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“उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत।”

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

CONVERSATIONS WITH SWAMI SHIVANANDA

BELUR MATH, SEPTEMBER 1930

Afternoon. It is raining cats and dogs. Mahapurush Maharaj is in his room, sitting. Two devotees connected with a well-known organization of Bengal have been waiting for a long time to have an interview. Because of his failing health interviews have been very much restricted. At last they are taken to him. Paying their respects to him, they say: ‘Maharaj, we want some spiritual advice. You are a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. Please bless us. And if you give us leave, we would like to ask a few questions.’

Maharaj: ‘Certainly. Ask freely.’

One of the devotees: ‘Sri Ramakrishna came down to the earth in human form for the good of the world. While in the physical body he got together his intimate disciples and handed over to them as a legacy all his spiritual force. The organization that sprang up thus is still functioning. What we want to know is this: How did he bring them together? What ties did he forge that kept them together?’

Maharaj: ‘Love is the only tie. He bound us together with the tie of love. Each of us went to him being drawn by his love. His love charmed us and gathered us round

him, one after another. Such was his love that, compared with it, the love of parents or dear relatives seemed nothing. Even now love governs his organization. Love is the common cord that holds all of us together.

Devotee: ‘But time is wearing out and will continue to wear out that love-force with which Thakur bound you together and which he transmitted to you. The question is: How to preserve that love-force intact? How to keep it uninterrupted and unimpaired for a long time for the good of the world?’

Maharaj: ‘Well, nothing in this world is permanent. No force is ever the same. Do you know how it works? Exactly like a wave. It has a wave-like motion. Now it surges up with force; next it sinks slowly. This has been the case always. And the sinking presages an upward surge that is to follow. How is man to know the secret of keeping the force intact? Only Mother knows it. She alone knows—She, the Great Force out of which this world emerges. The Primordial Force, the Supreme Mother, She brings down Her power for the good of the world. It is Her business to decide how and how long She will keep that power. For us there

is nothing else to do than to depend upon Her.'

Devotee: 'Sri Ramakrishna is our ideal. We are trying to shape our lives according to his teachings. We beg you to help us in this endeavour. Give us light. You are Thakur's intimate companion.'

Maharaj: 'My children, you are blessed in that you have made Sri Ramakrishna your ideal. He is the God of this age. Any one seeking shelter under him is bound to prosper. I bless whole-heartedly that you may gain strength; be blessed! May your human birth achieve its purpose! And as for light, my children, it will come from within. Try to go deep within yourselves. The more you go within, the more you will see light. Light is nowhere outside. It is within, it is within. Mother is shining as Light in every soul. In me, in you, in every one else. From Brahma right down to the tiniest insect or atom, animate or inanimate, everything is She. Pray to Her, the First Being. She holds the key. If She is pleased to unlock the door, the world of Light will be open unto you. She is the Light, the All-propelling Primordial Energy, the mind, the intellect, the ego, the Mistress of all, the Source of the whole universe. Out of Her have we come; into Her shall we merge. And that Primordial Energy, that Cosmic Force is beyond the pale of this mind, this intellect. Only a mind thoroughly purified knows Her. No amount of spiritual practices entitles a man to grasp Her or to find Her. She is self-illuminating. And with Her light the universe is enlightened. "There no sun shines, no moon, no star; no lightning is there; what to speak of fire? They all derive light from Her. Her light enlightens everything." Take shelter in that Mother. She is within you. She will open the way to Light.'

Devotee: 'Please tell us something about what you have realized by your lifelong pursuit of God. And also bless us so that that way to Light may be open to us.'

Maharaj: As I have just said, my

children (*very tenderly*), that Light is within you, too. Dive deep within yourselves. Then only will you get that Light.

"Dive deep, deeper, and still deeper into the ocean of form, my mind.

Search the lower depths, the very bottom; then only will you get the jewel of love."

The longer I live, the stronger this conviction is growing. There is no other way. Everything is within. That is why Thakur used to sing,

"Keep to yourself, mind; don't go elsewhere.

You'll get all you desire, only search within.

The jewel of jewels, the philosophers' stone can give you all you want.

How many precious stones lie strewn at the door-step of the indwelling God."

That is why I say, children, you must look within. This is the best advice I can give. Surrender to Mother. Pray earnestly, weeping like children. Then only will you be able to see the Light. Whenever we asked Thakur, he would say, "O my boys, pray to Mother earnestly. She will clear the way." Again and again he told us this. I, too, say the same. Pray and weep. Weep saying, "Mother, do let us have your vision, your vision." The Blissful Mother will grant you joy and peace. She will surely grant you these.'

Devotee: 'It is true. Light must come from within. But to bring it out some outside help is necessary, is it not? At any rate, is not the help of a teacher necessary? We beg of you that help.'

Maharaj: 'I give you my heartfelt blessings. May you attain peace! I have told you what to do about attaining the abode of peace. But you yourselves must do all that is to be done. From outside you get only suggestions; the rest you must do yourselves. The teacher's help is such a suggestion. But the more you proceed towards Him, the clearer the path will appear to be.'

RELIGION AND SUFFERING

BY THE EDITOR

I

The question of suffering, deserved or undeserved, has always evoked a passionate and vehement outburst of impatient protests from men since time immemorial. In a cosmos, in a world controlled by a just and merciful Creator, why such undeserved and pointless suffering? Nay, why should there be suffering and sorrow at all? Many religions say that in heaven all is happiness. But why should an omnipotent God then create this earth for human beings with its petty joys and sorrows, its interminable sufferings alternating with tantalizing moments of pleasure?

Not finding a satisfactory answer to such questions, the Charvakas in ancient India, and materialists in modern days, have denied altogether the existence of any God whatsoever as conceived by pious saints and philosophers. Even a Job begins to doubt the existence of God, and even if He did exist it becomes at times difficult to believe that He is just or merciful. It is said that during a period of great economic distress in the family, Swami Vivekananda was praying to God for help; but his mother, who overheard him, told him in a bitter mood to keep quiet, as, for all their prayers, they had not been able to keep the wolf from the door. It was said of the Pandavas that in spite of being the foremost warriors of their time and having Sri Krishna, the Lord himself, as their friend, there was no end to the sufferings they had to undergo. The Pandavas had to bear not only the sorrows of exile, but the even more galling and insufferable experience of seeing Draupadi indecently assaulted in public before their very eyes, and they were unable to do anything! Buddha, unable to bear the misery that he saw all around him, gave up a kingdom to become a mendicant. After untold sufferings he is said to have attained peace, but at what a price! Rama had not only to give up his kingdom, but had to bear the sorrow of the death of his heart-broken father, had to endure the unutterable pain of seeing his

wife carried away by Ravana; and even when he recovered her, it was only to banish her into an undeserved, yet unavoidable, exile into the forest, that he might be an exemplar to his people! And poor Sita! It is doubtful if any embodied soul ever suffered more than she did.

As Buddha taught, all is suffering in the world to a discerning and sensitive soul, he said :

This, O monks, is the sacred truth of suffering. Birth is suffering, old age is suffering, death is suffering, to be united with the unloved or unloving is suffering, to be separated from the loved one is suffering, not to obtain what one desires is suffering; in short the fivefold clinging to the earthly is suffering.

On the national scale, the story of suffering is even more terrifying. Famines, pestilence, floods, earthquakes, cyclones, and other natural calamities take away untold lives, leave millions on the level of a living death, especially in India and China. These, however, pale into insignificance before the pre-meditated cruelty that war, especially modern war, is. The pointless devastation of fair fields and cities, the murder or maiming of thousands of innocent men, women and children, whose only fault is that they are often dragooned into an unworthy war by the powerful military cliques that rule the roast in every state. Could anybody ever find a sensible reason for the miseries and sufferings of the Netherlanders or the Finns, the Ethiopians or the Red Indians, or the Jews and similar down-trodden peoples in the world? Neither Christianity nor Buddhism nor any other 'ism' has been able to stem the torrent of suffering that has deluged and is deluging poor human souls, struggling to live out their lives in a world into which they seem to have been thrust willy-nilly. No wonder that millions in modern times are losing faith in God or any Supreme Being ruling the world. If God cannot allow us to live a happy life here, what guarantee is there that in heaven life is going to be happier? Perhaps things might be worse, for we are told Satan

rebelled against God, and so had to be sent to hell!

II

Scientists say that whenever a theory or hypothesis does not fit facts, as they see them, they conclude that the theory or hypothesis is wrong and has to be given up or altered. The same is true of any other field. While it is true that to all seeming the world seems a chaos, a bitter place where even happiness is unsatisfying because it is so transitory, it cannot be gainsaid that, probing into the secrets of nature and man, we find a plan and a purpose; order where we could only previously perceive chaos; not only justice but also mercy where we had supposed it was all 'nature red in tooth and claw'. But as Jeans says :

Our scientific ancestors of half a century ago were wont to regard the universe as a fortuitous concourse of atoms which, created they knew not when or how, had fallen together and chanced to form the earth and the starry heavens. The wider knowledge of today shows that the main mass and the main energy of the universe do not exist in the form of atoms but of intangible radiation. We may say the universe is mainly a universe of radiation, combined in a far lesser degree with the atoms out of which radiation is continually being formed. Can we regard this new universe as a fortuitous concourse of atoms and radiation?

And Jeans concludes that the universe is a cosmos and is found to be increasingly so as our knowledge deepens and widens. Biologists are coming more and more to see purpose in evolution. In nature side by side with war and competition, we have to note the facts of co-operation within the group, of the noble feelings of friendship, love, and parental affection. Nor can we ignore the experience of many who have felt the existence of a guiding and helping Hand in answer to their sincere prayers. The spiritual experiences of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, and a host of lesser spiritual luminaries are there to bear testimony to the existence of God.

III

There might be some other answer, therefore, to the why and wherefore of suffering in the universe of our experience. We cannot, in a fit of petulant anger and impatience, give up our moorings and like the Charvakas and materialists live a mere life of animal pleasures. Such a course will only increase the use of the naturally easy policy of 'each

man for himself and the devil take the hindmost'. It will be a deliberate adoption of an *asuric* policy like the Western nations in their exploitation of the rest of the world. It would be committing moral and spiritual suicide. Rather should we hold on more firmly to all that is good, noble, and elevating, to all that tends to lessen suffering in so far as it lies in our power.

But in this task of removing human misery and suffering we must take note of the solutions offered by the various saints and philosophers and scientists of past and present times.

The Hindus have divided the sources of suffering into three : *adhyatmic* or resulting from one's inner nature; *adhibhautic* or resulting from causes traceable to the outside and visible world; and *adhidaiivic* or resulting from causes supramundane, that is, not accountable on the basis of our present knowledge, but which we may attribute to the operation of divine forces like gods or God. The *adhyatmic* suffering results from our identification of ourselves with our physical bodies and mental states, operations, or ideas, and as such it is at the root of the two kinds of suffering which affect us through their action on our bodies or minds.

All religions speak of the necessity of giving up attachment to things that do not pertain to God or that do not have eternal values. The Hindus say that suffering will cease only when we are aware of our real nature. The Vedantic section describes it as unity with Brahman. The dualists describe it as living in the proximity or presence of God in His heaven, call it *Vaikuntha* or *Kailasa*. The Buddhists picture it as the annihilation of all desire or absolute desirelessness or nirvana. 'Vanity of vanity, all is vanity, except to love God, and Him only truly to serve', says the Christian, St. Thomas a Kempis. The Mohammedans mean the same thing in their prayer that God is one, and He alone is the Great to whom all prayers should be addressed. The common feature of all these solutions is that unless we merge ourselves in the Infinite, by whatever name It may be called, there will be no safety, no security from suffering.

Swami Vivekananda says thus :

Is there no way, no hope? That we are all miserable, that this world is really a prison, that even our so-called trailing beauty is but a prison-house, and that even our intellects and minds are

a prison-house have been known for ages upon ages. There has not been a man, there has not been a human soul, who has not felt it some time or other, however he may talk. . . . We find that with all this, with this terrible fact before us, in the midst of all this sorrow and suffering, even in this world, where life and death are synonymous, even here there is a voice going through all ages, through all countries, and through every heart. 'This My *maya* is divine, made up of qualities, and very difficult to cross, yet those that come unto Me, I cause them to cross this river of life.' 'Come unto me all ye that are heavy laden and I will give you rest.' . . . this voice comes to men when everything seems to be lost, and hope is flying away, when man's dependence on his own strength has been crushed down, and when everything seems to melt away between his fingers, and life is a hopeless ruin.

The *upanishadic* seers said the same thing : 'The Knower of the Self crosses the ocean of sorrow'; 'Knowing the great, infinite, bodiless Being, existing within these perishable bodies, the wise and brave man goes beyond all suffering and sorrow'.

IV

But to those to whom the spiritual path leading to a knowledge of the Self or God is closed, and whose minds are tormented by doubts, moral and intellectual, we would say that they should keep an open mind, and try to seek the truth in all reverence, humility, and earnestness. Whether we describe suffering as part of the unalterable nature of things, or as a part of the *lila* of the Lord, or due to our past *karmas*, still the fact remains that we find it difficult to reconcile ourselves to its existence. To say that God is all-good, omniscient, omnipotent, and at the same time to condemn His handiwork as evil is to give away one's premises, or to draw a wrong conclusion. Either God is not what we picture Him to be or the evil that we see in the world is perhaps not really evil. In the latter case the question still remains, why should good come through evil or appear as evil. As Swami Vivekananda says, 'the question remains to be answered, and it cannot be answered; and philosophy in India was compelled to admit this'.

Sir James Jeans was asked by J. W. N. Sullivan, 'Do you think that the existence of suffering presents an obstacle to belief in a universal scheme?'

His answer was, 'No, I think it possible that suffering can be accounted for along the usual ethical lines. That is to say, evil may be necessary for the manifestation of greater

good, just as danger is necessary for the manifestation of courage.'

'But does not suffering, in many cases, seem to be entirely pointless—to lead to no good that we can see?'

'I agree that we cannot understand the scheme of life—if there is one. At present we understand hardly anything. I hold, very strongly, that our present knowledge, in comparison with what man's knowledge may become, is merely infantile. In fact, on all these questions my philosophy could be summarized by the unpopular phrase "Wait and see".'

We give below the views of Sri Ramakrishna on this point as recorded by Shivanath Sastri :

On one occasion I was present in his (Sri Ramakrishna's) room along with a few others, who during the saint's temporary absence from the room began to discuss the reasonableness or otherwise of certain Divine attributes. I was getting tired of the discussion when the saint returned. Whilst entering the room he had caught some words of that discussion and had observed the heated nature of it. He at once put a stop to the discussion by saying, 'Stop, stop, what is the good of discussing the reasonableness or otherwise of Divine attributes? These things are got by other ways, by prayerfully waiting and thinking. For instance, you say God is good; can you convince me of His goodness by reasoning? Take for instance that mournful incident, the encroachment of the sea on the land that lately took place at Dakhin Sabazpore, the great inundation during a storm. We hear that thousands of men, women and children were carried away and drowned by that flood. How can you prove to me that a good God, a beneficent Deity, ordered all that? You will perhaps answer by pointing out the attendant good that that flood did; how it carried away filth, and fertilized the soil, and so on. But my question is this, could not a good God do all that without carrying off hundreds of thousands of innocent men, women, and children?' At this point one of the audience interrupted him by saying, 'Are we then to believe that God was cruel?'

Ramakrishna : 'Thou fool, who tells you to do that? Join your hands in reverential humility and say, "O God, we are too weak and too incompetent to know Thy nature and

Thy doings. Do Thou enlighten our understanding.” ’

Then he illustrated the truth by the following parable :—

“Take the case of two men travelling by a certain road, who take temporary shelter in a mango grove. It is the season for mangoes. One of them sits with pencil and paper in hand and begins a calculation. He counts the number of mango trees in the garden, the number of branches in each tree, and the average number of mangoes in each branch. Then he tries to imagine how many cart-loads of mangoes that garden will supply, and then again taking each cart-load to be worth so many rupees when taken to market,

how much money that garden will fetch.

‘When one man is engaged in counting up the probable income from the garden, the other is engaged in plucking ripe mangoes and eating them. Which of them do you consider the wiser of the two?’

‘The second one is certainly the wiser’, said the visitor, ‘for it is certainly wiser to eat the fruits than counting up on paper the probable income from the garden’.

Then the saint smiled and remarked : ‘It is likewise wiser to pray to God and to cultivate communion with Him than to argue about the reasonableness or otherwise of His attributes. Pray and open your hearts to Him, and the light will come to you.’

THE MESSAGE OF THE UPANISHADS

BY SWAMI ATULANANDA

The Vedas are the sacred scriptures of the Hindus. They contain the highest Truth, revealed to certain *rishis* or sages, and they are regarded by the Hindus as the highest authority on all religious questions. On these Vedas is based the Vedanta philosophy, as the word ‘Vedanta’ implies. For, the word ‘Vedanta’ means the end of the Veda. We may take this in the sense that Vedanta is contained in the final portion of the Vedas, or that Vedanta is the final Truth taught in the Vedas. The word ‘Veda’ means wisdom. So Vedanta stands for the end, the acme, of all wisdom.

The Vedas consist of three portions : the *Samhitas*, or collection of metrical prayers and hymns of praise; the *Brahmanas*, or prose treatises on the sacrifices; and the *Aranyakas*, or books intended for those who had retired to the solitude of the forest in search of Truth. The most important part of these *Aranyakas* is formed by the *upanishads* which are philosophical treatises.

In ancient times, life in India, was divided into four stages. The first stage of life was that of discipline. This lasted from youth to the age of manhood. During this period the young man was sent away from his home to the house of a teacher or guru. It was the boy’s duty to obey his guru implicitly and to serve him in every way. In

return the guru had to give the boy religious and moral instruction. The boy was taught the Vedas and all that was necessary for life. The chief method was to draw the student’s mind away from worldly attractions and to direct it towards the soul. After this period, which lasted usually for twelve years, the young man returned to his home and the second stage of life began, viz. the stage of manhood. He was to marry and to rear a family, and to perform all the duties of a good householder. With the third period a new life opened. After a man had performed his duties as husband, father, and citizen, he was allowed to leave his home and his village, and retire into the forest with or without his wife. All his social obligations ceased, but he had to practise self-denial and penances. He was to meditate on the great problems of life and death, and for that purpose he was expected to study the *upanishads*. Hence the *upanishads* were often called the ‘forest books’. But in those days there were no books; so the teaching had to come from competent teachers who had committed these teachings to memory. The fourth or last stage was adopted by those who had mastered the teaching and who wanted to devote the rest of their lives to meditation on its inner meaning. These were the

sannyasins or wandering monks, who, in solitude, hoped to realize the highest Truth.

The *upanishads* explain the true relation between Brahman, the Supreme Being, and the soul of man. When we consider the meaning of the word '*upanishad*', we see what wonderful results were expected from the study of these ancient treatises. For the word has been explained to mean 'That by knowing which all misery flies away', i.e. that wisdom which destroys the seed of *samsara* or worldly bondage. And that seed or cause of bondage is called *avidya* or ignorance. '*Upanishad*', then, means that knowledge which destroys the bondage of ignorance and which brings freedom or liberation. He who realizes that wisdom is freed from the jaws of death.

Max Müller explains it in a different way, though essentially the meaning is not very different. He says the word means 'sitting near a person'. And then he goes on to explain this by saying, 'these *upanishads* represent to us the outcome of "sittings" or "gatherings" which took place under the shelter of mighty trees in the forest where old sages and their disciples met together and poured out what they had gathered during days and nights spent in quiet solitude and meditation'

When we speak of forests, we must not, however, think of a wilderness. In India, the forest near the village is like a happy retreat, cool and silent, with flowers and birds, with bowers and huts. Living in these forests, with few cares and no worldly ambitions, what should those forest-dwellers think and talk about if not about the higher things which relate to God and the soul, of what man is and what he will be hereafter. And so in the *upanishads* we find dialogues and discussions of a large number of sages who are so terribly earnest in their search after Truth that in some cases they even offer their heads to their adversaries if the latter can prove them to be in the wrong.

In these ancient days only such persons were admitted to the study of the *upanishads* who had been properly trained in the school of life, who had developed a highly moral character by fulfilling the duties of early life both as students and householders, who had fulfilled their civic and religious duties. The passions had to be brought under control; the body had to be hardened against external

disturbances such as heat and cold, hunger and thirst. And the mind had to be trained so as to acquire the mental qualities of tranquillity, restraint, self-denial, collectedness, and faith. It is the quiet, controlled mind that can grasp the teachings of Vedanta. For the mind has to be trained to look within, for then alone shall we be able to realize that everything is stored up in man, that the grandest truths are already deposited in man's heart. All we have to do is to withdraw our senses from the external objects of desire, and discover that we are the possessors of the greatest treasure. For the knowledge of God is within us.

In studying the Vedas, we must remember that we are dealing with the oldest literature in the world. It is the voice that comes to us from remote ages, when conditions were entirely different from what they are today. The mode of life greatly influences our mode of thinking and our way of expressing thought. The mind acts differently under different conditions. And so it is often not easy for us today to follow the line of reasoning which was adopted thousands of years ago. The ancient *rishis* who, with their disciples, lived in rural districts, often in a forest, removed from the unrest and anxiety of city life, at a time when instruction was given orally only, in their attempt to put into words, thoughts and visions which came from spheres beyond the ordinary run of thought, used language and modes of expressions which, to us, often, have little or no meaning. And even the later commentators on Vedic thought often use arguments and throw up objections which, to us, appear unnecessary, and the strength of which goes beyond our comprehension. Their arguments seem often devoid of meaning, nay, even childish. When we take up an ancient scripture, be it the Vedas, or the Avesta of the Zoroastrians, the scriptures of the Buddhists, or the Koran, we expect to find books full of ancient wisdom, moral teachings, and outbursts of religious enthusiasm. And then we are apt to be greatly disappointed. For, just as in the Bible of the Christians, so also in the Vedas we meet with many a page which, in our opinion, might have just as well been omitted.

Max Müller, in his introduction to the *upanishads*, has tried to explain this fact.

The ancient sacred books, he says, have been handed down by oral tradition for many generations before they were consigned to writing. In an age when there was nothing corresponding to what we call literature, every saying, every proverb, every story, handed down from father to son, or from guru to disciple, received, very soon, a kind of hallowed character. They became sacred heirlooms, sacred because they came from an unknown source, from a distant age. It was received with reverence, it was never questioned or criticized.

Some of these ancient sayings were preserved because they were so true, so striking, that they could not be forgotten. They contained eternal truths, expressed for the first time in human language. But besides those utterances which had a vitality of their own, strong enough to defy the power of time, there were others which might have struck the minds of the listeners with great force under the peculiar circumstances that evolved them, but which, when these circumstances were forgotten, became trivial and almost unintelligible. So we find war songs, descriptions of ceremonial acts, and incantations which, cherished and valued at that time, today survive as relics of the past. Furthermore, words and sentences respected from age to age, may, in course of time, have been misunderstood, replaced by other words and even new expressions may have been added as explanations of the truths taught.

These considerations may help to explain how, mixed up with real treasures of thought, we meet with, in the sacred books, so much which never had any life or meaning at all, or if it had meaning at the time, has completely lost it, in the form in which it has come down to us. Besides we must make allowance for national culture, taste, and tradition.

In studying ancient scriptures we must further remember that translations, no matter how accurate, can never take the place of the originals. And where the originals require not only to be read, but to be studied, to be read again and again to gain understanding of what they intend to express, translations require to be studied with much greater care, before we can hope to gain a real understanding of the intentions of their authors. It is much easier to mis-

understand a translation than the original. And one must be careful not to condemn, as devoid of meaning, a sentence or chapter which seems at first sight unintelligible in a translation.

We are greatly mistaken should we expect to get a clear understanding of ancient scriptures and their meaning by simply running through their pages. It is only by persistent effort that we can hope to get an insight into any scripture. It requires a sincere searching investigation with a concentrated mind.

Concentration of thought, *ekagrata* or one-pointedness, is very necessary in the study of ancient literature. Our mind is in constant motion. We are not able to direct it towards one object for any length of time. But in the Vedas we are told that in order to grasp a spiritual idea fully, we have to shut our mental eye to everything else, dwelling only on that one thought.

With the life we are leading now, a life of unrest, hurry, and competition, it has become almost impossible for us ever to arrive at that intensity of thought which the Hindu scriptures mean by *ekagrata* or one-pointedness, which they prescribed as an indispensable condition to the attainment of spiritual insight. And the science of yoga was developed in India through the pressing need to acquire this power, to draw the mind away from all disturbing impressions, and to fix it on one subject only. We must consider all these before we decide to reject any part of the Vedas. At the same time we need not trouble ourselves with those parts that convey no meaning to us. These may be set aside as of little importance to us. And there will be left more than enough that will prove to us of the greatest value.

A study of the Vedas should have, for its object, the enlightenment, in spiritual matters, of those who devote themselves to it. The Vedas have to be approached by us in this spirit only. If our study does not bring us spiritual insight, then it is in vain. Therefore one must take up this study with a heart open to Truth, with a sincere desire to realize the Truth. But in studying the scriptures, some of which are over three thousand years old, we must be prepared to meet with difficulties, and great patience is required. We may remember, in this connection, the beautiful simile, given by

Swami Vivekananda, of the oyster, which, opening its shell when the spring rain falls, comes to the surface of the ocean to catch a drop of the precious rain water, then returning to its bed transforms, slowly and patiently, this drop of water into a precious pearl. Similarly, as we go on studying the scriptures, we must try to take in one or two precious truths that appeal to us most and meditate upon them till they become part of us. Then only will they be most valuable in our spiritual progress and in the formation of our character. We have to gradually realize the truth of these thoughts of the ancient *rishis*, many of which may appear strange to us at first. But as we hear them again and again, and meditate upon them, they will reveal their meaning to us. It is then that we will be able to appreciate them and reap their benefit.

Every religion, every philosophy requires an attentive and devoted study. 'These teachings must first be heard, then thought about, and then meditated upon.' Then the inner meaning, the spirit of the scriptures will become clear to us. It is no useless study, for, in the Gita we read that a little understanding even brings great benefit. How much more, then, will we be helped by a close study and practical application of what we have understood. For the Vedas reveal to man the eternal truth that man is immortal, is one with the great eternal spirit from which the universe has evolved, in which it exists, and into which it will resolve in the end. To realize that we are all parts of the one divine Spirit is the end and aim of existence. It is the one lesson that every individual has to learn and to realize for himself.

To understand the teachings of the ancient sages and founders of great religions we must become like them. What they have seen, heard, and experienced, we also shall have to hear, see, and experience. Then alone shall we learn the spirit of their teachings. First we must listen to the Truth, then we must ponder over it, then meditate deeply. And then, in time, we will fully understand the Truth. We will then become an embodiment of Truth. Religion is, as Swami Vivekananda has said, a being and becoming. 'And ye shall know the Truth,' said Jesus, 'and Truth will make you free'. Knowing the Truth means becoming the Truth, i.e. we will realize

that we are Spirit, beyond birth and death, without beginning, without end, one with the only Existence which is God. Then we become free.

The Vedas can never be fully understood by mere perusal. The Truth must be felt, must be met with face to face. Then only can we understand it. 'O Thou, Self-revealing One, reveal Thyself to us', is part of a Vedic prayer. From darkness we must enter into Light, from death into Immortality, from the unreal into the Real, and the Vedas show us the way to do that. We may have to wade through much which seems superfluous to us, but every now and then we will come upon grains of Truth, which will lift us beyond this universe, which will make us realize the Spirit within, which will sustain us in our life journey, and which will keep us from sin and evil, making us strong and holy. When we understand the spirit of the Vedas, we will then know it for certain that we are essentially divine, the children of the One God.

The difficulty in our modern times is that we are always in such a terrible hurry. Even God we want to realize in a hurry. If we do not realize the Truth in a few years, we are disappointed and we become discouraged. That is not as it should be. It was very different with the spiritual aspirants in ancient times. Sometimes a student asks a question of his guru, and the teacher, in reply, gives only a hint. And then the disciple is told to serve his teacher for twelve years or so, before he can ask another question. One teacher, after giving his disciple some instructions, asks him to take some cows to the forest and not to return till the herd is increased to one hundred cows. But these young students were not discouraged. They went and did as they were told. And we read how, through sincerity, light came to them. They were in no hurry to get their brain filled with a lot of information which they could not digest. They were ready to serve their teachers for years even for a little instruction. They thought over what they were taught, day and night, year after year, and thus even a little instruction became very fruitful. The students of the ancient times learnt that by patient and deep thought all questions are answered from within.

Coming to the teachings of the *upanishads*, we may start with a story from the *Chhandogya Upanishad*. Indra, the god of the

Devas, heard that a great *rishi*, Prajapati by name, had knowledge of the Self. He thought, 'Let me go and serve Prajapati, and let me ask him about the Self.' So he approached Prajapati, fuel in hand, as was the custom for pupils approaching their teachers, as a token that they wished to serve him. Then he dwelt with Prajapati for thirty-two years. At last Prajapati asked Indra, 'For what purpose have you dwelt here?' Indra replied: 'A saying of yours is being repeated, viz. the Self, which is free from sin, free from old age, from death and grief, from hunger and thirst is what we must search out, that it is what we must try to understand. Now I have dwelt here because I wish to know that Self.' Then Prajapati told him to look into a basin of water, and asked him, 'What do you see?' Indra replied, 'I see a picture of myself, even to the very hairs and nails.' Prajapati said, 'Clean yourself and put on your best clothes and look again. What do you see?' Indra said, 'I see myself clean with my best clothes on.' Prajapati said, 'What you see that is the Self, that is immortal, the fearless; that is Brahman.' Then Indra went away. That is all the instruction Indra gets after serving his guru for thirty-two years. Indra thought over the answer and he was not satisfied. He thought how this changeable body could be the immortal Self. The teacher could not surely have meant it. So he returned to Prajapati, and asked for further instruction. Prajapati was very glad to see his earnestness and told him, 'Live with me another thirty-two years, and I shall instruct you again.' So after thirty-two years Prajapati told Indra, 'He who moves about happy in dreams, he is the Self, he is the immortal, the fearless; this is Brahman.' Then Indra went away. But again doubt arose in his mind and he returned to Prajapati, and served him again for another thirty-two years before he got more instruction. And so, the *upanishadic* story shows that Indra served Prajapati for 101 years before he received his final instruction. Prajapati told him that the body was indeed mortal, but that it was the abode of that which is immortal, and which is not dependent on the body. At last Indra understood and realized his own divinity.

One has only to admire such patience, perseverance, and willingness to serve, and compare these with the modern attitude in regard to the acquirement of knowledge. If we do

not get a ready answer we are disgusted. We are not prepared to think for ourselves. Therefore we get no results. If we search in the right spirit and with patience, light will come sooner or later.

In the vast mass of Vedic literature, the sublimest system of thought is the Vedanta philosophy as we find it expounded in the *Vedanta Sstras*, the *upanishads*, and the *Bhagavad Gita*. There are many other works on the Vedanta, but the scriptures mentioned above are the oldest. These are standard works which most of the sannyasins in India study, with commentaries. They are called *prasthanas*, meaning books that contain the knowledge which leads us away from the world and ignorance. The central truth around which the entire system of Vedantic thought has been woven, is, in the words of Shankaracharya, 'Brahman is real, the world is false; man's soul is Brahman and nothing else.' And he adds: 'There is nothing worth gaining, there is nothing worth enjoying, there is nothing worth knowing, but Brahman alone; for he who knows Brahman is Brahman.' This, in short, is the fundamental Truth taught in the Vedas. God alone is real, He is eternal, unchanging, the Rock of Ages. The world is fleeting, but man's soul is God, and nought else. It is a bold statement, but the sages knew it to be true, and taught it fearlessly. They themselves had risen beyond death. They knew eternal life because they had entered into it. They spoke with authority and experience. They knew that the only thing worth striving for, the only thing worth gaining, the only thing worth knowing is Brahman. For, 'What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?' said Jesus.

To know God truly is to become God. Once we know Him in all His fullness, we can never lose Him again. We are of His own spirit; He is our life; His existence is our existence. That is what the Vedas teach us: *tat-tvam-asi* or 'Thou art That'. The God we are searching for in books, in temples, in forest retreats, in images—that God resides in the heart of all beings. Sri Krishna says in the *Gita*: 'I am the Self, existent in the heart of all beings; I am the beginning, the middle, and also the end of all beings.' Our gross body may turn into dust, our subtle body may dissolve into the finer elements, but our soul, the real Self, is indestructible, for it is one with God. We

are all part of Him. This one Truth we find expounded, again and again, in Vedantic scriptures. The knowledge of Self is the one quest. In the *upanishads*, the question asked by students mostly is, 'What is that one Truth, knowing which, everything else is grasped?' All other knowledge is of little importance compared with this one fundamental Truth.

This fact is nicely illustrated in the *Chhandogya Upanishad*. Shvetaketu was the son of *rishi* Aruni. To him his father said: 'Shvetaketu, go to school, for there is none belonging to our race who has not studied the Vedas. For it is not sufficient, my boy, to be a brahmin by birth alone. He only can be called a true brahmin, who has mastered the Vedas.' Having begun his apprenticeship under a wise guru, when he was 12 years of age, Shvetaketu returned to his father when he was 24, having then studied all the principal Vedas. The young man considered himself well read, and he was very proud of his learning. His father, noticing the change in his son, was sorry. For, what does knowledge amount to if our character is not thereby improved, and if we have not gained spiritual knowledge as well? So, one day, the father called Shvetaketu and said to him: 'My son, as you are so conceited and you consider yourself so learned, let me see what you really know. Have you ever asked your teacher for that instruction by which we perceive that which the senses cannot perceive? Have you learned about that which reaches beyond the mind and intellect?' Shvetaketu did not understand what his father meant. So he asked, 'What is that instruction, sir?' And then the father begins to teach him about the *atman*, the One Self, the soul of man. 'You see, my son, if you know what clay is, then you know the true nature of all things made of clay. For, things made of clay are nothing but clay to which has been given name and form. And so it is with ornaments made of gold. If you know what gold is, then you know the true nature of all golden ornaments. These are only gold to which name and form have been given. Name and form are what make the difference in objects.' And so Aruni goes on to explain to Shvetaketu, in different ways, how by knowing the original substance everything made of that substance is also known. By removing the name and form of all things made of that substance we again

have the original substance. And then, at last, he comes to the highest Truth, viz. that, if we know Brahman, then we know the true nature of everything of every being. For the whole universe is only Brahman on which we have superimposed name and form. Brahman, seen through name and form, appears as the universe. Man is that same Brahman. The body is only name and form. *That* will disappear in time. But the formless, the nameless man will persist through all eternity, for he is one with God, one with Brahman, the divine omnipresent spirit.

As the pot, when destroyed, turns back into clay, as the bracelet in the melting pot becomes gold, so man, when purified by the fire of wisdom, goes back to his source, Brahman, the One Existence. He who realizes this enjoys eternal freedom. And even in this life, man can realize that Truth. That is the teaching of the *upanishads*. It is illustrated in various ways; it is told in stories, it is discussed at the courts of kings, it is told by the *rishis* in the forest; everywhere we find this one question discussed. It is also taught in the *Bhagavad Gita*, and it is put forth in almost every *upanishad*.

What is life, what is this universe, what is man, what is God? These are the questions which have arisen in the human mind in all ages. And these questions find their answer in the Vedas. In the *Katha Upanishad*, Nachiketa asks the same questions of Death. And Death, after trying his sincerity in many ways, at last consents to instruct the boy. He tells him that God, the Spirit, is 'smaller than the small, greater than the great, hidden in the heart of every creature' 'The wise man who knows the Self as bodiless within the bodies, as unchanging among all changing things, as great and omnipresent, he never grieves.' Only the *rishis*, by their subtle and sharp intellect, can know that Self. But every one of us can become a *rishi*. By controlling mind and speech, by always concentrating the mind on God, we also can become *rishis*. 'Arise, awake,' says Death to Nachiketa, 'your question has been answered; now realize it.' 'The sharp edge of a razor is difficult to pass over. Even so it is with the path that leads to realization of the *atman*, the Divine Self.' But there is no cause for despair, for 'he who has perceived that which is without sound, without touch, without form, without decay

or smell, eternal and unchangeable, he is freed from the jaws of death'.

Shvetaketu, we read again, could not understand how God can be omnipresent and still we do not perceive His presence. So his father tries to make it clear to him through examples. The ancient *rishis* were very practical in their method of teaching. They used a sort of kindergarten system. The father tells Shvetaketu to bring a seed of a particular tree. When it is brought, he asks him to break it in two. 'What do you see inside?' 'Nothing, sir', replied the boy. Then the father said, 'My child, that subtle essence which you cannot see in the seed, from that a large tree will grow up. So also from the subtle Spirit which one cannot see the whole universe comes into being.' Shvetaketu thought over the question. But still he could not understand the point clearly. So he asked his father to give him another example. 'Very well,' said the father, 'bring me a glass of water. Now put a lump of salt in the water and come to me again in the morning.' This done, the boy came the next morning. 'My son,' said the father, 'give me the lump of salt you put in the water yesterday'. 'It is melted, sir.' 'Then taste the water from the top, from the middle, and from the bottom. How does it taste?' 'It tastes salty, sir, all

the way through.' Then the father explains how, even as the salt is in the water though we do not see it, even so the Supreme, though invisible, dwells in us. He who has realized this Truth, for him there is no more sorrow, no more pain. He who grasps the teachings of the Vedas is beyond all *maya*, all delusion. He sees the One, he realizes the One, he lives and moves and has his being in the One Eternal Being which is Brahman.

We must all try to realize the Truth taught in the *upanishads*. When Shvetaketu brought the lump of salt, he could see and touch it. But when the salt was dissolved in the water, he had to use another sense, the sense of taste, to discover it. So also one can perceive the Spirit in the body by means only other than the means employed to perceive matter. Matter can be perceived through the five senses. But to perceive the spirit another sense has to be opened up. That sense is called *yoga-drishti*, the sense of spiritual intuition. In every one that sense is present, but only few have developed it. With others it lies dormant. That spiritual sense is opened up through the process of meditation. When it is once opened, one can know the spirit, and understand the deeper meaning of the Vedas. All knowledge is within us, and meditation opens up the avenues of that knowledge.

DEATH'S DOOR

BY P. SAMA RAO

Death's door is ajar. . . .
Selves pent up long
In reeking flesh and bone,
Like arcs of light
Multi-coloured,
Dart heavenward
To that sweet land
Of eternal Love,
Their Solace and Home.

Or, like the petals
Of life's full-blown rose
Their ardour done,
Shrivel up and fall
One by one,
Into the chalice of Time
Beyond memory's ken. . . .

THE LEGACIES OF VIVEKANANDA

BY PROF. BENOY KUMAR SARKAR

Vivekananda as a World Power

In September 1893, Vivekananda addressed the Parliament of Religions at Chicago. There he came into contact with representatives of the entire Western world as well as of Asia. In that atmosphere of some five thousand intellectuals comprising businessmen, engineers, psychologists, anthropologists, literary men, philosophers, and heads of religious associations, he was recognized as a creative force by the international standard. Both Europeans and Americans encountered in him a great power and could realize that, out in Asia somewhere on the banks of the Ganges, a spirit was born that was destined to conquer the world. Vivekananda became a world-conqueror—a *digvijayi*, a person in whose thoughts and activities were found some of the most creative tendencies of the age. His was the message of an affirmative faith. He was found to be another Nietzsche or another Carlyle for the remaking of inter-human relations. It was the philosophy of an 'everlasting yea' that he contributed to the thought of the times.

The world felt that India was capable of producing persons with whose contributions it was possible for men and women in every part of the world to co-operate in an effective manner. The legacies of Vivekananda are immense and those legacies are being enjoyed today both by East and West. Mankind in the two hemispheres has been functioning as the combined legatee of Vivekanandism. It has been possible since then for the most diverse races of mankind to work together on the same platform on terms of equality as well as of mutual self-respect. Previously Asians used to be treated by Eur-Americans as mere pupils and, of course, as slaves. For the first time Europeans and Americans felt convinced that the days of their cultural and spiritual overlordship were getting to be over. Vivekananda is the first Indian of modern times to compel the Western races to admit Asians to the status of equality with themselves.

The Asian Monroe Doctrine

In Vivekananda's American activities as well as later movements in India and abroad mankind found the beginnings of a new order in inter-racial relations. The submerged and suppressed races of Asia were, by the energetic creativities of Vivekananda, elevated to the dignity of peers—equals and colleagues of the militarily dominant and politically domineering races of Europe and America. The whites, equipped as they were with their slogan of the 'whiteman's burden' were beginning to feel that their chauvinism and albinocracy were soon to become things of the past. Anti-albinocratic enthusiasm as well as achievements became the order of the day in India as well as in the rest of Asia. Indians as well as other Asians were inspired into the thought and feeling that they were to enjoy the same human dignity and social prestige in International Congresses of Arts, Letters, Sciences, Philosophies, Politics, and what not as the representatives of the white races. The distinctions, differences, disparities, and divergences between the East and the West were subverted; and in the melting pot was coming into shape the soul-enfranchising doctrine of Asia's equality and identity with Eur-America.

This is the Monroe Doctrine from Asia's standpoint. In Vivekananda's life-work we have to see registered the establishment of this spiritual dogma. He succeeded in transforming the pattern of inter-human relations obtaining between East and West and ushering into being the new organization of spiritual forces which enabled the West to know the limitations of its ambitions vis-a-vis the East. It was Vivekananda whose activities and propagandas of all sorts, in India and foreign countries, succeeded in spiritualizing India with what may be called the 'Asia for Asians' slogan in the cultural sphere. No legacy of Vivekananda is more substantial and epoch-making than this cult.

The Ramakrishna Empire

Vivekanandism was an amalgam of moral forces in which the soul force of the *upani-shads* and the Gita got multiplied by the idealism of Fichte and the positivism of Comte. The Young India that came into being under the inspiration of Vivekananda's world-conquest has been a growing concern. It has been moving from achievement to achievement and from country to country. Today the ideas and idealism of Vivekananda are embodied in thousands of Indians, both Hindus and Mussalmans. Every Hindu who is co-operating with Eur-Americans as a scientific investigator, labour leader, or social worker, in Asia or elsewhere, is a representative of Vivekanandism as a living reality. Every Mussalman in whose philosophical researches or industrial achievements Eur-America can detect influences of world-wide importance is Vivekanandist in spirit. All such Indians, irrespective of their formal faiths, Hindu or Muslim, are helping forward the establishment of the 'Asian Monroe Doctrine' on a secure and sound basis. Add to this the activities of some five hundred missionaries of the Ramakrishna Order, created by Vivekananda, and we shall get an idea of the numerous centres of action and thought in which Vivekanandism has been finding expression in diverse personalities, institutions and movements.

It is indeed possible to say that the system of thoughts and actions for which Vivekananda lived and died is world-wide in dimensions and embraces the two hemispheres. We have today an empire of Indian influences in East and West, and this empire is aptly to be described as the Indian Empire of the 20th century. I have often described it as the Ramakrishna Empire, because Vivekananda used to associate each one of his activities with the name of his mighty guru—Ramakrishna. This creation of Vivekananda—the Ramakrishna Empire—can be historically appraised as the successor and

continuator of the Buddhist world-empire of ancient and mediæval times.

The 'Greater India' of today,—this Indian Empire of the twentieth century,—is in intimate liaison with the creative forces in the most diverse nooks and corners of the globe. It is already recognized as a power, although small but growing power,—among the powers of the world. Mankind in East and West is consciously and deliberately co-operating with the Ramakrishna Empire in order to re-create the world-economy, world-politics, and world-culture. In this situation is to be envisaged one of the most tremendous legacies of Vivekananda.

The Vivekanandas of Today and Tomorrow

Vivekananda died in 1902. But he lives still. Today at the end of over half a century since the Chicago event of 1893, the name of Vivekanandas in India is legion. Creative men and women of India are self-conscious enough like Vivekananda of fifty years ago in their aspirations, demands, and creativities. They are filled with the spirit of utilizing the *vishva-shakti* (world forces) in the interest of India's self-assertion. Difficulties and hindrances of all sorts they know how to annihilate. Their spirit is the spirit 'of conquering and to conquer'. For the last fifty years they have been subverting obstacles after obstacles. At every step they have known how to overpower the dangers that be. Each one of the self-conscious men and women among Indian publicists, scholars, missionaries, labour leaders, and others, active in diverse fields both at home and abroad, is looking forward to fresh conquests—after new encounters with novel dangers. Dare-devil enthusiasm for the establishment of India's permanent and solid addresses in the world of moral, economic, and political values constitutes the dominant urges of the Indian Vivekanandas of today and tomorrow.

MONOTHEISM AND POLYTHEISM*

BY PROF. ABINASH CHANDRA BOSE, M.A., PH.D.

II. POLYTHEISM

Primitive Polytheism or Animism

The beginnings of polytheism are in animism to which some of the important traits of monotheism also may be traced.

First, animism believes that material objects are animated by the spirit of a god or a goddess. Hence its deities have limited spheres of activity. Fetishes and idols of primitive religion are believed to be divinely animated objects and they are reported to be performing miracles. The old arguments against idolatry—‘Your idol cannot speak,’ ‘Your idol cannot defend itself against a robber’ etc.,—are based on the animistic conception of religion—that objects of worship, being divinely animated, possess supernatural powers.

Animism is attached not to objects only, but to places also. In primitive religion there are local deities operating in particular places. The original literal conception of monotheism has a common point with animism—that God is a local spirit—an invisible Person with a habitat. Only, instead of a spot on the earth, monotheism believes that a far-away place, called heaven, is the habitat of the Divinity.

Again, miracles have formed a chief basis of monotheisms also; a very important miracle being God’s dictation of the scripture to the prophet, and a greater still. God’s literal fatherhood.

Secondly, primitive religion believes that God desires food like earthly creatures. And, whether because the primitive food of man was chiefly animals, therefore, animal sacrifice to God was common; or it was some sacred animal (totem) that was originally sacrificed on ceremonial occasions; or it was believed that God, being a vindictive being, needed compensation for the sins of men through sacrifice of lives; or being a cruel being, as primitive rulers were, received sadistic satisfaction from cruelty: whatever the reason, the propitiation of God by animal sacrifice became a common ritual. But it is strange to note that *monotheism which repu-*

diated fetishism and idolatry did not repudiate the ritual of animal sacrifice. The most typical of monotheistic creeds—Islam—is uncompromisingly severe on idol-worship and on the belief in multiple gods—has practised animal sacrifice on a large scale. Christianity, that, unlike Jainism and Buddhism, believes that animals have no souls to save, has, however, eschewed animal sacrifice, but on the basis of a doctrine which theoretically implies human sacrifice, or in a more specific form, the sacrifice of the sacred animal (totem), or of the holy man: features that characterized very crude and violent forms of primitive religion. Thus in one important respect monotheism has made no progress in relation to primitive polytheism.

In certain Indian religious sects attempts have been made to counteract not only the practice but the very ideology of animal sacrifice in religion, though there are other sects which practise animal sacrifice on a wide scale.

Thirdly, primitive religion guided the social attitude of men on the basis of tribal feeling. The following description of the mentality of the primitive tribe may be read with interest in this connection:

‘The attitude of an uncultured human being towards any individual who is not a member of their restricted social group is one of profound distrust and generally active hostility. “In primitive culture,” observed Dr. Brinton, “there is a dual system of morals; the one of kindness, love, help, and peace, applicable to the members of our own clan, tribe, or community; the other of robbery, hatred, enmity, and murder, to be practised against all the rest of the world, and the latter is regarded as much a . . . sacred duty as the former”.’ (Robert Briffault, *The Mothers*, New York; also reproduced in *The Making of Man*, N. Y.).

With the progress of civilization, the tribal patriotism and tribal hatred were greatly over-

* Concluded from the May number.

come by breaking up tribal barriers and grouping men into large societies, and developing the ideal of common fellowship, culminating in that of the fraternity of all members of the human race. But monotheistic creeds with their well-defined doctrine of the infidel, the heathen, and the heretic, went back to the primitive tribal feeling, only in a more extensive and aggravated way, because what was the attitude of a comparatively small group of people forming a tribe became now the feeling of millions following a religion.

In India the racial-economic grouping known as the caste has replaced this tribal spirit. But, socially, caste continues the tribal exclusiveness to a great extent, though the hatred of the infidel is absent here.

Cultural Polytheism

In the animistic stage polytheism is attached to certain crude instincts like the hankering for miracles, delight in killing and hatred of the man outside the class or tribe. In cultural polytheism new traits are developed which make it a strong ally of human civilization. We shall consider here some of its essential features.

(a) *Creativeness of Polytheism.* Primitive polytheism is to cultural polytheism what, for example, folk poetry is to art poetry. Polytheism in its cultural form is creative. Being a creation of the mind of man, it is, like all art, an expression of imagination. It does not deal with facts, it deals with visions which, in the hands of a genius, embody themselves in concrete forms either in language or in terms of some other art.

While monotheism believes in one God in heaven, polytheism peoples the land and air and water with an inexhaustible variety of gods and goddesses. And with polytheism, worship consists in picturesque ritual beautified by poetry and art—by music, by dancing, acting, sculpture, and painting. To these are sometimes added the poetry of things—of flames, lamps, incense, flowers, fruits, leaves and grass-blades, and of the beauty spots of the land. The polytheistic worshipper, except for the survivals of primitive customs like animal sacrifice, creates an atmosphere of beauty about him in offering worship to his God. As a result, even where there is no religion as such, there is much in polytheism that men will value as poetry and

art and wish to preserve from a cultural point of view.

The imaginative nature of polytheism makes it essentially different from monotheism. The former works on poetic *visions*, the latter on *facts*—which are accepted through faith. So *polytheism is poetical, monotheism historical*. And, as Aristotle said the poetical truth is universal, while the historical is particular. Hence Greek polytheism has inspired people living in different ages and professing different religions, while, on the other hand, monotheism is found to move only those who have placed their faith in what are claimed by it as facts.

Matthew Arnold said about Hellenism and Hebraism, that the former is guided by 'spontaneity of consciousness', which leads to poetic creation, and the latter by 'strictness of conscience', producing dogmatism in respect of the historical as well as the moral belief. These descriptions would also apply, respectively, to polytheism and monotheism.

It will be found that polytheism flourishes as long as it is creative, and monotheism as long as it remains dogmatic. When polytheism comes to rest upon dogma, all its spontaneity and imaginative appeal fail, and mere dead hollow forms remain. That is how Egyptian and Babylonian polytheism disappeared. Without creative energy and imaginative vision, polytheism quickly descends into simple fetishism. In the religious life of the Indian masses, the claims of the creative imagination of cultural polytheism and of primitive fetishism are found to be always in conflict. On the one side, there is the poetic and philosophical school interpreting the images in temples figuratively and symbolically and leading religion to the planes of art and metaphysics; on the other hand there is the dogmatic school taking the image as a divinely animated object and associating it with magic and miracle.

Thus we find that polytheism lives by creativeness and thought, while monotheism lives by dogma and belief. Take, for example, the attitude of the creeds towards statements made in the sacred books. A monotheist finds it written in his scripture that God created the earth as the centre of the universe, and on the earth He created paradise and in paradise He put Adam, the first man, and out of his rib He created the first woman, Eve. Now he finds that if he

is to be a true follower he must believe in each one of these statements; that if he does not, he is a heretic. We do not know of any monotheistic theologian who has taken these statements in a figurative way.

Take, on the other hand, a story of creation from polytheism. One of the Hindu *puranas* says that in the beginning there was a big *lingam*, a stone pillar, and that two gods, one Brahma and the other Vishnu, tried to find the two ends of it. The one flew up as a swan and the other crawled down as a tortoise at the speed of the mind, and each went on for a thousand years; but both returned disappointed, without being able to find the extreme end of the pillar. Vishnu confessed the fact and was declared by a voice to be the true god; Brahma, however, falsely claimed to have found the origin and was discredited.

Now the religion of which the *purana* forms a scripture does not require of the follower a literal belief in the story given above. What it requires is an imaginative understanding of the story. Hence the issue here is not whether Brahma became a swan and Vishnu a tortoise or whether it is possible to travel at the speed of the mind and for a thousand years; the question is, what is the underlying meaning of the legend? That meaning is clear enough to the man possessing imagination and thinking power. It is that the ultimate beginnings of things are mysterious, that it is not possible to know them really and that one who claims to do so is a false god or prophet. The Indian *jnani*, the wise man, while reading the story, will remind himself of what the *Veda* has said about the first origins:

Who verily knows and who can here
 declare it—
 Whence was it born and wherefrom came
 this creation?
 (*Rig.*, x. 129. 6);

and he will say with Socrates that he is wiser than others because he knows that he knows nothing in respect of ultimate things.

(b) *Paganism*. Another characteristic which distinguishes polytheism from monotheism, is the attachment of the former to the earth—what is known as paganism. The monotheist is at peace with himself and his surroundings when he finds, through a strong faith, that God is in His heaven and all is

right with the world. The holy man of monotheism rejects the earth and its seduction and lives for a world to come. Paganism may believe in the existence of a world after death, but it gives its heart away to the earth and is attached to all its good things. It hardly makes a difference between body and soul, matter and spirit. It will strive after spirituality through rich sense perceptions. In the dust of the earth it will discover the divine light.

(c) *Naturalism*. The primitive ideas of fetishism are transformed in cultural polytheism into poetry and spirituality. Just as, instead of a well or a spring, a whole river, in its course of hundreds of miles, becomes sacred in polytheism, similarly a whole township or a whole mountain may become sacred. And why 'not the whole earth? The polytheist delights in the earth—its beauty and wonder, its sweetness and all the comfort and joy that it offers. He tries to build a heaven on the earth itself. The hymn to the Earth in *Atharva Veda* is a grand paean of naturalism.

(d) *Mythology*. This attachment to the glory of the earth has found most prolific expression in poetry and the arts through the creative imagination of polytheism. Every aspect of nature is deified. Greek as well as Indian mythology is rich in this imaginative creation.

In a typical polytheistic creed, every god or goddess is modelled on human beings. Each has his points of strength as well as weakness. None is altogether perfect. The activities of one may be counteracted by those of another. Thus, except for their supernatural powers including that of working miracles, they have the same character interest as men. These ancient legends, therefore, are the first fictional literature of the world. They range from the sublime to the ridiculous, from the refined to the coarse. Another interesting point about them is the variety of material included in them. While at their finest they consist of allegory and symbolism and suggest deep philosophical thought, at their crudest they touch fetishism, totemism, and similar other features of primitive religion. A polytheistic pantheon is a museum of human civilization. Sometimes the same deity or the ritual is found to represent different strata of human

culture, of which one may be divided from the other by ages.¹

(e) *Anthropolatry.* Anthropolatry—the worship of a human individual or human individuals—was made popular in India by Buddhism and Jainism. The theory of ‘avatar’, in the typical form of which the divinity was believed to have ‘descended’ into a human being, formed the brahminical counterpart to this view. A similar idea occurs in Christianity also, but there the typical features of monotheism are maintained. For example, the avatar when he is a human being is, according to the Hindu conception, born a man with human parents; but monotheism with its factual outlook considers the divine parenthood as literally true. Another difference is interesting. The Hindu view has formulated the birth of an avatar as a cosmic law—that in certain definite circumstances God incarnates Himself; but Christianity considers the birth of its Christ as unique, quite in keeping with the exclusiveness of monotheistic claims.

Another interesting point is that just as the ‘avatar’ is one at a time, therefore, there is by inference only one God. Hence the avatar theory postulates monotheism in the numerical sense. Not only this; as no female avatar is contemplated, the conception of God behind the avatar theory corresponds in more than one point with semitic monotheism. Again when the person claimed to be an avatar is an historical person like Chaitanya instead of a legendary one like Rama or Krishna, the miracles associated with his life produce the same difficulty as in the case of monotheism; and for this, faith is found necessary. Thus the avatar religion comes very near monotheism in the technical sense.

It will be found that creative polytheism has attempted to absorb the avatar in its composite pantheon by superhumanizing him. It has attempted, for instance, to make just a deity of Krishna by giving him four arms, or of Datta by giving him three heads.

On the other hand, the polytheistic avatar theory, attached to anthropolatry, has pro-

duced a plethora of divine incarnations. There were times when every priest or king or the so-called spiritual preceptor or guru was believed to be a divine incarnation. As the holy man became after death a saint in Christianity, so here he became a sort of demigod. The Moslem idea of *pir* also fitted in here. There was even a thorough neglect of sectarian and credal differences among Hindus in their regard for the holy men. These men seem to have been placed above sect and creed by popular devotion. The abuses incidental to such unsuspecting reverence have naturally roused opposition from reformers. But anthropolatry is an ancient religious trait and is deeply rooted in the mass mind. A careful analysis of mass psychology would reveal a hardly perceptible line of demarcation between the conception of a God in heaven who is a Person, and that of a human person believed, after his death, to have become divine.

(f) *Humanism.* If monotheism becomes anthropomorphic by necessity, polytheism is so by choice. And in the latter case it is possible to forget God for a while and extract only a human value out of the manifestations of the divinity. For example, when Homer makes the Goddess Thetis lament, foreseeing the death of her hero-son Achilles—

‘Listen, sister Nereids, that ye all hear and know well what sorrows are in my heart . . . For after I had born (to me) a son noble and strong, the chief of heroes, and he shot up like a young branch . . . but never again shall I welcome him back to his home’—*Iliad*, Bk. xviii)—

he makes us forget the Goddess in the mother. Indian *puranas*, too, are full of lovely human stories of gods and goddesses which have received a simpler human touch in folk literature by the infusion of realism. There are stories of Shiva and Parvati, daughter of Himalaya, of their wooing and marriage and the home-life in Kailasa. These exist not only in legend and poetry, but also in sculpture (e.g., at Elephanta and Ellora). Then there is the prolific lyric poetry regarding Krishna in Brindavan among the cowherds and cowherdresses.

An essential part of polytheistic humanism centres in the feminine interest. The deity has often been conceived as mother. There are the Vedic Aditi, the mighty mother

¹ For example, the elephant-headed god of presumably crude origins has a Vedic name—Ganapati, a term applied by the Veda to Brahmanaspati, the Lord of Brahman or sacred lore; and the sacred plant *tulsi* (basil) is supposed to be the wife of Vishnu, a *puranic* and Vedic deity.

(*mahi mata*), and Saraswati with the sumptuous feed in her breasts. There is also Usha, maiden, but solicited by the worshipper as a mother by the child :

shyama natur na sunavah 'May we be like sons of Thee, the Mother'.

(*Rig.*, vii. 81. 4)

Then there are the *puranic* goddesses and the *tantric* conception of *shakti*, the mother power in the universe. Greek mythology has its Athene, corresponding to Saraswati, and the goddess of virginity Artemis, and others.

Monotheism is poor in respect of this wealth of human interest. The feminine interest is meagre in it. Heaven is an abode of males and of the sexless cherubim. In Islam there is mention of females in paradise, but they are not divine, and there is no mention of their individual personality as, for example, we find in Indian *puranic* account of *apsaras*. It was quite natural for a Christian monotheism, growing in the

atmosphere of Greek life, to have substantially repudiated its original semitic character by welcoming most of the gods and goddesses of paganism in the new garb of saints; and for the masses, accustomed to mother worship, to be devotedly attached to the worship of the Virgin Mother. Here, decidedly, polytheism with its rich humanity has virtually superseded monotheism.

From the above considerations it will appear that polytheism, in its non-fetishistic and creative form, has fertilized vast tracts of the civilized life of the world. In fact it was through the revival of polytheism and the naturalistic outlook on life with its inexhaustible imaginative creativeness that, at the end of a somewhat dreary if not dark period of the prolonged middle ages, Europe was reborn in spirit. Renaissance is, generally speaking, the triumph of Hellenism over Hebraism, or more characteristically, of a rich and prolific polytheism over artistically barren monotheism.

KNOWLEDGE AND WISDOM

BY A. DOROTHY BARRS

Few people in life differentiate between the words 'knowledge' and 'wisdom', 'intellectual' and 'intelligent'. To many each pair is synonymous. Knowledge can be obtained by all people who use the brains and read or study other people's opinions in books, or listen to the views held by those who lecture or teach. Knowledge belongs to the reasoning, logical, concrete mind. Wisdom is attained through inner enlightenment and often comes in flashes from some higher source which men call inspiration or the higher mentality. Intellectuals are everywhere in modern society but often these people possess narrow minds and miss the all-round intelligence of the so-called uneducated. Intelligence, like wisdom, is a rare commodity and sometimes those qualities appear in unusual people who come quite unexpectedly into one's life; thereafter life is enriched by these contacts.

The majority of us possess a smattering of knowledge. We learn numerous things through the experiences that come to us in

life. The ideas we gather are developed according to our environment, our avocation, our hobbies. Some go through life with little understanding of the world in which they live; they have very little curiosity concerning the purpose of life, and so they pass their days in a state of darkness or ignorance. They are content to be born, to live, to reproduce their kind, to earn their daily bread, and to die; beyond these, which to them are necessities of life, their imagination does not go. For others this is not enough; they desire to know something of the world in which they live; of the universe of which the world is a part. These mental types seek to know the origin of life and form; of how things work and why. Today knowledge has accumulated so extensively and the mind of man has developed so rapidly that facts upon all known subjects can be obtained from many sources: museums, books, lectures.

Even among those who have emerged from the darkness of ignorance there are men and

women who delve into different departments of life's activities. Some concentrate on business, the accumulation of money, and power; this sometimes leads to greed, selfishness, and exploitation. Others use their mental capacities in unravelling the intricate problems of politics. If these people seek the welfare of humanity they can be of enormous value to the race. Frequently they are seized with the desire for power and position; they start intrigues with politicians of other nations; they play a game with finance and they, together with financiers, create conditions favourable for war. Another group, called scientists, use their well-trained minds for research and experimentation in the laboratory. They seek to know the laws on which this universe is based; they are ever bringing forward new theories which are accepted by the masses until some further thought and experimentation prove them to be fallacies, and a new hypothesis based on fresh facts is presented to the world. A great many experiments take place in the effort to find cures for various symptoms of disease to which humanity is heir, through wrong living and self-indulgence. Experiments are made with gases and other substances to find still more destructive methods for taking life when nations are at war; these are based on cruelty and suffering because animals are often used in this laboratory work.

Inventors think out machines and gadgets of all kinds; they take existing knowledge and with adaptations give something new to the world. Sometimes these inventions are used constructively and tend to make life simpler. Too often they are made to serve destructive ends and bring terror and misery to millions of people. There are many other ways of expressing ideas which have developed through the ages during which man has lived upon the earth.

Have the races of mankind shown wisdom through these multitudinous facts and accumulated ideas stored in the mind of man? Has man learnt to live wisely as a result of all the knowledge he has acquired? Looking at the world today can we say that man's learning and intellect have led to the benefit of humanity as a whole? Has the race found happiness and security, freedom from poverty, disease, sorrow, and other ills of life? What do we lack? Where have we gone wrong?

This brings us to the important questions 'What is wisdom?' and 'Are we expressing wisdom in our lives?' Wisdom is the bringing down of God-realization from the self within into the personal life and concrete thought. God-consciousness is the spiritualizing of our thoughts, desires, and actions in the material world. If man allowed the spiritual aspect of his nature to be the dominant factor, greed, selfishness, misuse of power, exploitation, and cruelty would no longer result from his activities in the many departments of human life.

Although man has gained so much knowledge concerning numerous subjects, he has failed to achieve that spiritual understanding which would enable him to use his mind constructively and wisely. Knowledge is easily gained and is possessed by many; wisdom is a pearl of great price and belongs to the few. How is man to achieve this change of heart and mind in order to bring into his waking consciousness the wisdom of an awareness of the self within?

There is a technique of the spiritual life which is hard to understand and difficult to practise. There are masses of instructions laid down in the world's literature upon how to control the senses; to use desire, emotion, and thought, rather than be used by them; to redirect the will; to realize at-one-ment with the God within, which is the aim of all mystics. The initial stages can be found through a teacher or a book but the path itself must be found and trodden by the aspirant alone. The inner experiences of the awakening soul are indescribable and, therefore, cannot be expressed, although many have made the attempt. There is a saying of the Chinese mystic Lao-tze, 'Those who know, tell it not; those who tell it, do not know.' Many who find this union with God come back from the solitude of contemplation to spend their lives in active service to humanity. It is soon realized that wisdom permeates the speech and action of these God-conscious men and women.

Until at least the majority find time, in the turmoil of life, to dwell for a period each day in the silence for communion and closer contact with the ever-living Light of the soul, the world as a whole cannot know wisdom. Natural intelligence leads the questing mind onwards and upwards to seek for qualities and gifts higher than the in-

tellec or material world can supply. With the awareness of the spiritual life, concrete thought, intellect, knowledge, call it what we will—which is not the apex of man's achievement—must take its rightful place in human life, as the handmaiden of wisdom which is the product of spirit. When man reacts to wisdom in all his activities, the conditions which make for war will be overcome, and he will be able to live in peace and plenty. Love will rule instead of hate; intelligence will supersede the intellect; and wisdom guide the hearts and minds of those

who rule and take an active part in the world's progress.

Has the human race not yet learnt the lessons of war and conflict at home and abroad? The saying of Christ that 'Those who use the sword must perish by the sword' surely applies to those who make wars and are, therefore, responsible for the untold misery and suffering which must inevitably follow, for war can never end war. The soul's awakening will show to humanity a better way of life, will bring wisdom into our lives, and will help us to build a saner and happier world for all.

THE GOD OF SPINOZA

BY SWAMI PRAJNANANANDA

There is only one substance according to Spinoza, and that substance is self-complete, self-subsistent, infinite, and all-embracing. 'The concept of God and the concept of Nature are for Spinoza identical with the concept of Substance.' This substance is the fundamental Reality and world-ground eternal God, or in the beautiful language of Dr. Hoffding it can be said, 'Everything which is predicated of substance must also be predicable of God.' He is one and possessed of infinite attributes, something other than God Himself. Besides God no substance can be conceived, 'everything which is, is in God and, without God, can neither exist nor be understood.'

Spinoza's God is the primal cause of everything. He says in his *Ethica*: 'Clearly, therefore, God is one, that is only one substance can be granted in the universe, and that substance is absolutely infinite.'

There are four logical arguments which form Spinoza's ontological proofs for the existence of God. The first is: the conception of God as infinite substance is clear, and being infinite, God is possessed of an infinite quality, i.e. *existence*. The second is: there is no logical contradiction regarding the possibility of God's existence. So what is possible must exist. Thirdly, we the finite beings are never created by ourselves. There must be some one greater than and outside of us as our creator or designer, and He is the infinite

being, God. Fourthly, an infinite being will necessarily possess infinite power and thereby He maintains His own existence. Spinoza says that this world is an infinite gigantic creation, and if it be extended infinitely in time and space, the human conception will not be helpless without finding out God as its only cause. So, well has it been said by Dr. Windleband: 'Spinoza's definition of *substance* or *deity*, as the essence (*essentia*) which involves its own existence, is only the condensed expression of the ontological proof for the existence of God.'

Spinoza also did not deny the existence of the world process as he enriched his immanent God with *thought* and *extension*, the two attributes. Thought is the soul, mind or spirit, and extension is body or matter. But in spite of the two attributes of the one and unconditioned Absolute, he clearly subsumed that though God is the indwelling cause of everything and possessed of attributes, yet 'God, and all the attributes of God, are eternal.' 'Body and soul are not two in kind, but constitute one being looked at from two different sides,' as stated by Prof Falckenburg. Material and spiritual are merely the two sides of one and the same necessary world process. It can be compared to a magnet with its two poles, positive and negative. As positive and negative poles are really the two extremes of one and the same magnet, so thought and extension,

spirit and matter are the two *modes* of one and the same substance God.¹ 'There is nothing real which is not both "extended" and "ideal". There is no "lifeless matter", no "immaterial spirit".' They assume two different manifestations only for the world process, otherwise they lose their separate entities in the one eternal ocean of the Absolute; or it may be put in the expressive language of Dr. Schwegler that 'everything individual, as finite, merged in the gulf of substance'.²

Spinoza's God is an independent unity, and this God cares not for anything other than Himself. Spinoza himself has defined, in his *Ethica*, that God is 'that which is in itself and is conceived by itself'.

It is true that from the transcendental point the parallel modes of these attributes may be reconciled without entering into any contradiction with their Ground. The Hegelians like Erdmann and others maintain this view. They say that the attributes have no real existence in the Substance, they are assumed only to represent 'the subjective ways of understanding the world of things and minds in relation to God,' as Prof. Bhattacharyya puts it. But Kuno Fischer maintains a different view. He says that those two attributes should be considered as two real potencies or supreme powers, as two lines of divine activities. Prof. Adamson reminds us that this realistic expression can be understood only in the light of the more purely logical conception; otherwise 'consciousness and

extension are ways in which the sum of being is apprehended by us; but there is only one sum of being.' He says that like the waves of the sea, the modes have no existence in themselves; 'but they are the manner in which the infinite essence gives expression to itself.'

Whatever may be the controversies about the parallel attributes *thought* and *extension* of God, it is true that though Spinoza admits the two attributes of his unconditioned substance, he really does not admit their separate entities or existence apart from his Essence, the Ground; 'he treats them', in the words of Caird, 'as negative and illusory in themselves; he finds in God a ground of reality, of a self-assertive, self-determining, self-maintaining being.' He is absolutely self-dependent and unique. Being perfect and all-inclusive, there is nothing to be desired outside of Him. He is the cause of all, but uncaused Himself. But it should be remembered that everything other than God is illusion and error, or it may be said, as Prof. Norman Smith nicely puts it, that 'finite existences are illusions of the imagination that vanish when their essence is realized to be continuous with, and indivisible from, the one reality.'

The God is Spinoza is the Whole, and though He apprehends the capability of division, is yet absolutely indivisible. He is simple, indeterminate, and concrete. There is no limitation or finiteness in the Whole; He is one and identical in His essence and existence. All limitations die out or cease to exist in the undivided unity of God.

The manifold appearance is the outcome of creation or emanation. But it is an interesting thing to be noticed that this creation or emanation does not come out from God, but it remains in God. The manifold world is created out of finite things or *modi*, and 'God is their indwelling cause, not transcendent creator'. The God of Spinoza, then, is really the free cause. 'There is no different law by which God acts, but He Himself is a law.'³ The ground and the consequence—freedom and the inner necessity—are the same and

¹ cf. Swami Abhedananda, *Self-Knowledge*.

² But here we should not overlook one of the weighty and ingenious comments of Dr. Haldar, as he says: 'The theory of Spinoza which reduces thought and extension to parallel attributes of the one substance does not help us. . . . Spinoza's modes of thought are, of course, not such a unity. they are only parallel to the modes of extension. But unless thought is conceived as a unity that transcends this parallelism, knowledge remains unexplained. It is not possible to attribute such a view to Spinoza though perhaps there are some indications of it in his theory.'

Prof. Joachim also supports it in the same way when he says: 'But, because they (i.e. thought and extension) are "ultimate" he cannot admit that in the Reality all the distinct characters are as such transcended and absorbed; so he is left with plurality "in" an absolute unity, and the metaphorical "in" leaves the conception totally unintelligible. . . . and by his failure to reconcile the plurality of the Attributes as ultimate characters of God with his transparent unity. Still we must not abuse the licence. For Spinoza . . . rises above the spatial way of representing the "relation" off the Attributes to one another and to God.'

³ Prof. A. E. Taylor urges here: 'My objection to Spinoza's formula would be based not on what it asserts but on what it denies. It asserts, truly as it seems to me that God acts "by the law of his own nature", but falsely sets such action in God in opposition to "free action", as though the complete identity of *voluntas* and *natura* were not itself the very ideal of perfect freedom.'

identical with the Whole of Spinoza. 'The relation of cause and effect, he (Spinoza) in the end shows, is not only identical with that of ground and consequent, but also with that of substance and quality.' This Whole of the eternal One is the highest knowledge; and from the realization of this knowledge arise the supreme joy and happiness for us.

But this realization or the method of arriving at the union of man with order of things, or with God is purely an intellectual process. It is called 'intuition' according to Spinoza. This intuition is not the 'intuition' or 'apperception' of Kant, as intuition and even inner intuition, for Kant, are nothing but the representation of appearance, and are subject to the form or *a priori* condition of time; or in the words of Prof. Paton, it can be said that in intuition, according to Kant, 'the mind intuits itself, not as it is in itself, but only as it appears to itself,' and so it is phenomenal. The apperception of Kant is also a power or faculty of mind which can be taken to be identical with understanding or empirical self-identity. Spinoza's intuition transcends even the '*conscientia*' of Descartes and the temporal 'I-consciousness' of Leibnitz. It can be called the God-intuition which, though involves a speculative intellectual process or vision, is the fountain of bliss sublime and divine unity with God.⁴ This God of Spinoza is also different from the 'Thing-in-itself' of Kant; because the 'Thing-in-itself', for Kant, re-

mains for ever beyond the reach of human intellect and appreciation, whereas the all-containing God for Spinoza can be intuited and known by the intellect, and He can be appreciated in the Divine Communion.

The divine flash of God-intuition of Spinoza is really other-worldly and sublime. It lies quite along the path of mysticism. The union with God or God-intuition, as Dr. Windleband calls it, is the 'theory of *cognition*, with its three stages, which sets *intuition*, as the immediate apprehension of the eternal logical resulting of all things from God, as knowledge *sub specie aeternitatis*, above perception and the activity of the intellect'.⁵ 'The more we understand', Dr. Hoffding well concludes, 'that we ourselves and our conditions are determined by the infinite nature, by God Himself, who moves in us as well as in all things acting upon us, the more we regard ourselves not as a single, isolated, impotent being but as included in God and identical with Him. We feel pleasure in this thought, since it is the fruit of the highest activity of our mind, and pleasure too at the thought of the Being who is the cause of the joy with which knowledge fills us: Thus arises an intellectual love of God (*amor intellectualis dei*), which fills us with the highest peace. . . . Through that intellectual love of God, founded in our union with the absolute Being, our true nature is expressed; . . . we are-immortal.'

⁴ So Prof. Seth also admits: 'For Spinoza, with all his intellectualism, the moral and practical interest may be said to be supreme, since the great service which the intellectual vision of all things, in the light of their divine unity and necessity, renders to man is to free him from "the bondage of the passions"; for Spinoza, as for Socrates, virtue is knowledge.'

⁵ Dr. N. K. Brahma also says rightly: 'Intuition is "understanding at a glance and not by process", Spinoza says. . . . It springs from knowledge of the ultimate reality in its aspect of totality and eternity. From this standpoint Intuition seems to be an extension and consummation of reason and appears to be more intimate with reason than with sense.'

ANSWER

BY TANDRA DEVI

There is something I want to write ;
I have been wanting to write it for a million years ;
But the image is not clear,
And the words will not come.

There is something I want to find ;
I have groped for it
During interminable searches.
Will it remain hidden for ever?
And am I a dupe
Of blind longings—
Wild chance?

There is something I long to see—
To touch and hear and make my own.
Is it unattainable—
A mirage—a dream?
Or is it nearer than the blood in these veins.
Closer than myself,
Warmer than the handclasp of a friend?

Something is longing, beating, driving, hoping,
sighing, rising within me.
In this dark cloud called 'I'
Perhaps the illimitable sun is hid.
So dark, so dark the cloud—
I ask 'Shall that sun ever break through?'

I call silently in pain,
'Where—where is light,
And when shall there be knowing?'

Millions have called thus since the beginning,
And they will call on, for ever.
Is this then a game of chance,
Or is it a mysterious pilgrimage?
Speak! Speak! O Voice hid in stone—
In stars—in my weary heart.

Shall death give the answer?
And shall birth make me to forget again?
Again and again, shall we forget, for ever?
Wilt Thou not come forth to save,
O Unknown?
Or art Thou endlessly inexorable—
Careless, cruel—
Condemning Thy creatures to limitless uncertainty?

Somehow, somewhere,
Will not mercy and love prevail?

Inscrutable Being—
Thou—God—
Answer!

NOTES AND COMMENTS

REMINISCENCES OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA

Sri Mahendranath Dutta, the younger brother of Swami Vivekananda, who leads a secluded life of study and meditation in Calcutta, met Sri Ramakrishna for the first time about sixty years ago, and several times afterwards. He has related some of his most interesting reminiscences of Sri Ramakrishna in his latest book in Bengali, excerpts from which, translated by Swami Jagadiswarananda, have appeared in the *Human Affairs* for February 1945. Referring to his first meeting with Sri Ramakrishna, he says :

My first meeting with him took place in a summer evening of 1882 or 1883 in the house of Sri Ramachandra Dutta,—my neighbour and relative. Hearing that the Paramahansa of Dakshineswar had come, a crowd of about fifty persons of whom I was one, gathered in the house almost out of curiosity. . . . All eyes were fixed on him.

He was very simple and unassuming like a villager. As I sat near him, I felt like keeping quiet. The assembled people felt a similar mood and sat silent. He himself was speaking a few words now and then. . . . His mind was always in such a high plane that when he used to speak, he brought down his mind by force from its dizzy heights. All present slowly got overpowered by his august presence and felt uplifted. After sitting for a while he began to murmur a song on Kali or Krishna. I had heard previously expert singers, but the song of Sri Ramakrishna was wonderfully inspiring. How sweet his voice was! He used to be absorbed so deeply in the ideas underlying the song that he appeared to float in the thoughts of the song, as it were. . . . Our minds got tuned with his mind. . . . I forgot hunger and thirst and also all my engagements. . . . His words were soft and convincing, forceful and intoxicating. When the time drew near for departure I felt a sort of strong attraction for him. This attraction was neither affection, nor love, nor respect ; it was the heart's desire to be in his holy company.

A kind of intoxication which overtook us all in his presence lasted for full three days at least in my case. Though I followed my daily

routine as usual, I did not get any interest in them—my mind was away from them; it was with Sri Ramakrishna, as if he had snatched it away. This, in short, is the impression of my first meeting.

Mahendranath Dutta particularly remembers the states of divine ecstasy (*samadhi*) in which Sri Ramakrishna would often be found, and giving a vivid description of one such state, observes :

Once in the house of Ramachandra Dutta, Paramahamsadev had come. . . . As soon as Sri Ramakrishna was garlanded he hummed a hymn in low tone and passed into *samadhi* . . . such a heavenly atmosphere of holiness and calmness, peace and blessedness was created that none wished to move his body or limbs. . . . Our breath became rhythmic and slow. Our minds lost their outgoing tendencies and turned inward. Those who never practised meditation in their life experienced a meditative mood. Effluence that emanated from his body filled up the room like the fragrance of a flower, and overwhelmed us. . . . I have travelled in many countries of Europe and Asia, but I have nowhere come across such a strange man, such a God-intoxicated soul. To him God was all in all and everything else was trash.

In these reminiscences we get a glimpse of the sublime nature of Sri Ramakrishna's influence over the group of sincere young men who were gathered round him, knit together in the bonds of spiritual fraternity. Those who visited Sri Ramakrishna even casually became friendly, and talked of him whenever they met. Not infrequently there were instances when the whole night was spent in the parks or streets of Calcutta by friends deeply engrossed in talk about Sri Ramakrishna. S. J. Dutta reveals how, in a quiet way, Sri Ramakrishna exercised his liberalizing influence on the then orthodox Calcutta society. Interdining among the people of different castes became a common feature, at least 'in the feedings organized in connection with his visit'. Brahmins and non-brahmins dined together giving up their narrow caste prejudices; for, Sri Ramakrishna had told them that as sincere devotees of the Lord they formed a class by themselves. They had no separate caste, and consequently were above social restrictions. A new fact narrated by the writer refers to the introduction into the then Hindu society, by Sri Ramakrishna, of the system of greeting each other by bowing in Indian style. Evidently such practice did not find favour with the anglicized section of Calcutta society of those days. Mahendranath Dutta adds that Sri Ramakrishna always set the example by bowing first, and even

persons like Girish Chandra Ghose and Keshab Chandra Sen had to learn this etiquette from him.

AWAKENED INDIA

Swami Vivekananda visualized the future of India as great and glorious, and declared that her awakening could be brought about by the sacrifice of a number of unselfish, thorough-going young men. He strongly urged the Indian youth to steer clear of superstitious orthodoxy and anglicized spirit, and develop a passionate love for everything Indian. These stirring words of Swami Vivekananda, spoken forty-eight years ago, are as vitally significant today as they were when they were uttered. Unfortunately the tendency to imitate Western forms is growing in India. And instead of assimilating the good points of other nations, we are doing the opposite. Western shibboleths, with their soulless materialism, are capturing the imagination of the youth of India while Indian ideals do not interest them any more. In his illuminating address to Simla Vyayam Samiti, Calcutta, Sadhu T. L. Vaswani said that he had found Indian young men imitating and becoming servile imitators of Western forms and institutions. Such imitation is useless from two points of view: In the first place Indians can never become Europeans or attain racial or national equality by copying European methods; in the second place, it is impossible to imitate the Westerners *in toto*, for we cannot help being what we inherently are. It usually happens that the non-essential features of European society are more easily copied than the virtues, resulting in our degeneration and denationalization.

In order that India may progress towards her goal of freedom, Sadhu Vaswani believed there was need for three kinds of men whom he called, respectively,—volunteers, wanderers, and worshippers. According to him the volunteers were those who devoted themselves exclusively to the service of the motherland and who did not think in terms of religious denominations. The wanderers, he said, were to move from village to village, speaking to the village folk about India's cultural message and spiritual ideals. They should also impart secular education on purely national lines, stressing the importance of physical culture. The third group of men, named by the speaker as worshippers, was

needed to serve India, like true Karma-Yogis, looking upon service of man as worship of God. 'Awakened India' will have to play a great part in the new world order when the war-weary nations will turn to her for spiritual ministrations. The future greatness of India

lies, as it did in the past, in her becoming, once again, the spiritual teacher of the world. In any progressive movement Indians will have to keep spirituality in the forefront and give up imitating the ways of foreigners.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

NATURE OF CONSCIOUSNESS IN HINDU PHILOSOPHY. BY S. K. SAKSENA, M.A., PH.D. *Published by Nand Kishore and Bros., Benares. Pp. viii 223. Price Rs. 7-8.*

The cognitive relationship of man to his environment is unique, and nowhere does this unique characteristic display itself more forcibly than in his consciousness. And so, the problem of consciousness has occupied a most prominent place in all branches of philosophy, particularly in psychology and epistemology. In Hindu philosophy the problem acquires great value as it is related to the vital questions of bondage, release, and *brahma-jnana*. What is Consciousness? What is its essence? How does it differ from the *atman*? What are its relations to self-consciousness and self-luminacy? And above all how does it stand in relation to Unconsciousness? These are some of the questions which require to be dealt with from the Hindu point of view. And Dr. Saksena, the learned author of the treatise under review, has, in his doctoral thesis, attempted in a clear and forceful style to deal with the above problems and has succeeded in presenting 'a picture of the essentially and solely Hindu view of Consciousness along with the characteristic features which distinguish it in broad relief from its Western ally'.

The eight chapters of this well-written thesis contain a clear exposition of the ontological, epistemological, psychological, and transcendental nature of Consciousness; and of the relationship between the *chit* and the *achit*. What strikes the reviewer as most valuable in the book is the learned author's thorough, systematic, and critical estimation of the comparative values of the contributions made by different schools of Indian philosophy to the study of Consciousness. Of course, in dealing with *samvit*, *anubhuti*, or *upalabdhi* the author has had to pay special attention to Sankhya Yoga and Nyaya-Vaisheshika positions, and also to the views of Shankara, Ramanuja, as well as to those of Vachaspati and Vijñanabhikshu. Dr. Saksena's discussion of the self-luminacy of Consciousness in relation to mystic experience deserves special mention. The reviewer is tempted to say that a critical exposition of the Unconscious as understood by the psychoanalysts from the Hindu point of view will be particularly welcome from the scholarly pen of Dr. Saksena. But, then, I forget the author has set a limit to his researches by confining him-

self to 'an independent and critical study of the Hindu view of Consciousness in its individual and distinctive traits'. *Nature of Consciousness* is a distinct and valuable contribution to Indian psychological study, and the learned author has placed every student of philosophy under a debt of obligation to him by the timely publication of his valuable research thesis. It is now the duty of others to take up the work of synthesis for which we have brilliant suggestions in the book under review, specially in its epilogue. I have no hesitation in recommending this scholarly work to every student of comparative philosophy as a valuable and stimulating source book. *Nature of Consciousness* is a work without a copy of which no philosophical library, private or public, may be said to be complete.

P. S. NAIDU

NEW LIGHT ON SRI KRISHNA & GITA. (VOL. I). BY DR. MOHAN SINGH. *Published by Dr. Mohan Singh, 13/2, Kapurthala House, Lahore. Pp. 102. Price Bound Rs 7-8, Unbound Rs. 5.*

Sister Nivedita in her preface to *The Cradle Tales of Hinduism* wrote, while discussing the problems connected with the personality of Sri Krishna, thus:

'We have thus to decide whether the Krishna of the Puranic stories here given, and the Krishna Partha Sarathi of the Mahabharata, are two or one. On the answer to this depends a great deal of history. If they are two, is Krishna Partha Sarathi new at the time of the last recension of the Mahabharata, or is he some ancient hero of the Aryan peoples, with whom Krishna Herakles is then fused, to become the popular vehicle of Vedic ideas? *In the hands of highly trained Indian scholars—competent as no foreigner could be to apply the tests of language and of theological evolution—it is my belief that these inquiries might receive reliable solutions. I doubt that alien opinions could ever be much more than interesting speculations.*' (Italics ours).

This dream of Sister Nivedita receives partial fulfilment in the volume under review. Dr. Mohan Singh of the University Oriental College, Lahore, has really thrown new and valuable light on Sri Krishna. We believe that the line of research he has intuitively chosen is the correct one, and it is also supported by the mass of invaluable references he has quoted in support of his views. He has developed clearly and convincingly the theory of avatars in Hindu theology, philosophy, and

mythology, and has proved that Sri Krishna is one and the same Divinity manifesting itself in various forms. As the Gita truly says,

'Avajananti mam mudhah manushim tanum-ashritam, param bhavamajananto mama bhuta-maheshvaram' (IX. 11).

With a courage of conviction rare in the ordinary run of Indian savants, Dr. Mohan Singh has brushed aside the patronizing yet puerile criticisms of Western scholars about the truthfulness of our *puranas* and epics, the Vedas and the Gita, and has delved into them, and brought out the truths hidden from the irreverent gaze of scoffing, yet ignorant, Christian scholars from the West.

Indian scholars and Western indologists will find much food for stimulating thought in this book. Every true Hindu will find in its pages an authoritative confirmation of the beliefs which he or she has sucked with the mother's milk. We wish Dr. Mohan Singh all success in his further researches in this direction.

The highly illuminating foreword by Sri Krishna Prem is a fitting introduction to such a fine book. We could only wish that the paper and get-up had only been more worthy of the subject dealt with.

THE PEACOCK LUTE. EDITED BY V. N. BHUSHAN. *Published by Padma Publications Ltd., Bombay, Pp. 155 + xix. Price Rs. 6.*

Here is a delightful anthology and one that is of special importance in the literary world of today. It is a collection of poems in English, by Indian writers. The poems are not translations but have been written directly in English, although the Editor has wisely made an exception to this rule in the case of four poets.

Indo-English poetry is described by the Editor as 'a full-blooded orphan languishing for want of proper care and recognitions.' This book

should do much to prove that this orphan not only deserves recognition but has an important function to fulfill. Some critics fear that the encouragement of Indian literature in English is detrimental to the cause of national literature. These critics have apparently not yet grasped the tremendous depth and breadth to which their nationalism must go. No one can be truly national who is not international as well. And if this is so in the spheres of politics and economics it is of far greater importance in the sphere of culture as expressed in religion, art and literature. To India and Indians it is of particular importance. For the time is upon us when India's voice shall be heard in the West. The modern Renaissance in India is leading to this as surely as the decay in Western civilization is preparing the ground for its reception. It is through channels such as this anthology of poetry that that voice will go.

If, from the technical point of view, some of these poems leave much to be desired, this is easily counterbalanced by their inner worth. In the words of V.N. Bhushan: This poetry 'Justifies itself by its strange beauty and newness of genius. . . . At times it is nerve of energy and strength of wing that are visible; at other times it is intellectual depth and intuitive suggestiveness that are supreme. . . . Indeed, the many facets of the best Indo-English poetry lend their admirer ampler flight into the realm where Truth, Goodness and Beauty tone into each other. . . .'

The publishers of this book tell us that it is the first of a series of anthologies of Indo-English literature. Those to follow will be anthologies of essays, short stories, and one-act plays. We welcome the idea and hope that those to come will equal this production in excellence of get-up and content.

IRENE R. RAY.

NEWS AND REPORTS

SWAMI MAHIMANANDA

It is with the deepest sorrow that we record the passing away of Swami Mahimananda at Benares at 2-15 p.m. on Wednesday, the 23rd May. He joined the Ramakrishna Math at Belur in 1908. After a few years' stay there he went to Benares where he lived almost uninterruptedly till the end. He was a member of the Governing Body of the Ramakrishna Mission and a Trustee of the Ramakrishna Math. He was noted for his self-help and sweet nature. His age at the time of passing away was over 81 years.

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION SARADA PITHA

We have received a copy of the scheme and report of the activities of the Ramakrishna Mission Sarada Pitha, Belur, for the years 1941-44. The

Sarada Pitha was started in the year 1941 as a new educational centre of the Mission in a building of its own near the Belur Math. It has now two main sections, viz. the Vidyamandira or College section, and the Shilpamandira or Technical section. The Management of the Sarada Pitha has in view the opening of a third section, viz. Tattvamandira, devoted to religion and philosophy, and the addition of an Agricultural branch as well as a Teachers' Training branch.

Vidyamandira: The Ramakrishna Mission Vidyamandira, an Intermediate Arts College, residential in character, and affiliated to the Calcutta University, came into existence in 1941. The College and Hostel are close to each other amid quiet and peaceful surroundings. The College has a decent Library and a well-provided Common Room. In addition to regular lectures by a

brilliant staff which included some monastic members of the Order, coaching classes were held in all subjects during the period under review. The boys took keen interest in debates and meetings, and ran a manuscript magazine. The Vidyamandira is run on the principle of the ancient *gurukula* system. As such they are under a healthy discipline, and attend to most of the household work. Regular religious classes were held and attention was paid to the spiritual training of the boys. The boys were encouraged to take active part in games and excursions, and in organizing dramas and special functions. The examination results were highly encouraging: Of 19 students who sat for the I.A. Examination in 1943, 16 came out successful; in 1944, out of 12 students 11 came out successful. In each of the years two secured scholarships. The Vidyamandira offers full-free and part-free studentship facilities to poor but meritorious students.

Shilpamandira: The Ramakrishna Mission Shilpamandira, started in February 1942, trained up a number of carpenters, electricians, and fitters. The average strength of the Technical section was 175 during the period under review. It is housed in a big building of its own, and has a large workshop and two hostels attached to it. The Management has a plan for starting three-year courses in electrical, mechanical, and automobile engineering, supplemented by practical training in workshops where small machinery of various kinds will be manufactured.

Needs: (1) For teaching science subjects in the Vidyamandira, a science section, equipped with a first-class laboratory, has to be opened. The estimated cost of buildings and equipment is Rs. 2,50,000/-. (2) Extension of the Vidyamandira hostel building, with a view to accommodate over 400 students, will entail an expenditure of Rs. 2,00,000/-. (3) To complete the College building Rs. 30,000/- are needed. (4) A spacious prayer hall, with shrine, for about 500 students will cost Rs. 50,000/-. (5) The cost of construction and equipment of a gymnasium, for 100 boys, will amount to about Rs. 15,000/-. (6) A sum of Rs. 50,000/- is needed for providing the boys with a large dining hall and for the construction of a kitchen. (7) A sum of Rs. 10,000/- is urgently needed to meet the cost of sinking a tube-well or excavating a tank for good water supply. (8) Acqui-

sition of land for the Sarada Pitha will cost Rs. 2,00,000/-. (9) To ensure stability of the institution, a Provident Fund of at least Rs. 1,00,000/- is absolutely necessary.

SRI SARADA VIDYALAYA, MADRAS
(Ramakrishna Mission)
REPORT FOR 1944

The Report on the working of the Sri Sarada Vidyalaya, Madras, one of the prominent educational institutions of the Mission for girls, for the year 1944, shows an increase in strength, and progress in the different schools under its management. The total number of admissions during the year was 871, and withdrawals 652, thus leaving a total strength of 1,810 at the end of the year. In June 1944 Standard VI was opened in the Girls' Elementary School.

A new section to teach instrumental music was opened during the year. Of the 72 girls sent up for the final examination in the High School, 59 were declared eligible for college course. In the Training School, 12 passed the T. S. L. C. Examination, and 12 passed the E. S. L. C. Examination. Classes in moral and religious instruction were regularly held for the pupils and the members of the staff. Opportunities were afforded for physical training and games. Other activities consisted of literary meetings, excursions, and organization of a scout group. There were respectively 25 and 40 inmates in the High School Hostel and Training School Hostel. The two important needs of the institution are: (1) Finding a permanent habitation for the several schools; (2) securing endowments for the Schools and the Training Section.

VEDANTA SOCIETY, SAN FRANCISCO

We have received the programme of work of the Vedanta Society of Northern California, San Francisco, for the month of February 1945. Of the bi-weekly lectures delivered by the Swami-in-charge mention may be made of the following: 'The Law of Karma and Reincarnation', 'The Nature and Practice of Inner Consciousness', 'The Spiritual Experiences of Sri Ramakrishna and their Significance to the Western Mind'. The last of the above-mentioned lectures was delivered on the occasion of the celebration of the birthday anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna.