and desire it, with the consciousness that we are in dead earnest to galvanize every creek and corner of our social life, and with the determination that this launching forth into a course of unlimited progress shall be irrevocable.

### II

Does any educated man lack the conviction that the Hindu society needs a baptism of active participation in social advance? Let him compare notes with other communities in and outside India. In India the Muhammedan community is noted for its virility and cohesion. A Muhammedan from the Punjab feels himself at home almost in every way amidst Bengal Muslims. A knock at a Muslim home in Malabar finds its repercussion in the United Provinces. The reason is not far to seek. Muhammedans may differ slightly in dress and greatly in language; but in social customs, cultural expressions, and religious conventions they are on a similar footing. They have their common creeds and places of worship, their ranks are not divided by questions of caste and food, they are not at loggerheads over such silly questions as to who should enter a certain temple and who should use a certain well, hotel, or school, and their culture is not sanctimoniously guarded from the profane contact of the pariahs.

The Christian community also shows similar tendencies towards knitting its members into a corporate whole. It has, on the whole, given better play to the Vedāntic conception of the equality

of men than the Vedantists themselves. The Hindus still cling fondly to their antiquated ideas of social stratification based on an aristocracy of birth which has, through ages, deviated immeasurably from its original conception. True, the European Christians recognize the value of aristocracy. But they do not make a fetish of it. And, as Macaulay put it, their aristocracy is the most democratic, and their democracy the most aristocratic. In fact they have struck a better balance between the spiritual ideal of equality and the social actuality of difference than the present-day Hindus have done.

As for social mobility, nobody will want us to dilate on the point. For who is not aware of the great handicaps from which Hindus suffer in choosing their avocations? Trading in leather is anathema to a brahmin. Hindus cannot become sailors for fear of losing caste. They lack greatly the wanderlust and the colonizing spirit, which are more in evidence among the other communities. The percentages of recruits from different communities as revealed by the Secretary of State for India are highly eloquent of the vigour of the sister communities. We may try to explain away the differences as due to political considerations or the pacifism of the Hindus, which is universally recognized as a high ideal. But the modicum of truth left after allowance is made for all that, is not very flattering to the Hindus. We may compare the army percentages with the 1941 census figures of Indian population :

Army	Hindus 50	Tribal ..	Muslims 84	Sikhs 10	Christians and others 6
Census	66	6	24	4	

These are great drawbacks indeed, but greater are the impediments due to immobility of social laws and institutions. We do not for a moment imply that we must change over-night, or that

we must take the more desirable laws and institutions bodily from other communities. We do not also forget that the other Indian communities are equally immobile in many respects and equally suffer from sectarian differences. But that is no reason why we should not critically and sympathetically study the best things that others may possess. Nay, further. It is no shame to take a leaf out of another's book when that is manifestly to our advantage and when this borrowing does not entail any revolutionary change. India of the past did it; why should she not do it again? A virile nation must always be on the move and take part in international exchange of ideas and institutions and internal integration of the various social factors. India's history and her spiritual lore are replete with ideas of progress and democratic reorientation. But though our brains are active, our hands and hearts have atrophied.

### III

Let us look at the problem of untouchability a little more closely. It is an anachronism and has no legs to stand on. Caste Hindus are often loath to admit that untouchability with various shades of its manifestation is nothing but a sort of social repression. They will cite scriptures in support of the present position. We need not argue the point, since the whole attitude is based on sentiment rather than on reason or even on scriptures. But what is apparent to all, and what touches even the instinct of self-preservation of the upper classes, is that this lamentable distinction between the touchables and the untouchables has weakened the Hindu society as a whole. Those who have given the least thought to the problem of communal disturbances, know that very often is it the case that the high-caste houses are ransacked by Muhammedans when the depressed class Hindus in neighbouring places remain unconcerned. According to Dr. Moonje, the Mopla riots in Malabar were partly

possible because of this lack of cohesion among the different sections of Hindus. When you possess covetable things and fail to guard them properly, you invite mischief—that is a well-recognized social law.

In recent years our enemies have made political capital out of this internal disharmony. It is held by some that the scheduled castes are no more Hindus than the aborigines in the mountain recesses are, so far are they culturally removed from the superior castes! This sentiment may not be wide spread. But there is no doubt that the lower classes are beginning to be aware of this injustice and are showing signs of unrest. They do smart under this ignominy, and when the helping hand is stretched out not by their own religious leaders, but by others, their antipathy is fanned to white heat. From such a coign of vantage they fling the argument at our very face: 'If the benign British Government had not helped us, you caste Hindus would never tolerate us in responsible positions like ministerships of State.' The Muslim parties in the provincial legislatures can easily win over sections of them by making higher bids for their favour. The caste Hindus may not actually be as bad as they are painted. But the ugly fact is too patent to be ignored: we have failed in our natural leadership, since our love for our co-religionists has not proved strong enough to make our ranks more compact and irresistible.

Often enough it is argued that the lower castes cannot aspire to equal treatment, so long as they are not culturally raised. True, but may not the inequality be exaggerated? You may not admit a pariah to equality in every way, but what right have you to treat him as worse than a dog? Do not the Christians and Mussulmans show better respect to their fellow beings? In a story of Premchand, the noted Hindi writer, an old pariah, when faced with this argument of cultural inferiority, retorts by saying that the highest brahmin does not feel any compunction in mixing freely

with people of other faiths, who, according to the Hindu standard, should be treated as untouchables, since they use wine and beef and are not very scrupulous about many forms of personal cleanliness, and the old man concludes that it is not culture but power, both physical and political, that makes the higher castes recognize greatness in others. It goes without saying that true equality cannot be established without cultural uplift. But we must not make a fetish of culture and shut our eyes to the actualities of life. The question is, Should men be treated, for any reason whatsoever, as less than men?

Caste prejudices stand in another way against a fresh acquisition of strength by the Hindu community. Some time ago we had a talk with a public man of Assam, who complained that the Ramakrishna Mission had failed in its duty inasmuch as it did not convert the hill tribes of Assam. It was quite easy for us to silence the gentleman by the simple question, Is your society ready to accept the converts? The crux of the problem is not conversion, for the hill tribes are already knocking at our doors to be asked to step in. But the word of welcome never passes our lips, whereas the Christian churches are wooing them with open arms. Not only this, we are even eager to chase away those members of our society who through some momentary weakness or pressure of circumstances make a false step. Their importunities to be accepted back into the Hindu fold go absolutely unheeded. This social pressure extends even to the intelligentsia who dare to cross the seas in search of learning. And it may be easily surmised that when such people are accorded such an unbecoming treatment, the little fries in the lower rungs of society have absolutely no chance.

The social position of families subjected to communal riot or rough handling by rogues is really pitiable. This is a constant source of depletion of the Hindu ranks, for such families are either ex-communicated or have to disown

their women, who perforce have to swell the ranks of their enemies.

#### IV

Then there is the question of marriage. The other day we were shocked to read that a Hindu caste girl had married a Muhammedan gentleman. The match by itself may be above reproach and may even prove happy. At least, let us hope so; for we as Vedantists should desire well of all people. But what is wrong here is that such a match implies *pari passu* a change of faith, and it is too often the case that sex considerations get the better of religious allegiance, thus creating a psychological complex. The situation also reveals a weakness of the Hindu community, since it failed to accommodate a little girl. It is not just a passing event, a mere youthful frivolity, but it is symptomatic of a deep-seated social disease. The marriage system in our society seems, at least partially, to have failed to change itself according to the needs of the time.

Kaulinya or caste aristocracy in its extremest manifestation has limited the range of choice of partners within small endogamous groups. As a result, it was not very unusual in Bengal, a generation or two ago, for such an aristocrat to have more than a dozen wives. Things have greatly improved now. But the evil tendencies are still at work. When society divides into such water-tight small compartments, the ratio between males and females of marriageable age is bound to vary greatly from one sub-caste to another. It may not be advisable, or it may sound too revolutionary at this stage, to broach, as a remedy, the question of inter-caste or inter-provincial marriage. But there is no sense in limiting marriage within a negligibly small group. Eugenics tells us that blood deteriorates when forced to circulate within a very limited area. That is what is happening in many sections of the Hindu society.

Another source of trouble is the system of dowry, which is often so exorbitantly high that it is impossible for

poor parents to marry their daughters. The bridegrooms, too, often fail to furnish the necessary bride-money. The adventurous, thoughtless, or weak souls succumb to the temptation of contracting irredeemable loans, while the more timid incur social stigma for their failure to get suitable bride-grooms at the proper marriageable age.

Polygamy is definitely on the decline. But it is not extinct as yet. Needless to say that this is a constant source of social trouble. Child marriage is legally banned, but practically quite rampant, and particularly so among the lower classes.

Connected with marriage is the problem of widowhood, which has to be tackled forthwith with sympathy and intelligence. Drastic legal measures and frontal attacks will not help us, as our past experience has amply proved. Among indirect means we may suggest some. There should be few occasions for old men to marry young girls. The health of youths should be greatly improved. There should be wider ranges of choice of partners. And, perhaps, in many cases society should not be too critical about the age of marriage. For such a change of front public opinion has to be thoroughly educated, without which widow-marriage acts and child-marriage acts are bound to become dead letters.

Then, again, the position of women in our society is not what it should be. It cannot be denied, of course, that in some respects the Hindus are very liberal. For instance, they have placed some of their women in the highest administrative and legislative positions, though some of the most advanced countries of the West fail to do so. But when everything is taken into consideration, there is ample scope for improvement. Our achievement is not to be judged by the number of highly placed women, but rather by their position as a whole. Manu said that girls should get an education similar to that of boys. This idea should not be limited to the intellectual field alone. There is no



reason why girls should not be physically fit, and why they should not take an increasing share in social welfare. In many Western countries teaching in the primary schools is entirely or mainly in the hands of women. This is what it should be, for children require motherly guidance. Our hospitals, too, can absorb a great many nurses and lady doctors. Institutions meant primarily for women can be left to their care. In other departments of social reconstruction, too, women can not only be gainfully employed, but their help is often absolutely necessary. We do not deal here with the legal rights of women, for we believe that with added duties further rights are bound to accrue. Swami Vivekananda used to say that just as a bird cannot fly with one wing so also a society cannot advance depending only on its male members. We have to find out ways and means for tapping this unutilized source of national strength. We are not much enamoured of politics, and do not see why our gifted women should not turn to other useful fields as well.

### V

With the Hindus, the question of food is a very ticklish affair. And when caste questions are mixed up with it, the problem becomes ponderable. We have, however, to face it boldly, since it is intimately connected with the problem of Hindu solidarity. Vegetarianism and non-vegetarianism are, according to some sentimental people, synonymous with spirituality and non-spirituality. Some people are so prejudiced against non-vegetable foods that they harbour a suspicion that people who do not limit their dishes to the vegetable world may not be morally strong.

An up-country brahmin who happened to be in an out-of-the-way place in Bengal, where he could not possibly get any up-country cook, was invited by a Bengalee brahmin to take his food at his house, assuring him that his kitchen was entirely managed by an orthodox Behari brahmin. The up-country man refused

and preferred to purchase some sweets from a way-side shop, though it was full of flies, filth, and dust. He thought nothing of the insult to his would-be host, the irrationality of his behaviour, or the possible injury to his health. Orthodoxy in Madras runs even to greater extremes. In our youth we heard the argument repeated often enough, and we believed it to be partially true, that caste distinctions do not carry with them any personal *hauteur* and that caste superiority does not necessarily have insult as its counterpart. But with age we have become wiser, and have seen instances where lower caste people, who are often culturally higher than some higher caste people, smart under the treatment meted out to them. To remedy this, we would not advocate revolutionary measures. But it is well for the caste people to remember that such a feeling does exist, and that whenever possible, they should relax their stiffness a little.

Let us take the question of meat-eating as an illustration. People may not like it; they may even detest it. But can they not hide their feelings in social intercourse? They need not take it. But they have absolutely no right to pass unkindly remarks or to insult a whole province by impudent generalizations. It was once rumoured in Calcutta that an eminent political leader refused to stay there for long, since animals were sacrificed at Kalighat, a place five miles away from the house where he put up! That is fanaticism with a vengeance. Such sentiments work not only vertically for inter-provincial acrimony, but also divide the Hindus horizontally, the higher from the lower. And, yet, why should meat-eating be identified with non-Hinduism? The scriptures are not against it. According to them Yogis must abstain from it, but the commonalty need not be so scrupulous. Besides, as a matter of fact, the vast majority of Hindus eat fish or meat, though interested propaganda makes us believe otherwise. It is only the high-caste Hindus of Northern,

Central, and Southern India who are strictly vegetarians. The East, West, and extreme North have no scruple on that score; and the lower classes throughout India eat whatever comes handy and whatever their purses allow. Of course, certain meats are tabooed by all Hindus. Granted that, cannot educated Hindus keep silent over the matter if they cannot actually encourage it? At least they have no right to condemn their co-religionists. We resist the temptation of entering into a discussion of the relative merit of the two kinds of food, for our present problem is Hindu consolidation and not food reform. All that we want to press on the Hindus is that they should be more tolerant about long-standing customs when these do not touch the fundamentals of their spirituality.

Then there is the question of pollution of food, otherwise than by direct contact with bad things. Many Hindus wax eloquent about the pollution of food due to the touch of undesirable and lower caste people. Customs vary from province to province. But generally, it is believed that food should be saved from many kinds of contamination. The scriptures enjoin that this should be carefully looked after. But who cares to inquire what the real meaning of food (Sanskrit *Āhāra*) is? According to Shankarāchārya, *whatever is taken in mentally and physically, is food*. Needless to say that according to him there should be greater emphasis on the mental side than on the physical. But we have reversed the order, and natural-

ly so. For Hinduism in its present moribund condition is more a matter of customs, rituals, and sentiments, than a question of heart and realization. As Swami Vivekananda used to remark, the Hindu religion has now entered the kitchen. And even there Hindu irrationality is transparently clear. The ludicrous part of it is that the emphasis on the caste aspect of food contamination has compelled the caste aristocrats to tolerate bad characters and dirty persons as cooks and domestic servants simply because the latter belong to the desirable castes. Such behaviour cannot escape the vigilant eyes of the lower caste people.

But we cannot go on multiplying instances of social iniquity and irrationality *ad infinitum*, nor is this necessary. It is enough that we have cited a few glaring cases. Our chief aim here is not to revolutionize society, but to develop the proper mental attitude of toleration, sympathy, love, and co-operation so that progress in every field may run its natural course. Once the necessary mental equipoise is ensured, once fanaticism and prejudices are set aside, deformities will easily reveal themselves to our clear vision. All that is necessary is that we must not rest satisfied with the vainglorious assurance that ours is the best society on earth and that our critics are misguided and misinformed propagandists. Let us be more realistic and more courageous in our outlook, for do we not love our society and do we not want it to prosper?

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## IS THE WORLD UNREAL ?

BY PROF. N. K. BRAHMA, M.A., PH.D.

One of the most fundamental problems of philosophy—if not the most fundamental—is the relation of the One and the many. Every system of philosophy has to attempt an answer to this

problem, and its worth and importance are judged mostly by the success it attains here. Not only do the philosophical systems derive their characterizations and designations as monistic,

dualistic, and pluralistic directly from their handling of this problem, but the answer to this question forms the key to all other problems; and the solutions of those other questions can very well be anticipated from the answer given to the central problem.

The stock criticism against Vedanta (as interpreted by Shankara) is that however exalted its position may be with regard to its conception of the Absolute, it fails miserably in explaining the relation of the Absolute and the world, of the One and the many. It is urged that Vedanta regards the world as an illusion, as wholly unreal, as a *Mithyā Adhyāsa*, a false superimposition, and thus instead of explaining the world, it has rather explained it away, instead of attempting a solution of the problem of the relation of the One and the many, it has rather ignored or denied the difficulty. Instead of explaining how the many rise out of the One, how the concrete real facts are related to the One Absolute, it is said, Vedanta has given us a very easy solution by dismissing the reality of the many. To say merely that maniness (*Nānātva*) is an illusion, it is pointed out, is not even to explain how the illusion arises: there are difficulties even in understanding how this world-illusion can happen, the Absolute being *ex hypothesi* not subject to any illusion, and the finite individual (*Jīva*) not being prior to the world-illusion. To say that reason fails to understand how this illusion arises and that this is something beyond reason and ordinary logic is to introduce unjustifiable assertions in a philosophical system. On this point criticisms diametrically opposed to each other have been put forward against Vedanta. It has been said that as Vedanta bases itself entirely on the Shruti texts and places revelation above reason, it cannot be regarded as a genuine system of philosophy at all. It has also been pointed out, in extreme opposition to the previous view, that Vedanta has followed rigorous logic and that in its attempt to be logically con-

sistent, it has neglected the concrete experience and has become an abstract, one-sided theory.

It is really strange how the same philosophical system could be charged with the guilt of under-estimating as well as of over-emphasizing discursive reason. On this point we may say that the two criticisms cancel each other and that Vedanta is open to neither of the charges. It is true that Vedanta is not an airy speculation having no basis in experience, Shruti being its soul and Shruti having a strong support in the experience of adepts. It is also true that Vedanta yields to none in applying strict and rigorous logic in order to elaborate it as a system of philosophy and thus justify its position in the eye of reason. Vedanta takes its stand on Anubhava or experience and adopts strictly logical procedure in order to rationalize the experience. Anybody acquainted with the method and content of the arguments put forward by Shankara and his numerous followers to point out the inadequacy of the position of the other philosophical systems and to show the rationality and excellence of the Vedantic system of thought will realize that Vedanta does not merely restate the teachings of the Upanishads, and paraphrase the Upanishadic Mantras, but that it is a vigorous logical defence and justification of the experience embodied in the Upanishads and that as a philosophical system it is able to accept any challenge and answer it satisfactorily.

The whole of the *Adhyāsa Bhāshya* of Shankara is devoted to the justification of explaining the world as an *Adhyāsa*, an illusion or a superimposition. Illusions are familiar experiences and Shankara says that the Anubhava or experience embodied in the Shruti texts can be rationally understood if the world is regarded as an illusion, if the *Jivabhāva* or individuality be regarded as a superimposition. The Shruti says, 'This *Ātman* is Brahman.' It also declares that one who realizes Brahman becomes liberated and also that one who

realizes the Self overcomes all suffering and misery. The Shruti thus speaks of Brahman and Atman identically inasmuch as the same result happens to the knower of Brahman and the knower of the Self. In other words, the Shruti teaches the identity of Brahman and Atman, the identity of the Absolute and the individual. This can be understood only if individuality or Jivabhava or finitude is a superimposition. We find that when we are under an illusion, something appears to be what it is not, the appearance is something very different from its substratum or ground. This familiar experience of illusions furnishes the logical and psychological basis of Shankara's philosophy. There is nothing inconceivable in supposing that the non-dual Absolute appears as the dual universe, or rather that the universe of duality and opposition has its ground in the Absolute transcending all duality and difference, because we find that in illusions we do experience appearances which are not manifestations of their ground but which are very different in nature from their ground or substratum. If it is possible in the case of illusions, we cannot reasonably deny its possibility elsewhere; for reason can only show possibility of things and not their actuality. If the rational and the real do not coincide, philosophy becomes almost an impossibility. The possibility of the distant and the future is to be established on the basis of the present and the actual, and there is no ground for denying the validity of the conclusions which Gaudapada and Shankara establish on the basis of the experience of hallucinations, illusions, and dreams.

There is no denying the fact that a great deal of misunderstanding has centred round the use of the term Mithya in Shankara's system of philosophy. After so many centuries, I am still disposed to think that the criticism directed against Shānkara is due chiefly to a wrong interpretation of the term Mithya. Most of his critics forget that although the world is Mithya, it is not Asat; although false or unreal, it is not

non-existent. The distinction has been emphasized everywhere in the system of the Advaita-vedanta, and the failure to recognize or remember this all-important distinction is very often the source of cheap and superficial criticisms levelled against Shankara. The world is as real to Shankara, as it is to all of us, in one sense. The criterion of reality to us, ordinary men, is its appearance and workability. Whatever appears and serves practical purposes is real to us. The world appears and serves practical purposes and is in this sense real even to Shankara. So Shankara's philosophy says nothing against common sense, and there is no cause for alarm for any man of the world on that account. Water is able to quench thirst and fire is able to burn actually even in Shankara's world exactly as in ours; Shankara's world is not a mere nothing nor a world of subjective fanciés and ideas. He is not a nihilist nor a solipsist or subjective idealist. He criticizes nihilism and subjective idealism as mercilessly as atomic realism. The world is not non-existent, not Asat, not a chimera, but it appears as real and has workability or Arthakriyākāritva, and as such it is empirically real in the full sense of the term.

But Shankara points out that there is a Higher Real, a Paramārtha Sat, an Absolute Reality, a Reality that is not Bādhita, sublated or contradicted, anywhere in any time, the Real that has been described as the Truth of Truth or the Truth beyond Truth, Satyasya Satyam (*Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad*, II. i and iii) or the ultimate Reality that underlies the reality of the universe. In the Upanishads, Prāna has been described as Satyam and Atman as the Satyasya Satyam; the former is empirically real, the latter is transcendently and absolutely real. Those critics who shudder at the supposition of the Mithyatva of the world may remain undisturbed by knowing that if Brahman is described as Satyasya Satyam, Shankara has no objection in holding that the world is Satyam; but if Brahman is

described as Satyam, then the world is to be described as Mithya. All that Shankara means is that the world is not as real as Brahman, that the world is Nyunasattāka or less than Brahman; and whatever falls short of Brahman which is Reality and Truth, cannot but be unreal and false.

It is to be clearly understood that Shankara uses the term Mithya in a special sense. By Mithya he does not understand the absurd or the chimerical, the Asat or the non-existent. He means by it that which has no permanent value or worth, that which is evanescent and temporary, that which is constantly changing and varying, that which has no fixed, permanent, absolute character. I think everyone of us will admit that the objects of the world are all temporary and fleeting, that they have no fixed character but that they are ever varying. If Reality is defined to be what is permanent and eternal, constant and fixed in character, if the definition of Satyam or Sat is found in the characteristic of non-varying or Avyabhi-chāritva or Niyatarupatva, then the ever-changing objects of the world cannot but be characterized as Mithya. Shankara is a firm believer in the logic of identity, and he defends his position vigorously against all critics with faultless logic, and it is logic alone that compels him to declare the world to be Mithya. Those who think that Shankara is not following logic but is merely indulging in mystic experiences when he declares the world to be unreal, are mistaken. Brahman and the world, oneness and maniness, identity and diversity, cannot be both real inasmuch as these are logical opposites. It cannot be said, Shankara urges, that both are real in concrete experience as in the case of the tree and the branches or in the case of the sea and the waves. The supposition that Brahman is one as the tree is one and that Brahman is in the diversities of the world just as the tree is in all its branches, or that Brahman is one just as the sea is one and that Brahman is present in the things of the

world just as the sea is present in its waves, cannot be maintained. To say that the unity of Brahman is not an abstract identity ignoring or annulling all diversity and difference but that it is a concrete unity including plurality and maniness, is, according to Shankara, to misunderstand and misinterpret the Shruti texts. The real One is not the unity that is opposed to or different from the plurality or an aggregation of plurality; and so the interpreters who have found in Brahman an abstract identity as *opposed* to a concrete reality have entirely misunderstood the spirit of the Vedantic teachings. The Bhedā-bhedavādins of the past as well as those of the present day, whether preaching their doctrines and revealing their real position openly or concealing their real position and taking refuge in the monistic position of the Vedānta, propose a superficial solution of the great problem and think that the One and the many are both real. The One that refuses the many into It cannot be the Absolute, and the many that do not find themselves in the One cannot be ultimate. Both of them are one-sided abstractions. The real Absolute is the one-in-many, the identity-in-difference, the whole or the all that does not exclude or deny the many but includes them all.

Shankara says that Brahman has been described in the Shruti as Kutastha, as the unchanging or the changeless; how can it be supposed to be changing? It can never be supposed within the range of rational conception that the same reality in its inherent nature at the same time undergoes change and does not undergo change—'Na hi ekasya Brahmanah parināmadharmatvam tad-rahitatvam cha shakyam pratipattum.' It cannot be said that just as the same object is in motion as well as in rest so Brahman is both changing and unchanging, because Brahman is Kutastha—always the same—and this is what differentiates It from the world. The Shruti says—'Mrittiketyeva satyam'—earth alone is real, the transformations,

(pot, jar, etc.) are all unreal—mere words and not reality. The Shruti does not say that in the form of earth, the jar, pot, etc., are all one, but in their individual forms they are many, and that both oneness and manness are real. It is clearly stated that the Mrittikâ is real, the many that come out of it are unreal. The use of the word Vikâra or transformation should not lead us to think that Brahman undergoes transformation or Vikâra, because the Shruti definitely states that Brahman does not undergo any change. This is not the subject matter of the analogy. The point is to show that the ground or the substratum is real, while all that seems to come out of the ground is Mithya, Anrita, unreal.

What is unreal becomes Badhita or contradicted by the real, what is real is never sublated or contradicted by the real; it is only the unreal or the false, the Mithya or the Anrita that is contradicted or annulled by the real. The dualism that characterizes and forms the essence of the world, the Jivabhava or the individuality, becomes contradicted on the realization of Brahman. This conclusively shows that the Jivabhava or individuality is unreal, and that Brahman is real. What is a Vastu or reality cannot be eliminated by means of knowledge, rather the knowledge of it reveals its reality. What is not a Vastu, what is unreal, is recognized to be such when real knowledge arises. It is false ignorance or error or illusion that made it appear like a Vastu; true knowledge shows its real nature—its Mithyatva or unreality. If we think a hundred times that the earthen jar is really made of earth and is earth, that will not show its unreality, because an earthen jar is really a transformation of earth. But as soon as the snake that is a false superimposition on a piece of rope is perceived to have its ground in the rope, it is recognized to be unreal. The Dvaitabhâva or the duality that is at the root of the universe is such a superimposition, an appearance imposed by the Great Magician

on the creatures of this world. The illustration of the Mrittika is not to be extended beyond the point at issue. The world is not a transformation or Vikâra of Brahman as the earthen jar is a transformation of a lump of earth.

If the individual humanity is a Vikâra or transformation, if the Jiva is a changing real, all hopes of his Moksha or release are at an end, because Moksha is nothing if it is not permanent and eternal. If oneness and manness are both real, if the Upanishadic teaching be interpreted to mean the reality of both, how is it possible to understand the Upanishad text where it is declared that the conception of Nanatva or maniness is false and that it leads to death and bondage and that it is only the Ekatvadarshana or the perception of oneness that dispels the false conception of Nanatva or maniness and thereby leads to immortality and liberation? If both Ekatva and Nanatva are real, how can the knowledge of one dispel the other? We have already seen that it is only the unreal that can be eliminated by the knowledge of the real—the real can never be eliminated by knowledge. The Shruti prescribing Moksha or liberation for the seer of oneness and condemning the seer of maniness<sup>1</sup> cannot be interpreted to hold the reality of both oneness and maniness, of both Ekatva and Nanatva. The Bhedabhedavada, whether in its ancient form or in its modern disguised forms, attempts a superficial reconciliation which does not find any support in the Shruti texts.

The most important point that is to be noted in this connection is that the Mithya is not opposed to the Sat, and that the Mithya is not identical with the Asat or the non-existent. The Mithya exists in the empirical sense, is an appearance or an existent in the ordinary sense, and, therefore, it has been sharply distinguished from the Asat, the non-existent. The Mithya is not absolutely real, is not Paramartha

<sup>1</sup> Mṛityoh sa mṛityumâpnoti; ya iha nâneva pashyati—one who sees manness here undergoes the darkest death

Sat, has no permanent value. The Sat has been defined by Vedanta as that which has permanent value, and the implication of Mithyatva is fully understood from the standpoint of values. If anything that appears is real in the form of an existent, then the world is also real. Vedanta declares the world to be unreal or Mithya, not because it does not appear to be real but because it is a mere appearance, a Pratibhāsa, which is not substantial. The Mithya Jagat rests on the Sat Brahman and is grounded in It; the Sat Brahman is the support and substratum of the Mithya Jagat. Hence there is no opposition between the Sat and the Mithya, between Brahman and the world. All the criticisms that have been hurled against Vedanta centre round this misunderstanding; and the confusion between the Sat and the Mithya is responsible for the current conception that Vedanta denies the reality of the universe. The Sat is not the permanent that is opposed to the changing Mithya; Brahman is *not opposed* to the world. The timeless that opposes itself to time is not and cannot be the Absolute that is whole and full, cannot be Brahman which is not only not opposed to anything but is the substratum and ground of everything.

One point is to be clearly understood. The Mithya is not opposed to the Sat—it is not in contrary or contradictory relation to the Sat. The changing Mithya is not a part or portion of the Sat. The Mithya is a peculiar category. Its Mithyatva is due to its being transcended. Transcendence is not mere negation or denial. It is as much an assertion as a denial, as much a denial as an assertion. The Mithya is as much included in the Sat as denied in It. Assertion and denial are partial categories that do not comprehend the full significance of transcendence. The Sat Brahman, the Absolute Transcendent Reality, is the Whole, the Akhanda, the Full, the Perfect, the Non-numerical, the Non-quantitative, the Non-measurable which remains the whole or the full

even if the full be subtracted from It. The Mithya is the region of division and aggregation, analysis and integration, the region of the part and the whole. It is a mistake to think that Brahman is the whole that is opposed to the parts; it is a mistake to suppose that Shankara's Brahman is the whole that rejects or denies the parts. The whole that is opposed to the parts is one member of the opposition and belongs to the realm of the Mithya, the Dvaita Jagat.

When Bhedabhedavada proposes to join the whole and the part, the permanent and the changing, the eternal and the temporal, it is not an improvement on the Shankarite conception, but it is merely explaining the real nature of the Mithya Jagat. Hegel's Absolute is nothing but Shankara's Maya comprising within it the subject and the object, the eternal and the temporal. Shankara's Brahman is above the duality of permanence and change in a special sense. Permanence and change, silence and dynamis, and their aggregation, synthesis, or harmony all fall within the world of Maya. The duality of silence and movement, Tamas and Rajas, is harmonized in a higher synthesis of both, which is Sattva. But all these three Gunas form the Maya or Prakriti. Brahman is beyond Maya. Brahman transcends Maya, because It is the whole that knows no division or aggregation. The Upanishads have taken great pains to show the distinction between Prana and Atman, the distinction between the One-in-many and the Absolute One, between the unity in diversity and the Indivisible, Unchangeable Identity. Harmony or Sattva, the silence that is harmoniously present even in movement, the movement that is harmoniously present in silence, seems to be a great reconciliation and appears to be the highest truth from the level of the duality of Rajas and Tamas, activity and rest; but as compared with the reality of the indivisible identity of Atman, it sinks into insignificance. Shankara has attempted to show that

the Bhedabhedavada only applies to Sattva, Buddhi, or Prana and not to Atman, and has taken great pains to establish that the essence of the Upanishadic texts consists in showing the superiority of Atman to Prana, of the Indivisible whole to the unity-in-diver-

sity, of the Kutastha Nitya to the Parināmi Nitya. Those who think that the One-in-many, or the Parinam Nitya, is a conception superior to Shankara's Brahman are deliberately unjust to Shankara and have missed the essence of the Upanishadic teaching.

(To be continued)

## IS BRADLEY'S ABSOLUTE A MERE BLANK ?

BY PRINCIPAL DHIRENDRALAL DAS, M.A., PH.D.

### I

A common criticism against Bradley is that the Absolute he conceives of is a mere blank. We propose in this paper to examine the aptness of this criticism.

Prof. Pringle-Pattison, who in his book *Man's Place in the Cosmos*, has called Bradley's Absolutism a neo-Spinozism, writes,

Now, strange as it may seem, Mr. Bradley's first book (*on Appearance and Reality*) is in a sense neither more nor less than a restatement and re-inforcement of this skeptical thesis, A=A, Socrates is Socrates . . . The logic of abstract identity which he brings in against phenomena, is fatal in the end to his Absolute also, reducing it, in spite of Mr. Bradley's disclaimer, in spite of his sincere endeavour to avoid such consummation, to the undifferentiated unity of Spinoza's substance.

What Pringle-Pattison means is this : Bradley takes his stand upon the principle of contradiction, according to which every real thing is identical with itself at all times and in all circumstances. Strictly speaking, then, A can never become B, A is always A, B is always B, white is white. This principle as thus interpreted asserts permanence to the exclusion of change, and unity to the exclusion of difference. That is, the problem of the One and the many is solved here by denying the many altogether. And this denial, it would be urged, is due to the inability to see the true nature of thought.

This argument is reminiscent of the criticism of Kant's ideal of pure thought

by Caird. According to Kant nothing is theoretically satisfying to the mind that is not reducible to the form 'A is A'. Therefore, the syntheses of understanding, however necessary, cannot produce truth or reality. The world which they reveal is not the real world, it is merely an appearance of the real world which thought demands, but which remains ever beyond it. Against this doctrine of Kant, namely, that reality is no architectonic unity accomplished through the formative understanding, the philosophy of rationalist idealism holds that the ideal that inspires thought is never identity but identity in difference. The linking up of differences, which is the function of understanding and for which Kant refuses it ultimate significance, is the supreme character from which thought does not desire to be divorced. The reality which thought demands is not alien to that character but, on the contrary, represents the very perfection of that character, unity-in-difference. Through the ever-widening activity of the understanding that perfect synthesis is being progressively approached. Reality, in other words, is not discontinuous with understanding or thought operative in our day-to-day experience, but is the fullest realization of thought's principle of identity in difference. It is the consummation of all human thinking, and in it the demand of thought for an Other ceases



inasmuch as there thought and reality coincide.

The criticism of Pringle-Pattison against Bradley's doctrine of the supra-relational Absolute appears to be in line with the above argument against Kant's Thing-in-itself. From the criticism of Pringle-Pattison it would seem that the ultimate principle of Bradley is the same as the Abstract Identity which Kant contemplates as an anti-thesis to the world of Nature, and, therefore, the Absolute of Bradley is open to the same charge as the Thing-in-itself of Kant.

We should at once admit the resemblance in the attitude of both Kant and Bradley to discursive thought which, according to both, lives in a reference beyond itself. There is no idea or proposition that does not need another idea or proposition as its support. I cannot conceive of A without being able to connect A with B or a not-A, that is to say, knowledge of A is possible only through the mediation of B. Yet, theoretical satisfaction is not to be had by this connection, which in its turn needs another idea or connection of ideas to make itself intelligible, and so on interminably. And here lies the weakness of thought. It ceaselessly demands an Other to supplement it, suggesting thereby the possibility of an ultimate supplementation which alone can impart perfection to its increasing demand. That ultimate supplementation is, according to both, impervious to the thought which is discursive and relational. But while Kant regards it as absolutely beyond thought, with Bradley it is a consummation in which thought is taken up. Although, in this his difference from Kant, Bradley may appear to be Hegelian in his main outlook, his difference with Hegel in regard to the main character of the Absolute is not inconsiderable. According to Hegel, consummation of thought is thought in its highest phase, the principle of unity-in-difference displayed in its perfection. But Bradley refuses to call the ultimate stage thought. If in that stage there remains nothing alien

to thought, that is, if the dualism inherent in thought is transcended, that according to Bradley could be no more than 'thought's suicide'. For 'thought is relational and discursive, and if it ceases to be this it commits suicide'.

Thought is displayed in judgement, and judgement always expresses a distance between its content and the subject of which it predicates the content. Where there is no such distance there is no thinking or judgement, so that the stage of abolition of the distinction between the subject and the predicate, reality and thought, cannot be characterized as thought. An Other to thought or understanding is the assumption of both Kant and Bradley, but unlike Kant, Bradley envisages a definite state where the otherness is extinguished, where thought discursive and relational is completely absorbed. That state according to Bradley is supra-rational, because dualism from which thought draws its sustenance is no longer present there.

Turning to the criticism of Pringle-Pattison, we can see now that it is thoroughly misplaced. Bradley's rejection of thought as the sole characteristic of the ultimate state or principle cannot be interpreted as a commitment in favour of bare identity. The relational system that thought offers is rejected because it does not furnish the ideal (highest) unity-in-difference, a self-subsistent whole which is the ultimate principle. Since thought-connections always need a ground extraneous to themselves, the order they accomplish cannot be said to have the integrity of a perfect whole.

All through Bradley has been inspired by the ideal of a perfect whole, an all-inclusive individual. His rejection of thought is due to the fact that its products are removed from that ideal. It would be unfair to say that identity has ever been Bradley's ultimate criterion. He has clearly said that he is in search of a principle

that must stand absolutely by itself. While wide enough to cover the facts it must be

able to be thought without jarring internally. It is this on which everything turns. The diversity and the unity must be brought to the light, and the principle must be seen to comprehend these. It must not carry us away into a maze of relations, relations that lead to illusory terms, and terms disappearing into endless relations.

And the suggestion of such a principle is afforded by immediate feeling which is an experience of a totality. Immediate feeling which is the starting point of cognitive life, foreshadows a higher immediacy which includes relations but is still above them. Agreeing with the Hegelian thesis that reality is a coherent whole, Bradley offers something very different from the Hegelian Idea. Instead of Hegel's 'Thought-absolute', we have the 'Feeling-absolute' in Bradley. In Hegelian philosophy the Absolute is an intellectual order throughout, continuous with the working of intellect as it is present in ordinary experience. But Bradley denies that any organization of phenomenal differences on an intellectual pattern, however elaborate that might be, can be equivalent to the Absolute which has no Other to it. If the Absolute is not conceived in the pattern of unity displayed in immediate experience, whatever is offered as a self-dependent whole will turn out on analysis to be no more than a shadow of the Absolute.

The genuine totality, to express the same idea in a different way, is available only in experience where will, thought, and feeling intermingle. The real to be real must be experienced entire containing all elements in harmony. Intellect with which the Absolute is identified in Hegelian philosophy is only one element, and hence a solely intellectual order is doomed to confront an Other in the elements that are left out. 'The delights and pains of the flesh, the agonies and raptures of the soul', these burning experiences must always remain a world outside thought's region. The idea of the Absolute can be reached only when every flame of passion, chaste and carnal, beauty, pleasure, and the like, have been acknowledged as belonging to

it. To concentrate on one element only is to substitute for the infinite riches of the whole a mere fragment thereof, and in the most earnest words Bradley expresses this deep-seated conviction of his in closing his work on logic :

When in the reason's philosophy the rational appears dominant and sole possessor of the world, we can only wonder what place would be left to it, if the element excluded might break through the charm of the magic circle, and, without growing rational, could find expression. Such an idea may be senseless, such a thought may contradict itself; but it serves to give voice to an obstinate instinct. Unless thought stands for something that falls beyond mere intelligence, if 'thinking' is not used with some strange implication that never was part of the meaning of the word, a lingering scruple still forbids us to believe that reality can ever be purely rational.

It is not possible, therefore, to argue from Bradley's rejection of the relativistic order furnished by thought, that he in the end lands in a blank Absolute. Bearing in mind that experience, of which intellect is one among several other elements, is his ideal, we can see at once that his Absolute is nothing but an all-inclusive and concrete principle.

## II

Had Bradley stopped after showing that the Absolute is a supra-relational whole embracing all empirical diversities, the distress of his critics would have been considerably less. But instead he adds,

this total unity of experience (which is the Absolute) cannot, as such, be directly verified; we know its nature but in outline only and not in detail.

Such an admission, it is held, betrays failure of Bradley's idealism. Ruggiero in his *History of Modern Philosophy*, for instance, characterizes Bradley's position as veiled skepticism. The despair that the Absolute as a whole is impenetrable by the finite mind is, the critic suggests, due to Bradley's obstinate refusal to conceive the Absolute as a relational whole of appearances. By denying the concreteness of relations Bradley has burnt his boats and is driven to despair about the intelligibility of the ultimate principle.

Such criticism is based on the assumption that it is possible to work out the nature of the Absolute in full, and that an ultimate explanation of things is within the competence of human cognition. But one who has followed Bradley in the progress of his thought, cannot fail to note that the principal aim of his philosophy is to strike at the root of this gnostic vanity. What he is not tired of repeating is that the Absolute or absolute truth remains an unrealized ideal for human thinking which proceeds by judgement and inference. In judging we set ourselves over against an Other, and although it is thought's perpetual endeavour to overcome this division, this division remains the very condition of thought. However much we may supplement and alter our system of thought with a view to rendering it adequate to the Other, the Other cannot be exhausted by any series of judgements however elaborate. (And when it is exhausted there is no human thinking at all). Considering, therefore, this impotence of discursive thought, which is the sole means of knowledge available to the finite, a candid philosophy of the Absolute must confess to the un-intelligibility of ultimate reality, if by intelligibility is meant the grasp of the principles of its nature.

To say that Bradley was at last in the predicament of not being able to reconcile appearances with the Absolute in consequence of his previous rejection of relation or discursive knowledge, and that he was, as a result, driven to skepticism in spite of himself, is an utter misreading of the main argument as also the main purpose of his philosophy. That thought operates by way of relations and cannot give ultimate satisfaction he proves at the outset. Relations, he shows, try in vain to get differences into a perfect unity, since they cannot connect them intrinsically but only through a ground that remains always external. And this failure is at the root of the ceaseless movement of thought (which Hegel has called dialectic).

As a fact, . . . we have in feeling a diversity and unity in one whole, a whole implicit and not yet broken up into terms and relations, this immediate union of the one and the many is an ultimate fact from which we start.

When this transitory unity breaks up and thinking ensues, the fact that differences were already somehow one, haunts thinking, so to say, and ultimately leads to its absorption in a whole superior to itself. And to that whole thought can only point, but that whole

is known only in abstract character, and could not be verified in its detail.

Bradley is never in the predicament of being unable to go back upon his rejection of relations or discursive process of knowing. On the contrary, the felt union of the diversities, that is, immediacy, is a criterion that he starts with and sticks to up to the last. His assertion that ultimate immediacy is in a sense beyond and is impossible to construe fully to ourselves, is not a note of skeptical weariness. It is rather the logical consequence of his central view of the Absolute as non-relational or supra-relational. When, to repeat, the only mode of knowing we are capable of is thinking by terms and relations, the supra-relational reality must be pronounced not to be fully intelligible to us. And this is what we are used to understand (misunderstand) by skepticism. If to be unable to assert the impossible, namely, that reality is fully knowable and that no detail of its life is hidden from our view is skepticism, no true philosophy can be other than skeptical. Such skepticism Bradley has no hesitation in acknowledging.

He draws a distinction between Absolute skepticism and intellectual doubt. Absolute skepticism, he holds strongly, is absurd. Even when one says, Truth is impossible to attain, one must stand on a positive criterion to be able to make this assertion; and at that point at least one assumes infallibility which is synonymous with truth. No philosophical pursuit, polemical or constructive, is possible without a governing principle. To set out to philoso-

phize without resorting to a definite intellectual bearing is, as Bradley says, like sitting down to a game without being prepared to play. A definite stand must be taken somewhere and with regard to that stand there should be no chance of doubt. This being the law of all speculative endeavour, one cannot with consistency indulge in an ultimate doubt. When Bradley says, reality is undivided experience, he undoubtedly stands on a positive basis from which he refuses to be shaken. It will be no criticism of his position to say that this basis itself being the outcome of an intellectual process which is generally adjudged as defective, is of little value. For one cannot forget that our business is philosophy, which is thoroughly an intellectual pursuit. And within the orbit of this pursuit we must formulate the result of the pursuit in intellectual terms. Even the impotence of the intellect has to be reasoned out by the intellect itself; and this actual process of reasoning must be regarded as infallible if philosophy is not to be a meaningless affair. If we mean to speculate about the universe we must decline to consider the chance of fundamental error within the speculative process, and abide by a criterion. There can, therefore, be no skepticism in the accepted sense of the term, and Bradley is not a skeptic.

But Bradley is emphatic that we cannot know more than formal characteristics of that which the intellect is led to expect as real. Reality is one and is harmonious experience—this is forced upon the intellect, but beyond this our philosophical construction can never extend. When the contradictory nature of all appearances has been brought out and the weakness of finite knowledge discovered, the intellect is carried to the affirmation that reality is an immediately present whole in which all appearances are contained. This is what Bosanquet calls

inference to the Absolute, the passage from the contradictory and unstable in all experience alike to the stable and satisfactory.

But this transition is

misapprehended if we call upon it to put us in possession of an ultimate experience which is *ex hypothesi* incompatible with our limited being.

The above affirmation about reality is after all abstract; reality does not come to us bodily in that affirmation nor is the kind of supplementation that finite experience is to undergo in order to be attuned to the harmony of the Absolute, known. To know how appearances are assimilated in the Absolute would be omniscience, which, Bradley holds, no metaphysics should and need claim. Every considerable metaphysics ought to be able to give us the main character of reality. And the truth it so furnishes is absolute in the sense that it is not intellectually corrigible—'There is no intellectual alternative' conceivable which would carry us nearer to ultimate reality. Within the intellectual framework of metaphysics the truth arrived at is the only possible truth. Nevertheless, this absolute truth is no more than mere general knowledge. It is unable to give us subordinate details.

In its general character reality is present in knowledge and truth—which is distinguished and brought out by metaphysics. But the general character of reality is not reality itself.

The absolute truth about reality easily turns out to be error if we expect it to conjure up reality.

Reality we know only in vague outline and so far as this knowledge of the outline is concerned, it is, of course, infallible and unalterable. But compared with what we do not know and cannot know this knowledge is nothing considerable. We do not know why there are appearances; why appearances are of such various kinds; why the Absolute breaks up into endless finite centres of experience. These constitute 'the main miracles' which must remain unsolved. Then again, the exact nature of transformation that finite facts undergo in the Absolute also transcends our intellect. Having regard to these elements of our ignorance about the Absolute, it is quite

justifiable to regard the Absolute as something for us unattainable by our cognitive endeavour. And Bradley recognizes the limitation of the finite cognitive power thus :

We admit the healthy skepticism for which all knowledge in a sense is vanity, which feels in its heart that science is a poor thing if measured by the wealth of the real universe. We justify the natural wonder which delights to stray beyond our day-light world and follow paths that lead to half-known and half-unknown regions.

With these words Bradley merely echoes the profoundest convictions of many masters of philosophy and the whole host of mystics and religious geniuses whose singular passion of life was the Divine. That reality transcends our knowledge—that 'depth of the riches, of the wisdom and knowledge of God' is beyond the finite creature—is the essence of the great philosophical tradition which has come down to us from the Upanishads, Plato, Plotinus, Shankara, and Kant.

'Devotional religion', says Radhakrishnan, 'is born of this haunting sense of otherness. We may know God but there is always a something still more that seems unknown and remains unspoken.'

The theist is anxious that religion is destroyed by such a position that regards God as wonder or mystery. But far from being hostile to religion the doctrine of Bradley and such others in regard to the absolute experience is the highest religious sentiment. The attitude taken by them is not one of doubt and question; on the contrary, the belief that the Divine is not fully knowable stimulates the finite yearning to lose and dissolve oneself in It. It is a lower order of religion where God and the world or human soul are taken as terms of a relation, and when a perfect God is set over against an imperfect world or the imperfect soul. Such a religion is involved in flat contradiction. It is impossible to conceive through an intellectual mode how Divine perfection goes with finite imperfection. God is no longer perfect if man's imperfect being continues to confront His nature. A related God is a finite God struggling to

establish mastery over evil and imperfection. But this is not the God that authentic religious experience reveals. God, in the words of Tagore, is the 'last fulfilment'.

It is genuine God where all aspirations of the human soul reach full and final consummation, evil and imperfection are dissolved into supreme serenity.

God is not God, till he has become all, and a God which is all in all is not the God of (lower) religion.

The mystic everlastingly yearns for that God that claims from him 'the complete gift and dissipation of his personality,' and that, baffling all logical articulation, ever remains shrouded in mystery. A determinate, anthropomorphic, personal God, feeling and willing, does not satisfy the demand of the highest religious consciousness for which the only reality is the Absolute, the super-personal.

'Its nature', says Rudolph Otto, 'is that nothing can be affirmed of It, not existence, not essence, not life since It is that which transcends all these.'

Here the idealist of Hegelian affiliation will be provoked to hurl the classical ridicule at such an Absolute 'as a night in which all cows are black', which means that devoid of all logical determinations the Absolute resembles the dark in which colours have no existence. Western idealism, since Hegel, has been entrenched behind the view of the Absolute as possessing intellectual coherence throughout the length and breadth of Its being. For it, the rational is the real. The indeterminateness of intuition, as well as the mystery of ultimate principle, does not appeal to it. The real, according to it, is the real for thought as a single system manifesting one perfectly determinate principle. Whenever, therefore, any philosopher affirms the Absolute as reason-transcending, he will be charged either with having said nothing about or having altogether denied the ultimate principle.

But there is nothing self-evidently untrue in the Bradleian view of the Absolute. The negative concept by

which the Absolute is designated, bears implication of the super-abundance of the absolute life. When it is said that the Absolute is inscrutable and indeterminate, reference is always to the finite *qua* finite. The finite because finite cannot fully apprehend the infinite, the Absolute. However elaborate our conceptions of the nature of the Absolute may be, there is always a beyond that baffles our power of cognition. However confident we may be of the expressed relations between Life Divine and the imperfect finite, there will always

remain deeper connections waiting to be articulated. Our calling the ultimate principle Absolute, itself implies the impotence of all finite modes of apprehension, an overwhelming sense of humility that what we know is ever inadequate to what the Absolute is. There cannot be a deeper truth than this—the truth that finds expression in these words of Bradley :

Fully to realize the existence of the Absolute is for finite beings impossible. In order thus to know we should have to be, and then We should not exist (as units).

## THE SHIVA-SHAKTI CULT OF YOGIGURU GORAKSHANATHA

BY PROF. AKSHAYA KUMAR BANERJEA, M.A.

### I THE YOGI-SAMPRADAYA OF GORAKSHANATHA

Though Gorakshanatha was the organizer of a great religious sect, which played an important part in the creation and consolidation of neo-Hinduism after the decline of Buddhism in India and which spreads even now over all the provinces of this vast land of spirituality and also over some parts of the countries outside its borders, his philosophical views are scarcely known to the scholars of the present day. The followers of this sect have generally laid greater stress upon the practical aspect of his system than upon its philosophical basis, and hence very little earnest attempt has been made by them to give a systematic account of his metaphysical doctrines. The demand for a research in this direction was created by some inquisitive scholars who had no religious tie with the sect, and very recently the attention of some learned members of this organization also has been drawn towards the necessity for the philosophical study of the fundamental doctrines upon which this widespread and long-lived organization is based.

The literature of this sect is partly in Sanskrit and partly in the old vernaculars of some provinces—Bengal, U.P., the Punjab, and the Maharashtra in particular. Most probably the great Āchārya taught the truth-seekers in their own spoken dialects, and could thus preach his system even to the lowest grades of society. His illustrious disciples, many of whom belonged to the so-called untouchable and depressed classes and were afterwards recognized, by reason of their extraordinary spiritual attainments, as Mahājñānis (supremely wise) and Mahāsiddhas (persons who attained supreme success in Yoga) and even as Gurus (spiritual guides) by the truth-seekers of the upper castes, followed the footsteps of their master in imparting lessons on spiritual discipline through the current vernaculars of their times and in laying greater emphasis on practices than on theories. The vernacular treatises of the sect, which are found in different provincial dialects and which claim to be based on the teachings of Guru Gorakshanatha and his disciples, do not generally attach much importance to the subtle philosophical prob-

lems and are chiefly concerned with legendary, poetical, and dramatic accounts about the miraculous powers, occult knowledge, and compassionate deeds of the great master and his notable associates and disciples. Religious teachings of great practical importance are imparted in and through these accounts. Their conceptions about the Divinity and the individual souls and their outlook on life and the universe find ample expression in these writings. The philosophical background of their modes of life and forms of spiritual self-discipline has, however, to be discovered by intelligent research and thoughtful reflection upon the legendary accounts.

Among the Sanskrit works also, there are very few which are devoted wholly or principally to the discussion of philosophical problems and the logical establishment of the views of Gorakshanatha and his school. Nevertheless, the problems with which philosophy deals, were certainly not ignored by them. In India no religious system could ever thrive or even sustain its existence without a stable philosophical foundation, for since the days of the Upanishads philosophy had entered into the inner life even of the most ordinary people. In the cultural atmosphere of this land of spirituality, religion and philosophy have always advanced in close embrace with each other. Too much of philosophy had sometimes to be discouraged by renowned religious teachers.

Gorakshanatha's sect is generally known as the Yogi-sampradaya, because the system of spiritual self-discipline taught by him is called Yoga, the ultimate aim of which is the spiritual union between the individual soul and the Supreme Spirit, between Jiva and Shiva. As Hatha-yoga (a course of psycho-physiological discipline for the attainment of complete mastery over the body, the nervous system, and the mind) occupies an important place in the spiritual culture of this sect, and as the science and the art of Hatha-yoga were greatly developed by Gorakshanatha and his monastic followers, the

sect is also known as Hatha-yogi-sampradaya. It is not unoften forgotten that what is technically called Hatha-yoga is neither the whole nor even the best part of this system, but is practised by the earnest spiritual aspirants of this sect as the most effective means for making the psycho-physical organism perfectly fit and unobstructive and almost thoroughly spiritualized, as they say, so that they may easily rise to the higher and higher planes of spiritual consciousness and ultimately attain perfect union with the Supreme Spirit—the absolute ground and substratum and soul of the universe—which is true Yoga. The minor Siddhis, consisting in wonderful powers for performing miracles, for seeing the past and the future, for entering into the bodies and minds of others, for living an unusually long life, etc., etc., may be and are attained by adepts in Hatha-yoga; but if they attach undue importance to these and fall victims to the propensity of making a parade of them, they are regarded as fallen from the path.

This sect is sometimes vulgarly called the sect of Kānpât Yogis, on account of the unique external feature of the members of its monastic order having their ears split and wearing rings in them. It is also known as Siddha-sampradaya and Nātha-sampradaya. The system of spiritual discipline of this sect consists of Mantra-yoga, Hatha-yoga, Laya-yoga, and Raja-yoga, as well as certain forms of devotional practices. In the higher stages, the discipline consists almost wholly of deep meditation and concentration of the entire physical and mental energy for the direct realization of the Absolute Truth.

## II SIDDHA-SIDDHANTA-PADDHATI

*Siddha-siddhanta-paddhati* is an authoritative philosophical work of this sect, written in Sanskrit and claiming to have been composed by Gorakshanatha himself. This book is the basis of many other minor treatises of the sect and is often cited as the scriptural text

by its learned members. It is written partly in the form of aphorisms (Sutras) and partly in the form of verses (Shlokas). The specific characteristic of the book is that it is wholly a constructive philosophical work and it does not enter into any logical disputation with other systems of philosophy or religion. It presents systematically Gorakshanatha's conception of the ultimate ground of the universe, the process of the evolution of the mundane diversities from one Absolute Spirit, the true nature of the individual souls and their psychophysical embodiments and of the highest ideal to be realized by these souls through the proper discipline of their body and mind, and such other topics. It also gives a general idea of the course of spiritual discipline, necessary for reaching the goal, as well as the character of a man who has reached it in this life. The book is of inestimable value as the exposition of the metaphysical view-point of a particular school of thought that exerted considerable influence upon the intellectual and spiritual culture of the land, and also as the exposition of the philosophic background of a system of worship and religious discipline which is even now prevalent among the classes and the masses alike throughout the length and breadth of the country.

I may note here that there is some controversy with regard to the authorship of the book. In *Goraksha-siddhanta-sangraha*, which is an important, though small, treatise in Sanskrit and which is chiefly based on *Siddha-siddhanta-paddhati*, this latter work is, at least in one place, attributed to Sri Nityanatha, while in all other places it is mentioned either merely by name or as composed by Sri Natha. Mahamahopadhyaya Gopinath Kaviraj in his editorial introduction of *Siddha-siddhanta-sangraha*, which is a summary in verse of *Siddha-siddhanta-paddhati*, appears to accept Sri Nityanatha as the author of the *Paddhati*. It is not clear whether he had seen the original work before editing. The

*Sangraha*. Prof. G. N. Briggs in his admirable book *Gorakhnath and the Kanphata Yogis* mentions *Siddha-siddhanta-paddhati* as a metaphysical treatise composed by one Nityananda Siddha. He refers to Mitra as his authority. He also probably had no opportunity to see the book itself.

The book, which was for the first time printed and published in Sambath 1996 by Srīmat Purnanatha from Haridwar with learned commentaries in Sanskrit and Hindi, begins thus:

आदिनाथं नमस्कृत्य शक्तियुक्तं जगद्गुरुं ।

वक्ष्ये गोरक्षनाथोऽहं सिद्धसिद्धान्तपद्धतिम् ॥

—Having bowed down to Ādinātha, who is with Power and is the Guru of the world, I, Gorakshanatha, shall expound the *Siddha-siddhanta-paddhati*.

From this it is evident that Gorakshanatha is the author of the book. This is corroborated by statements in other places of the treatise. The statement of the author of *Goraksha-siddhanta-sangraha* may very well be explained, if we remember the fact that Gorakshanatha's followers regarded him as identical with Shiva, the eternal Master (Nityanatha). I do not know if there is any basis for ascribing the authorship to any Nityananda.

### III SHAKTI-YUKTA SHIVA THE ULTIMATE REALITY

I propose to give here a brief exposition of the metaphysical view-point of Gorakshanatha and his school, on the basis of this book. In agreement with the Vedantic system of philosophy, Gorakshanatha assumes that the Ultimate Reality must be one infinite and eternal, self-existent, self-luminous, and self-perfect Spiritual Being as well as the sole ground and source and support of the diversified world of our experience. This Ultimate Reality is referred to by him as *Shiva* or *Ādinatha* (the First Lord of all creation), who is accordingly identical with the Brahman of Vedānta or the Upanishads. *Shiva* is one without a second (*Advayam*).



He is above time and space, above all changes and relations, above all differences and limitations.

There is no substance either within or outside Him, the existence of which is independent of, or essentially different from, His existence. He does not depend upon any cause or any instrument or any conjunction of circumstances for the illumination or revelation or manifestation of His existence and character, and as a matter of fact no such cause or instrument or circumstances exist to condition his self-illumination or self-revelation or self-manifestation. He never loses the unity of His existence and the perfection of His character.

All these follow from the very conception of the Absolute Reality, and in this conception Gorakshanatha appears to be in perfect agreement with the orthodox Vedanta philosophy. But, it is asserted, the Absolute Reality is not merely a matter of conception or metaphysical speculation. The Supreme Spirit is actually realized as such by the Yogi at the highest stage of his spiritual experience, and hence there is no room for scepticism or agnosticism. The individual self can through proper discipline rise above all mental and physical limitations, perceive its identity with the Absolute Spirit, and become free from all doubts and errors.

But to satisfy the human reason it is not enough that the Ultimate Reality should be distinguished from the finite, transitory, contingent, relative, and imperfect realities of the lower planes of our experience and should, therefore, be conceived as one, infinite, eternal, necessary, absolute, and perfect Spirit; but it is also demanded that this Spirit should be so conceived that His sole existence and consciousness may furnish an adequate rational explanation for the origination, continuance, order and adjustment, destruction and renewal of this wonderful world process—that His non-dual perfect existence above time and space and relativity may be the absolute ground, source, sustainer,

and regulator of the diverse orders of imperfect existences in time and space, which constitute the world of our normal experience. To fulfil this demand of reason, the Ultimate Reality must be conceived as eternally possessed of Supreme Power—Shiva must be conceived as having limitless Shakti inherent in Him (Shakti-yukta). Power is the dynamic aspect of Reality. Without the recognition of the presence of Power within Reality, the process of creation, preservation, and destruction cannot be rationally explained.

The nature of Power should of course be conceived in the light of the effects which are experienced and in and through which Power manifests Itself. The Power inherent in the Supreme Spirit, Shiva, must be sufficient to account for the entire world process, and hence It must be without any kind of limitation. Human reason, which feels an inner urge for an ultimate explanation of the world process, cannot dissociate the conception of Power from the conception of Reality. Gorakshanatha accordingly conceives the Ultimate Reality as Shiva with Shakti—as the non-dual Spirit with infinite Power. Here Gorakshanatha appears to part with Shankara's school of Vedanta and join hands with the theistic schools. He does not regard the cosmic order as illusory, having only an apparent and not real existence. Hence the Power which must be the source of this diversified world is not described by him as *Mâyâ* in the Vedantic sense of the term. The Supreme Power giving birth to this world of diversities is not to him mere ignorance or a neither-real-nor-unreal incomprehensible entity, but the eternally real or Supreme Energy of the Absolute Spirit—the dynamic aspect of His noumenal consciousness.

Now, the creative, the preservative, and the destructive processes which we experience in the world, the processes of evolution and involution revealed in the cosmic order, imply that the Power behind them has an inherent tendency for self-expansion (*Vikâsha*) as well as

self-contraction (Sankocha). It is the modes of self-expansion and self-contraction of the Shakti of Shiva, that constitute the cosmic order. The Power transforms Itself from the state of absolute unity to the state of relative diversities, and this is the creative or evolutionary process. The same Power proceeds back from the state of diversities to the state of unity, and this is the process of destruction or dissolution or what is sometimes called involution. This self-exhibition of the inherent Power of Shiva in the processes of self-expansion and self-contraction has no absolute beginning or absolute end *in time*. The Power is eternally active, for activity constitutes the essential nature of the Power. The action, however, may be gross (Sthula) or subtle (Sukshma), manifested (Vyakta) or unmanifested (Avyakta). The presence of this eternally active Shakti in Shiva must be recognized in order that Shiva may be conceived as the sole ground of the universe (Brahmānda) and all orders of individual existences (Pinda) within it.

#### IV SHAKTI NON-DIFFERENT FROM SHIVA

Now, the question is, What is the true relation between Shiva and His Shakti, between the Absolute Reality—the Supreme Spirit, Brahman—and the infinite Power eternally present in Him? It is this question which has given birth to different schools of Vedānta. Is the cosmic Power of the Absolute Spirit different from Him, or non-different from Him, or both different and non-different from Him, or neither different nor non-different from Him, i.e., *inexplicable* in terms of the logical categories? Is this Power equally real with the Spirit or has It only an apparent or illusory reality like a dream or rope-snake? If equally real, does It not contradict the absolute differenceless unity of the Spirit? If only apparent, to whom does It, with the great cosmic order produced by It, appear? Is Brahman a victim to illusion? The

questions are puzzling. Says Gorakshanatha,

शिवस्याभ्यन्तरे शक्तिः शक्तेरभ्यन्तरे शिवः ।

अन्तरं नैव जानीयात् चंद्र-चंद्रिकयोरिव ॥

—At the heart of Shiva is Shakti and at the heart of Shakti is Shiva. See no difference between them as between the moon and its light.

He means that the Supreme Consciousness is essentially and eternally dynamic, and the Ultimate Power originating the universe is essentially conscious and spiritual. Gorakshanatha accepts the view that Shakti is non-different from Shiva. Since Shakti exists in, by, and for Shiva and has no existence apart from the existence of Shiva, Shakti cannot be reasonably regarded as distinct from Shiva. This is true in all cases of the relation between a substance and its inherent power. We cannot conceive a substance apart from its power, nor its power apart from the substance. Without the substance the power has no reality, and without the power also the substance cannot be said to have any reality. But it is possible that the power is sometimes present in the substance without any outer manifestation and it is then perfectly identified with the substance; and sometimes the power manifests itself and it is then somewhat differentiated from the substance and shows the substance as active.

Thus Shiva and Shakti are in reality one. The same Ultimate Reality is conceived as Shiva from one point of view and Shakti from another point of view. When Shakti is unmanifested in Shiva, Shiva is the pure, self-luminous, non-dual Being. When Shakti is manifested in the cosmic process, Shiva is the creator, ruler, and destroyer of diversities, though there is no actual change in His essential nature. When Shakti reaches the perfection of Its manifestation, Its identity with Shiva is perfectly manifested. Perfect activity is found to be absolutely identical with perfect rest. Activity consists in manifestation

in relativity; in perfect activity the relativity is again transcended and absoluteness is restored. As Gorakshanatha says,

सैव शक्तिर्यदा सहजेन स्वस्मिन् उन्मीलिन्यां निरु-  
त्थानदशायां वर्तते, तदा शिवः स एव भवति

( S. S. P., IV. 1 ).

—When the Power through Its perfect self-manifestation attains the perfectly self-realized state, It reveals Itself as perfectly identical with Shiva—the fully illumined and unveiled Power is Shiva Himself.

It implies that when the nature of Shiva is fully expressed in and through the activity of Shakti and when the activity of Shakti attains its perfect state of blissful tranquillity, free from all relativity and duality and all resistance and endeavour, the difference in *meaning* also between Shiva and Shakti vanishes altogether. This is experienced by a Yogi in the stage of the fulfilment of his active endeavours for the realization of Shivahood.

#### V THE ABSOLUTE SPIRIT CONCEIVED AS BEING IS SHIVA AND CONCEIVED AS BECOMING IS SHAKTI

Thus in the view of Yogiguru Gorakshanatha Shiva is Shakti and Shakti is Shiva—the Supreme Spirit and His self-concealing and self-revealing Power are identical. Shiva and Shakti are essentially the same, though different in *meaning*. Gorakshanatha emphasizes again and again the absolute unity—the non-duality—of the Ultimate Reality which is the meeting ground of man and the universe, the subject and the object, spirit and matter, the seer and seen, the enjoyer and the enjoyable (*Advaitam Param Padam*). He proclaims repeatedly that a man, through the systematic practice of Yoga, can reach a plane of experience in which the distinction between him and the objective world vanishes, in which the material world of diversities is perceived as perfectly spiritualized and unified in the one non-dual self-luminous blissful Being, who is one with his own

self. This highest truth is perceivable only by the self (*Swa-samvedya*). The true character of this supra-sensuous, supra-mental, supra-intellectual processless experience cannot be understood till this stage is reached and the experience is attained. It is only at this state of consciousness that the consciousness becomes perfectly one with the Ultimate Reality and the Ultimate Reality reveals Itself to this super-intellectual, super-logical, super-phenomenal consciousness.

But he maintains that philosophically this Advaita Tattva (non-dual Reality) must be approached from two points of view, neither of which we have any right to discard as illusory. To view the Ultimate Reality solely from the stand-point of the highest plane of spiritual experience would be one-sided and incomplete. The conception of the Ultimate Reality as above time and space, above all changes and activities, above all differences and relativities, above all distinctions of subject and object, spirit and matter, and hence as pure Existence-consciousness-bliss—*Sachchid-ânanda*—may be logically quite perfect; but it would be philosophically inadequate, inasmuch as it would mean ignoring the world system in which the Ultimate Reality has been eternally manifesting Itself, in which the Absolute Existence-consciousness-bliss has got a temporal, spatial, and phenomenal self-expression. That the Ultimate Reality is the sole ground and cause of this diversified universe, that It has been freely manifesting Itself in various orders of limited and changing experiences and existences, is no less true than that. It is the one self-luminous Spirit, infinite and eternal, without any change or modification in Its essential nature. That the Absolute Spirit has *become* and is eternally *becoming* many must be recognized to be as true as that It is eternally one without a second. Human reason has no right to deny or explain away either of these aspects of the Absolute Reality.

If the causal aspect or the aspect of

*becoming* is denied or thrown off to the background as illusory, reason fails to find out an adequate rational explanation for the world of temporal and spatial diversities, including the various orders of experiencing and truth-seeking minds. If the aspect of transcendent, differenceless, changeless unity is denied, neither the spiritual demand of the Self would be satisfied, nor a satisfactory explanation for the unity underlying the diverse orders of phenomenal existences would be obtained. Gorakshanatha and his school think that both these aspects of the Absolute Reality must be accepted by the rational mind. These two aspects of Reality are indicated by the

terms Shiva and Shakti. In its aspect of *becoming*—as the sole ground and cause of the creation, regulation, and destruction of the diverse orders of finite and temporal existences—the Ultimate Reality is conceived as Shakti (Power); and in its aspect of *being*—as the changeless, differenceless, self-luminous Supreme Spirit—It is conceived as Shiva. The conception of Shiva divorced from that of Shakti is incomplete, and the conception of Shakti divorced from that of Shiva is meaningless. Shiva with His own Shakti, which is non-different from Himself, is the sole ground and the true Self of all phenomenal existences. (Vide S. S. P., IV. 13).

(To be concluded)

## THE APPROACHES OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

BY PROF. NIRMALMOY GHOSH, M.A.

No search has been dearer to the human heart than the search after God. No study has taken so much time and energy in the past as well as in the present, both in the East and the West, as that of the soul and God and man's destiny. However immersed we are in our daily occupations and duties, there comes sometimes a pause. The mind stops and wants to know something beyond this world, and to catch glimpses of an unseen spiritual world beyond the senses. Religion has brought to man blessings as well as horrors. Religion has made real the brotherhood of man, and again has produced enmity between man and man. If religion has brought peace and love, it has also caused bloodshed and ruin.

Now what is religion? Every rational being, as he begins to reflect, finds that he is an insignificantly little creature in this globe, which, again, occupies a small corner of space in this vast illimitable solar system. And when he thinks of the Being on whom ultimately he as well as the whole solar system depends,

he is startled, amazed, awed, and almost struck dumb by the vast incomprehensible magnitude of the creation and its author behind it. It is out of this sense of littleness of man, out of the feeling of fear and awe that religion first springs up. But though the science of astronomy has dwarfed man and brought home to him his physical littleness, the science of the human mind has revealed to him the greatness and glory of man and his infinite possibilities, and shown him that his soul is greater and mightier than the mighty physical world.

Is religion, then, wholly a matter of feeling? Schleiermacher, Max Muller, Prof. Rudolf Otto and many others support this view. Though feelings occupy an important place in religion, it is a mistake to say that religion is mere feeling. The feelings of self-abnegation, of conscious dependence, of awe, reverence, fear, etc., may shed spiritual grandeur but they by themselves do not constitute religion. It is but a common psychological fact that

we cannot love or fear what we know nothing about. We cannot love what we do not consider worthy of love. We do not fear unless there is reason for fear. Feeling is a peculiarly unstable transitory element in human nature, and its degree and intensity depend more often on the individual's own temperament and character than on the nature of the object. Mere feeling is an impossible experience. If it is uncaused and unenlightened by knowledge, it only testifies to the insanity of the man who feels. If religion is founded only on feeling, it is a house built upon sand, and the first storm of calamity or misfortune will cast it down. Such a man will turn out to be a veritable agnostic soon.

Is religion, then, wholly a matter of intellect, a mode of thought? Socrates, Spinoza, Hegel, Croce, and some Vedantists hold this view. Religion is man's communion with what he believes to be a God or gods, and the sense of relationship with Him or them. Virtue is knowledge, and vice is ignorance. This intellectual or reflective aspect of religion is what is called theology, and it consists of a knowledge or belief in God, of a set of doctrines and dogmas or articles of faith, constituting what is called the creed.

But mere knowledge is not religion. Mere knowledge of the ultimate Power or powers, however clear, profound, and comprehensive it may be, never can be religion. There can be no religion where feeling and affection are not added to knowledge. There can be no religion in any mind devoid of reverence or love, hope or fear, whose thinking is untouched, uncoloured, and un-inspired by some pious emotion. Further, to know is not to do; however much we may be convinced of a truth, there is still left room for choice to act or not according to it. This is corroborated by the oft-quoted Sanskrit saying:

I know what is right, but feel no inclination to follow it; I know what is wrong and yet cannot refrain from it.

Religion, as Swami Vivekananda says, is realization—no talk, nor doctrine, nor theories, however beautiful they may be. It is being and becoming, not hearing and acknowledging. It is the whole soul becoming changed into what it believes. It is not sectarianism. He who only studies books for religion reminds one of an ass which carried a heavy load of sugar on its back, but did not know the sweetness of it. Such are the pundits.

Is religion, then, wholly an affair of will, as Kant, Fichte, the Buddhists, and others hold? Religion is more behaviour than belief. It consists in the self-surrender of the soul to the object of its worship. There can be no religion in the true sense so long as the will is unmoved, the character and conduct unmodified. Pious feeling, even though based on knowledge, is only religiousness, not religion. It is only a capacity of being religious, not actually so. It becomes a reality when the will of man submits itself to the Divine Will. This volitional attitude of religion is known as worship, and it has given rise to the institution known as temple, or church, or mosque.

But can the will surrender itself to God without knowing Him and without feeling its dependence on Him? Unless we have a clear vision of God, religion will degenerate into meaningless ceremonies, formalities, and superstitions.

Thus religion belongs exclusively to no one part, no one disposition or faculty, but embraces the whole mind, the whole man. Knowledge, affection, and self-surrender—Jñāna, Bhakti, and Karma—are indissolubly present in religion. They are all essential. As Radhakrishnan says,

Religion is not a mere speculation of reason or a feeling of dependence or a mode of behaviour. It is something which our entire self is, feels, and does; it is the concurrent activity of thought, feeling, and will. It satisfies the logical demand for abiding certainty, the aesthetic longing for repose, and the ethical desire for perfection.

Religion, as Galloway says, is man's faith in a Power beyond himself where-

by he seeks to satisfy emotional needs and gain stability of life, and which he expresses in acts of worship and service. In modern philosophy of religion the conception of God is the conception not only of the Power on which all things depend, but of the Highest Value. Prof. Hoffding and others hold that religion is the belief in the conservation of the highest values. We value what is absolutely true, what is absolutely beautiful, and we also attach absolute value to moral goodness. Now religion has usually connected this realm of values with the name of God. As Inge says,

God is the self-existent *Summum genus* in whom we believe that our highest ideals are realized. The life of God is known to us as the realization and the support of these three kinds of value.

It is obvious, then, that these three paths or *Mārgas*, the path of *Jnana*, the path of *Bhakti* or devotion, and the path of *Karma* run into one another, and cannot be separated from one another. In the beginning, however, the spiritual aspirant should select one particular path according to his own temperament and tendencies. The *Jñāni*, having a philosophic turn of mind, is not satisfied with the pleasures of this life and tries to penetrate behind the surface show of things and grasps the reality at the back of the phenomenal world. His sins and impurities being cleansed by knowledge, he gradually realizes that the Ultimate Reality of the universe is not far from him, and he is the changeless, deathless Self or *Atman*. The *Bhakta* or the devotee hankers after union with his beloved Lord with all his heart. Gifted with an emotional frame of mind, he tries to find true happiness in the path of love. Worldly love is not able to quench his thirst. His whole mind, all his love and affection are turned towards his Lord, who is seated in his own heart. The fire of true love and devotion for the Supreme Lord burns all earthly ties and impurities. He realizes the grand truth, the oneness with the Universal Being. The *Bhakta* or the devotee first

tries to apprehend the Divine Love under the aspect of *Shānta*, i.e., the peaceful. In the second phase he regards himself as the servant of God, i.e., *Dāśya*. In the third phase he looks upon God as a friend, i.e., *Sakhya*. In the next phase he begins to love Him as his own child, i.e., *Vātsalya*. In the last phase he regards Him as the beloved of all, as his own lover, i.e., *Madhura*. On the other hand, persons of an active temperament who do not possess a strong intellect, should try to purify their hearts by work or *Karma*. The secret of work is that all our works should be looked upon as a form of worship, whether we walk, or play, or talk, or eat. Work with attachment is bondage, but selfless work performed in a spirit of worship will bring peace and freedom. A true *Karma-yogin* performs duty for the sake of duty in a disinterested way, without any thought of results, without any idea of personal gain or loss. This is the ideal preached in the *Bhagavadgita*, and this is the teaching of the German philosopher Kant. Selfless work, work for the good of others, work without attachment awakens the dormant power within, and instils courage and fearlessness. This teaching was carried into practice by the ideal *Karma-yogin Buddha*.

However different may be the approaches leading to the Divine, there can never be any true religious life without a strict moral basis. Ethics is a necessary stepping stone to religious realization, it is the very foundation and ground of spiritual life. Man is a dual being. On the one hand he is an animal, moved by impulses and passions, subject to whims and caprices, bound by space and time, a finite and limited creature of his surroundings. On the other hand he is a rational being, master of his impulses and passions, able to transcend the limits of space and time, a creature of his own making. This contradiction between the animality and rationality, between the lower self and the higher self, the

actual and the ideal, is the source of morality and religion. What is morality? It is but the impulse to conquer the animal self and live a life of reason, and become what you ought to be. Religion is the conscious union of the finite with the Infinite, the lower self with the Divine Self. Religion, as Swami Vivekananda has said, is the manifestation of the Divinity already in man. Moral or ethical culture in every form of approach is the condition, *sine qua non*, of spiritual culture.

Besides the above paths of self-realization there is another path laid down especially for men of contemplative bent of mind, endowed with great will power to be able to control both external and internal Nature. The restless mind is to be brought under control slowly and steadily through practice and renunciation. This method is called by Patanjali the method of Râja-yoga, and can be practised by any one more or less in conjunction with another method, even by the sceptic, provided he has faith in the infinite potentialities of his own self.

Raja-yoga gives us control over our nature and gives us a knowledge of all the parts of our mental life, viz, the sub-conscious, the conscious, and the super-conscious. It is a kind of psychotherapy, self-hypnosis, psychic healing, etc. The method of psycho-analysis of Freud regards mental aberrations as caused by the suppressed or repressed wishes, and the cure of a variety of mental diseases takes place when these are expelled from our mind by the method of confession. But this does not go very deep. Psycho-analysis tries to find the cause of any abnormality in the psychological incompatibilities of the underlying forces. But this method of Yoga goes further and finds the causes of the incompatibilities in the fundamental elements, viz, Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas. If we can establish equilibrium in our nature through proper regulation and control of the psychic forces we can permanently eradicate the causes of diseases and sins. With the increase of the Sattva element,

the removal of Tamas, and the control of Râjasic vibrations many psychic powers are unfolded. Raja-yoga declares that miracles, answers to prayers, etc., come not from supernatural beings above the clouds but from the sub-conscious depth of the mind itself.

Raja-yoga is divided into eight limbs or steps. The first is Yama which consists of Ahimsâ (non-killing), Satya (truthfulness), Asteya (non-stealing), Brahmacharya (continence), and Aparigraha (not receiving unnecessary gifts).

The second is Niyama which consists of Shaucha (cleanliness), Santosha (contentment), Tapas (austerity), Svâdh-yâya (study of religious books), and Ishvara-pranidhâna (self-surrender to God). The Yama and Niyama are moral trainings and preliminary but essential requisites of a Yogi. The impulses and sexual passions must be controlled, and the spiritual aspirant must not think of injuring anyone, by thought, word, or deed. He should be merciful to all sentient creatures.

The third step is Asana. They are certain postures recommended for keeping the body and the nervous system fit and free from diseases. It is necessary that the spinal column should be held free, and the chest, neck, and the head should be in a straight line. These static exercises will make a man healthy and increase his reserves of energy so as to enable him to bear any physical strain. make the mind alert, and improve concentration.

The fourth step is Prânâyâma, i.e., regulation of breath or Prâna. Prana-yama lessens the number of daily breathings and consequently prolongs life, and is very helpful in concentration and spiritual progress. It is one of the best means of rousing the coiled-up Kundalini Shakti, which is lying dormant in us, and which is the main spring of all psychic powers. It has three stages, viz, inhalation (Puraka), retention (Kumbhaka), and expiration (Rechaka).

The fifth step is Pratyâhâra. This

consists in withdrawing the mind and the senses from the objects. To control the mind is indeed the hardest thing in the world, and after a patient and continuous struggle we can succeed in controlling the restless mind. It is the stepping stone to inner spiritual life. In this state the senses cannot take any impressions from without.

The sixth stage is *Dhāranā* or attention. This consists in holding the mind on certain points to the exclusion of others, i.e., the tip of the nose, the midpoint of the eye-brow, etc. The ability to focus the mind for any length of time is the test of fitness for entering on the next stages.

The seventh stage is *Dhyāna* or meditation. This consists of a continuous flow of thoughts about an object till the inner meaning is revealed. This meditation must begin with gross objects and slowly rise to finer and finer objects, until it becomes objectless.

The last step is *Samādhi* or super-consciousness. Here the mind loses itself in the object and has no cognition of itself. There is a sudden stroke of mystic illumination. The powers of the mind are like rays of light dissipated; when they become concentrated, they begin to illumine.

This method of Yoga can be employed by the *Jnani*, the devotee, the *Karmi*, and by the followers of any religion. One who follows this path with earnestness and sincerity will surely attain wonderful results in due time.

The state of *Samadhi*, or super-consciousness is the only state in which the Infinite Being can be realized face to face. However religions may differ from one another in ideals, dogmas, and doctrines, they are all built upon the existence of ecstasy. The Greek philosophers Plato and Plotinus advocated ecstasy or mystic vision of God. Spinoza and Kant had an experience of this; great poets like Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Rabindranath had visions in ecstasy. The office of reason, says Plotinus, is to distinguish and define;

but the Infinite cannot be ranked among the objects, and can be apprehended by a faculty superior to reason; and this is ecstasy. The German mystic Eckhart also holds that when all our passions are stilled and worldly desires silenced, then only there is perfect stillness in the soul and God whispers His words into it. The religious history of the world is filled with descriptions of the ecstatic visions of such prophets as Jesus Christ, Mohammed, Buddha, Chaitanya, Ramakrishna, etc.

But if all the teachers of religion claim to have their spiritual truths by the method of ecstasy, why should there be differences and variations in their messages? This is due to the fact that the mystic truths can hardly be translated into our everyday language and are also mixed up with preconceived beliefs, superstitions, and prejudices. If the spiritual aspirants stumble upon this state of mystic vision by chance or by some process, they will misinterpret the revelations as if coming from the sky, or from some angel, or God, or dream. Thus, whenever a seer or prophet by the intensification of his emotional nature attained this privileged state of *Samadhi* without proper discipline and moral training, he brought some spiritual truths mixed up with his fanaticism and superstition, which did more harm than good to the world. So *Raja-yoga* declares that the aspirant should proceed slowly and cautiously after a thorough discipline and mental purification, step by step, under proper guidance, till he reaches the state of *Samadhi* or super-consciousness. As he proceeds onwards, many psychic powers will manifest themselves, but these should be scrupulously avoided as distracting agents. *Samadhi* is the property of every human being, and each one of us will have to come to that state, and then real religion will begin for him. This state is something beyond reason but not contrary to reason, rather the completion and perfection of reason. Then the soul will have God-consciousness, and all doubts will vanish. His



whole inner nature will be illumined, and the individual will realize his one-

ness with the Divine. This is self-realization, the goal of religious life.

## CULTURAL FELLOWSHIP OF BENGAL

BY SISIRKUMAR MITRA

### III

It is not known when Buddhism started to spread in Bengal, but the heyday of its influence is witnessed during the four and a half centuries of Pala rule which was remarkable for intellectual and artistic activities of a very high order. The event with which the Palas began shows the democratic tendency in the political consciousness of old Bengal. For Gopala, the founder of the dynasty, was elected king with the consent and will of the people, a fact which indicates that there was unity in the political life of the time. Buddhism and the great culture that it built up had during the Pala period deeply permeated the mind and heart of Bengal, but the days of its decline began when after the fall of the Palas the Senas (twelfth century) rose as champions of conventional Hinduism with the result that a reaction set in against the liberating influence of Buddhism on society. The Senas were strict followers of the canons and traditions of their religion, and during their rule the social laws became rigid and proved a hindrance to all kinds of collective progress of the people. It must, however, be said to their credit that they endeavoured to re-affirm to the people the greatness and glory of the Hindu ideals, however orthodox might be their way of doing it; and that solidarity of the people and their loyalty to the rulers made it possible for the latter to enforce those invidious laws including the new caste alignments as formulated by them. There is no denying the fact that the policy of the Senas was largely responsible for the disintegration that

was soon found to be paving the way for the Muslims to come and invade Bengal without much resistance. Not only that, as the spirit of the past was not understood in its deeper implications, and as only a mental approach to it was made and that also by a very small section belonging to the upper ranks in society, the people were precluded from having before them any large and integral vision by which to be inspired to those common, corporate activities that bring real and all-round well-being to a country. Thus while the intellectuals were busy with their academic pre-occupations, the people in the mass were tending to be confined within innumerable folk-forms of culture, whose deteriorations, especially of those in the domain of religion, became so glaring in the pre-Chaitanya period. Nevertheless, the soul of Bengal has scarcely allowed any such adverse condition to continue for a very long time; and it has always struggled, more with success than with failure, to be reborn again and again in new forms of religion and culture. Sri Chaitanya came with his message of neo-Vaishnavism not only to stand against all such reactionary forces as were then destroying the social and religious life of the people, but also to vindicate the truth of devotion to God as the only truth that can be realized by all, high and low, and for which a heart full of love for the Divine was the only thing necessary. But the Vaishnavism of Bengal was a new orientation of the Bhakti cult, different in tint from the Vaishnavism of the North or of the South in the same way as the Buddhism that was prevalent in Bengal was not exactly the accepted Buddhism of the

rest of India. Dharmapala, a Buddhist by faith and an ardent patron of Buddhist culture, performed Vedic sacrifices and offered liberal gifts to the Brahmins who conducted the sacrifices on his behalf. Many of his ministers were Brahmins.

The stamp that Buddhism left on the religious life of Bengal can be perceived even to-day. It is interesting that many of their deities the Bengali Hindus have received from Buddhism, to which, again, it is still more interesting to note, they had been adapted from Tantrikism and Paurānic Hinduism, from both of which the particular form of Mahayana Buddhism, for many centuries the prevailing religion in Bengal, derived many of its conceptions including those of its anthropomorphic symbolism. Its Yoga and Bhakti cults are distinctly Hindu in their inspiration. Tantric Buddhism which rose to its heights during the Pala period is the source of many cults of Bengal of which an important one is the Sahajyā.

Bengal's contribution is unique in the movement that led to the absorption of Buddhism into Hinduism of which the outstanding consequence was the acceptance of the Buddha in Hinduism as one of the ten incarnations of Vishnu. In the religious consciousness of Bengal the Buddha yet figures as such. It is according to Tantric Buddhism that the Hindus of Bengal even now worship their most popular deities such as Tārā, Kālī and Sarasvatī. The seven Hindu deities called Ugra, Mahogra, Vajra, etc., are derived from Tara of Buddhism. The Hindus associate the conception of *Akshobhya* (an imperturbable state) and *Ekaajatā* (a single-matted figure) with Tara. But they come immediately from Buddhism. In the Tantra of the Hindus *Akshobhya* is identified with Shiva; whereas in Tantric Buddhism he is the Dhyāni Buddha: *Ekaajatā* also is a Buddhist deity. Sarasvatī is of course a Vedic deity. But in Bengal she is worshipped as Bhadrakālī who is only a formal variation of the Buddhist Tara. There are instances of the figure

of the Buddha being worshipped by the Hindus in one or other of the many names of Shiva of which Jātāshankar (Shiva with matted hair) is a common one. In a village in Tipperah, an ancient Buddhistic site, a Buddhist icon is worshipped as Krishna. The Dharma of the Buddhist Trinity still receives offerings from the Hindus in some parts of west Bengal. The Digambar Tirthankar of Jainism is in many places worshipped as Shiva. Like Tantrikism Shaivism also played an important part in bringing about a syncretic fusion of Hinduism with Buddhism and Jainism, the latter having preceded the former in being a popular form of religion in some parts of Bengal.

This process of fusion must have begun long ago when Buddhism came in contact with Tantrikism, always a dominant cult in Bengal. Most of the deities and doctrines that have given form to Bengal Buddhism, are the product of Tantric reorientation, having very little to do with the original Buddhism itself. The Buddhist goddesses of Bengal are said to be variants of the Tantric conception of Shakti, though, as we have said before, the forms and rituals in which many of them are worshipped to-day are those of Tantric Buddhism to which they once belonged, suggesting thereby that there was a time when they were common to both Buddhism and Tantrikism. Mention may be made here in passing that the *Chandi*, one of the most sacred and popular scriptures of the Tantric Hindus, was held in equal esteem by the Tantric Buddhists. A manuscript of it, about a thousand years old and in the handwriting of a Buddhist monk, has been found in Nepal. The *Chandi* is the quintessence of Tantric thought as the *Gita* is of the Hindu thought. It consists of thirteen chapters from the *Mārkaṇdeya Purāna* of the Hindus and was written in Bengal during the third century of the present era. Its popularity among both the Hindus and Buddhists indicates that there was very little difference between their respective

religious practices and thought. Even the idea of Buddha has taken on a new character in Bengal, and there is a view that Shiva is an important element in its elaboration. It is in this inspiration from the Tantras that the genesis is to be found of the movement through which Buddhism in Bengal began to lose its distinctiveness till it was completely merged into Tantrikism or, more correctly, into the Tantric school of Hinduism.

This movement, it may be noted, was not so much an external phenomenon as a gradual process that worked its subtle way into the religious mind of Bengal, manifesting itself only in the mutual collaboration towards that fusion of the more liberal among the followers of those cults as well as in the adjustments that had to be made to accelerate its progress. A literary evidence of this movement is furnished by *Shunya Purana* (eleventh century?), a treatise on the Dharma cult which is a degenerated form of the Mahayana creed and to which we have already referred as being still prevalent in some parts of Bengal in a Hindu garb. The cosmogonical theories, stated in that work, are only an echo of what on the same subject are found in the *Rigveda* and the Tantras, and there have also crept into them such Brahminical gods as Brahmā and Vishnu along with other Pauranic ideas.

It is not difficult to imagine how in this way a wonderful religious fellowship was developing among the Tantric and Buddhist communities in Bengal in those early days. During the Sena period the people were so much steeped in Buddhistic and Tantric ideas that in order to bring them back to the Hindu fold the revivalists of orthodox Hinduism were forced to re-interpret the conception of Shiva as having all the attributes with which the Buddha was idealized and to introduce those rituals and modes of worship which were common to Tantrikism and Buddhism. Such compromises, however, are not rare in the history of religions. Vedic leanings, we

have seen, were connived at by the early Buddhists of Bengal. The non-Aryan element in the Aryan pantheon is associated with the efforts that were made in early times to absorb the non-Aryans into the Aryan fold. Mithraism (the cult of Sun-worship) was so deep-rooted in the religious consciousness of pre-Christian Europe that the early fathers of Christianity found it impossible to dissuade the new converts from observing Mithra rites and had, therefore, to shift back the celebration of Christmas from its previous date, the sixth of January, to the twenty-fifth of December, the winter solstice (according to Julian Calendar), from which date used to commence the annual festival of Mithraism, in which the early Christians would invariably participate. Thus the Nativity of the Sun came to be identified with the Nativity of the Christ.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to have a complete knowledge of Bengal's past without an understanding of the part played by Tantrikism in its making. Ethnologically, Tantric cults were an important factor in the process of Bengal's Aryanization. Culturally, the Tantric idea of the world being a manifestation of the All-blissful Mother, and of the life of man a ready field for that divine efflorescence, has always been an inspiration for Bengal to break into those creative adventures whose fruits are the constituent elements of her culture. Spiritually, through the practice of Tantric discipline Bengal tried to discover, by acting on the physical, vital, and mental planes, the force of their central being, so that it may be taken up by the Divine Shakti for the higher ascension of humanity, for the perfection, which is the end of all Her inward endeavours. It is true that Bengal was not able to achieve in her community life the supreme ideal of her Tantric Sādhana, and that, because of the attempt in it being sometimes made without proper guidance to bring down power from above into unready and imperfect vehicles and for the satisfaction of the demands of the lower nature

—so luring and so difficult to avoid in Tantric practices—it could not always keep to a strict observance of its principles, and in some cases, degenerated into forms that have brought ignominy not only on them but unjustly on the whole of this great spiritual discipline. Nevertheless, a little insight will take us to the fact that whatever inner growth Bengal had in the past and whatever vision she had of her spiritual possibility in the future, were almost entirely due to her Tantric Sadhana, to the worship of the Divine Mother, kept alive in the life of the race by generation after generation of pure selfless seekers who by their intense Sadhana preserved the knowledge passing it on to those that were to take their place. But what is of more importance to our subject is the other fact that by emphasizing the collective aspect of the Sadhana in which different natures striving towards a common goal find their unity in an utter surrender to *Mahāmâyâ*—the basic principle of the Tantra—it laid the foundation of a new spiritual brotherhood—peculiar to Bengal—which gave a social meaning to her Tantric culture.

In a sense the Tantra is a synthesis of Hinduism. If Vedanta is its beginning, the Tantra is its end. For it does not stop with the realization of the Infinite; it also seeks to arrive at the realization on earth of an infinite existence, a Divine birth—which is the esoteric significance of the Vedic teaching. The *Bhāgavata* recognizes the necessity of Tantric initiation for all the five principal classes of worshippers. The root Mantras are all Tantric. And in the system of Tantric discipline a wonderful co-ordination is seen of Karma, Yoga, Jñāna, and Bhakti. Almost all the religious and cultural movements in Bengal from early times to the present day have behind them some kind of Tantric inspiration. While its practice throughout the ages has given Bengal her synthetic mind, her catholic outlook, her vision of harmony, its influence is not difficult to perceive in the efforts that she has made towards

her spiritual and cultural advancement. Vedanta provided her with the grounding on which Tantrikism itself developed. The Buddhism of Bengal, as we have seen, is essentially a Tantric cult. Her ancient seats of learning were many of them famous for their Tantric studies. Bengal's cultural fellowship with foreign countries including Nepal, China, and Japan was cemented through the propagation mostly of her Tantric doctrines. Even in the texture of the neo-Vaishnavic thought Tantric elements are traceable.

During the time of Sri Chaitanya a large number of sects and schools, many of which derived from Tantric Buddhism, existed in the country. Some of them were absorbed by the new movement and a few continued. But there were also those who in their quiet conclaves kept burning the fire of Tantric Sadhana, its root-word, and its thought, waiting for the modern age to dawn in India when the impact of Western culture, which Bengal was the first to receive, brought about conditions compelling her to look back to the past and refreshen her memory of its imperishable treasures and thereby become ready for the renaissance that was heralded in Bengal through the efforts of her inspired sons. The rediscovery of the spirit of her distinctive culture came to Bengal soon enough and she was able to rekindle it quickly into an ardent aspiration for the perfectibility, envisaged in the Agamas. We see it seeking to define itself, however inchoately, in the early movements, all of which did in a remarkable manner further the cause of cultural fellowship in India. But the aspiration flamed into its highest intensity, and almost at the same time won its unique victory, in the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, the very embodiment of synthesis and harmony, who erected on the foundations of the past a magnificent mansion of spiritual fellowship, to which not only India but the whole world was invited by that mighty son of the Mother, Swami Vivekananda.

## NOTES AND COMMENTS

### TO OUR READERS

This issue may be rightly described as a philosophical issue, but philosophy often systematizes and examines the grounds of belief; and the philosophers in the present issue never lose sight of that goal. Prof. N. K. Brahma puts up a strong defence of Shankara's views and demolishes Bhedâbhedavâda, both old and new. . . . Principal D. L. Das shows that *Bradley's Absolute* is not a *Mere Blank*. . . . Prof. A. K. Banerjea summarizes the views of *Yogiguru Gorakshanatha*. . . . Prof. N. Ghosh, of the Patna University delineates *The Approaches of Religious Experience*. . . . Mr. S. K. Mitra concludes his article on the *Cultural Fellowship of Bengal*.

### SIKHS AND HINDUISM

Of late a controversy has cropped up as to whether the Sikhs can be called Hindus. Naturally, the controversy has its centre in Lahore. In a timely and thoughtful article in *The Triveni* Professor Pritam Singh, M.A., of Lahore holds that

Sikhs are reformed Hindus. . . . As a matter of fact, the Sikh reform, as inaugurated by Guru Nanak, was a replica of the Bhakti movement sponsored by the medieval saints like Ramanuja, Kabir, and others. *Granth Sahib* also contains the hymns of Jaidev, Namdev, Ramdas, Pipa, Sadna, and Farid. The sacred books of the Hindus are mentioned in the *Granth Sahib*. . . . As a matter of fact, the Sikh scriptures reinterpret the Hindu sacred books in the popular language of the people of those days. Dr. Banerjee says, 'It appears that there is no satisfactory evidence to contend that Guru Nanak denounced almost everything that he had found in existence, and that it was his object to build an entirely novel structure on the ruins of the old. The Sikh movement is indeed a protest, but it is a protest against conventionalism and not against Hinduism.' (*Evolution of the Khalsa*).

The writer dismisses the story of Guru Nanak's visit to Baghdad and Mecca as unhistorical. The third Guru Amar Das

visited Kurukshetra and Hardwar, proclaimed the gatherings of the Sikhs on the first of Baisakh and Magh and on the Dewali day, and at the time of his passing away he instructed his disciples to perform Hindu rites. (*Granth Sahib*, p. 923).

In *Jappi* of Guru Nanak we read: 'The Guru is Shiva, the Guru is Vishnu and Brahmâ; the Guru is Pârbati, Lakshmi, and Saraswati.' (*Jappi V*). . . . There is the belief in the doctrine of transmigration. . . . Monotheism and pantheism merge into the Sikh movement as they do in Hinduism. . . . We are, therefore, Hindus and will always remain Hindus. . . . The Sikh Gurus did not give us any new doctrine apart from what was already there in the Bhagavad Gita and in the Upanishads.

The Hindus are ready to recognize all those as Hindus who call themselves so, and these latter are doubly welcome when they swear by the Hindu scriptures and stand by the Indian culture.

### HINDUISM AND CHRISTIANITY

In an illuminating article entitled *What Elements, if Any, can we Adopt from Hinduism into Christian Thought and Practice?* contributed to *The Guardian*, Dr. P. D. Devanandam, M.A., Ph.D., remarks:

This is a question of vital importance to us Christian Indians for many reasons. First, the fact remains that our environment is Hindu; for many years it will be so; and he would be a bold man indeed who refuses to come to terms with his environment. Secondly, Hinduism is a living faith. It may be 'condemned to die; but it is determined to live'. All round us we find evidence of the tremendous influence it exercises on the life and thought of the people with whom we come into contact every day of our life. The subtle power of suggestion is a fact with which we need to reckon. In the third place, though we may disclaim it, it remains true that there are remarkable traces of Hindu thought and practice which we have already unconsciously carried over from our environment.

Non-Indian Christians have no close touch with Hinduism, and denounce it all as evil. But Indian Christians can-

not afford to maintain such an ostrich-like attitude.

It is true that as Christians our allegiance is to 'One Lord, One Faith, One Birth,' whether we live in Chicago, Tokyo, Moscow, or Lucknow. But we are bound to differ in the language we speak, in the manner we give expression to that allegiance. This we get from our environment . . . we have now the doubly difficult task of first interpreting the faith to ourselves and then to the neighbour in the language which both speak. This is, indeed, a dangerous task. But we must either run the risk and live, or play for safety and perish.

These opening lines breathe a spirit of sincerity and catholicity which we

cannot too greatly appreciate. Given this very commendable attitude towards other communities, Christianity is bound to make itself lovable. For the detailed study by the writer we do not care much. His valuation of things is not faultless. At times he is either unjust to the Hindus, or unconsciously betrays too much of partisanship. But these are matters of detail which will find their true values once the method of approach is right. How we wish that the other communities too could be equally open to conviction!

## REVIEWS AND NOTICES

**RIGVEDIC CULTURE OF THE PRE-HISTORIC INDUS.** BY SWAMI SHANKARANANDA. WITH A FOREWORD BY DR. BHUPENDRANATH DATTA, M.A., D.Phil. *Published by the author from Ramakrishna Vedanta Math, 19B, Raja Rajkrishna Street, Calcutta. Pp. xlv+98. Price: board, Rs. 4-8; paper, Rs. 4.*

Research in the field of ancient history is often characterized by two common features—originality and disregard for national tradition. This is what it is bound to be, since the scanty and shifting data can be easily subjected to all kinds of interpretation. For originality we have every respect. Theories put forward by European scholars, who were first in the field, should by no means be taken as the last word on the subject. Oftener is it the case that these theories, which are the results of preconceived notions, hinder rather than help further progress. The present volume is 'a new attempt to throw light on the original home of the Aryans from the Rigvedic sources'. So far good. But we are sorry to note that the Swamiji has not always been very well advised in rejecting the traditional views of the Hindus. He has his reasons for doing so, though, we admit, we often demur. Look, for instance, at his theory: '. . . the Devas were the performers of the sacrifices. They made Agni a messenger to bring other Devas who were not present in the place. . . . The Aryans would ignite fire. The smoke ascending the sky would become a signal to be seen from a distance. This custom was taken recourse to bring the Arya Devas to an assemblage.' Gods reduced to men, and sacrifices to beacons! Again we read that the word Ashva (literally

horse) meant Surya or the Sun. The Aryans had no knowledge of the horse. From Suktas 162 and 163 of the first Mandala of the *Rigveda* the author shows that though in the earlier portions of these Suktas Ashva is synonymous with Surya, in the later portions interpolators have made it equivalent to horse (to pacify, perhaps, the Sumerian invaders!). Other instances are: 'Shankaracharya . . . deliberately embraced the Upanishadic cult of the Kshatriyas,' 'With Buddha the Kali Yuga began,' and 'From sun rise to sun rise is calculated a solar year.' Similar assertions may be found galore.

But these are side issues, though they form the basis of the main theory, viz, that the Aryans were the founders of the Indus valley civilization. The crudeness of the Rigvedic culture, the absence of the horse, and similar other theories established by the author, pave the way for such a conclusion. The author is in good company in holding that the Rigvedic culture was autochthonous, that the Sumerian culture differed substantially from the Indus valley culture, and that the Shiva Linga is not a phallic symbol. But the question is, Do these findings establish his main theory irrefutably? Attempts at reconstructing the pre-historic history of India on the basis of scattered materials supplied by archaeology, anthropology, philology, or ancient literature, is like building a glass house on the shifting pebbles of a swiftly flowing mountain stream. You may admire the beauty of the structure so long as it stands, but you dare not trust yourself within it.

Two or rather three theories regarding the originators of the Mohenjo-Daro civilization are advanced by the Indian Indo-

logists. Some plead for the Dravidians, others for the Aryans, and still others for the proto-Aryans. It is an intricate problem, and every contribution to its solution is welcome, particularly so when an author is bold in thought as well as fully equipped with material facts. But readers must be cautious as to whether the bridge between the two factors is well built.

The well-documented and elaborate *Foreword* takes up the 'Aryan controversy', dismisses the Nordics and proto-Nordics as study-room races, and comes to this conclusion: 'Thus, the more we investigate about the Vedic people the more we come to the level that they were not a special type different from those of the present day,

who claim to be their descendants.' The connection between these people and Indus valley is summed up in these modest words: 'The ethnic and other cultural similarities warrant the conclusion that the presence of Indo-Aryans cannot be denied in the Indus valley civilization. At Harappa their presence is clearly discernible.'

Taken all things together, both the *Foreword* and the body of the book are replete with thought-provoking ideas which are the outcome of erudition. As a contribution to the vexed question of the origin of the Indus valley culture they deserve the attention of all research scholars in the field.

## NEWS AND REPORTS

### RAMAKRISHNA MISSION'S RELIEF WORK

#### REPORT AND APPEAL

##### *Distress Relief Work :*

The Ramakrishna Mission is carrying on distress relief work through 23 centres, in Calcutta as also in 9 other towns and 289 villages of 12 districts in Bengal. Besides free kitchens at Baghbazar and Hatibagan in Calcutta, at Sonargaon and Baliati in Dacca, and in the towns of Dinajpur and Midnapur, rice or other food grains are being supplied either free or at concession rate and monetary help is being given to the poor middle class families of 129 villages in 24 Parganas, 42 villages in Bankura, 25 villages in Dacca, 17 villages in Backerganj, 10 villages in Faridpur, 8 villages in Khulna, and 8 villages in Murshidabad, as also in the district towns of Bankura, Barisal, Berhampur, Dacca, Faridpur, Maldah, Howrah and Dinajpur. In addition to this a milk canteen is being run by our Mymensingh centre for children and patients. We are also co-operating with some other relief parties in running free kitchens at Sarisha, (24-Parganas) Salkea (Howrah), and Berhampur (Murshidabad).

The relief so far given is quite inadequate to the extent and acuteness of the distress. To cope with the situation at least partially, the work requires immediate and wide-scale expansion. For want of funds and food grains, particularly owing to transport difficulties, our efforts in this direction have not been successful. The need of cloth also is very acute.

##### *Flood Relief Work :*

This work is now being carried through two centres, one in the Sadar and the other in the Kalna Sub-division of the Burdwan

district, and during the first half of September, we distributed 72 mds. 5 srs. of rice and 37 mds. 23 srs. of Dal to 1,479 recipients of 23 villages. The recipients in these areas urgently require cloths which our limited funds do not allow to purchase nor will it be possible for us to continue the work for long, unless liberal contributions be forthcoming.

##### *Cyclone Relief Work :*

The work is at present being conducted in 200 villages of Midnapur and 24 Parganas. During the first half of September we distributed from our 8 centres 3,060 mds. 28 srs. of rice, 1,187 mds. 8 srs. of paddy, 73 mds. 33 srs. of Joar, and 4 Hessians supplied by the Government, in addition to 105 pieces of new cloth, 61 lbs. of Neovit and 98 lbs. of Barley to 63,229 recipients. Homoeopathic medicines and diet, etc., are also given from three of our centres. Two allopathic medical units have recently been sent to the field to combat the fearful outbreak of malaria, etc., as far as possible 6,194 patients have been treated with medicine and diet during the period.

It is the Distress Relief Work, however, that needs the greatest attention. While conveying our grateful thanks to all donors through whose generosity we have been able to conduct our relief activities so far, we earnestly appeal to the benevolent public to do all they can to save thousands of our helpless sisters and brothers. Contributions, ear-marked for any of the above relief activities, however small, will be thankfully received and acknowledged by the Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission, P O Belur Math, Dt. Howrah.

SWAMI MADHAVANANDA  
Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission  
24, 9. '43.

## MAYAVATI CHARITABLE HOSPITAL

## REPORT FOR 1942

The Mayavati Charitable Hospital, run by the Advaita Ashrama at Mayavati, situated far away in the interior of the Himalayas, came into being as a sheer necessity—in fulfilment of the local needs. The condition of the villagers, mostly ignorant and poor, is so helpless in times of disease and sickness that the stoniest of hearts will be moved to do something for them. The regular Dispensary was opened in 1903. Since then it has been growing in size and importance until now, when it draws patients from a distance of even fifty or sixty miles. The rush for admission in the indoor department is at times so great that its regular 13 beds are found to be too inadequate, often necessitating temporary arrangements for as many as 30 beds. The condition of the patients is so bad and difficulties of travel so great that refusal to admission is rendered painfully inhuman.

The Hospital is in charge of a competent monastic member, who is assisted by a medical graduate. The efficiency of its work has elicited praise from one and all, especially from persons having practical knowledge of hospital management.

Its well-equipped operation room and the small clinical laboratory have provided almost as much help to the local people in these forests of the Himalayas as can be expected in a town. Moreover, by providing arrangements for gramophone music and a small library and a beautiful flower garden with spacious lawns attempts have been made to make the life of patients as pleasant as possible.

The total number of patients treated during the year in the indoor department was 395, of which 208 were cured and discharged, 44 relieved, 45 discharged other-

wise or left, and 8 died. In the outdoor department the total number of patients treated was 14,727, of which 12,034 were new and 2,693 repeated cases.

This year's receipts including interests were Rs. 5,650-13-5p., and the expenditure was Rs. 5,644-2-9p.

We cordially thank all our donors who by their continued support have made it possible for us to carry on this humanitarian work in such an out-of-the-way place.

Owing to the war situation we find it increasingly difficult to run the Hospital efficiently. But we hope sufficient help and support will come from our friends and sympathizers to enable us to meet the difficulties.

All contributions, however small, will be thankfully received and acknowledged by

SWAMI PAVITRANANDA,

President, Advaita Ashrama,

P.O. Mayavati, Dt. Almora, U.P.

## REPORTS PUBLISHED

The following Ramakrishna Math and Mission branches have published their reports for the periods noted against them :

R.K.M.	Home of Service, Benares	1942
"	Vidyapith, Deoghar	1942
"	Sister Nivedita Girls' School, Calcutta	1940-42
"	Students' Home, Calcutta	1942
"	Port-Louis, Mauritius	1942
"	Sevashrama, Brindavan	1942
R.K.	Sevashrama, Shyamala Tal	1942
"	Advaitashrama, Kalady	1940-42

Besides, the Ramakrishna Mission Vidyamandira has published its new prospectus, which shows exceptionally good results in the last University examination.