

FIFTY-SECOND YEAR

FEBRUARY 1947

# Prabuddha Bharata

OR

AWAKENED  
INDIA



Editorial Office

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Publication Office

4, WELLINGTON LANE, CALCUTTA-13

Subscription : Inland, Rupees Four ; Burma, Rupees Five ; Foreign, Eleven Shillings or Three Dollars.

Single Copy : Inland, Annas Seven ; Foreign, Annas Twelve.



“उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत ।”

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

## CONVERSATIONS WITH SWAMI SHIVANANDA

Mahapurushji's meditations and prayers not for himself but for others—His resignation to God.

(Place : Belur Monastery. Time : November-December 1932)

The weather was growing slightly cold, indicating the approach of winter. It was dusk. After the vesper services the Brahma-  
charis and Sanyasis of the monastery were engaged in meditation. An indescribable peace and serenity prevailed everywhere.

Silence pervaded Mahapurushji's room. A green light was burning there. Mahapurushji was seated cross-legged facing the west absorbed in meditation. An attendant was gently fanning him driving away mosquitoes. Time passed away in this way. The silence in the room gradually deepened. Mahapurushji's serene countenance became all the more radiant. The Sadhus of the monastery came as usual to his room and finding him absorbed in meditation saluted him from a distance and left. It was nine o'clock at night but still he did not come down to the normal plane from his meditation. After a while Mahapurushji softly chanted 'Om' which became more and more distinct as 'Hari Om.' He inquired what time it was.

The attendant hesitantly replied in a low voice, 'nine.'

Mahapurushji : 'Has the bell been rung for the offering of food to the Master?'

Attendant : 'A long while ago. It is quite a while since food was taken to the shrine and it is nearly time to bring the offered food back.'

The attendant was very much concerned to find Mahapurushji practising so much of meditation. It was the special instruction of the doctors that he should not practise too much as it was harmful for his health. The attendant therefore took courage to ask : 'Why should you have to meditate so much? You can see the Master with your eyes open and talk to him. Why do you have to meditate so much?'

Melting with affection Mahapurushji remarked : 'Yes, my child, you have rightly spoken. Without any effort on our part the Master graciously appears to us and if necessary talks to us too. The Master, the Holy

Mother, Swamiji, and others are all very gracious. There is no doubt about it. We do not have to meditate to see the Master. I do not meditate for that purpose, but for this: many have had initiation from me but not all can keep up their spiritual practice. There are still others who although they keep up their practice do not make much headway because of certain obstructions in their individual lives. For them I have to pray separately. When I concentrate a little their faces flash across my mind and I pray for them individually. I have to remove the obstructions that stand in the way of their spiritual progress. Besides, in this world many have trials and tribulations. I have to help them in that respect also. It is the Master who inspires us from within to do these things. In this world there is no end to trials and tribulations. Therefore our only prayer is that there may be peace in the entire world and a lessening of pain and sorrow and that men may advance towards God. We do not perform any spiritual practice for ourselves, my child.'

Every word of Mahapurushji bespoke the earnestness of his heart, the fountain of his love overflowing, as it were. In a trembling voice he said: 'It is He who makes us do all these things. That loving Lord seated within is playing various roles. I do and say what He prompts me to. I am simply an ordinary instrument in His hands—a broken instrument at that. But He is an excellent player; He can win the game even with a broken die and He is doing just that. Otherwise, tell me, what power do I have? I have neither scholarship nor the gift of speech nor anything else; neither am I handsome to look at. Old and feeble in body I cannot always even go downstairs and yet He is managing

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The Ganges is sacred—Mahapurushji tells about his austerities and experiences as an itinerant monk—The monastery at Belur rich with many holy associations—The influence of Sri Ramakrishna in the realm of ideas

(Place: Belur Monastery. Time: November-December 1932)

Mahapurushji has been sick with high blood-pressure. He has been under the

His work. How many people come to us! I can hardly speak to all—so many come. They say, "You do not have to speak. Just by seeing you the afflictions of our hearts are assuaged and all our doubts vanish." I do not know anything. Glory be unto Thee, O Lord! Blessed be Thy name! Who can understand Thy glory? I am surprised at the doings of the Lord. In how many ways is He functioning within this body! To whom shall I disclose it and who will understand? Within me as well as outside it is He who is playing.

'The other day Sudhir (Swami Suddhanda) asked: "So many people have had initiation from you—do you keep track of them? Can you recognize all?" I said, "No, I don't remember all. What need have I to remember how many have had initiation, where they come from or what they do? I simply repeat the Lord's name." I think about Him. I don't know anything else. And about initiation, it is He who is responsible for bringing people here and it is He, seated within, who blesses them. Otherwise, why would so many people come if they were attracted by me alone? It is He who has taken hold of this body and is playing His game, I am being blessed. Whoever comes here I dedicate at His feet. I say, "O Lord, here are your people—have them." Just as people worship the Lord's feet with many kinds of flowers in the same way I offer different types of men at His feet. I see clearly that He accepts all. He takes their responsibility. He is responsible for their good as well as for the opposite; but they have my best wishes at all times. Every moment I think about their well-being and pray for them.'

treatment of doctors and has to be very careful not to over-exert himself. These days

he had not been able to come downstairs and have his usual walk. In the afternoon he would walk back and forth sometimes on the small verandah on the west side of his room and sometimes on the verandah facing the Ganges. Today shortly before dusk, he went to the verandah facing the Ganges and saluting the sacred river with folded hands repeated: 'Glory be to Mother Ganges! The Master used to call the Ganges water *Brahmavari* (water of Brahman). The breeze blowing from the Ganges purifies everything it reaches.'

Mahapurushji then saluted Mother Kali at the Dakshineswar temple-garden and also the spot on the other side of the Ganges where Sri Ramakrishna was cremated. Leaning on a cane, he started walking slowly. Coming near the room which had once been occupied by Swamiji he bowed in reverence. He had with him an attendant and while walking slowly he remarked: 'Just see to what a pass the body has come! Now it pains me to move even a few steps and yet it is this body that did a lot of mountain climbing, visited so many countries, and practised so much austerity! There were times when I did not have more than one piece of cloth with me. Half of this piece I would wrap around me as a skirt and the other half I would wrap around the upper part of my body. While journeying along I would bathe at a well and would dry the cloth after my bath, wearing simply the loin-cloth.'

'Many nights I slept under a tree. In those days I had a feeling of great dispassion and would never think about physical comforts, finding joy in austerity alone. I have wandered a great deal having no possessions but I was never in any difficulty. The Master stayed by me and protected me from all dangers and difficulties and I never went hungry. Of course, there were days when I had very little to eat. I remember very well one experience. One day, on my way to Bithur to see a Sadhu, I was resting at noon

under a tree and had not eaten anything. There was no human habitation in the neighbourhood. All of a sudden from a near-by *bael* tree a ripe *bael* fell down on the ground with a thud and broke open. I looked around to see if there were any one near and then picked up the fruit and satisfied my hunger with it. It was a big *bael*.

'In those days I had great longing and restlessness to realize God. While walking I would practise remembrance of God and pray to Him earnestly. I disliked the company of men and would avoid roads which ordinarily would be frequented by travellers. Towards evening I would find shelter somewhere and spend the night absorbed in my own thoughts. Night is the ideal time for spiritual practice. There being no external noise and bustle at night the mind naturally becomes quiet. I wandered like this for a long time. If one lives this way, having no possessions one develops full resignation to God. One becomes established in the idea that God alone is our protector in prosperity as well as adversity.'

Mahapurushji now sat down on a chair and the conversations continued. He said: 'Now the Master has graciously kept me here for his service. I don't feel like going anywhere now. The Guru and Mother Ganges are on two sides; between them I am in great peace. This place is verily Vaikuntha (the heaven of Vishnu). The Lord of the universe Himself is here for the good of the world. A perfected soul like Swamiji lived here. How much spiritual rapture and ecstasy has been experienced here! Our Master, who is self-contained, is here and all his apostles live in this place in their subtle bodies. And sometimes we see them. If a spiritual aspirant attains illumination in any place that place becomes holy and this is the holiest of all holy places. How sacred is the very dust of this place! It will take a long time for humanity to know and realize what Sri Ramakrishna and Swamiji were. The world has not seen such spiritual giants manifested

for the good of the world in thousands of years. Buddha came and after several hundred years people understood a little of him and his liberal message spread throughout the world. Just think what a furore was made over a tooth of Buddha that had been carried somewhere; What a big temple was built to commemorate that tooth! And here we have the relics of Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother, Swamiji, and others. When I think about these things my hair stands on end. How many people will come from distant countries to worship the ground of the Belur Math! There is already an indication of that. It is not yet fifty years since the Master's passing away and yet what a spiritual revolution is taking place throughout the world. We are blessed that we can see these things. You will see even greater things.

'The Master's work was in the realm of ideas—in the realm of the spirit. The ideal that he lived will soon bring about a wholesale transformation of religious ideas in the entire world. There are already signs of it. Yogin Maharaj (Swami Yogananda) used to say, "There have always been various religious paths and countless scriptures and holy places in every country. In spite of that, why is there a decline in religion? The reason is because in course of time all those ideals become lost. Therefore God incarnates Himself so as to explain the subtleties of religion and to show the ideal." The Master came this time as the living embodiment of all religious paths. That is why he practised many religious disciplines and obtained illu-

mination through them. The Master's life is the living embodiment of every religious ideal. Now you will see that the votaries of every religion will derive new life, and hope, and inspiration from his divine life moulding their own religious life in accordance with his life.'

Gradually it became dark. Mahapurushji slowly walked to his room and sat on his cot, facing the west, with folded hands. In front of him on the wall was a good-sized photograph of Sri Ramakrishna. There were also other pictures of gods and goddesses in his room. Mahapurushji bowed again and again in reverence to Sri Ramakrishna and the other holy ones and then sat silent. The vesper service began. In sweet tones the Sadhus and devotees started chanting the vesper hymns. Finally they chanted the salutation to the Divine Mother. Mahapurushji joined in and repeated:

O Auspicious One, Thou art the source of all auspiciousness. Thou art the accomplisher of all cherished desires. Thou art the giver of refuge. Thou possessest the eye of wisdom and a beautiful form. O Thou Power Divine, salutations to Thee!

O Eternal One, Thou art the energy of creation, maintenance, and resolution. Thou art the abode of all the qualities, and yet art beyond them. O Thou Power Divine, salutations to Thee!

O Mother, Thou ever savest those in poverty and pain who take refuge in Thee. Thou art the remover of the misery of all. O Thou Power Divine, salutations to Thee!

Gradually complete silence pervaded the monastery grounds. Mahapurushji sat in the same position with eyes closed absorbed in meditation.

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'The journey of this world is delightful to one, who, after the removal of his errors and dispersion of the cloud of his ignorance, has come to the knowledge of truth. That serenity of the mind and calm repose of the heart being secured, all the senses are subjected to peace, and everything is viewed in an equal light; and this knowledge of the truth gives a delight to our journey in this world.'

# RELIGION AND SOCIETY

BY THE EDITOR

## I

All the scriptures of the world proclaim that the object of their teachings is to lift up man from his erring humanity to perfect divinity. Nowhere is this perfectibility of the individual so unambiguously emphasized and the methods of the process of self-discovery and self-integration so clearly delineated as in the Vedanta.

The Vedanta starts with the fundamental idea of the unity of God and man. But it is not a unity of man *with* God or *in* God to be achieved in the future, but a unity of complete identity which is eternal in its nature and not dependent on the exigencies of time or place. To the ordinary man who sees himself and the world as separate this seems an amazing, if not, an absurd and blasphemous, proposition.

The ordinary man sees himself as primarily a physical body with all sorts of muscular and mental powers. He finds his existence depends on the food he eats, as otherwise it is evident to even the meanest intelligence, that the body will die; and that seems to be the end of the man. So he insists that man is a physical or material being endowed with the energy of life which because of its peculiar powers of digestion, growth, recuperation, and reproduction makes the body a self-acting mechanism which subserves its individual ends as well as the ends of the race to which it belongs. Here ends his knowledge. Even educated men who have not pursued the matter further do not go beyond.

But there are others to whom a deeper and broader vision of life and the destiny of man has been vouchsafed. They refuse to accept a mere materialistic explanation of the universe. Life is not bounded by its mere material aspects; it has its ethical and spiritual aspects, and the soul, that the man is in reality, does not return to dust with the decaying of the body.

These two views of man, one saying that he is only a material being, and the other maintaining that he is a spiritual being, have been beautifully illustrated in an ancient story in the *Chhandogya Upanishad* about Indra and Virochana.

Indra the king of Gods and Virochana the king of the Asuras or demons, who were always fighting each other for world supremacy, approached Prajapati, their common ancestor, as pupils desirous of knowing the true Self which is 'free from impurities, from old age and death, from grief and thirst and hunger,' for they had heard that by a knowledge of Brahman they could conquer all worlds and obtain the fulfilment of all desires.

Prajapati said to them: 'The person who is seen in the eye—that is the Self. That is immortal, that is fearless and that is Brahman.'

'Sir,' enquired the disciples, 'who is seen reflected in water or in a mirror?'

'He, the Atman,' was the reply. 'He indeed is seen in all these.' Then Prajapati added: 'Look at yourselves in the water, and whatever you do not understand, come and tell me.'

Indra and Virochana pored over their reflections in the water and when they were asked what they had seen of the Self, they replied, 'Sir, we see the Self; we see even the hair and the nails.'

Then Prajapati ordered them to put on their finest clothes and look again at their 'selves' in the water. This they did and when asked again what they had seen, they answered: 'We see the Self exactly like ourselves, well adorned and in our finest clothes.'

Then said Prajapati: 'The Self is indeed seen in these. That Self is immortal and fearless, and that is Brahman.' And the pupils went away pleased at heart.

But looking after them Prajapati lamented thus: 'Both of them departed without analysing or discriminating and without comprehending the true Self. Whoever follows this false doctrine of the Self must perish.'

Satisfied that he had found the Self, Virochana returned to the Asuras and began to teach them that the bodily self alone is to be worshipped, that the body alone is to be served, and that he who worships the ego and serves the body gains both worlds, this and the next. And this in effect is the doctrine of the Asuras.

But Indra, on his way back to the Devas, realized

the uselessness of this knowledge. 'As this Self,' he reflected, 'seems to be well adorned when the body is well adorned, well dressed when the body is well dressed, so too will it be blind if the body is blind, deformed if the body is deformed. Nay more, this same Self will die when the body dies. I see no good in such knowledge.' So Indra returned to Prajapati for further instruction. Prajapati compelled him to live with him for another span of thirty-two years; after which he began to instruct him, step by step, as it were.

Prajapati said: 'He who moves about in dreams, enjoying and glorified—he is the Self. That is immortal and fearless, and that is Brahman.'

Pleased at heart, Indra departed. But before he had rejoined the other angelic beings, he realized the uselessness of that knowledge also. 'True it is,' he thought within himself, 'that this new Self is not blind if the body is not blind, not lame, nor hurt, if the body is not lame or hurt. But even in dreams the Self is conscious of many sufferings. So I see no good in this teaching.'

Accordingly he went to Prajapati for more instruction, and Prajapati made him live with him for thirty-two years more. At the end of that time Prajapati taught him thus: 'When a person is asleep, resting in perfect tranquillity, dreaming no dreams, then he realizes the Self. That is immortal and fearless, and that is Brahman.'

Satisfied, Indra went away. But even before he had reached home, he felt the uselessness of this knowledge also. 'When one is asleep,' he thought, 'one does not know oneself as "This is I." One is not in fact conscious of any existence. That state is almost annihilation. I see no good in this knowledge either.'

So Indra went back once again to be taught. Prajapati made him stay with him for five years more. At the end of that time Prajapati taught him the highest truth of the Self.

'This body,' he said, 'is mortal, for ever in the clutch of death. But within it resides the Self, immortal, and without form. This Self when associated in consciousness with the body, is subject to pleasure and pain; and so long as this association continues, no man can find freedom from pains and pleasures. But when the association comes to an end, there is an end also of pain and pleasure. Rising above physical consciousness, knowing the Self as distinct from the sense-organs and the mind, knowing Him in his true light, one rejoices and one is free.'<sup>1</sup>

## II

The above story shows that not only individuals but societies also are saved or

destroyed by the extent of their knowledge and the greatness of their ideals.

But the greatest responsibility lies on the leaders of thought and public opinion, for the multitude look up to them for guidance, and follow them blindly for good or for evil. The masses of people in the world are so taken up with the problem of meeting the necessities of life, are so immersed in the immediate pleasures and sorrows of their lives that they have seldom the leisure, the capacity, or even the energy to think of higher ideals. Whatever ideals are put before them by their self-appointed leaders, they accept at second hand on trust. They are incapable of sound and prolonged thought, and any clever demagogue whether of the political or spiritual variety, is able to sway the masses. Hence the greater need for true leaders to make their influence felt on the rank and file. Instead of acquiescing with and supporting the low standard of civilization to which the masses cling, the leaders of thought and public opinion should put before them the highest ideals of human perfectibility, brotherly love, and neighbourly co-operation.

Virochana was satisfied with the thought that the body was everything and believed that man's chief happiness lay in taking care of it in all possible ways so that enjoyment of the pleasures of life could be continued for as long as possible. For, in his view, with the death of the body there is an end of all possibilities of further enjoyment for the individual. Man comes but once never to return here again on earth; so what is more natural than that we shall feel inclined to grab and devour like carnivora whatever pleasures can be secured by fair means or foul. To a man attuned to this material ideal the whole world appears as a forest in which survival and success come only to the strong in teeth and claw. The appeal in all matters is only to the law of the jungle, to the use of violence in all its myriad forms.

To others, however, like Indra the insistence on purely material values does not seem

<sup>1</sup> Aldous Huxley, *The Perennial Philosophy*, pp. 234-236.

sufficient. They find in such a partial view the germs of death. If with this life end all our individual aspirations, hopes, and joys, then that would indeed be the signal for the stopping of all ethical and spiritual striving.

It may be argued that morality and civilization are but names cloaked with reverential sentimentality to denote what are essentially the same selfish impulses in the individual. What the individual by his unaided powers cannot secure he tries to get in company with others similarly situated like him and having similar interests to achieve. The evidence of biology is invoked in support of this view, as the herd instinct is supposed to have naturally developed in the weaker races of animals and also in men in this way. But the herd instinct was not primarily the outcome of a defensive or offensive attitude to the rest of the world. Rather it seems to have arisen in almost all cases as a result of marital, parental, and brotherly love extended to all individuals of the same species. It is love that overcomes first the selfish clinging to one's body, and extends the conception of self not only to include the bodies of others dear and near, but to something else than the mere bodies. Though bodily satisfaction may be the beginning of the feeling of love for others in the lower stages of evolution, in the higher animals and man the instinct of love and sympathy is so well developed that brotherliness is the common thing; love is more natural whereas hatred has almost always to be worked up by fears of danger to one's self-interests. Besides when we love a person it is not the mass of flesh and blood that is the object of our devotion; something intangible, something spiritual, something akin to our own self, is indeed there, which evokes our feelings and attracts us. If that were not so a corpse would have been as lovable as the living body.

This truth the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* declares in unambiguous language with the clear vision of the seer who has looked into

the heart of things. Yajnavalkya says:

Verily, a husband is not dear, that you may love the husband; but that you may love the Self, therefore a husband is dear. Verily a wife is not dear, that you may love the wife; but that you may love the Self, therefore a wife is dear. Verily, sons are not dear, that you may love the sons; but that you may love the Self, therefore sons are dear. Verily, wealth is not dear, that you may love wealth; but that you may love the Self, therefore wealth is dear. Verily, the Brahman-class is not dear, that you may love the Brahman-class; but that you may love the Self, therefore the Brahman-class is dear. . . . Verily, the worlds are not dear, that you may love the worlds; but that you may love the Self, therefore the worlds are dear. Verily, the Devas are not dear, that you may love the Devas; but that you may love the Self, therefore the Devas are dear. Verily, creatures are not dear, that you may love the creatures; but that you may love the Self, therefore are creatures dear. Verily, everything is not dear that you may love everything; but that you may love the Self, therefore everything is dear. Verily, the Self is to be seen, to be heard, to be perceived, to be marked, O Maitreyi! When we see, hear, perceive, and know the Self, then all this is known.<sup>2</sup>

It is because the same Self is in all beings, it is because all life has come out of the one primordial and eternal life, that we feel the bond of kinship and of love. That is why love is so pleasing and gives us joy while its opposite, hatred, is disturbing and rends us as well as others whom we hate.

### III

This lesson of universal brotherhood, of loving one's neighbour as oneself has been inculcated by all religions. The results, however, have not yet come up to the expectations of thinking men. Leaders of men have struggled through the ages to raise man, and we must all be grateful to them for their unselfish and loving work. But the problems of our time have to be solved by the present-day leaders as well as ourselves. The elemental questions which are crowding upon us require solutions in the light of modern conditions. Economic, political, or social conditions are seldom static. Thanks to the progress made in science, the modern world is

<sup>2</sup> Max Muller, *The Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. XV, pp. 109-110.



confronted with problems on a global scale, and the solutions have likewise to be global in their main character if they are to be effective. Besides modern scientific technique must be brought to bear on social problems and their solutions if society is to be truly and ever increasingly made civilized and if religion is to enter into the lives of men.

The development of civilization is possible only when individual men envisage the ideals which aim at the progress of the whole, and when these ideals are fitted to the realities of life and assume the forms in which they can effectively influence the people under the circumstances of the time.

Religion has always emphasized the true ideals which should animate any civilized society. Love of fellow men and striving after spiritual values in preference to merely material ones have to be the corner-stone of any society which pretends to call itself civilized. But in modern times it is not religious ideals but political and economic ones that dominate the minds of men. Hitler, Mussolini, and others are acclaimed as saviours. Men like Gandhiji are brushed away as visionaries who do not take into account the stark facts of reality, but try to create a world of their own to live in—a world founded on a faith based upon, yet transcending, reason. Religions in a former age made rather an undue insistence on other-worldly values to the neglect of worldly ones. As a result material progress was retarded and poverty and physical misery became very widespread, especially with the ever increasing pressure of a growing population in the world. Men, however, had accepted poverty as the lot of the many, and even within its bound were striving to live after spiritual ideals. But now, even though there is an accumulation of wealth undreamt of before, man is not better off for that. For, the rich have become richer, and the poor have been reduced to further poverty. Meanwhile the hopes, raised by science, of progress and plenty for everybody have been dashed to the ground by the

spectres of impoverishing wars in which whole nations have become bankrupt and vast millions are threatened with slow starvation and death. People are realizing that it is not by abandoning of religious and ethical ideals, but by more truly following them in social life that the world can be saved. Once more the old tradition has to be brought back that the highest service is rendered by him alone who seeks and finds, and who shares the joy of divine life with all his neighbours.

Sri Ramakrishna emphasized time and again that no man can come to true spiritual life without first conquering lust and greed. This is true of societies and nations as well. Individuals fight and murder each other over women and gold. Nations fight each other for political supremacy that brings in its train power and wealth. The law of might alone is the arbiter in the quarrels between nations. Unless the leaders of nations give up the love of power and train their followers in decent ways of peaceful living there can be no peace or happiness for the nations on earth.

Mere preaching of religious ideals by itself will not make much headway in redeeming mankind. The economic and social conditions which make it possible for unscrupulous and selfish leaders to egg on their followers to war must be changed. The masses of men goaded by economic necessity are willing to risk their lives in war. This economic necessity of a group is often disguised under glorious names like patriotism or freedom of man, or democracy. This hypocrisy must be stopped. Only when the preliminary cause of strife is removed, can we with effect ask them to join in the pursuit of the highest moral and spiritual aims. Only when the hungry millions can have bread and even butter, only when they can have education and a vocation in life, will they desire for a higher life and for spiritual values. When a man feels that the welfare of himself should first be based on the welfare of the society, then alone civilization and morality will be built on strong and sure foundations.

The rich and the powerful will no longer be able to treat man either as one of the raw materials for their industries or as cannon fodder in their plutocratic wars.

#### IV

Just as water always tends to find its level so does the soul of man always strive after equality with its brothers. Vedanta says that there can be complete equality only when there is complete identity. Now it is a matter of universal experience that physically or mentally no two men are equal in their capacities, inherited or acquired. Variety in unity is the plan of the universe. Nature abhors a dead uniformity. But the human soul in its inherent dignity will never accept the inequality in the world as permanent or necessary; it will be satisfied with nothing short of complete independence, Swarajya.

But there is no complete independence for anybody except in the Self or God. Only when we are one with God can we be one with the world, equal with everybody; for then we *are* everybody and everything. This may appear mystical, but as Albert Schweitzer says, all 'reflection, when pursued to the end, leads somewhere and somehow to a living mysticism which is, for all men everywhere a necessary element of thought.'

If there is no equality in this world, if real communism is possible only in spirit, shall we then stand aside and mourn our fate? If inequality, poverty, and misery are bound to remain in this world along with equality, plenty, and happiness as the obverse and the reverse of the same thing, shall we then remain moribund, and remain satisfied with an almost animal-like existence, vegetating as it were, without trying our utmost to improve our condition as far as possible? To adopt such a fatalistic attitude is to forget the true nature of the Self; it is to go back to lower levels of existence rather than to rise higher. Such a policy is suicidal, and is an indication of senility, decay, and destruction — whether it is an individual, society, or nation that is actuated by it.

Society can be improved and reformed not by destructive process based on hatred but on constructive process based on love. It is not by demolishing noble ideals, it is not by stretching all people to fit the bed of Procrustus that equality can be achieved. We forget that equality itself implies a higher and a lower, an inferior and a superior. The only equality that we can strive for in this world is the equality of opportunity to rise to higher and higher levels; this equality implies that no other individual or society have any right to impose barriers against our progress whether in the political, social, economic, or religious field. Moreover the inferiorly-placed in circumstances have a right to expect from the superiorly-placed all help and guidance in rising higher. It is in this sense that Vedanta preaches the equality of man and demands the destruction of privileges, while insisting on the performance of one's duties. The man of culture, the poet, the artist, and others are not to be brought to the level of the uncultured but the latter have to be raised to higher levels, by individual self-effort as well as corporate action. Social harmony cannot be brought about by envy of the excellences of one's betters; nor by haughtiness and rivalry with one's equals nor by mean joy at the inferiority of others. It is not by pulling down the Brahmin to the level of the Shudra, but by raising the Shudra to the level of the Brahmin that real equality is achieved. It is not by reducing the rich to poverty, but by teaching the poor to labour and earn money enough, that poverty can be abolished. In all economic systems, whether capitalist, socialist, or communist, it is hard work combined with initiative and intelligence that produces wealth. No system by itself can completely remove the inequalities inherent in the nature of things. Men by behaving in a spirit of love can but lessen the pain and burden of their fellow men. All religions harp on this point again and again. The powerful and the rich who hedge themselves with privileges will have only them-

selves to thank for if unbearable misery drives the masses to assert their physical strength, and destroy their oppressors. We must never forget that it is criminal to hide our light under a bushel. So long as we live in this world we must work and share the fruits of our work with all. Not only individuals but the whole of society must be

imbued with the ideals of love and service of others in the sense that all are but children of the same God. Removal of physical wants, and of mental and spiritual ignorance, are tasks through which the individual can attain to true liberation, and whereby society can be made a better and happier training ground for future generations.

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## WHAT IS RELIGION ?

BY SWAMI PAVITRANANDA

Religion has always been the subject of much controversy. But recently that controversy has become greater. Some say religion is the panacea for all the ills of life. Some say religion serves no useful purpose: it is the opiate of the people, it is a tool in the hands of the higher classes to exploit the masses, to keep them under subjection. Of those persons who can ventilate their opinion, a larger number perhaps talk against religion than for it, and there are some who are aggressive in their attitude to suppress or crush religion altogether. But still religion is persisting. It is changing colours, taking new forms. It is not dead. It cannot die.

In any controversy one must be very particular about the definition of the terms used. Otherwise no conclusion can be arrived at. Sometimes two contending parties talk, argue, discuss, and get excited over a thing, but they do not probe deeply into each other's words. The result is that no decisive conclusion is reached at. If this is true of other things, it is much more so of religion. Therefore in order to find out whether religion will survive the present onslaught, whether it has proved false to its professions, we must know what is meant by religion.

Each particular religion defines religion in its own way—in terms of its creeds and dogmas. But such a definition represents a

partial aspect of religion—if it does that much even; and in the very nature of things it is not real religion. Christianity says one thing about religion, Islam interprets it in another way, Buddhism raises an altogether different note, and Hinduism has its own views about it. The result is that those who have no, or only an indifferent, interest in religion, are in great dismay: they want to keep themselves at a safe distance from any religion whatsoever.

There are certain things which are so very familiar to us that it is very difficult to define them. We see them, we feel them, but we cannot say in so many words and with any degree of accuracy what they are. Religion is one such thing. Religion is the outcome of man's inner urge for freedom; it is the outer manifestation of his great hunger for the Infinite. Different religions represent different aspects of that struggle, but the whole of mankind consciously or unconsciously is moving towards that goal which is the end of religion. No man is satisfied in life. If he gets one thing, at once he longs for another. He covets a particular situation, thinking that that will give him joy and happiness. But the moment he has got it, he is fed up. He sees the emptiness of it, and he wants some thing else. Thus he goes on eternally dissatisfied, always unhappy; ceaselessly struggl-

ing for what he himself does not know. That is his life on earth. That is the great characteristic of human existence.

This eternal dissatisfaction indicates that man wants Infinite Freedom. Man wants more and more; he will be content with nothing short of that, beyond which there is nothing else to aspire after. That means he wants to reach the Infinite. But man usually seeks the infinite in the finite world, and as that is impossible he suffers. Those who are experienced and wise easily see the fallacy of seeking the Infinite in the finite world and turn to a direction different from what the ordinary people spend their energy on. That is religion in the true sense of the term. But nevertheless those who are trying to find permanent joy in the material world should not be called irreligious, for are they not also in search of the Infinite? May be, they have not found the right direction. But they are also pursuing the same goal, though unconsciously. This search for the Infinite is in the very constitution of man; it may be conscious or unconscious but it is there. As such it cannot be said that religion can be suppressed, religion is dying, or man is growing irreligious. Those who talk vehemently against religion—we mean orthodox or credal religion—are no less religious. For they see the emptiness of the orthodox churches and religious institutions, and while the so-called religious people are too timid to say anything against traditional views, they are sincere and bold enough to speak out openly what they feel or see. It may be that they have not been able to see things deeply and to come to right conclusions, but what doubt is there that some of those who talk against religion are strong and sincere enough to be in the vanguard of religion?

The Upanishad says: From Great Joy the world has come into being, through that Great Joy the world lives, and to that Great Joy the world enters in the long run. From that standpoint no one—not even a confirmed atheist—is out of the ambit of religion. For

every one will in the end enter that Great Bliss, and every one is sustained in his very daily existence through that Bliss.

So many may be unconsciously religious, but religion, in its usual sense, means a deliberate and conscious attempt to reach the goal which otherwise one will attain after long, long, waiting. Religion means squeezing many lives into the present one life. A really religious person is impatient of any delay. He wants to reach the goal now and here. Hence he is out of the ordinary—he looks strange and his outlook on life is inexplicable to all but those who are in sympathy with his ideals.

Why is it that man cannot find any lasting joy in this material world and how can he go beyond the confines of the finite to reach out to the Infinite? It is a fact that man, barring exceptional cases, is not happy; he has not found the clue to the lasting happiness. This sounds like pessimism, but it is a fact. In his heart of hearts, every one knows how true it is. In life if our happiness increases in arithmetical progression, our unhappiness multiplies in geometrical progression. There is always some fly in the ointment. There is always something to disturb our peace and happiness. Man has been living in this world for thousands of years, but still the condition of the world is such that no one is safe and secure in his life. A rich man is enjoying all the luxuries of life. He suffers more from surfeit than from want. There comes a war. At any moment he may find himself in the same condition with the poorest of the poor. Modern amenities of life are immense. Science has made and has been making wonderful discoveries to make man's life on earth happy and comfortable, but with each discovery there has arisen a problem which the world finds it difficult to tackle. So if a man does not admit that man is unhappy and miserable on earth, he is denying hard facts, ignoring a stern reality.

In the ultimate analysis what is it that is found to be the cause of man's sufferings?

Happiness and unhappiness are the conditions of the mind. It is the mind that makes one feel happy or unhappy. Man identifies himself with his body and mind. As body and mind are both unstable factors, man suffers. The body is all right today, tomorrow it is out of joint. The condition of the mind varies every moment. It is frisky and restive like an unbroken horse. So long as one depends on the mind for one's happiness, one is bound to suffer: This is as sure as anything. One must transcend the limitations of the mind, if one wants to get any lasting peace.

It sounds theoretical, if not fantastic, that one can go beyond mind. What is the state beyond mind?—it is hard to conceive even! Is it not a state of annihilation—which a man finds beyond the state of body and mind-consciousness? Whatever it may be, there is such a state as beyond the reach of mind and body. In the whole history of mankind, those who found real and permanent peace, had attained to that state. Ordinary persons may find it hard to understand them, but nevertheless they experienced that superconscious state. That their experiences were true and unchallengeable is proved by the fact that each of these persons wielded a tremendous influence on the life of mankind, and their influence is still continuing.

Even those persons who have not reached the ultimate goal, but are fairly on the way to it, are found to have attained a certain amount of unalloyed peace. They radiate joy and blessedness, and those who come under their influence share their experiences. To a sceptical or critical mind this may sound problematical or even incredible, but persons who have come into direct contact with these rare souls, will not question their experiences. For they have found direct evidences. The direct evidence gives you undeniable proofs. We can discuss and speculate about the existence or non-existence of a thing from a distance but when we see that thing directly all our doubts and questionings are set at rest.

One may reasonably say, 'Why should we bother ourselves with superconscious, supernatural, or otherworldly things, when we have got so much to do in the living present? Why should we care for unalloyed peace or the "peace of the grave" for ourselves, when there is so much suffering and misery all around? Let us fight to remove those sufferings, let us struggle with all our energy to bring heaven on earth, instead of flying from earth to reach heaven.' This sounds so logical, reasonable, and heroic! But this method has been tried so long, and the world usually follows it, and what has been the result? The present world is in a chaotic condition, and nobody knows how to bring order from this chaos.

Those who follow the path of religion do that not from any visionary plan, but from an inner urge, which they cannot resist, till some day they reach the final goal and become an example to humanity. Such persons have got extremely sensitive minds, they are moved more by dreams and ideals than by the thoughts of any sordid material gains. They can deliberately sacrifice their earthly career at the altar of an ideal and vision. Willingly do they burn their boats, in order to get something which to the worldly-wise has no value. Such have been the poets and scientists, discoverers and explorers,—persons who have left their marks on the history of humanity and lighted up new paths for mankind to march through, but surpassing them all are the persons who hunger after the Infinite and are content with nothing short of that.

The greatest impulse in a man's life is his love for Freedom, or the longing for the Infinite. At first he is only dimly conscious of it. Impelled by this innate, though unconscious, hankering he goes on and on till the Ideal takes a definite shape or the Goal becomes an object of conscious attempt.

It is interesting to note how this same hankering finds different channels of expression or takes to different paths to reach the

ultimate destination. This difference in methods and paths depends on each individual's difference in temperament. Some one has got very active habits. He likes activity. He loves to serve others. The greatest joy of his life is to help others. Every moment he is ready to sacrifice his own interest for the sake of others. He loves humanity as a whole. No one is high or low in his eyes, he is ever ready to serve any one he comes across. As he pursues this path, his tendency to serve others becomes stronger and stronger till his life becomes all sacrifice. He has no interest of his own, as such his ego-sense becomes nil. And the man who has no ego-sense has the whole world under his feet. We fear the world, we are afraid of unpropitious circumstances, because we have some self-interest to serve and protect. One who has no self-interest has nothing to be afraid of. He has attained Freedom. He has got Liberation-in-life. In the words of the Hindu scriptures he has reached perfection through Karma Yoga—the path of work. We may not have come across any such person who has reached the highest perfection, but in our daily life we come into contact with many persons whose extraordinary self-sacrifice compels our respect and admiration. Now if we find a person whose life is an illustration of extraordinary sacrifice, we can imagine cases of higher and higher self-sacrifice till the ideal of complete self-effacement is embodied in some rare soul. So we cannot say that the idea of reaching perfection through work or self-sacrifice is theoretical or hypothetical.

There are some persons who are of a philosophical temperament. They think, brood, and contemplate so much that hardly do they find any aptitude for action. They find that everything in the world is transitory and evanescent. Everything changes. Nothing earthly or of earth is permanent. And there is that great factor—death. Friends die, relations die. You are afraid to love any one, for who knows when death will seize him, and then he will permanently

disappear from the face of the earth! What is the fun of depending for your happiness on things which are not lasting? So the man with a philosophical temperament rejects everything that is impermanent. He follows the path of what Vedanta says, 'Not this, not this.' Through this process of rejection he finds out that which is permanent, eternal and changeless. When he has reached that, he has got real Freedom. For he has found that which fire cannot burn, water cannot impair, or even time cannot destroy. Such a man is said to have reached the Goal through the path of knowledge or Jnana Yoga.

There are some persons who are very much introspective and self-analytical. They find that all men run after happiness and nobody finds it. Happiness is as elusive as the blowing wind. You cannot bring that within your grasp. So such a man begins to analyse what is the cause of man's happiness or unhappiness in life. When he pursues his researches, he finds that it is the mind which is the cause of one's joy and misery. Outside factors have little to do with a man's joy or suffering. It is the way in which a man reacts, to external circumstances that gives him joy or misery. So, in order to get real happiness, one should take care of the mind. If one can control the mind, one can control the whole world. For the outer world is nothing but the reflection of one's own mind. If you get control over the whole of the outside world—it can no longer mar your happiness or affect your inner life. Now, how to control one's mind? Experience shows that it can be done through contemplation and meditation. The mind is like a restless monkey. It wanders and wanders. If you want to check it, it revolts and wanders all the more. It is only through deep thinking, contemplation and meditation that the mind can be controlled and made one-pointed. But the moment the mind becomes one-pointed, you get at the basic foundation of the universe—the secrets of earth and heaven are, then, revealed to you. When you attain to that knowledge, you become the master of

yourself. You are then above the reach of any earthly influence. You get real Freedom.

There is another aspect of human life which compels one to think of some existence behind the phenomenal world. Man finds that he is helpless against circumstances. Sometimes he fails to work against circumstances. Sometimes all his calculations, resources, and plans avail nothing against circumstances. He feels that there is some unseen hand, as it were, which shapes his destiny. He finds he is not free to do whatever he likes or thinks to accomplish. A Napoleon fails, a Kaiser's pride is humbled, a Hitler is reduced to dust. So human vaunting has no value. There is some unseen power on whose sufferance we exist, live, and work. Beyond its wishes we cannot move a single step. So a man unconsciously, and sometimes in spite of himself, prays to that Power for help, strength, and guidance. Man soon finds that real happiness lies in identifying oneself with the process of action of that great Power and having no separate will of his own. This world is but the outcome of the creative impulse of the Great Artist who is behind His creation, and it is idle for us to hope that we can go against His will. We are given freedom so much as it fits in with His creative process. But does that mean that we are eternal slaves, and have no individuality of our own? No, our real individuality is found when we are at one with Him. Therein lies our hope, strength, and joy. The moment you want to see yourself

separate from That, you are knocked down, and you suffer. A stagnant pool is separate from the main stream that pursues its joyous course to the sea. But because it is separate, that pool is stagnant, it is dead. Once it is connected with the running stream, it again revives and finds a new life. The moment we can give up our individual will we become invulnerable, we become the inheritors of Great Power, we become adamant, we taste real Freedom. But soon it will be found that the Great Power we speak of is not only outside but within us also. The object we worship externally is within us. The God you pray to is within you. This is called the path of devotion or Bhakti Yoga, according to the Hindu scriptures.

It will be found that all the religions of the world fall into one or other of the groups enumerated above. Religion did not create man, but man created religion. Rather man pursued his inner urge and found out the goal, and the world named the path as religion. So religion is not something extraneous to a man's life, it is part and parcel of his very being. Because there have been many abuses in the name of religion, a man in the modern world gets frightened at the very mention of the word religion, but what doubt is there that every man in his own way is pursuing the path of religion—i.e. trying to get real Freedom, the joy that does not wane, the Bliss that transcends all earthly limitations? 'The God thou unconsciously worshippest, the same I preach unto thee'—said St. Paul.

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'He who wants to serve Shiva must serve His children—must serve all creatures in this world first. It is said in the Shastras that those who serve the servants of God are His greatest servants. Unselfishness is the test of religion. He who has more of this unselfishness is more spiritual and nearer to Shiva. And if a man is selfish, even though he has visited all the temples, seen all the places of pilgrimage, and painted himself like a leopard, he is still further off from Shiva

# THOUGHTS ON SRI RAMAKRISHNA

By 'T.'

Some years ago, a little talk took place at Belur Math between Sri Ramakrishna's greatest Apostle, the inspired Swami Vivekananda, and a disciple. Here it is.

Disciple: 'Why do you not preach Sri Ramakrishna as an Avatar? You have indeed power, eloquence and everything else needed to do it.'

Swamiji: 'Truly, I tell you, I have understood him very little. He appears to me to have been so great that, whenever I have to speak anything of him, I am afraid lest I ignore or explain away the truth, lest my little power does not suffice, lest in trying to extol him I present his picture by painting him according to my lights and belittle him thereby!'

Disciple: 'But many are now preaching him as an Avatar.'

Swamiji: 'Let them do so if they like. They are doing it in the light in which they have understood him.'

Even Vivekananda said this! The fact of the matter is that all attempts to portray Ramakrishna tend towards that very narrowing, that sect forming, of which the Paramahansa's whole life revealed the folly and the danger. He was—he is—an ocean. He is the shining of the sun itself! Who can paint the sun? The sun just *is*, and what little we know about it, life itself teaches us. Thus, also, with the suns of humanity. They are understood through life. We cannot depict them. We can but live in and by some of their rays, which fill our little horizons, and suffice.

It seems that we are too near to these two, both in time and locality, to be able even dimly to appreciate them for what they really are. May be, as they recede from humankind in time, and possibly also in space (for is it not true that even Bengal is

no nearer to them than the rest of the world?) we will give them worship, yet still without understanding. As we now worship the ancient heroes, so also in due course will we bow down before these modern ones, after we have made convenient myths of them, thus vitiating the pure stream of life which they have opened so widely for us. Is every great influx of the spiritual stream thus to be tainted?

But if we are as yet incapable of rising to their heights—though we can feel the light, the soft soul-clearing winds, the dews and rains reflected and driven and descending from those starry peaks—we can at least take the problems of this world of ours for solution into the atmosphere of their teachings. It is a fact that those sections of life which will not presently allow that atmosphere to absorb them, must fall out of the general onward march; for the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda evangel is a world-teaching for the present epoch. Thus it is regarded by many thoughtful minds of the West, and many more are thinking the same, in India today. Fortunately, enough of biography and admonition, of story and parable, and talk, has been carefully and accurately noted, to provide spiritual and intellectual sustenance for humanity for a long time to come.

Ramakrishna was once heard softly singing to himself in his heart-reaching, magical voice, 'Unless a man is simple, he cannot recognize God, the Simple One.' Thus, the approach is indicated. He loved singing—acting—dancing. What a shock he must have been (and is, if they don't pass over those bits in his life) to the ultraconventional! But we cannot have things both ways: if a man must be simple in order to become God-seeing, then he will be bound to do and say all sorts of things that will



distress the conventional. Conventions are ever a craze of the world-trapped. He said, 'People with a craze do not attain Knowledge. Follow conventions only as much as necessary.' He recognized the necessity! What a man! From Nirvikalpa Samadhi to the simple acceptance of the difficulties of the average person! Christ also said, 'Render unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's and unto God the things which be God's.' All greatness is simple. It is when it tries to compromise with Caesar that the rot sets in. This rot has permeated human life, in arts, sciences, education, economics—throughout all its ramifications. To track and dig it out is, in one form or another, now the everyday problem of almost the whole human race. The mind has to be roused to face the issues of our vaunted civilization; the heart, to endure without succumbing to their pain; and the entire teaching of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda is a preparation for this modern Kurukshetra. Its causes have been clearly described by the biologist of Rockefeller Institute, New York, the late Dr Alexis Carrel, in his book *Man, the Unknown*, a book which should be studied by every Indian who would like to build up his country on the model—now out of date—of Western so-called civilization. After examining into the causes of the downfall of this civilization from the biological and physiological angles, the great scientist concludes: 'In order to reconstruct personality' (by which he means 'individual uniqueness'), 'we must break the frame of the school, factory and office, and reject the very principles of technological civilization.' Again: 'It seems that modern business organization and mass-production are incompatible with the full development of the human self. If such is the case, *then industrial civilization, and not civilized man must go.*'

We live in the days of the ordinary man and woman. This tremendous moral and spiritual and intellectual battle to find the

real values of life and to stick by them, is the biggest war we have yet faced. Subtle, elusive, psychological—this is not a war carried on by massed forces. It is the lonely, hideous jungle warfare of the market-place, the council-chamber, the tortured being of the scientist, scholar, artist, teacher, patriot—faced with success on the left hand, or ruin, failure, on the right. Which? The choice is not nowadays made by a mundane power above. If we accept the democratic ideal, and are going to put it into practice, each choice between the liberation and the enslavement of the human spirit will have to be made by ordinary men and women—alone—and the results of their choice accepted and stood by—alone. Nothing less than this is democracy. And the only thing that can make democracy work, is God. Thus Ramakrishna: 'The real cleverness is the cleverness by which one realizes God.' Somebody was worried about this, and asked the Great One how it could be done. There is no royal road. 'People shed a whole jug of tears for wife and children. They swim in tears for money. But who weeps for God? Cry to Him with a real cry. . . . As the mother loves her child, the chaste wife her husband, and the worldly man his wealth—add together these three forces of love, and give it all to God.' The only solvent for each one is to be found in the crisis in which the soul is reborn. Ramakrishna has the faculty of bringing on that crisis. That, of course, is a recognized power of the Paramahansa. He is always a *doer*. By his touch, he made men whole. Many aver—and not without reason—that the all-hallowed Ramakrishna continues that ministration—that the veil between him and us is very thin. That, of course, is a matter for personal experience; but before denying its feasibility, let people seriously, sincerely, and intently mould life on his teaching, and prove the reality of Ramakrishna for themselves. Lazy people have neither the thought to affirm nor to deny. 'The kingdom of heaven suffereth

violence, and the violent take it by force,' said Jesus.

He warned his disciples against any kind of Ramakrishnaism! It must have been extraordinarily difficult to obey him, for the supreme Being possessed him; God, as it were, spilled over on to Ramakrishna, on to his disciples, on to every one who came earnestly into contact with him. They said it was the Almighty Presence that was there—realized—unleashed, and they were carried away upon that Ocean, never to return as they had left the world's shores. But the man himself was so sweet, so childlike, true. There are little pictures of him that hold the heart. Here is one of his descriptions of himself: 'As I was leaving the place, I heard him (Bamandas) say: "Goodness gracious! The Divine Mother has caught hold of him like a tiger seizing a man." At that time I was a young man, very stout, and always in ecstasy.' Again, picture Dakshineswar. The spells of holy fervour, the crowds, the authority of the God-realized Teacher. Over against that, this picture: 'Keshab Sen's mother, sisters and other relatives came here; so I had to dance a little. I had to entertain them. What else could I do? They were so grief-stricken!' *'Unless a man is simple, he cannot recognize God, the Simple One.'*

He is so immense; we are apt perhaps to think too often of him in terms of cosmic significance, forgetting that other side—the patient, potent, humorous and charming teacher of little people who resemble the drops which form the great ocean, and are indeed collectively the ocean of humanity upon which alone the ship of progress can sail. Here he is, teaching the small-minded:

(To a Sadhu) 'Well, sir, one should be desireless; one should renounce all desires.'

Sadhu: 'Yes, sir.'

Master: 'But I have the desire for

Bhakti. That is not bad. Rather, it is good. Sweets are bad, for they produce acidity. But sugar-candy is an exception. Isn't that so?'

Sadhu: 'Yes, sir.'

The Master trailed off on to another subject. But he had without argument made his visitor doubt the narrow view he held; he had, in fact, charmingly scored him off! The man would have to review his philosophy, and he *would have to do it himself*.

And again: Master (smiling): 'I keep men's own ideals intact. I ask a Vaishnava to hold to his Vaishnava attitude and a Shakta to his. But this also I say to them: "Never feel that your path alone is right and that the paths of others are wrong and full of errors." Hindus, Mussalmans, and Christians are going to the same destination by different paths. A man can realize God by following his own path if his prayer is sincere.' . . . 'Vijay's mother-in-law said to me, "Why don't you tell Balaram that it is unnecessary to worship God with form; that it will be enough if he prays to the formless Satchidananda?" I replied, "Why should I say such a thing, and why should he listen to me even if I should say it?"' She, too, was left with something to think over. And to his best-beloved Narendra, he was sometimes hard. 'At first he used to abuse my Mother Kali very much. One day I said to him sharply, "Rascal! Don't come here any more!" He slowly left the room and prepared a smoke.' Can we not see the youthful Vivekananda, coming back slowly—but *coming back*? Thus the Master pulled and pushed and dragged and attracted them, seeing always their real selves. And from a group of college lads he reared up those great disciples who later became the Sanyasis of the Ramakrishna Order.

# BHAKTI YOGA

BY M. D. SAGANE, M.A., LL.B.

All living creatures, from one-celled beings to such an evolved being as man, desire happiness and extinction of all forms of pain. Not only do they desire happiness but they also want it to be permanent and everlasting. All make efforts to attain this objective in their own way. As for man he has been making stupendous efforts since the birth of humanity. But in spite of all efforts, humanity as a whole has not yet attained the unadulterated happiness for which it has been longing. With all the increased means of subsistence and maintenance and the surprising inventions of locomotion and communications, with all the development of literature and fine arts, and in spite of the utilization of all the augmented physical, intellectual, and mental resources humanity as a whole is just where it was at any time before so far as the goal of everlasting happiness is concerned. Undoubtedly we are civilized; our minds and brains have developed; and we have evolved organizations for the better management of our affairs. We are doing something or other to relieve humanity of its miseries and make it feel more comfortable. But all these have proved to be palliatives only. In spite of the police and law courts, in spite of the moral and religious precepts, and in spite of all the uplifting activities, we have within our folds several elements which continue to disturb the smooth and harmonious working of human life. There are elements which occasionally break the peace of our society and even throw the whole humanity into the simmering cauldron of sorrow and misery. Even leaving apart the catastrophies that spring from the hidden vaults of nature which we may attribute to fate, there are a thousand and one things which disturb us now and then. In short we find that while

we achieve some good in some sphere, a corresponding evil arises in another. To check that evil we make efforts, and possibly we succeed in checking or rooting it out. But then some new evil has arisen in the meanwhile. We are thus led to strive and strive, the ideal happiness remaining as distant as ever. Thus though we may have risen in the scale of evolution, the totality of happiness does not seem to have increased appreciably; and the yearning for true happiness is as great and pressing as ever.

The apparent reason for all this is that we are seeking happiness through the objective world and through the senses. But in its very nature the objective world is incapable of doing away with pain altogether or of giving perennial happiness. Although the universe may be unlimited the objective world is changeable, perishable, and limited in its pleasure-giving capacity. Likewise man's body, mind, and senses, his intellect and his reason are limited. Man's capacity to receive and feel pleasurable impacts is limited. For instance, there is pleasure in playing tennis; but one cannot go on playing tennis for ever to reap the mathematically progressive quantity of pleasure therefrom. Music is pleasurable; But music played for days together is incapable of giving pleasure to the same man all the while. One pleasurable contact soon dies away or loses its charm and excites a desire for another contact to keep up the continuity of pleasure. Thus a man is led to exert on and on; Pursuit of desires for pleasures prompted by the objective world brings in its train more and more desires, all of which in the very nature of things cannot be realized. Intensive pursuit results in adverse reactions and extensive pursuits necessarily bring in failures and disappointment. It is, therefore, impos-

sible to be in a continuous flow of pleasure or happiness through the objective world. Not knowing this, or though knowing yet not realizing it, we try and try to be happy and to make others happy through the interplay of the senses and objective world.

Yet another fact not visible on the surface is the idea of duality—separateness. I think that I am distinct and separate from other living beings or things. I think that the happiness lies outside me—that the source of happiness is in the objects and phenomena outside me. I therefore seek contacts with those objects—and, for that purpose, I desire and want to possess them. The universe being infinite and my physical and other capacities of this life being limited, it is only a fraction of the universe that I can possess and own. With every acquisition there is still a desire to acquire and possess more and more. I would be rightly and fully happy if I possess and own the whole universe. To be really happy I want to possess and own everything. I want and must be the lord of all I survey, of the whole universe. Then only I can have full and everlasting happiness. For, as long as I do not possess things which others possess or there are in the universe things which I do not possess, so long I shall have some dissatisfaction, some feeling of misery or unhappiness in me. I can therefore be never truly happy or eternally happy unless I possess and own everything seen and unseen.

Taking the world and humanity as they are, it seems impossible that the whole world or even an appreciable section of it can ever be truly happy. We say that it is, in the very nature of things, impossible. There is no reason to be so pessimistic. To avoid argumentation it may be conceded for a moment that humanity as a whole may not be happy all at a time; but certainly a section of it can be. The question is how can that be? What is the way?

Those who have thought over the matter both intensively and extensively, and follow-

ing their thoughts in practice have realized the goal have discovered the ways and means for our benefit. They have discovered several ways. One way that is easily the best is Bhakti Yoga. In simple words Bhakti Yoga means devotion to God. There are various stages and aspects of this Yoga. Its most essential and sublime aspect is love. 'Devotion to God' means nothing else than 'Love towards God.' He who loves God is promised all happiness. This sounds too simple perhaps and is therefore likely to raise doubts about the nature and efficacy of the Yoga. To understand the underlying truth and to be convinced thereof, it is necessary to be clear in our ideas, about the two factors involved, namely 'God' and 'Love.'

The idea of God is that He is powerful, All-seeing and All-pervading. In whatever form we may conceive Him, the main idea is that all things and powers, physical, mental, or otherwise, all things and powers seen or unseen, known or unknown, spring from Him, exist or abide in Him and end or subside into Him. He is in them all and all is in Him. He represents not only this universe but many others of which we know nothing. Vishvarupa Darshana by Lord Krishna is nothing but an illustration of this all important idea—the correct idea of God.

Now everybody knows more or less what love is. There are 'loves' and 'loves'—love of the meanest type and love of the most sublime nature. On the plane to which we are accustomed, there is no love comparable to the love that exists between mother and child. The love between the mother and child is the most sublime form of love. There is no love more pure and more intense than this.

In Bhakti Yoga we direct our love towards God. Our love towards God must possess the purity and intensity which characterizes the love between mother and child. Let us see how this intense love of God secures eternal boundless happiness.

Very few of us know that love is a force

or a power. Love is a vibratory force which has a peculiar charm and characteristic of its own. It is a harmonizing influence and has the quality of absorption, assimilation and unification. Even on the lower planes as the physical we find its expression undeniably vivid. Take for instance the love between lovers. Each feels as if he is absorbing the other. Each assimilates the other as it were and feels one in body, mind, and soul. For both of them the duality is lost and there is a sense or consciousness of complete unity or unification, though only for the time being. The same phenomenon happens with greater purity and intensity when a mother kisses her child and presses it to her bosom. There is a feeling of unification and assimilation of the child as it were. There is that glorious feeling of unity which, in the moment of ecstasy, the mother expresses in her imperfect and inadequate words, 'O, my dear—dear—I feel I should put you in my bosom and hold you there for ever.'

What we love we possess and assimilate. Absorption, assimilation and unification form thus the essential features of love. In Bhakti Yoga we have to love God as one lover loves the other but with absolute purity. We have to love God as a mother loves her child but with greater intensity. By loving God we assimilate Him. We possess Him. In Bhakti Yoga you are to love God and thereby to possess Him, assimilate Him and unite with Him.

Just ponder over this theme. To love God is to possess Him, to unite with Him, to be one with Him, in fact, to be Himself. Now God, as we have already posited, represents the universe or the universes that may be. He represents all things and powers visible and invisible, known and unknown. To love Him and to assimilate Him and to be one with Him means to love the whole Universe, to assimilate it and to be one with it. By loving God and by being with Him we automatically absorb and assimilate the universe, all things and all powers. And

when this happens there is nothing that we want, there is nothing for the want of which we can be possibly sorry and be unhappy. We have assimilated the whole universe. We therefore possess every conceivable thing in the universe. We are therefore in constant contact with everything and the pleasures emanating from them. We are in simultaneous contact with everything and at all times. We are therefore perpetually steeped in happiness without anything to break its continuity or disturb its harmony. We had said shortly before that to be completely happy we must possess everything. Here now by assimilating God through love we have absorbed all things and all powers and therefore all pleasures. We possess them all and they are now within us. The totality of happiness is thus within us at all times and places. There is nothing then which we have to seek from outside. In fact there remains nothing as outside or as the objective world. All is within us. We are permanently happy.

Such is the bliss of the love aspect of Bhakti Yoga. But how many of us are availing ourselves of it? We say that we follow the path of Bhakti. But the whole of our Bhakti is perhaps confined to applying sandal paste, uttering a few Mantras or reciting some verses and offering a few flowers or prayers. Most of us do these mechanically; and we think that we have got Bhakti. We show this sort of Bhakti the whole of our life and yet we do not experience even a millionth part of the bliss described shortly before. We continue to be unhappy as before in spite of the lifelong Bhakti. If this is the case, surely we have wasted our life! We could have utilized it better in some other way. Let us pause and find out the cause of our failure to attain everlasting unadulterated happiness. Let us enquire where the mistake lies.

The first flaw lies in this that we attach unnecessary importance to the preliminary stages of Bhakti alluded to before. The preliminary stages are useful for the initiates

and the undeveloped; But for those who are presumably on a higher level, their mechanical reproduction is not conducive to progress. To remain enveloped in them for ever is like continuing to write the alphabet every morning throughout our life in spite of our higher and increased capacity to learn more and be wiser. Mechanical reproduction is certainly stagnating. It is true that due to our Samskaras from childhood we find it difficult to extricate ourselves from the preliminaries; but we must try; and try to achieve the progress for which they were only the preliminaries.

The second flaw is that the element of love is absent in the Bhakti that we practise. The love that we direct towards God is of a mercenary type and not of the type described shortly before. However stoutly and even sincerely we may be talking of philosophy and of the mutability of 'Maya' and permanence of Brahman; however intensively we may be arguing about the everlasting happiness and of the incapacity of the objective world to yield it, there lurks in our subtle mind a stealthy desire for worldly pleasures and blind belief that we shall be happy with their acquisition. With these subtle impressions deeply impressed on our subconscious mind there is naturally an expectation in the innermost recesses of our heart of a return in terms of material welfare for the love that we direct towards God. We may not be conscious of it, but our subconscious mind thinks that for our Bhakti God will make our life easy and smooth, warding off the dangers that crop up from time to time. Here again our Samskaras are responsible for our attitude towards God and the objective world; and even the greatest amongst us are not quite free from them. But the self-realized souls want only God. If God were to give in return material welfare the unquestionably greatest Bhaktas like Radha, Mirabai, and Tukaram would never have been in want. And in any case they would not have been subjected by the world

to abominable tortures and persecutions. Jesus Christ would not have been crucified; And yet none can deny that these Bhaktas were happy, happier than any person who can boast of having acquired the largest amount of worldly possessions. There is and can be no return in terms of material welfare at least in the sense in which we want or conceive it.

And there is the third flaw in our Bhakti and it underlies our expectation for return. It is that in that expectation we become oblivious of the correct notion of God. We lose sight of the essential axiom that God is sum and substance of all that exists whether seen or unseen, known or unknown. What we usually do is that we consider Him as something different from the universe, as somebody dwelling somewhere and ruling as the kings and dictators do. We consider Him as something apart. This idea revolving in our mind from day to day is bound to keep alive, if not increase, the feeling of separateness. It keeps awake the sentiment of duality which, as seen before, is the source of unhappiness. That is why in spite of our Bhakti we continue to be as unhappy as before. That is why even after many years of Bhakti we scold or beat our son who touches us while we are in Puja, cling as fast as before to the various distinctions in society and push forth our self-interest above the interests of others even as we used to do before.

The path of Bhakti is meant to help develop love for God, for God not as an individual but as a totality of all that exists; and all that exists includes humanity. This central idea must be present in our minds in following Bhakti Yoga. To learn to love God is to learn to love humanity and all else. To love God is to love humanity and everything else. To feel one with God is to feel one with humanity and with all.

Now it is a truism of common experience that when we love a certain person, his presence and association is always a source of

pleasure and comfort to us. Even his grave faults assume a lighter aspect and appear to us small flaws only. We are tolerant, forgiving, and charitable towards him. In fact we like everything that is in him, as a mother does even in her naughty child. The toil and turmoil that we have to undergo for our beloved are neither tiring nor tantalizing. The privations we pass through for him cause neither sorrow nor suffering. Rather, we experience a peculiar feeling of sweet satisfaction in sacrificing our pleasures and comforts for him. In fact we surrender everything—ourselves and all to him. Our love for the beloved compels our complete surrender to him. Bhakti thus transforms itself into Prapatti; love transforms itself into surrender. When this happens there is no distinction between the lover and the loved. They become one.

Let us substitute God, that is humanity and all else, in place of the beloved. If we learn to love humanity and all else our attitude towards them will be similar. Tolerance and other virtues will automatically grow within us. Troubles and discomforts proceeding from them will lose their pain-giving aspect. There will be a gradual cessation of pain and unhappiness and in the course of time they will disappear altogether. And what remains then will be eternal, unadulterated happiness. Love will dissolve our separate identity and make us surrender ourselves completely to God and to all that He represents. We shall then feel one with everything. We shall be everything and everything shall be in us. There shall be nothing that we do not feel to be already with us and within us. We shall be possessing everything. There shall then be nothing which we want. And when there is no want, when there is no feeling of something wanting, there will be no discomfort or unhappiness. All shall be happiness.

And yet we shall continue to be conscious of what is good or bad in general or for a particular man or society or for a particular

form of life. We shall still know what are the needs of humanity or of life as a whole. And by the force of our love towards all, as developed through Bhakti, we shall rush to relieve them of their sufferings, to ameliorate their condition and to increase their joy and happiness as we do now for our son, wife or friend. We shall be voluntarily doing the public service for which there is so much need and also good deal of clamouring. We shall do the public service not for the sake of name or fame, power or honour, but for its own sake. The service rendered in this spirit will be real and fruitful and is certain to help humanity and make it happier.

Even if we may not act physically, the powerful harmonizing vibrations of pure love emanating from us will affect the mentality of others. The vibrations will imperceptibly permeate through the masses and bring about a change in their minds and hearts. The society in which we move and the world in which we live will surely change. All that militates against happiness will tend to disappear and all that contributes to happiness will make its appearance. For instance, competition will easily yield place to compromise and co-operation, right will submit to duty, discord and disintegration will be dissolved into peace and harmony, pride and prejudice will be replaced by humility and understanding, hate and oppression will be transformed into love and sympathy. In short, duality which is responsible for unhappiness will tend to merge into unity and there will be nothing left but happiness.

Thus if we but enter into the true spirit of Bhakti Yoga, meditate upon it and bring into practice the love aspect of it, we shall get the realistic experience of one life, one soul and one spirit pulsating through us all and through the whole universe. We shall feel that we are not at all different from the rest of humanity and all that exists in the universes that may be; every one of us will consider himself as essentially the same as

others. We shall then realize our unity with all. Everything shall be with us and within us, ever and anon. There shall therefore be nothing that we want. We shall thus have the feeling of fulness, that is, of having got everything. We shall have the feeling of happiness, eternal happiness, with nothing to disturb its serene tranquillity.

One thing that is therefore essential for us to do is to love—to love God as the sum and substance of all that exists. We must love Him with utmost intensity of a passionate lover, and with the chastened purity of a loving mother. We must feel as if we are penetrating Him through and through and assimilate Him till He and we become one. That is we must sur-

render ourselves to Him completely and unconditionally.

We must love Him, continue to love Him, and must not allow any barriers to prevent our ultimate surrender, dissolution into Him. Love, pure love cannot know barriers. It does not acknowledge the obstacles of caste, creed, society, or nationality. Our genuine love for God must not therefore recognize the fetters of return or reward. There must be absolute love and unconditional surrender. Prema and Prapatti cannot be conditioned by the conditions even of religions. That is why Lord Krishna has proclaimed loudly and unequivocally through the Gita—*सर्वधर्मान् परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणां व्रज ।* Abandon all religions and surrender to me alone.

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## DOCTRINE OF HALLAJ

BY DR ROMA CHAUDHURI, M.A., D.PHIL (Oxon), F.R.A.S.B.

Mansur-al-Hallaj, the famous Sufi teacher, flourished during the ninth and tenth centuries A.D. His historic utterance, *Anal Haqq* (I am the Truth of God), cost him his life; and since then, it has become one of the most disputed of all mystic formulae, interpreted differently by different sects. We give below a short summary of the main doctrines of Hallaj.

### God

God is without beginning and end, beyond the limits of space and time, unsupported, unconditioned, eternal, one. In a beautiful passage Hallaj describes God thus:

'Before' does not outstrip Him; 'after' does not interrupt Him; 'of' does not vie with Him for precedence; 'from' does not accord with Him; 'to' does not join with Him; 'in' does not inhabit Him; 'when' does not stop Him; 'over' does not overshadow Him; 'opposite' does not face Him;

'with' does not press Him; 'behind' does not take hold of Him; 'before' does not limit Him; 'previous' does not display Him; 'after' does not cause Him to pass away; 'all' does not unite Him; 'is' does not bring Him to being; 'is not' does not deprive Him of being; concealment does not veil Him; His pre-existence preceded time; His being preceded not-being; His eternity preceded limit. If thou sayest 'when,' His existence has out-stripped time; if thou sayest 'before,' before is after Him; if thou sayest 'he,' 'h' and 'e' are His creation; if thou sayest 'how,' His essence is veiled from description; if thou sayest 'where,' His being preceded space. (Quoted in Kalabadhi's *Taarruf*).

To God nothing is impossible. He is an abode of apparently contradictory qualities, but these do not mar His essence. 'Other than He,' continues Hallaj, 'no one can be qualified by two opposite qualities at one



time; and yet with Him they do not create opposition, He is outward and inward, near and far; and in this respect, He is removed beyond the resemblance of creation. He acts without contact, instructs without meeting, guides without pointing. Desires do not conflict with Him, thoughts do not mingle with Him, His essence is without qualification, His action without effort.'

### *Doctrine of Creation*

In the very beginning, 'before all things, before creation, before His knowledge of creation, God in His unity was holding an ineffable discourse with Himself and contemplating the splendour of His essence in itself. That pure simplicity of His self-admiration is Love, which is His essence, the essence of essences, beyond all limitation of attributes.' Therefore, in the very beginning God was perfectly undifferentiated Being, a pure essence without any limiting attributes, a pure unity, simple and alone.

Then, 'in His perfect isolation, God loves Himself, praises Himself, and manifests Himself by Love. And it was this first manifestation of Love in the Divine Absolute, that determined the multiplicity of His attributes and names.' Thus, in the second stage, the pure undifferentiated essence comes to be differentiated by various qualities and names.

Then 'God by His essence, in His essence, desires to project out of Himself His supreme joy, that Love in aloneness, that He might behold it and speak to it. He looked in eternity, and brought forth from non-existence an image, an image of Himself, endowed with all His attributes and all His names: Adam. The Divine look made that form to be His image unto everlasting. God saluted it, glorified it, chose it, and in as much as He manifested Himself by it and in it, that created form became "Huwa, Huwa," "He, He."' Hence, in the third stage, man is created by God in His own image and thus deified.

Thus, there are three distinct stages in the life of the Absolute:—(1) The stage of pure being or essence, without any attributes and names. The essence of God is Love. (2) The stage of the appearance of attributes and names in Him through the manifestation of His essence or Love. This is the first manifestation of God's essence or Love. (3) The stage of the appearance of man through the projection of His essence or Love. This is the second manifestation of God's essence or Love.

Hence, the universe was created out of nothing simply through God's essence or Love. The purpose of creation is that God, feeling lonely, wanted to share his own essence, love or joy with another, viz. man, in whom He may behold Himself as in a mirror, with whom He may associate; and the principle of creation is love or joy alone. There was nothing beside God, and God created the universe out of His own essence alone. Hence the universe is really God in essence. Man is the crown of creation, as he was created by God in His own image, and the entire universe was designed for the perfection of man. This was later on developed into the doctrine of the 'Perfect Man' by the famous Sufi, Ibn Arabi, in the thirteenth century A.D. and by Jili in the fourteenth century A.D.

### *Doctrine of Two Natures in God*

God possesses a twofold nature—a divine nature (*lahut*) and a human nature (*nasut*). In Adam, in whom God manifests Himself, these two natures and the divine spirit and the human spirit combine. Thus, a Perfect Man objectifies the entire divine nature. It may seem strange that Hallaj regards Jesus, not Mohammed, as the perfect type of deified man, who is the representative of God on earth.

### *Doctrines of Commixture and Incarnation*

This union of the *lahut* and the *nasut*, of divine and human nature, is called *hulul* (incarnation). *Hulul* implies that the union

between God and man takes place in the present life and God enters the human soul in the same manner as the soul enters the body at birth. In other words, God incarnates Himself on earth through the Perfect Man. As the 'humanity' (*nasut*) of God consists of the entire physical and spiritual nature of man, the 'divinity' (*lahut*) of God can unite with it only by means of an incarnation in whom the two natures commingle. Thus incarnation is due of commixture of divine and human natures.

Some poems of Hallaj seem to suggest the doctrine of commixture, e.g. 'Thy spirit is mingled in my spirit, as wine is mingled with pure water. When anything touches Thee, it touches me. So, in every case, Thou art I.'

I am He whom I love, and He whom I love is I.  
We are two spirits dwelling in one body.  
If thou seest me, thou seest Him,  
And if thou seest Him, thou seest us both.  
Thou art with me between my heart and the flesh of  
my heart.  
Thou flowest like tears from my eyelids.

There is a famous poem of Hallaj which seems to propound the doctrine of incarnation :

Glory to God who revealed in His humanity (i.e. in Adam) the secret of his radiant divinity.

And then appeared to His creatures visibly in the shape of one who eats and drinks (i.e. Jesus).

So that His creatures could perceive Him as in the flicker of an eyelid.

The doctrines of commixture and incarnation being altogether opposed to the view of orthodox Islam, the majority of the later Sufis, however, try to prove that Hallaj never taught these doctrines. Hujwiri, for example, holds that it is altogether wrong to attribute the doctrines of incarnation, commixture, and transmigration of spirits to Hallaj, though some have erroneously tried to do so.

### *Doctrine of Unity*

Hallaj propounds the unity of man with God. As we have seen, according to him man is essentially divine, the image of God Himself. Hence he declared *Anal Haqq*—'I am the creative Truth or God'—for which he

was cruelly done to death. 'If ye do not recognize God,' he says, 'at least recognize His signs. I am that sign, I am the creative Truth (*Anal Haqq*), because through the Truth I am a truth eternally.' There can be no doubt that Hallaj himself believed in the essential divinity of man.

Later Sufis have, however, tried to interpret the formula in a different manner, thereby trying to extenuate Hallaj of the charge of heresy. Three main explanations have been offered:—(1) Hallaj did not sin against the Truth, but against the Law, which forbids the divulgence of spiritual secrets to the mass. This great truth of the Unity of God and man should not have been revealed to ordinary men, but reserved for the select few. (2) Hallaj was not sober, but spoke under the influence of ecstasy of intoxication. But a man should not be taken literally when he is not sober. Hujwiri, for example, puts up this defence. He was really united with a divine attribute, though he imagined that he was united with the divine essence. (3) Hallaj simply meant to show that God, as an all-comprehending unity, includes man, too, in Him. Man is *in* God, but not *identical with* God. It was God who was speaking through Hallaj when he said, 'I am God.' Rumi says, 'No! No! for 'twas even He that was crying in human shape *Anal Haqq*. That one who mounted the scaffold was not Mansur, though the foolish imagined it.' In fact, Hallaj asserts the transcendence of God, too, and the difference between God and man. Hence, he cannot be properly characterized as a pantheist.

### *The Goal*

The supreme goal of man is to regain union with God. Man was projected out as an image out of God's essence, and as such, came to be infused with an element of non-being. Hence the supreme task of man is to eliminate that element of non-being and regain pure Being through a complete union with God,—the separated image should merge

back again into the essence imaged and become one with it. This absorption of the self in God, of the image essence into the real essence, is possible, to a certain extent, even in the present life, although it can be fully achieved only after death. From beginning to end, the whole process is like a closed circle: God going out to man, man again coming back to God. The unmanifest Absolute moves down to the sphere of manifestation, then again moves up back towards its unmanifest state. Hence, the soul's spiritual progress towards God is nothing but God's upward movement towards His original state of pure, unmanifest Being.

Hence, the goal of the soul is to lose its separate humanity and be divine in essence. 'A Sufi,' says Hallaj, 'is one who is single in essence.' His essence is really the essence of God. He describes this state of absorption, beautifully thus: 'The butterfly flies into the light and by its extinction becomes the very flame itself.'

This annihilation of the human self qua self in the Divine self is the only goal of life. Everything else,—asceticism, or spiritualism, etc.—is only a means to this end and not an end in itself. It is stated that once Hallaj asked Ibrahim Khawwas: 'During these forty years of your connection with Sufism, what have you gained from it?' Ibrahim replied: 'I have made the doctrine of Trust in God peculiarly my own.' Hallaj said, 'You have wasted your life in cultivating your spiritual nature. What has become of annihilation in unification?'

But although Hallaj insists on the identity and unity of God and man, still from the illustrations given by him it appears that according to him, human personality or essence somehow survives even in union. As quoted above, he describes the state of union as a commingling of wine and water. Now, when water is mixed with wine it becomes one with and inseparable from it, but does not actually *become* wine. Even the charred butterfly, in the example given above, does

not *become* fire, but retains somehow its own individuality—it implies the sublimated personality of the saint united with God. Again, he says: 'We are *two* spirits dwelling in one body.' That, too, implies that man remains somehow different from God in essence, even when inextricably united with Him. Hence, divine and human natures, though commingled, are not absolutely identical in essence.

### *The Means*

Self-control.—The usual means are formulated. The subjugation of the lower self (*nafs*) is stressed. The *nafs* is the material element, the element of evil in man. It is the flesh that binds the spirit to the world and prevents the union of the latter with the Supreme Spirit. The *nafs* is often represented as a fox, a snake, a mouse, etc. to signify its essentially material and obnoxious nature. The *nafs* of Hallaj, so the tradition goes, was found running after him in the form of a dog.

Gratitude.—A saint should cultivate an attitude of utter humbleness and gratefulness. But at the same time, he should also realize the limit of his power of being sufficiently grateful, for no gratitude, however great, can ever equal what God has done for us. Hence the highest gratitude is to realize that human gratitude is futile. 'O God,' says Hallaj, 'Thou knowest that I am not able to thank Thee according to all Thy bounties; wherefore, I pray Thee, thank Thyself for me.'

At the highest stage, the distinction between benefit, benefited, and benefactor disappears, and this alone is the highest gratitude or service rendered to God, for God wants man to return to Himself again as soon as possible, completing the circuit. 'Gratitude,' says Hallaj, 'consists in being unconscious of gratitude through the vision of the Benefactor.'

Recollection, Concentration and Prayer.—These are very important in leading the saints to the final goal. 'By concentration,' says Hallaj, 'they are raised sublime from selfhood, as before the birth of time. Like other

mystics, he stressed the absolute necessity of prayer—not the obligatory ritual prayer (*Salat*) but free prayer (*Dua*), and loving converse with God (*Munajat*).

Dependence on God.—This is illustrated by the following beautiful prayer of Hallaj: 'Thy will be done, O my Lord and Master: Thy will be done, O my Purpose and Meaning. O Essence of my being, O Goal of my desire, O my Speech and my hints and my gestures! O all of my all, O my hearing and my sight! O my whole, and my element and my particles!' (Quoted in Kalabadhi's *Taarruf*).

Obedience to God.—Hallaj insists that complete and unquestioning obedience to God is the prime duty of a man. In this connection, he recounts the story of Iblis, stated in the Koran. After creating Adam God commanded the Angels to worship Adam, but Iblis refused pointing out that he being made of fire, was higher than Adam, made only of clay. Therefore, God cursed him and threw him into Hell. Hallaj explains Iblis's disobedience by pointing out that he disobeyed God simply because he refused to recognize any other object of worship except One God. Hence Hallaj says: 'My friends and teachers are Iblis and Pharaoh. Iblis was threatened with Hell-fire, yet he did not recant. Pharaoh

was drowned in the sea, yet he did not recant, for he would not acknowledge anything between him and God. And I, though I am killed and crucified and though my hands and feet are cut off, I did not recant.'

Gnosis.—Through gnosis alone can man realize God directly. Hallaj ridicules intellect thus: 'O Wonder! how is he, who knoweth not how the hair of his body grow black or white, to know the creator of things?'

The following verse is attributed to him by Kalabadhi:

Whoso seeks God, and takes the intellect for guide,  
God drives him forth, in vain distraction to abide.

With wild confusion He confounds his inmost heart,  
So that, distraught, he cries: 'I know not if thou art.'

Gnosis is a divine gift. 'He only knoweth God,' he says, 'to whom God hath shown Himself.'

Ecstasy.—Ecstasy brings the lover and the beloved together but this state of *fana* (self-annihilation) must be superseded by a still higher state—*fana al fana*, annihilation of annihilation, during which ecstasy itself is annihilated. Hallaj says, 'I, too, found formerly delight in ecstasy, but woe is me.'

Now here I was, now there, Then to my glee,  
He granted me an attestation, free  
Of all but the attested: ecstasy  
Was swallowed up, and every memory  
Of visual form, in the One Unity.

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## LIFE OF SWAMI SHIVANANDA

BY SWAMI VIVIDISHANANDA

(Continued from the January issue)

With the passing of days, Tarak became more and more convinced that he had at last found some one who could safely guide him across the stormy waters of this world to the haven of peace. The world seemed to have no attraction for him and earthly ties lost their grip upon him. God became more and more real in his life. Besides, he felt intuitively

that in Sri Ramakrishna were fully manifested the ideals he had cherished all these years. He felt that the Master was not only the fulfilment of Hinduism but of all religions and to know him was to know God. With the growth of this conviction Tarak dedicated his body, mind, and soul at the feet of the Master. The Master made

Tarak his own by his immeasurable love, in comparison to which the affection of his parents was nothing.

The depth of Tarak's devotion for Sri Ramakrishna can be better understood if we quote here excerpts from a letter Tarak wrote to a devotee later in life: 'I have not yet come to a final understanding whether he was a man or superman, a god or God Himself. But I have known him to be a man of complete self-effacement, master of the highest renunciation, possessed of supreme wisdom, and the very incarnation of love; and, as with the passing of days I am getting better and better acquainted with the domain of spirituality and feeling the infinite extent and depths of Sri Ramakrishna's spiritual moods, the conviction is growing in me that to compare him with God, as God is popularly understood, would be minimizing and lowering his supreme greatness. I have seen him showering his love equally on men and women, on the learned and the ignorant, and on saints and sinners, and evincing earnest and unceasing solicitude for the relief of their attainment of infinite peace by realizing the Divine. And I dare say that the world has not seen another man of his type in modern times so devoted to the welfare of mankind.'

Like a master craftsman, Sri Ramakrishna was remarkably skilled in handling material and fashioning it to the best advantage. His was a technique that was peculiarly his own. The keynote of his training was his love by means of which he conquered the hearts of his disciples. Believing in the innate Divinity of man, he gave each disciple legitimate freedom, letting him grow in his own way, without disturbing his inherent make-up. Any attempt to destroy the individuality of a person by thrusting upon him practices and disciplines foreign to his nature was considered sacrilegious by the Master. But like a watchful mother, he would keep his eye upon each disciple and note the details of his everyday conduct, admonishing and correcting, encouraging and helping wherever neces-

sary. Tarak was supremely happy when he placed himself completely in the hands of the Master, studying and practising courses of discipline prescribed by him. Under the tutelage of Sri Ramakrishna, Tarak started making progress and his life found greater expression.

Forced by circumstances Tarak was obliged to marry against his wish. Born with unusually pure and monastic instincts, he considered wedlock as a great blow, but through the grace of the Master he did not lose heart, mustering strength and courage to face the problem. Not for a moment did he compromise the Ideal with the pleasures of the senses. The few years of his marital life were characterized by absolute continence and dispassion, which was possible because of Sri Ramakrishna's supreme influence. Long afterwards, at the house of Balaram Bose, a householder devotee, the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna were discussing the practicality of continence in married life; Swami Vivekananda remarked that continence in married life is rare in this world, Sri Ramakrishna's life being an exception. Tarak rejoined humbly that through the grace of the Master it was possible in his life too. Swamiji congratulated Tarak saying, 'Then certainly you are a Mahapurush (great soul).' Since then Tarak came to be called Mahapurush or Mahapurushji by his brother disciples and others in the Order—this name being an epithet of great respect and reverence indicating spiritual excellence.

'Know that by reverence, questions, and service,' said Sri Krishna to Arjuna. Above all a spiritual aspirant needs an attitude of reverence, a sincere inquisitive mind and a spirit of service. Equipped with these three qualities, Tarak continued his frequent visits to Dakshineswar, sometimes spending the week-ends there. During those visits he did his very best to imbibe as much as he could from Sri Ramakrishna by close association and devoted service. In moments of doubt and dullness he would approach the Master for

help and the Master would quicken the slackening spirit of the disciple by his effective words of advice, by a magic touch, or perhaps by a mere wish. Doubts would be dispelled giving place to conviction and there would be great spiritual fervour and ineffable peace instead of dullness. 'Sri Ramakrishna had the power,' said Tarak once, 'to transmit spirituality to others, and he could lift one's mind to higher levels of consciousness. He would do this by a thought, will power or touch. Swami Vivekananda, myself and others used to visit the Master frequently. Through his grace all of us according to our individual capacities, had opportunities to ascend higher flights of knowledge. I myself had the good fortune to experience Samadhi three times, by his touch and wish, during his lifetime. I am still living today to prove his great spiritual powers. It was not a delusion or a dream, because these experiences brought about unique and lasting changes in our lives and characters.'

In 1885 Sri Ramakrishna showed symptoms of cancer in his throat and when his illness became serious, he was first moved to Calcutta and then to a gardenhouse in Cossipore, a suburb of Calcutta, for treatment. As Sri Ramakrishna was very dear to their hearts Tarak and others became extremely concerned, availing of every opportunity to serve the Master to the best of their ability and to prepare themselves seriously for the life of renunciation. At first they would visit the gardenhouse from their respective homes in Calcutta and do the nursing, returning home for sleep and rest every night. Later, as the nature of the illness demanded constant vigilance and care, most of the boys, including Tarak, started staying there all the time without going home.

During the last days of his illness, the Master suffered excruciating physical pain, although mentally he was very cheerful, having ecstasies of Samadhi frequently. Even while lying in the bed he continued his

spiritual ministrations, helping devotees, shaping the characters of his boy disciples, and spurring them on towards the realization of the Ideal. Tarak and others, when not busy serving the Master, would practise austerities of various kinds, according to the specific instructions of the Master. Service to the Guru and loyalty to the common ideals indissolubly united the youthful disciples and thus the foundation was laid for the monastic order of Sri Ramakrishna.

Although reared in an orthodox, conservative Brahmin family, Sri Ramakrishna possessed a mind which was remarkably modern. Under no circumstances would he allow his disciples to be narrow, sectarian, or fanatical, emphasizing the cultivation of an attitude of respect towards all religious beliefs. Besides, he would encourage them to study the different scriptures of the world and interpret them as so many readings of the Ultimate Truth.

While caring for the Master at the Cossipore gardenhouse, some of the disciples became deeply interested in the study of Lord Buddha's life and philosophy and their discussions continued for days. The story of Buddha's great renunciation, fortitude, and compassion, and particularly his rational approach to Truth, fascinated Tarak, so much so that he, along with Swami Vivekananda and Swami Abhedananda, decided to visit Buddha Gaya, the place where Buddha attained illumination. Tarak paid the train-fare and they started on their journey without revealing their plans to any one. Arriving at Buddha Gaya they spent days in meditation under the famous Bodhi tree where Buddha sat with grim determination resolving not to leave his seat until he realized the Truth, even if his body dried up and perished in the attempt. The place associated with the hallowed memory of Buddha filled them with great inspiration and spiritual fervour. One day as they were meditating under the Bodhi tree Swami Vivekananda became deeply absorbed. Overwhelmed with spiritual

emotion, he burst into tears and embraced Tarak who was sitting beside him. Very much startled, Tarak asked him the cause of his emotion. Swami Vivekananda kept silent at the time. Later he revealed that at Buddha Gaya all those associations connected with Buddha and his illumination evoked his feelings so much that he could not control himself. Very soon they returned to the Cossipore gardenhouse to the joy of all.

Even after meeting Sri Ramakrishna, Tarak had a liking for the path of discrimination and knowledge, as he believed God to be an impersonal principle. Consequently, Buddhism appealed to him and he studied it drawing inspiration from its philosophy. Many times he would have animated discussions with his *Gurubhais* on the philosophy of Buddhism. Describing the state of his mind at that time he remarked later: 'In those days I didn't believe in the existence of God. . . . Sometimes I would say that it was harmful to have body consciousness. Even the thought of God would not allow the mind to be free from modifications. It was not that I just expressed myself that way, but my meditations and experiences also were of that nature. I could not think otherwise in those days—I was so absorbed in those ideas. Some devotees brought the matter to the notice of the Master who remarked, "What he says is also true. There is a stage in spiritual life when the seeker does not admit the existence of God." This tendency of mine lasted quite

a long time—even after we moved to the monastery at Baranagore, after the passing away of the Master. One day the Master appeared to me and said, "Well, the Guru is all in all. There is no one higher than the Guru." The moment I had this vision these ideas left me and never returned.' In course of time as his consciousness expanded Tarak recognized the Truth in the impersonal and the personal at the same time and admitted the beauty and usefulness of devotion in spiritual life.

About this time the wife of Tarak passed away and although humanly speaking this would be considered a blow, it proved a blessing in Tarak's case. It removed the last obstacle in his path. Instead of waiting any longer, Tarak resolved to renounce the world while the Master was living in the flesh. It was a big step in his life and he felt impelled to tell his father about his plans. As he disclosed his wish, the father was deeply moved, tears streaming down his cheeks. He asked Tarak to go to the family shrine and prostrate before the Deity. Then placing his hand upon Tarak's head he blessed him saying: 'May you realize God! I myself have tried. I even thought of renouncing the world, but that was not to be. I bless you, therefore, that you may find God.' As Tarak narrated this incident to Sri Ramakrishna, the Master rejoiced and expressed his hearty approval.

*(To be continued)*

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## DOES VEDANTA WORK ?

BY A WESTERN STUDENT

'Does it work?'

The words were spoken by a friend of mine, a die-hard materialist, to whom I had been trying to expound, as far as my limited knowledge would permit, the Vedanta philo-

sophy. He had listened, as he always did, his eyes half-closed, his pipe in his mouth, his head slightly on one side, like a wise old owl pondering the sayings of some less experienced creature. Now I had finished, and

was waiting to see what his line of attack would be. The question, when it came, was not unexpected.

'It seems to me,' he went on, 'that the test of a philosophy is in its results. Take Russia, for example, where the Marxian philosophy has been put into practice: the results have been astounding. Can this Vedanta of yours claim any such achievement? If it can, I shall be interested to hear more of it. If not . . . ' He relapsed into sceptical silence.

His words seemed to me to sum up the attitude of a great many Westerners, not only towards Vedanta, but towards any philosophy which stresses the importance of Man's spiritual, as distinct from his material, development. It is not that they deny the importance of the former (save for a few who have become so hypnotized by the achievements of science that they refuse to believe in the existence of anything outside its scope); rather, they feel that it is futile to talk of spiritual development while war, famine, unemployment etc. continue to deprive man of the basic essentials of life itself like food, clothing, shelter, education, recreation and all the other things which go to make life endurable. 'How,' they say, 'can a man be expected to take an interest in his soul when his body is starving or diseased, his mind untutored and crammed with fear and superstition? Religion cannot fill an empty belly.' And in that they are perfectly right.

Their objection is, of course, based on a misunderstanding. Swami Vivekananda himself always stressed the futility of offering men spiritual guidance while their material needs were yet unsatisfied. The only hope for India lay, he saw, in an improved standard of living. Only when this had been achieved could religion play its part.

All this I explained to my friend while he puffed silently away at his pipe. Only a glint in his half-closed eyes showed that he was awake and listening intently. When I had

finished:

'True enough,' he said, taking his pipe out of his mouth. 'But what is Vedanta doing to bring about this idyllic state of things? What is the use of a philosophy if the conditions under which it can be practised are never reached? Ideals are all very well, but they are no use without the machinery to put them into action.' He replaced his pipe as if the last word had been said.

'Machinery, too, is all very well,' I said, 'but it is no use without the right spirit on the part of the human beings who have to make it work. Even in Russia, it was only the enthusiasm of the people for Communism which prevented it from being a complete failure. That enthusiasm arose out of an intense desire for material improvement. Given the right conditions, such a desire can have similar results in India or in any other country where the people are extremely poor. But once that improvement has been effected, can it be sustained? Human nature is very fallible, and selfishness is one of its chief failings. The desire for material things does not stop short at satisfaction: and, though there is enough in the world to satisfy the needs of all, it is impossible for one man or one nation to have more than enough except at the expense of others. Only some very real ideal, other than a material one, can keep that man or that nation from demanding more than his or its share. Christianity, Islam, Hinduism all offer such an ideal, only each conceives of it in a different way. To me Shankara's great philosophy seems to offer the most logical and balanced expression of that ideal and the most lucid explanation of how it can be reached. Based as it is on the twin principles of self-control and renunciation, it provides every individual with certain clear-cut rules which, if he follows them in his life, will bring him that bliss which the Hindu calls Liberation, the Buddhist Nirvana and the Christian 'The Kingdom of Heaven.'

'But what has the salvation of the indi-



vidual got to do with the well-being of society? The two don't seem to tie up.'

'On the contrary,' I said, 'they tie up perfectly. 'If a man gives up his craving for all material things, he will no longer seek to profit at the expense of others. Or, to put

in other words, the love which before he expanded on himself is now turned outwards upon his fellow men. In a world of selflessness and love how can there be misery?'

My friend did not answer. He was busy refilling his pipe.

## NOTES AND COMMENTS

### TO OUR READERS

In *Conversations* we get an insight into the fact that spirituality can be transferred from Guru to disciples, that prayers are effective in helping others, as also some of the deep-seated convictions of Mahapurushji regarding Sri Ramakrishna. . . . Swami Pavitrananda while discussing the essential features of true religion shows at the same time that all religions are one in their fundamentals, though clothed to fit the different temperaments. . . . The *Thoughts on Sri Ramakrishna* will give the reader an idea of how the influence of Ramakrishna's life is spreading and taking root in unexpected corners of human heart. . . . In *Bhakti Yoga* Mr Sagane deals lucidly and with earnestness the essentials of the Yoga of Devotion. . . . In the *Doctrine of Hallaj* the writer, while elucidating the philosophical views of the great Sufi saint, incidentally portrays the similarities of the doctrines with Vedanta. . . . In *Does Vedanta Work?* a Western student tries to meet some of the questions that arise in the minds of modern critics of Vedanta.

### SRI RAMAKRISHNA AND THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT IN INDIA

Perhaps many do not know how deep was the impression Sri Ramakrishna's life left on the national movement in India. He was, as is believed by common man, a Sanyasi first and last; but there was something more in him which none but a close student of his life can understand. The tremendous upsurge

of the national awakening along with that respect and regard for things Indian, which began from the partition of Bengal in 1905, and culminated in the present-day open challenge to the foreign authority, has its impetus from this illiterate monk who had carried out that self-imposed duty of regenerating and re-awakening the potential spiritual energy of India. The seed that had fallen on the ground was not noticed till when it had grown to such a gigantic size covering the whole ground giving hope and shelter to the weary masses oppressed and suppressed by centuries of foreign rule.

To arouse a people who had for centuries been bled white under foreign emasculation, dishonoured, demoralized, hypnotized, to revitalize such a people is indeed a giant task; and for that not only untiring work but also silent meditation to recoup the latent energy is necessary. Sri Kalidas Mukhopadhyaya writes in the *Udbodhan* thus:

If there is no silent preparation behind the humdrum life of action, then the life force of a nation will become dried up, and may fall to the ground. It is for this reason Bankimchandra has propagated the ideas of service to the nation as the highest ideal and carved out in his works characters of all-renouncing Sanyasis, whose unostentatious preparations to achieve the end have produced volcanic energy in the national life of the country. . . . The dream of Bankimchandra was materialized in Ramakrishna, in whose silent preparation was found the footing for the revival of national hopes and aspirations, for the veneration for the religious and cultural greatness of India. In short Ramakrishna has become a symbol for all that is great and glorious in the past, and all that a nation can

aspire for in the future. When at intervals such a man appears in a nation's history, who centralizes in his person all the hopes and aspirations of a people that man is called the true representative of the people. . . . There were three great resurrections in the last part of the nineteenth century—in religion, literature, and politics: in the midst of all these stands the calm and serene soul of Ramakrishna as the inspirer. The above three renaissances have helped the nation in its onward progress, and for this reason Ramakrishna is called the pioneer of Indian national movement. His meditation was not for selfish ends, but for the regeneration of the nation. That energy, concentrated in his silent meditations, has taken up the dynamic form of Swami Vivekananda. Ramakrishna had initiated him into the treasures of power not for his own salvation, but for the salvation of the nation as a whole. Vivekananda has made it clear on many occasions—'Brothers, our Master had come for the benefit of humanity at large; I too have spilt my blood drop by drop in doing his work. All of you too will have to do the same.'

The chief thing required to facilitate the exploitation of a nation is firstly to destroy the unity of the people, and secondly to show them as a most contemptible and uncouth people before other nations, so that they may not get any sympathy from outside. While trying with one hand to create discord and disunity, among the different elements of the nation, propaganda was going on telling the world that Indians are the most barbarous people, without any remarkable literature or culture, with contemptible ways of social organization; and English nation has come to India as a heaven-sent messenger.

When this is the condition even today, what to say of fifty years ago, when the nation was still lying unconscious by the vulturous attack of the exploiter? Therefore the responsibility of Swami Vivekananda was greater as the work of all pioneers is. That giant of a man at once set up to work to organize and unite the people by inspiring them with hopes and courage, by showing the immortal greatness of their religion, and the glorious culture of the past. At the same time he reshaped the world opinion on India by his inspiring presentation of Indian problem. In the words of Sister Nivedita, 'What India needed amidst the general disintegration of the modern era was a rock where she could lie at anchor, an authoritative utterance in which she might recognize her self.' Vivekananda had again and again

proclaimed to Indians that they are not always to sit at the foreign feet; in religion 'we are the teachers to the world. We should give them our Vedanta and learn from them their science. It is only by this give and take way that we can ever hope to get the respect of other nations.'

Continues Sri Mukhopadhyaya :

As a result of his propaganda India received respect and regard of the world, and hearing her glorious culture from him many men and women of Europe and America became sympathetic toward India. India thus got her own position among the comity of nations as a result of his work.

The hypnotized men and women of India who were taught to look at India and things Indian with contempt and consider the European culture as the highest step of civilization, now, at the great interest shown by Westerners for Indian culture as a result of Vivekananda's teachings, began to turn to their own land, and think more seriously of their own culture. Thus in the words of Swami Abhedananda, 'Vivekananda's is a national movement. Every one of you must feel it a part of your national life:' and as Netaji Subhas said in his book *Indian Struggle*, Vivekananda was the 'father of Indian nationalism.'

#### RECURRING RECITAL

The creative power of recurring recital was first understood and effectively applied by the great seers of ancient India. The recital of Vedic Mantras which can still be heard in the length and breadth of India, has thrilled the land for centuries and slowly raised it to high spiritual flights. As one recites one verse again and again, day after day, year after year, the suggestive power of words while sharpening one's faculties, inspires one with elevating and strength-giving thoughts. While it becomes a habit, the latent energy of the words permeates your whole being bringing it again and again to the well of wisdom to draw waters of inspiration and at the same time restraining you from wanton thoughts and wandering dreams. It carries you forward into new and ever new worlds of spiritual moods by focussing the mental powers; and finally it moulds and controls every impulse in you and guide you from destructive thoughts.

Sri K. M. Munshi thus writes in the *Social Welfare* :

When a master of literature is intensely studied all the faculties are cultivated. In that process we self-sculpture ourselves into an artistic creation. There is no more beautiful delineation of fascinating childhood than in the *Bhagavata*; of youth strong and beautiful, friendship staunch and free, of love so exquisite and enduring as in the *Ramayana*; of feeling so tender and so pure as in the *Shakuntala*. Whoever studies the appropriate prayers, memorizes them, and recites them often, will be a better, stronger, and nobler man. In doing so he in his humble way goes through the whole process which these masters went through when composing the masterpieces.

This method of awakening the latent spiritual energy of man was later copied from the Hindu by almost all the sects and religions of the world. Reciting the Gita, the Bible, or the Koran at fixed times is a religious duty; and most of the great poets and philosophers were creations of the inspiration they got from such recitals. This Swadhyaaya of immortal masters thus has its definite influence even in educative and cultural fields inasmuch as it helps in character building. The party slogans and literature of modern times still show the way of influencing the minds of men by repeating the same thing over and over again.

But to draw perpetual inspiration from the recital the selection of the book is most important. It is for this reason that we see nations and parties fed on political and social slogans fall as quickly as the partymen. Continues Sri Munshi :

If the book selected for Swadhyaaya is an uninspiring one, the student will throw it away. If some one takes a detective novel for recurring recital he will never read it again. It is only a work of beauty and inspiration that can have a fresh meaning and strength every time one reads it. The work to be a proper Swadhyaaya must appeal to the fundamental moral or aesthetic sense of man and deal with permanent values.

But it is a matter of regret that modern educationists have not understood this creative aspect of recital. It is a common knowledge that books selected for studies in schools or colleges are looked with askance by students. In olden days it was the duty of the pupil to

study the text by heart and recite every day. The reason for this change of attitude is to be seen in the ephemeral nature of the text which can hardly inspire the pupils; and secondly in the wrong way of imparting it by giving undue stress on examinations—thus giving a wrong direction to faculties. The essence of education is to make the pupil to live by the spirit of the book by continuous and constant application of mind to it—by intensifying the process of self-sculpture through recurring recital. But the modern education reduces him to an imitator of foreign culture, instead of making him a creative artist of life.

#### GITA THE MOTHER

When the whole country is immersed in melancholy and pessimism, with internecine wars, with hatred and suspicion ruling strong, there is only one voice we can look to for inspiration and guidance—that ancient voice, which had for ever and ever consoled weak hearts with the tenderness of a mother, persuaded with the love of a friend, and commanded with the authority and insight of a spiritual teacher.

Indeed, such occasions were not rare in the history of India, but the consoling feature in those days was the presence of the teacher who was always ready to give strength and courage and hope, and thus raise them from despair and despondency. When Arjuna sat in the battle-field dejected, disheartened, filled with sorrow and grief, the mighty Lord Krishna harangued him to manly action, infused courage and hope. When Ramachandra had almost lost the war with the Mleccha king Ravana, and the whole Aryan civilization was in danger of annihilation, the Devas gave him the Aditya Mantra—that revealed to him his real nature of the Lord Almighty born to destroy evils and re-establish Dharma on earth.

And such a plight is now facing the Hindus. Many brave souls were martyred at the altar of Hindu religion; many have

given up the battle for lost and prefer to sit silent and weep; and the face of every Hindu is turned to some Inspirer who can lead them to victory.

Succour will not come to the weak and the idle. It is to the man of action, who can venture and fight, who can sacrifice his all and stand up alone, that help comes at last. This is the message of the Gita, and this ever-inspiring message, this source of all power is always there—'that power that strengthens every one when he is feeble, inspires him when he is weak, upholds him when he is strong.'

'When all resources fail,' writes K. M. Munshi in his *Experimental Approach to the Gita*, 'then through the words of the Gita God speaks :

Yield not to impotence, Partha,  
It befits thee not;  
Shake off this wretched faintheartedness,  
Stand up, on, harasser of foes,  
AND FIGHT.

Then fear flies. Then we recover ourselves; and like unto Arjuna, each of us can say inspired:

Here I stand firm; my doubts are fled;  
I shall act as thou biddest.

The more desperate the situation, the greater is the power which the Gita reveals. This has been the experience of the strong. Why should it not be the inspiration of us, the weak? . . .

The power which the Gita gives comes not merely to individuals but to communities and nations, as well, if they could translate its message into action.'

#### KHADI vs MILL CLOTH

The Indian way of hero-worship is quite different from that of the Westerner. Churchill who was worshipped by the people as a demi-god in war-time England was simply thrown away when the crisis was over. But the hero-worshippers in India are often seen to stick to the same hero for all things in time and out of time. The greatness of Gandhiji as a national leader is beyond dispute. But whether his economic ideas based on medieval village self-sufficiency is practical or even advisable as a long-term plan for the regeneration of India and the betterment of her starving millions is the doubt raised today, especially when such ideas are being

forced on a people through political power. Even though the people are loudly protesting, even though the industrialists are standing against, yet the Madras Ministry thought it fit to thrust their textile policy on the province, simply on the strength of party discipline. 'Let not,' says Gandhiji, 'capitalists and other entrenched personages range themselves against the poor villagers and prevent them from bettering their hard lot by dignified labour.' If it actually comes to the betterment of the lot of the poor, then none will be more happy than ourselves. But there is room for doubt.

It is not a question of 'reputation' of the Ministry, or the 'practicability' of the scheme that matters; it is a question of the life and death of a nation. Is India to go back to medieval times or is she to advance on scientific lines? Are we to be contented with the meagre necessities of life working the whole day like animals, or are we to develop ways and means for further happiness, and find leisure for recreation and cultural development? Gandhiji asks, 'Did not India clothe herself without machine-made cloth in those ancient days and why not now?' In good old days people were wearing barks of trees, and even before that, they were contented to remain nude. Are we to imitate them now and use barks for clothing? Are we then to go back to the Stone Age or are we to advance? That is the crux of the problem. India cannot hold her own in this wide world of international competition, by a mere hand-to-mouth production. After all man is not an animal to work all the twelve hours of the day; nor can all be ascetics contented with mere necessities. Every one is striving after happiness—physical, mental, or spiritual. Only when a man has not to worry about his physical necessities can he think of higher things, and when there is leisure then only cultural development is possible.

Gandhiji writes in the *Harijan* of 27 October:

Is it chimerical to induce and expect the people to utilize their idle hours to do useful, national, honest labour? It will be time to declaim against the Madras government when there is a feasible scheme to find useful and more remunerative employment for all who need work.

If this scheme is intended only as an interim plan for unemployment till another scheme is found, then we have nothing to say against it. But an interim plan should have the germs of a long-range plan side by side. Encouraging the Khadi cloth while at the same time having plans for the total absorption of labour in large industries with decent wages, would have been highly beneficial. But the Madras scheme clearly shows that they do not intend it as an interim plan, but as a permanent feature of future India.

Writes the *Hindusthan Times* of 10 October:

The Chamber of Commerce presented a memorandum to the textile commissioner pointing out that the production drive of yarn and mill cloth was lagging behind and numerous applications for new spindles and looms have been turned down by the Madras government. The Chamber stated that the attitude of the Madras government was hostile to mill production and existing textile mills were in a dangerous plight.

Of course this does not 'smack compulsion!' And Gandhiji's own idea is that 'the whole mill industry will be affected' (*Harijan*, 27 October).

The *Eastern Economist*, in an interview with Gandhiji, writes:

The entire case for Khadi, according to Gandhi, has been built on the firm basis of spinning requiring an hour's time of every available worker. . . . and spinning was designed definitely as a spare time work. Considering the fact that the agriculturists are unemployed for practically three to four months in the year and have surplus time during the rest of the year . . . . it is necessary for people to engage themselves in a useful occupation.

It is certainly chimerical to ask the poor people to spend their energy for labour which adds a few pice to their daily earnings when the same energy and labour can be directed to bring decent income to them. The proposal that the poor cultivators should work in their leisure hours on the Charka to

add a few annas monthly is but a poor stopgap. While all over the world attempts are being made to reduce the hours of work and the cost of production so that all may get plenty of leisure and sufficient opportunity to fully develop their body, mind, and spirit, we are trying to lead India in just the opposite direction. The argument that our agriculturists have to pass three months in idleness is not fully correct. For one thing, it is not the case everywhere in India. In many places rotation crops for different seasons are cultivated. Then it is only because agriculture is not fully developed that in some parts they do not get full work. Instead of throwing upon them a new work, they should be helped to do their own work well by scientific methods, which will give them more profit and the country more food. The yield per acre in rice is only 1330 lbs in India, whereas it was 6232 lbs in pre-war Japan. It is no consolation to argue that the Charka will supplement the meagre income of the people. Instead of defending the meagre income from Charka by comparing it with the average low income of our people, our aim should be to increase that average so that they may live like human beings; and herein comes the necessity of improving the agriculture on scientific lines. If supplementary works are to be given one should look to such allied occupations as cattle-breeding, dairy-farming, poultry-farming etc.

Again dealing with village self-sufficiency plan of Gandhiji, the *Eastern Economist* writes :

If handpounding of rice is to be done, if paper is to be made by hand, if other things too are to be made by hand, what would be the time left? Further did he expect the village woman working in the fields from morning to noon and having to cook and do other household duties to find time willingly to do an hour of spinning?

Nor is Khadi economic as pointed out by Mr. Muthiah Mudaliar :

Analysing the Khadi scheme sponsored by the Premier of Madras and for which a grant of three crores had been made, Mr Muthiah Mudaliar said that

it implied that one of every five of the population should be compelled to spin. He pointed out that a proficient spinner could spin at most only three to four hanks a day. The scheme calculated at the rate of one hank per day per person for 360 days in the year. To spin this hank a beginner would take four hours a day and after doing this spinning whether he would be able to attend to any other work, and whether there would be any employer willing to engage him to work during his spare time is a problem. As for the handloom weavers many of them would be accustomed to higher counts and several to fine counts of silk and lace. . . . Again it would involve wastage of cotton. He pointed out that preference to Khaddar would mean an economic waste of valuable material to the extent of 45 per cent. (*Hindu*, 12 November).

Sheer economic pressure will compel the Charka yarn to recede before the rising tide of mill yarn. And the scheme which makes Madras 'a sort of colony or market for being exploited by other provinces which are being allowed the freedom of making progress in the industry' has been supported by Bombay industrialists. Says Sir Victor Sassoon: 'From the point of view of the rest of India I have little doubt that Madras government would have considerable support from the industrialists in other provinces, only for the reason that their quota of imported textile machinery can then be increased!'

Khaddar cannot, however, compete in the open market. Even Mr Kumaraswami Raja, Minister for Agriculture in the Madras

cabinet, writes:

The Khaddar scheme could be worked only by government subsidy. That being the case the government cannot keep on subsidizing the scheme. Provincial self-sufficiency in the matter of cloth cannot be obtained through Khaddar alone.

Lastly, this kind of scheme for just self-sufficiency makes the future more terrible. One failure of crop for a season at once plunges the land into devastating famines; and since no reserve is possible under Gandhiji's scheme, chronic famine and starvation may become the inevitable lot of the people. To quote again the *Eastern Economist*:

His (Gandhiji's) philosophy of individual spinning and village self-sufficiency will leave no margin of reserves—food, clothing etc. Little calamities brought about by Nature or Man will be enough to upset this rudimentary structure and villagers may die in thousands for want of essential things. Secondly, how few of the men . . . would willingly accept his view of work and life? What is the use of setting up an ideal which few are likely to accept?

It is for all these reasons that we say that the Charka is at most a remedy for the present unemployment prevailing amongst the peasants. But it is not a real and lasting remedy for the grinding poverty of the masses. Industrial and agricultural development is necessary if India's potential resources are to be utilized and if India is to be enriched to the world standard.

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## REVIEWS AND NOTICES

THE ROLE OF THE LAW IN PEACE. BY SOHRAB D. VIMADALAL. Published by Thacker & Co., Ltd., Rampart Row, Bombay. Pp. 38. Price Re. 1.

It is a small book, with small ideas. But small ideas are quite new and promise to stay and ultimately develop into something big and positive. In this book the author has tried, in his own peculiar fashion and language, to explain how and why attempts to usher peace in the past failed, and also how peace is going to be ushered in at the end of this war.

I have a strong idea that our author is in tremendous love with all that science stands for, with all that it can do. And so at a place he recommends the use of the Atomic Bomb for forcing peace. I say 'forcing peace' as that is the best way to express the manner in which he wants peace to be created or made permanent. Here 'permanent' I have used not absolutely; for there cannot be a permanent peace. At least spirituality and reality of education and culture that

At the moment all are talking of the intensity of

spirituality and reality of education and culture that will combine to restore peace. Our author has no faith in these things of the spirit. He talks of law, based on force, which will, in his opinion, make peace possible for hundred years or so. He does not think in terms of lasting peace. His reason is that human nature is designed to fight. I consider these words quite bold and unpleasant. Human nature can develop along humane lines and can lead man to a lasting peace and order. Then law and love will be synonymous.

One thing more. 'To-day, in most countries of the world, the common man, that undefined entity that always existed, but, except during national upheavals, never mattered so very much, is making his power felt in everyday life as never before in the history of mankind.' If I agree with him I should think that the floodgates of liberty are now thrown open. Is it a fact? It is a pious hope.

Altogether, the book is rich in suggestions. Why not have a 'Parliament of Nations.' as the author insists on?

B. S. MATHUR

**TWO SISTERS.** BY RABINDRANATH TAGORE.  
*Published by Visva-Bharati, 2, College Square, Calcutta.*  
*Pp. 114. Price Rs 3-8.*

Shri Krishna Kripalani deserves our thanks for making this beautiful rendering into English of one of the eminent novels of Rabindranath Tagore. As novelist Tagore possesses an infinite fund of irony and sublimity, a rare combination, which are fully developed in this stirring and thoughtful story.

The theme may best be described thus: 'Women are of two kinds, the mother-kind and the beloved-kind. . . . The mother is the rainy season. She brings the gift of water and of fruit, tempers the heat, and dissolving from the heights drives away the drought. She fills with plenty. The beloved, on the other hand, is the Spring. Deep its mystery, sweet its enchantment.'

In these words Tagore has shown his unmistakable grasp of the heart and of the desire of women to be of two kinds. This idea is worked into a pathetic story, combining sadness with delight, irony with sublimity. Sasanka's wife Sarmila was of mother-kind, ever devoted to her husband. He grew impatient for he wanted flirtation and delicate and artificial delight. This he got in the company of his wife's sister, Urmila, the beloved-kind. But ultimately the story ends happily for Sasanka and Sarmila. The end is rather abrupt. All through in the story there is enough intensity of sadness and grief, and one is simply surprised into happiness when the story leaves Sasanka and Sarmila loving each other, ever keen on real work.

One thing Tagore wants us to learn. *Don't be a coward*—this is his wisdom which must be shared by us. There is no running away from our responsibility.

B. S. MATHUR

**CHINESE WOMEN AND FREEDOM.** BY ANIL DE SILVA. *Published by Kutub Publishers, Poona.*  
*Price Rs 2-12.*

In India we know little about the part played by Chinese women in the national fight for freedom and solidarity, primarily because of the paucity of suitable literature. Anil De Silva, who gives an interesting account of the daring and exploits of the women of China in this booklet, is a young Singhalese woman, who has evinced for years a sincere admiration for China and dedicates her work to Madame Sun Yat Sen, the ennobling symbol of Chinese womanhood.

When reading the history of China with special reference to the part played by Chinese women, we are bound to feel a spirit of intense comradeship. 'We too can feel with them,' says the authoress, 'and dream with them for the world that lies ahead, waiting to be fought for, waiting to be built, waiting to be lived in, the bright roads and the lovely gardens of tomorrow.' Towards inculcating such a revolutionary outlook in the Chinese women, great names have played key roles, such as the Soong sisters in the political sphere, Tin Ling and Ping Ying in the literary field and scores of less prominent women who took part in the economic regeneration and even in the battle for liberation.

Yang Kang, in his foreword to the book, commends the book as being an effort to forward the common cause of freedom. It is the result of a sad but glorious battle. It is a sad story, because, China fights not for freedom from alien rule like India, but against her age-long dead weight of custom, tradition, ignorance and political schism: and their struggle is recorded in this book with sympathy and understanding.

C. V. SARMA

**WHEN I WAS IN SHA CHUAN.** BY TING LING.  
*Published by Kutub Publishers, Poona. Price Rs 3.*

These short stories by the famous Chinese story writer, Ting Ling, have been translated from original Chinese by Kung Pusheng for the benefit of Indian readers. Literature is said to reflect life in all its aspects and judged by this test, a perusal of these simple tales of love and faith, struggle and suffering give the reader a true picture of peasant life in China from the closest quarters. Ting Ling, herself of poor family, has shared to the full the joys and sorrows of the people around her. She also contributed gloriously to the movement of national resistance against Japanese invasion. It was a miracle that in spite of the very hard life she led, her mind was alert and she could

wield her pen with vigour and vivacity. The stories are told in a simple and direct style and the characters are moving figures in the drama of life.

C. V. SARMA

### BENGALI

**BANGLAR NAVAYUG.** BY MOHITLAL MAJUMDAR. Published by General Printers and Publishers, Ltd., 119, Dharamtala Street, Calcutta. Pp. 285. Price Rs 4.

The book under review is a welcome addition to the literature dealing with the growth and development of Bengali culture and thought. The present volume confines itself to the limits of the nineteenth century and proposes to show the great wealth of Bengali genius that flowered forth in the period. The nineteenth century has truly been called the age of Renaissance in Bengal. It is an age of innumerable influences and tendencies of supreme importance and meaning. There is everywhere a great creative urge—a ferment of ideas of far-reaching values. It is natural, therefore, that this spirit of the age should find its poignant expression in and through the great personalities who made their influence felt in the life of the nation. The author who is a well-known poet and essayist has given here a critical review of the thoughts and activities of the gifted builders of Bengal's magnificent cultural heritage—Rammohan, Vidyasagar, Madhusudan, Bankim Chandra, Keshab Chandra, Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, and Rabindranath.

The book is a product of thoughtful study and deep scholarship. Very ably the author analyses the complex undercurrents of thoughts and tendencies that marked the spirit of the age. The chapters on Bankim Chandra and Vivekananda are strikingly excellent. The author has attempted a searching analysis of Bankim Chandra's versatile genius and elaborately shown his contributions to different departments of Bengali life and thought. When he comes to Vivekananda, the author appears to rise to a masterly treatment. He emphasizes that Vivekananda's message transcends the age, yet permeates, and elevates it. This message of hope for humanity indicates Vivekananda's large heart with which he could love the common men of flesh and blood, in spite of the

fact that he was a monk who had renounced the world and attained to the heights of spiritual illumination.

Although one may find at places some stiffness of style and diffuseness of ideas, the book is exceedingly well written. The author is entitled to high congratulation on his laudable success.

B. BOSE

**VICHAR-SAGAR (OF NISCHALDAS).** TRANSLATED BY DEVA SHANKAR MITRA. Published by the same from 67, Durga Kundu, Benares. Pp. 298. Price Rs. 4.

Nischaldas was a saint of Northern India, who passed away in 1863 at the age of 71. According to Swami Vivekananda, *Vichar-Sagar*, the *magnum opus* of Nischaldas, 'has more influence in India than any that has been written in any language within the last three centuries.' It is a treatise on Vedanta which has been moulding the religious life of a very large section of people in the Punjab as well as other parts of North India. It is said that, not being a Brahmin, Nischaldas had considerable difficulty in getting a teacher who would teach him Sanskrit scriptures. But by dint of sheer merit and extraordinary intellectual ability he became an erudite scholar—so much so that he was a terror to many of those who would indulge in philosophical polemics. When Nischaldas became famous, he did not forget the difficulty of the vast number of the religious public who cannot read or understand Sanskrit. So he wrote *Vichar-Sagar* in simple Hindi, giving the essence of the Vedanta—rather the monistic system of the Vedanta. The book became immediately popular, not only amongst the masses but also amongst the scholarly people. For herein was found abstruse philosophy couched in simple language.

*Vichar-Sagar* has been translated into different vernaculars as well as into English. The volume under review gives the first Bengali translation of the famous book. The translation has been done under the direct guidance of Swami Chidghanananda, a great scholar on Vedanta. So there can be little doubt about the accuracy of the translation. The book will remove a long-felt want of the Bengali-reading public.

## NEWS AND REPORTS

### RAMAKRISHNA MISSION EAST BENGAL RIOT RELIEF

CONSOLIDATED REPORT UP TO 31ST DECEMBER 1946

The Ramakrishna Mission has been conducting Riot Relief work from three centres since the 22nd October 1946. Four new centres at Karaitali and Paikpara in the Tippera District and Begamganj and Lakshmipur

in the Noakhali District have recently been opened, from which distribution has taken place, but reports have not yet been received, except from Karaitali.

A short consolidated report of work in the different centres, up to 31st December, 1946, is given below.

*Himechar* (opened on November 11): Relief was given in 3 Unions, covering 15 villages. 1,250 woollen



blankets, 3,984 pieces of clothes, 658 sweaters and banyans and 3,834 utensils, besides rosaries, vermilion packets and conch-bracelets were distributed during the period under review.

From the Milk Canteen, 203 lbs. of powdered milk were given. The daily average number of recipients—children and patients—being 165 and 16 respectively. From the Outdoor Dispensary 1,746 patients were treated.

*Chandpur* (opened on October 22): Relief was given in 3 Unions covering 13 villages. 323 mds. 23 srs. of rice was distributed as weekly doles, the maximum number of weekly recipients being 896 during the third week of December. Besides, 134 pieces of cloth, 15 banyans, 5 woollen sweaters and some conch-bracelets were distributed.

*Ramganj* (opened on November 29): Relief was given in 4 Unions covering 16 villages. 486 woollen blankets, 949 banyans, 112 woollen sweaters, 300 utensils, 950 pieces of cloth and some rosaries, vermilion packets and conch-bracelets were distributed.

*Karaitali* (opened on December 27): 109 woollen

sweaters, 435 banyans 535 utensils and 992 pieces of clothes were distributed among recipients belonging to 533 families of 13 villages, in 4 Unions.

In the Evacuee Relief Camp at Sylhet 221 persons were fed twice daily, and 18 mds. 20 srs. of rice was given to 317 refugees in the Evacuee Relief Camp at Habiganj, Dt. Sylhet.

From our Branch at Sargachhi, Dt. Murshidabad, 25 woollen blankets and 21 chaddars were distributed among the refugees of the Camp at Berhampur.

There is yet much to be done before the evacuees can be rehabilitated. So we appeal to the generous public to help us liberally so that we may carry on this most urgent task of helping our unfortunate brethren. Contributions will be thankfully received and acknowledged by the undersigned at the following address: The General Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission, P.O. Belur Math, Dt. Howrah (Bengal).

Belur Math (Howrah)

22 January 1947

SWAMI MADHAVANANDA,

General Secretary,

Ramakrishna Mission.

### SRI RAMAKRISHNA'S BIRTHPLACE

The village of Kamarpukur in the Hooghly District is hallowed by the birth of Sri Ramakrishna, the Prophet of modern India. As with the passage of time the life and teachings of the great saint are bringing solace to the hearts of innumerable people all over the world through the preaching of the monks of the Ramakrishna Order, the village is slowly gaining in importance and developing into a place of international pilgrimage.

With bitter memories of the last Great War, the wider public, both in India and abroad, is showing genuine and unmistakable interest in everything connected with the saint's life. It is high time that the nation paid its debt of gratitude to the saint whose advent has raised India as a nation in the estimation of the world. This it can do by undertaking to improve the condition of the village where Sri Ramakrishna was born, as also by suitably preserving the place of his birth and building a befitting memorial there.

It is with this intention that we have started the nucleus of a branch centre of the organization there, and have applied to the Government for acquisition of nearly 5½ acres of land, including Sri Ramakrishna's ancestral home, for opening a dispensary, a school, an international guest house, a museum, etc. along with preserving the place of his birth. Over Rs. 1,00,000 is required to work out the scheme. We earnestly appeal to the generous public as well as to our friends and sympathisers to lend us a helping hand in materializing this object.

Contributions will be thankfully accepted by the General Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission, P.O. Belur Math, Dt. Howrah.

SWAMI MADHAVANANDA

General Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission

### SRI RAMAKRISHNA'S BIRTHDAY

The Birthday Anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna falls on the 23rd February, 1947.