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“उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत ।”

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

CONVERSATIONS OF SWAMI SIVANANDA

Place : Belurmath *Time :* May 1923

A devotee from Sind was initiated today. He had, previous to this, received the holy name (*mantram*) in a dream. But being unable to understand its significance, he grew very restless in mind after receiving it. So he wrote a letter to Mahapurushji acquainting the latter with his state of mind and expressing a desire to see him. On receiving the necessary permission the devotee came hurriedly from the distant province of Sind to the feet of Mahapurushji.

Mahapurushji put on a new piece of cloth after washing his hands and feet with the water of the Ganges and went into the shrine at about 10 A.M. After worshipping Sri Ramakrishna according to rites, he initiated that Sindhi devotee. When he returned from the shrine to his own room after the initiation, a divine glow was visible on his whole face. Without sitting on the chair as usual he began to sing, clapping his hands and reeling slightly, as he walked, under the influence of an

ecstatic mood. The song was as follows :

‘When the right *guru* is found, he removes differences by instructing on knowledge.

The charcoal gives up its black hue when it enters fire.’

He was in a profoundly indrawn mood hardly describable in words. His eyes were half-closed, the mind was, as it were, dwelling in some suprasensible realm. He was strolling about the room, singing only these two lines. The face was red, and opening his eyes occasionally by some effort as it were, he glanced at the big picture of Sri Ramakrishna hung up on the western wall. He was completely lost to his surroundings. His naturally sweet voice, mellowed further by the deep love of his heart, sounded sweeter still. A long time passed in this way before he sat down on the chair. His clothes were disarranged and eyes closed. At intervals he was uttering in a voice hardly audible and coming from the depths of his heart, ‘Victory

to the Master! O Refuge of the lowly!
Merciful Lord! Victory to Mother!

The devotee who had been initiated was so long meditating on the porch of the shrine, according to Mahapurushji's instructions. He now came out and prostrated himself before Mahapurushji with great devotion. Sitting at his feet he folded his hands and said with eyes full of tears :

'I have today found peace in the heart, thanks to your grace. My mind grew very restless after receiving the *mantram* in the dream. I failed to find peace by any means. I became exactly like one mad. Today after having received from you the same *mantram* which I got in the dream, I am firmly convinced that what I saw in the dream is true and that it is you who favoured me with your grace in the dream.'

Mahapurushji: My child, the Master favoured you with His grace in the dream because He wanted to give you shelter at His feet. Today again the Master has bestowed grace upon you in another way. He is infinitely merciful. He incarnated Himself in human body for the good of humanity in this age. I am only a servant who has found shelter at His feet. He alone can bestow grace. Only God can favour one with grace—this is what I know. The scriptures also say that when a good *guru* initiates a disciple God Himself appears in the heart of the *guru* and transmits power into the disciple. God Himself is the *guru*. Man can never become the *guru*. Due to the good actions performed by you in previous births you have found shelter at the feet of Sri Ramakrishna, whose compassion knows no limits and who is a saviour of the fallen. Today I have dedicated you to His feet. He has from today accepted all responsibility of you, here and hereafter.

Devotee: But, Maharaj, I do not see the Master. I know that it is you who have been gracious to me.

Mahapurushji: You can think so; but I know that it is the Master who has been

gracious to you. You belong to Him from today. Cling to Him still more firmly from now on. Try to see Him within and without. Look upon Him as your own. This sense-world is very transient. Father, mother, wife, son, daughter, and near ones—all these relations are of this world and transient. But our relation with Him is eternal and is not terminated by the destruction of the body. The unfailing seed that has been sown in your heart today will grow everyday, watered by love and devotion, and will develop into a mighty ambrosial tree. It will yield fruits to satisfy the fourfold ends of life and fill your life with bliss. You will achieve the satisfaction of all your wants.

The Devotee: I am a worldly man under delusion and in bondage of various kinds. Please bless me so that I may not forget your holy feet, being immersed in the world. Please instruct me a little how I should live in the world so that I may not get completely lost in it. You have somehow to save this unworthy self.

So saying the devotee caught hold of the feet of Mahapurushji. At his eagerness Mahapurushji's bright face became a picture of compassion. In a trembling voice full of affection he said, 'My child, I have already told you that I have dedicated you today at the feet of the Master and that He has accepted you and taken all responsibility for you. It is because He wanted to accept you that He has brought you here through divine inspiration. Today you have gained a new life. If the Master be true, then what we say is also true. Take refuge in Him with all your being and throwing all your responsibility on the Master go on calling on Him with a yearning heart. That's all; you need not do anything else. He will look after you in all situations. And as regards how you should live in the world, the words of the Master contain the answer. "Do all your duties in the world, but keep your mind on God. Be like the maid in a rich man's house; she

does all the work; but all the time her heart is set upon her own home in her native place." So should one live in the world without attachment. You should serve and be kind to your wife, children, and the relations, but should know in your heart that God alone is your own, that there is none else your own besides Him. But you should not for this reason neglect your wife and children. You should serve them as best as you can as children of God, as His portions. You should talk to them on spiritual subjects and try so that their minds also turn to God. Live in the world, but let not the mind be bound by it. And the Master used to say, "It is very necessary to discriminate. The world is transient. God alone is eternal and true. What can money give? It can give food, cloth, and a place to live in—that's all. But it cannot give you God. So money can never be the aim of life. This is called discrimination."

'Never have too high a worldly ambition. You have made provision for a simple living, be content with that. The mind naturally gravitates to lower things—to lust and greed, name and fame. The mind which has become scattered thus has to be collected and merged in the lotus feet of God. The highest ambition of life is to realize God. Have that ambition in the mind always, and try your utmost to reach that goal.'

The lunch bell rang at this time, and Mahapurushji asked the devotee to go and partake of the *prasada*. After some time an attendant brought the Master's *prasada* for Mahapurushji. He sat for lunch, but today, since coming out of the shrine after the initiation, he is in a specially indrawn mood. A kind of intoxication is persisting. The eyes are almost closed. There is practically no inclination for eating—he was nibbling at the food due to force of habit. Thinking that a little talk might divert his mind and make him eat, the attendant broke the silence and started a topic: 'Maharaj, today the initia-

tion took you a long time in the shrine.' Mahapurushji, like one startled out of sleep, said, 'Yes. Ah! the person is a great devotee. The Master is specially graceful to him, otherwise such devotion cannot be had. One can easily find out the spiritual possibilities of a person at the time of initiation. Persons who are of an exceptionally good character are overpowered by feelings as soon as they are initiated. They begin to shed tears, feel tremors over the body, and their hairs rise on ends. At the same time the *kulakundalini*, the spiritual potential, wakes up and they easily become absorbed in meditation. I found this devotee of this nature. As soon as he heard the *mantram*, he had tremors all over the body and horripilation, and soon became absorbed in meditation. And what tears of love! Tears came flowing from the corners of the eyes. I was also very glad to see that. One feels very glad by initiating a true devotee—initiation in such a case becomes fruitful. The lotus of the heart of those who are ripe for initiation remains, as it were, fully blown and eager to receive the *mantram*, and as soon as it receives the *mantram*, it, as it were, grasps it firmly. Only the thought of the Master's compassion kept continually coming to my mind. In how many ways and on how many people he is bestowing his grace! There is no count of men here and abroad who are receiving His grace. Blessed is the Master!

Devotee: Not all are so moved and inspired at the time of initiation. Will no good come to them who are not so high recipients?

Mahapurushji: Why should it be so? They will also have success, but a little later. The perfect *guru* has such power in him that he can mould the mind of his disciple and can in a very short time direct his life towards spirituality. The power of the *siddha mantram* (Holy Name by repeating which persons have attained realization) is irresistible, especially if the power of the said *mantram* is transmitted by an enlightened *guru*. The Master used to say, 'If the grace

of the perfect *guru* can be had, the egoism of the disciple is destroyed after a little struggle.' And if the *guru* is not an expert, the worldly bondage of the disciple is not broken and he is not liberated.

Belurmah, Saturday, 8 December 1923

It is morning. Mahapurushji has just returned from the shrine. He is still absorbed in his mood and is humming a song in a low voice. While returning from the shrine with the deerskin under the arm he turned towards Dakshineswar, saluting it with folded hands. Thereafter he saluted the Ganges before returning to his room. The monks and *brahmacharis* of the Math are coming to him after their meditation and *japa* and going away again after saluting him. He is not talking to anybody still, but is sitting quietly absorbed in a deep mood. After some time an elderly swami who looked after the Math management came and after saluting him enquired of his health. After a little talk about work in the Math, he started the topic of Dakshineswar and asked, 'Well Maharaj, the Dakshineswar temple etc. have all gone into the hands of the Receiver for management. Will it do any good?'

Mahapurushji: Good will come of it, so it appears. Recently great irregularity was taking place in the worship of the Mother. Perhaps it is, therefore, in accordance with the Mother's wishes that this arrangement has been made. Is Dakshineswar an insignificant spot? The Divine Power after incarnating Itself in human form for the good of humanity has performed severe austerities there. The world has not seen before such *tapasya* and spiritual practice—it is even doubtful whether it will see again. Dakshineswar is the confluence of the holy places, every particle of the dust there is holy. That place is extraordinarily holy to spiritual seekers of all faiths, Hindu, Mahomedan, Christian, and again Saiva, Shakta, and Vaishnava. The other holy places of the world are spots where individual spiritual aspirants have attained realization by following a particular path or

where some perfected souls have laid down their bodies, and so on. But Dakshineswar is the place of *sadhana* of God Himself. Who can tell how many varieties of spiritual ideals have been realized and manifested there? In course of time people will understand the greatness of the place, and then there will ensue a scramble for the dust of that spot. The dense spiritual atmosphere of the place will not be destroyed. Since the time I heard that the worship and service of the Mother at Dakshineswar were not being properly done, I have been daily invoking the Mother and have been offering Her worship and food mentally here. I say to Mother, 'Mother, take your food etc. here. Accept our service.' I shall be free from worries if proper arrangements are made for worship and other things of the temple there.

'Swamiji said that in future perhaps all the landed property of Dakshineswar will come under the Math. Can the desires of the great ones fail to come true? Mathur Babu had given everything away to the Master from the heart; but the Master did not accept it then. Now His work is being done at many places and in many ways. Specially, the preservation of that place has become a necessity. When the Mother wills it, you will find everything coming under the Math.

The Monk: But Maharaj, dealing with money and other matters like this is a very difficult thing. Apart from it, there is the *zamindari* and its maintenance. History contains many instances how in the past big religious organizations fell from the ideal and became corrupt due to entanglement in worldly affairs and property.

Mahapurushji: What you say is true in a sense. But do you know what I think? The root cause why these religious organiza-

tions went down was the want of spiritual striving, renunciation, and austerity. As long as renunciation and non-attachment will remain bright in this Order of the Master, as long as every member of the Order will be engaged in spiritual practices and be striving, knowing realization of God as the chief aim of life, so long there is no fear—everything will go well. Maharaj (Swami Brahmananda) used to say a very fine thing regarding what should be the attitude and point of view of a *sannyasin*. He used to say that a *sannyasin* should imagine, even while he is living in a palatial building, 'I am under a tree'; and when eating good and delicate food he should inwardly think, 'I am partaking of pure food received by begging.' The meaning of it is that a *sadhu*, remaining non-attached under all conditions, should keep alive the spirit of *tapasya*. If the spirit is pure, there is no fear. It all depends on the spirit. Apart from that the work you are doing is all the Lord's work, you are not doing anything for your own sake, are you? Work also is part of your spiritual practice. All impurities of the mind will doubtless be washed away if you do His work in a spirit of service to Him. Of course, you must at the same time struggle hard with your spiritual practices. Everything will go wrong if your spiritual efforts slow down. His work should be done in a spirit of detachment. Always remember this, namely, if some one goes on doing work with the conviction that he is performing the Master's work, he will never come to grief, for the Master will always protect him. But you will be undone, if egoism or pride enters your heart. The Master used to say, 'Be sure that there is no theft in the chamber of your mind' (that is to say 'rationalization' of egoism and pride). If you hold on to the idea 'I am becoming blessed by doing work and by serving Him' there is no fear whatever. And you must always keep a close watch on your mind analyzing it in each one of your activities. Whenever you will notice that the mind is tending even slightly in another direc-

tion, pray yearningly to Him and struggle more with your spiritual practices. You will not be doing work all the hours of the day and night, would you? And you should also keep up the remembrance of God fully even in the midst of your work.

The Monk: If the living example of the ideal is not before our eyes, it is difficult to turn the flow of life always towards the ideal. As long as you are present, everything will go well. What will happen afterwards, the Master alone knows.

Mahapurushji: Why so? Know this well that the Master alone is the living ideal. And sure enough we are also present. Everything is not finished with the destruction of the body. When the mind is purified through spiritual practices, it becomes an instrument for the living, divine realization of God. That experience is the real experience, and its influence lasts all through the life. Besides, are you also small in any way? You have seen before your eyes the ideal lives of the children of the Master and have been blessed by their company—this also is the result of good actions. You have no fear. Those who have in them true renunciation and detachment have no fear at any time. God will be manifest in their hearts, and their lives will be blessed by His vision. The real thing is renunciation and detachment, purity and a sincere desire to find God. Now the time is very auspicious, and at this time people will awaken to superconscious experiences with only a little spiritual effort. Due to the advent of the Master the path of God-realization has become very easy. And the spiritual tide that has set in will continue for many centuries—not the least doubt about it. Standing on this courtyard a few days before his passing away, Swamiji said, "The tide that has set in will roll unobstructed for seven or eight centuries; none will be able to resist its march." This tide of the age will sweep due to its inherent dynamism; it will not depend on anybody's help. It is all the work of the Divine Power. What can man

do? Anyone who will help in the achievement of the demand of the age will himself be blessed. It is with the object of conserving the Divine Power which the Master had brought into the world and awakened to activity, that Swamiji has built-up this organization and has started that work with this monastery as the chief centre. This monastery is the central power station of that spiritual force. From here the tide of spirituality will flow to flood the whole world. That is why he brought the Master's relics on his head and planted them here. The Master had told Swamiji, 'Wherever you will place me after carrying me on your head, I shall remain there.' The day when this monastery was founded Swamiji brought the Master's relics on his head and installed them here. *Puja* (worship), *homa*, food offerings, etc. were done on a great scale. I cooked *payash* (rice porridge) for offering to the Master. Installing the Master's relics in this monastery, Swamiji said, 'Today the heaviest responsibility of my life has been lifted from my head. Now, even if I die, there is no harm.' Since then all the great spiritual practices have been performed here centring round the *atmaram* (the casket of Master's relics). How much *tapasya* and spiritual practices did they all—Swamiji, Maharaj, Baburam Maharaj—perform here! All of them are perfect souls, associates of the Divine Incarnation. They do not come down usually except in the company of the Divine Incarnation. How much spiritual practices all these great sages have performed in this monastery! Think over it—what a place is this monastery! The Holy Mother herself came here. We heard that even before the foundation of the monastery the Holy Mother, while going in a boat along the Ganges, had seen the Master here. Of course, even after the establishment of the monastery we went to mountains and forests to do *tapasya* (austere spiritual practices); but our heart always stayed near the *atmaram* in the monastery. All the associates of the Master are gradually depart-

ing to him one after another. Now is your turn. You have to keep the spiritual influence of this monastery undiminished by means of renunciation, *tapasya*, and spiritual efforts. You have to build up such ideal lives that persons who will associate with you will think that they are living in the company of the Master Himself and His associates. The message of the Master can be given in a word: Realization of God is the only goal of life, and real life is that in which there are renunciation, *tapasya*, and a harmony of all faiths....

A monk is today leaving for a branch centre in South India for preaching the Master's ideas. After saluting Mahapurush Maharaj he begged for his blessings and said, 'Maharaj, bless me that I may realize God in this life. So long I was near you; now I am to go to distant Madras away from you. The mind is very heavy on that account. Henceforward I shall not be able to see you the moment I feel the desire to do so. From now on you will be an object of meditation. Please instruct me a little how I should live in that country.'

Mahapurushji blessed the monk greatly and said affectionately, 'My child, you have all taken shelter at the feet of the Master. He will ever protect you. Wherever you stay always remember this well that the Master is always with you. You are very dear to Him. You have education and are pure; you have come here renouncing everything in order to realize Him; does he not know it? I sometimes think, had Swamiji been living now in the physical body how glad he would have been at the sight of these boys. There are many devotees of the Master in that place also where you are going. Tell them what you have seen and what you have learnt from us. The real thing is for you to lead the ideal life of a *sannyasin*, full of renunciation and *tapasya*. The Master's life is a burning image of renunciation. You are monks of His holy Order and are going to preach his ideas. The greatest preaching consists in

holding before others an ideal life, so that people may find it easy to grasp and understand the Master from your lives. Therefore the more you build up your character in accordance with the ideal life of the Master and Swamiji, the more their ideas will be propagated through you. Whenever you feel yourself like one lost, pray to Him with a very yearning heart ; He is your inner Self and is within. He will give you light from within and will inform you rightly as to what you should do. Never allow this thought ever to enter your mind that you are going to preach anything. The Master Himself preaches His own ideas. What can you and I preach about Him ? Who can understand Him ? The Master's ideas

are infinite. Is it possible to assign a limit to Him ? Even such a personality as Swamiji declared, "I could not understand even a little what the Master was." What to speak of others ! The aim of life is to achieve faith and love for His lotus feet. You will do your spiritual practices, study, spiritual conversations there exactly as you were doing here—rather you shall do them all the more. You will do good to yourself alone by it. Now is the time for you to do spiritual practices—so devote yourself to it with greater zeal. I am praying greatly that your heart may be filled with devotion, faith, love and purity, and that this life of yours may become blessed.'

OUR PROBLEMS AND OUR TRADITION

BY THE EDITOR

Vedaishcha sarvairahameva vedyo vedantakrit vedavideva chaham.

I am the subject of all Traditional Science, I am the Renewer of the Vedantic Tradition, and I am the knower of the *Veda*.—*Gita*, XV.15.

The conviction has become widespread today among all serious students of culture that no problem in society, science, or life is fully understood until its grounds in the metaphysical nature of things are discovered. If, therefore, a social problem remains unintelligible apart from metaphysical considerations, neither is a complete and durable solution of it possible in isolation of the deeper factors to which it is indissolubly tied. This truth which is becoming clear to those who are delving deep into cultural phenomena is not patent to persons immersed in the practical and topical. But it is one which requires to be particularly remembered at this hour by all charged with the shaping of India's destiny. For, in the absence of an integral approach to questions which agitate Indian minds, the

solutions proffered will remain unworkable compromises.

The two most pressing questions which confront Free India and demand speedy and correct answer are those which relate (1) to the construction of national unity based on a deep sense of solidarity among her peoples, apparently divided by so many narrow 'domestic walls', and (2) to squarely meeting the challenge of nation-wide misery and hunger, disease and ignorance, which provide so fertile a soil for the growth of blind, desperate, and disruptive movements like communism and fascism of all shades and descriptions. Unless the problems are swiftly and radically solved upon a basis of principles at once just and universal, the future seems heavy with foreboding. If the partial

ideologies are left to exploit this nation-wide hunger for peace and prosperity and a better order of things, then woe betide the Indian nation; for, if they succeed, there is not a shadow of doubt that her ancient civilization will disintegrate into a congeries of conflicting elements and the whole country will be plunged in almost irretrievable chaos. What is happening at our very doorstep, in Burma, Malaya, Indonesia, and China, must serve as a stern warning to all who hold the reins of national destiny in their hands.

The hour puts India on her trial. Can she respond to the challenge with an answer that is adequate?

No answer will be adequate which will attempt to solve the problems of disunity and hunger on the purely physical levels of politics and economics. No new political conceptions, no fresh legislative sanctions, no radical alteration of the national economy or the social architecture can by themselves provide a complete and stable answer to them. Institutional devices which do not articulate a sound philosophy and which do not rest upon the moral and spiritual convictions of the people at large will remain palliatives.

India, however, has an answer that is adequate. To fully grasp what it is we must recover the true sense of our tradition, which has well-nigh been obliterated in the minds of the modern educated by the teachings of the West. We are, therefore, led to enquire into the true character of this tradition which has given the complex Indian civilization a stability and permanence that is a source of universal wonder. A civilization could not have lasted for thousands of years if its foundations were unsound, or its basic premises false. It was not a survival decreed by fortuitous circumstances, ensuring her an islanded existence immune from the impact of outside forces. For all through her history she lay continually exposed to repeated invasions and challenging ideas. But she managed to swallow them all up and make them part of

her flesh and blood. Only in recent times has she shown any serious digestive trouble, which is in great part due to the fact that rulers and politicians mixed sand with her food. When the sand is removed and she is restored to her true old habits, her powers of assimilation will again surprise all given to gloomy prognostications. The discovery of the life-principle of eternal India will indicate how a true and integral solution of her manifold problems is to be achieved. More than that, there will be a world-wide repetition of the same to provide a firm rocky foundation for the vast superstructure of a World Order still to emerge.

II

It is (or it was?) one of the contentions of the British and those Indians who cannot understand anything Indian except by forcing it into the framework of Western theories that India lacked national consciousness and that she achieved a sense of political unity for the first time in history under the rule of Britain. There is a measure of truth in the former statement if we understand the term nation in the narrow political sense which the doctrine of the nation-state gave rise to in the nineteenth-century Europe and which remained so sacrosanct, until recent years, as the ultimate aim of a civilized community. We shall come to the question of Indian unity and her sense of nationhood later on. But we shall examine a little the question of political unity as a creation and gift of the British.

It is an indubitable historical fact that when the British arrived on the Indian scene, the country was a political melting pot. Britain succeeded, by means of her superior military might, administrative genius, and statecraft, in gradually imposing her will on the Indian people, who were bound together in the fetters of a common servitude. Even Burma was included in the steel frame of her administration. The question, however, is, what did the British aim at and what did they in fact

achieve? *Pax Britannica* held the people down in a common terror. Science and new methods of administration and new systems of education were introduced with the object of facilitating her exploitation of the Indian people commercially, and degrading and demoralizing her spiritually.

None can doubt that science and technology, new theories and methods of political and social organization, have come to improve the material aspect of Indian life. They were bound to come, for it was no more than a question of time. But India's temporary decline and loss of spiritual vigour sentenced her to a perhaps deserved term of political serfdom for centuries, before they would come. Hard blows were necessary to cure her of the fallacy of misplaced timelessness which made her cling to obsolescent forms and refuse to make fresh advances. But we were considering the question of political unity under the British.

This political unity, as we have seen, was no more than an administrative unity for convenience of exploitation. A common doom spurred a people who already possessed a sense of unity to a common desire for emancipation from a rule which was crushing them in every way. Britain, moreover, tried hard to destroy whatever sense of unity bound the Indians together. To cite some recent facts in proof of the same: The British partitioned Bengal to frustrate the emergence of a common political consciousness and to ensure that a people whom nature, geography, and culture made one and whole should disintegrate. Communal electorates were introduced with the object of widening those rifts which showed signs of closing up due to the operation of a healthy, natural process. They demilitarized vast sections of the Indian humanity to perpetuate the evils of caste and to divide and demoralize the people still further. The modern system of university education was started with the explicit intention of denaturing middle class Indians in

order that they might serve as willing tools of the machinery of exploitation. Christian missionaries were endowed with Indian money and given other facilities for the purpose of undermining the foundations of Indian culture and unity. And when the British quitted, the world witnessed what it had never before witnessed on the same scale and in the same degree, namely, the spectacle of a country united organically being cut up politically into a number of artificial parts. In the face of all these records of the policy of divide and rule and its inevitable aftermath, it is rather a little inaccurate for any one to claim that Britain achieved the political unity of India which had eluded the Indian people in the past.

The damage, however, that India has suffered culturally is deeper and far more serious than even this political enormity. Indian unity on the political plane will be achieved sooner or later. The political monstrosities springing from machiavellian statecraft and blind passion cannot long retain their artificial life, detached from real existential roots. Sentimental transfusion will not keep alive a creature lacking in real vitality. But the ground for the achievement of a real, durable union must be prepared by a positive policy of cultural integration which has to start from the dominant community. The social and religious prejudices which divide the Indian people must be levelled before we can hope for the emergence of a united nation. The way to do this must be fundamental, but it will be nothing new. We have only to recapture the true spirit of our tradition and put our faith in it. If we fail, we perish.

Atomistic political and economic thinking is already creating new types of antagonism in Indian society. We are fast developing a narrow temper and beginning to think in terms of little things of provinces, regions, groups, and classes. This is inevitable, for when our faith in deeper bonds wanes we become

inwardly crushed and put our entire trust in false realities and relative values. The quarrel over languages, provincial boundaries, and linguistic minorities and so on will develop into suicidal fights in the absence of an absolute standard by which to judge relative values.

The religious minorities present a most difficult problem, and curiously enough we tend to slur over it. The religious minorities cannot dwell apart from the main stream of Indian tradition without latent or manifest antagonism. They require to be integrated round a system of common fundamental values and absorbed in the main stream. Religion can never be cured in India. For the matter of that it will ever remain an incurable phenomenon in the world, however much some people might wish to see it disappear altogether. Such a possibility could have been envisaged in the nineteenth century in Europe when Christianity came under fire from Utilitarians, Biblical critics, Evolutionists, and Marxists. But the prevailing temper even in the 'scientific' West is different, and religion is going to survive there, for it is being recognized that its true foundations are in the human heart (*nihitam guhayam*). Since the religious urge is incurable and originates from some deep truth of man, the problem is how to deal with it in a scientific spirit.

The clue is provided by the Indian tradition which is not clearly understood even by many who tenaciously cling to many of its contingent applications. To a consideration of this we must now turn.

III

Every civilization reposes on some kind of traditional unity though the nature of the tradition may vary in different cases. The Indian tradition which may justly be termed as the Vedantic tradition is unique in this respect and does not partake of a religious character, using the term religion in its precise sense. Our civilization has grown out of a faith in an indeterminate, immutable Divine

Order behind the ups and downs of history. It is neither theistic, nor religious but metaphysical. Its source is metaphysical power and not a determinate religious experience. A comparison of it with other traditions will make this clear.

If we examine the character of the traditional unity of some of the great civilizations in the recent past, we shall discover that their traditional bonds were of a different nature. In Christendom and Islam the traditional unity was achieved by the recognition of a determinate form of religious experience and of a common religious authority which may be represented by a single individual as by the Pope in Catholicism or by a plurality of distinct functions as in Islam. Similar is the case with Judaism. Each of these religions is theistic, and each has a religious prophet without whom one cannot be saved. Their religious treatises are doctrinal in form. They all believe in a divine being with determinate characteristics and in the immortality of the determinate personality. In fact theism demands that the divine being must be determinate (*saguna*) in character.

In contrast to all these the metaphysical tradition of India maintains that nothing determinate or definite in character is immortal. No particular religious prophet is essential for salvation. It does not affirm the existence of a determinate divine factor in things, nor does it believe in the immortality of the determinate, differentiated personality. Reality is beyond all formulations of the relative mind, though there may be graduated interpretations of the same. It is always insisting that while scientific methods and logical reasoning may be very important for practical purposes they are of no use whatever to take one to knowledge which is metaphysically real.

This metaphysical tradition is known as the Vedantic tradition. In fact Veda means precisely Traditional Knowledge, independent of historical circumstances (*apaurusheya, shruti*). It can have infinite applications

according to changing situations (*smriti*). The essence of the tradition lies in a faith in an immutable divine factor in man and nature. This divine factor is the real truth of existence, and the historical process derives significance from man's attempt to realize and express the divine in and through it. All the great teachers of India have in one voice professed loyalty to this tradition. None has ever claimed to preach anything new. The concern of all has been to express it in the accents of the times in which they have appeared. This is given the most clear and emphatic expression in the *Gita*, where Sri Krishna says: 'I am the Subject of all Traditional Science, I am the Renewer of the Vedantic Tradition, and I am the knower of the Veda (*Vedaishcha sarvairahameva vedyo, vedantakrit vedavideva chaham*). Mahavira and Buddha did not, contrary to common belief, stand outside this tradition. But when real deviations were made from it by their followers, they suffered total eclipse in India. Buddha's fight was against a doctrinaire ritualism, so was Shankara's in part. Both sought to rescue the pure tradition from being submerged under the weight of a rigid formalism. Whereas nihilistic Buddhism failed, the positive Vedanta of Shankara succeeded.

This traditional knowledge is immutable and timeless in character and can be made manifest at any period by inspiration. This has been called *metaphysical power* by Swami Vivekananda who has given the broadest and most authoritative interpretation of Vedanta in modern times. Speaking of the problem of how the Divine One has become the Many, the Swami says, 'The only explanation must come from beyond the sense plane; we must rise to the superconscious, to a state entirely beyond sense perception. That *metaphysical power* is the further instrument that the idealist alone can use. He can experience the Absolute; the man Vivekananda can resolve himself into the Absolute and then come back to the man again. For him, then, the problem

is solved and secondarily for others, for he can show the way to others. Thus religion begins where philosophy ends. The "good of the world" will be that *what is now super-conscious for us, will in ages to come be the consciousness for all*. Religion is, therefore, the highest work the world has; because man has unconsciously felt this, he has clung through all the ages to the idea of religion.'

This is the promise of Vedanta and the key to the understanding of the real truth of religion. It is also a basis for religious harmony. Indian unity has rested and will rest upon this simple principle. All her history has been a consistent attempt to cling to this and bring this idea to the door of every child of the soil in a way suitable to its understanding. It is the spirit of Vedanta which has forged the invisible but imperishable bond of unity among the complex Indian peoples. It has had ups and downs in its mission, but has been ever renewed by inspiration. It is certainly bewildering for people accustomed to observing unity resting upon political and religious factors to understand how unity can be achieved simply by the inherent power of the traditional doctrine itself. But the fact remains that the Indian unity is a unity of a metaphysical order and does not rest upon any more or less exterior form of organization or upon the support of any authority other than the doctrine itself.

It is on the basis of this principle, actively pursued and not merely believed in, that we shall be able to meet the challenge of heresies which thrive on partial truths. The worldwide hunger for a new order, and the recent conceptions of social and economic justice, of human dignity and value, cannot be understood except as expressions and logical developments of the Vedantic idea. If we lose sight, in India, of this deeper unity of our civilization and seek solidarity through purely political methods, we shall frustrate the very end we are seeking. When Europe lost faith in its traditional bond of unity, Christendom broke

up into a number of nation States. Western culture came to lack a common principle. Toynbee has recently declared technology to be the distinguishing mark of the modern Western culture. This really means the absence of a principle which can serve as a vital bond of unity. Disunity, wars, and revolutions are the prices the West has had to pay for the pursuit of material progress and physical power as the primary aim of life. If our tradition is to be lost to us in the same way as it has been lost to the West, we shall also break up politically, for India, considered as a whole, is comparable more to the whole continent of Europe than to any single European State, not only because of her size and the numerical strength of her population but also because of the variety of languages, religions, and ethnical types to be found here. In fact such differences are far more numerous in India than elsewhere. This is no idle speculation, for already cries like Dravidistan, Sikhistan etc., however ridiculous they may seem for the moment, are in the air. . . .

If the Christian tradition has been lost to the West, what guarantee is there that the Indian tradition will not likewise be crushed by the panzers of the time spirit fast rolling towards the East? The guarantee lies in its universality. Christendom broke up because its tradition in the narrow religious form barred the march of science and freedom. This cannot be said of the Indian tradition, which is intellectual and scientific in the most precise sense of the term.

Cultural integration in India can only be achieved by absorbing the minorities into the main stream of Indian tradition. It has been done repeatedly in the past, it must be done again. But the process must not be conceived after the manner of the 'melting pot' theory, which envisages the fusion of all differences into a sort of homogeneous, featureless unity. This is the way of totalitarianism, whether religious, cultural, or political and is impracticable in the long run. It is enough for the

peoples of India to share certain fundamental values and objectives while retaining those aspects of their particular culture having value for them, or for the society as a whole. But intolerance and exclusive claims of religions must go. Religion is one, its expressions are different. Religions must conform to the dictates of the universal principle of reason. Our ideal has ever been a tapestry, rich with intertwined colours and designs of a variety of peoples and cultures rather than the melting pot in which all differences are boiled down to a uniform and glutinous mass.

The historical aim of our culture is to create conditions in society which will help every single individual to manifest the Divine in him. This is the sense of true human dignity. All hindrances to this achievement will have to go. What might have been a help in the past may be an obstacle today. Caste discrimination and segregation have become an enormity in our time, when we have the power to transform whole masses of men rapidly with the power science has put in our hands. Along with legislative measures and alteration of the social architecture, the ideal of Vedanta must be broadcast to all, for laws which do not originate in moral convictions remain inoperative. It is the heritage which belongs to every child born on the soil of this *punjabhumi*. All governmental measures must aim primarily at raising up the cultural level of the Indian masses, who are still whole and sound to the high level attained by the elect. Unity cannot be achieved among peoples given to different ways of thinking, feeling, and valuing. The primary aim of formal education everywhere is to induct the young into the culture of the society. Previously this task was performed in India by the extra-State activities and institutions of the community. Today they are either dead or dying. Can this vital aspect be neglected by the modern State in India? Can we contemplate with equanimity a policy which will deny the young an acquaintance, in schools

and colleges, with the most venerable and universal tradition the world has ever seen? If left to priests and women, spirituality will degenerate into superstitions, and breed fanaticism. The responsibility for the propagation of our cultural ideals must be shouldered by the leaders of the community. When this

is done and the country is flooded with the Vedantic ideas, India will emerge strong and united, not in the image of the nation States of the West, organized on competitive basis for the pursuit of power, but as a commonwealth realizing the best dreams of all idealists, whether in the East or the West.

BUDDHI AND BUDDHIYOGA

BY ANIRVAN

(Continued from the September issue)

XI

The gist of the matter then is this. Human nature, as we find it actually constituted, is dominated by a Will-to-Become whose final goal however does not appear in a clear light to the average consciousness. There is an urge towards self-exceeding which forms the keynote of all ideas of progression; but on the mental-vital plane, where the power of abstraction has not been sufficiently developed or is not commensurate with the power of projection, a certain amount of confusion seems to be the inevitable consequence of all human endeavours. Impelled by an inner drive towards domination and assimilation of the largest content of its objective field with the very limited means at its disposal, the mental-vital structure of the human organism usually loses its balance and succumbs to a chronic sense of indetermination which encroaches upon all its spheres of activities. Just as there is a chaotic imbalance in the domain of the emotion and the will clouding the present issue with the clamorous demands of crude and unregenerate vital impulses, so the horizons of the spiritual and the intellectual vision too appear blurred with the confusion created by religious cants and sophisticated ideologies. The general result of this turmoil is a sort of spiritual

bankruptcy in which the lamp of faith burns low turning the perspicuous intuition of the Beyond into a dull acquiescence in conventional truths, the memory becomes a mechanical device for endless repetitions of the vanities of superficial existence, and a clammy heaviness pressing down upon the consciousness damps all higher aspirations and bars the way to the illumination of a comprehensive concentration. If from this travail of Nature, anything emerges stark and strong, it is the Asura, the confrere of the Deva,¹ who stalks the field towering in his self-gorging greed and self-assertive might, his false glitter (*virochana*) dazing the sight of 'the many-too-many and the superfluous.' The Asura is either frankly asuric in his professions, preaching a gospel of undiluted materialism; or he poses unwittingly as the champion of the deva-cult. In the latter case, he is either an occultist, prostituting the ideal of the sacrifice (*yajna*) in his attempt to compel the Powers to minister to his vile end of self-aggrandizement; or he is a follower in the path of askesis (*tapas*) which in his delusion he turns into a cult of senseless self-mortification or a passion for miracle-mongering—all

¹ *Chhandogya Upanishad* I.2.i; VIII.7.ii; cf. *Gita* XIV.6.

inspired by a perversity and obduracy of the spirit (*asadgraha*), whose only aim is an insane pursuit of self-glorification even if it means misery and devastation for others.²

This marks the high-tide of the vitalistic achievement, which, because it is devoid of the clarity of a comprehensive vision and serene illumination, also creates for the average intellect a confusion of issues by parading a host of mutually contending dicta each asserting itself to be the only acceptable version of the true aim of existence and demanding the allegiance of reason to its particular dogma. The glamour of life lends a peculiar fascination to these specious philosophies, which blinds the human mind to the fact that all ideologies inspired by a positivistic outlook on existence, even though they might be supported by a bewildering array of plausible reasonings, are vitiated by what may be called an original defect of the lower Nature, viz. an apparently insurmountable limitation of her evolutionary urge which compels all her progressive movements either to describe a circle or at best a spiral, dominated by a rhythm of ebb and flow. The crude impulse of life is translated into passion in the domain of consciousness and gathers strength as it madly rushes on, but is inevitably spent up and sinks back often to a lower level without wholly achieving all that has been dreamed by it. This frustration brings but small gain to the human society as a whole compared with the vast amount of energy that has been put forth. The cult of the occult, whether it takes on a scientific or a so-called pseudo-scientific colouring, because it underlines the sensate values of the human mind, confuses man with the promise of an idea of progress that is intrinsically false; and because its generalizations are fundamentally based on the evanescent and the specious, it can never achieve the ideal of the all-comprehensive simplicity of the eternal truths, and so leaves the intellect

to lose its way in the maze of sophistications and speculative philosophies masquerading as new-found revelations. Religion then becomes a cloak for materialism, or materialism itself becomes a new form of religion, and rationality serves as a handmaid to crude vitalism. The malady is as old as civilization, and what the *Gita* describes in a phraseology suited to its particular social context is true to the conditions of the present day and will remain true for many days to come, until mankind is schooled by tribulations and sobered down to a saner and loftier outlook on the problems of life.

XII

As a remedy for this malady, the *Gita* from the very outset takes a most uncompromising attitude towards the whole problem. The background of a Kurukshetra, it points out, is formed not so much by material maladjustments as by the spiritual poverty of the individual and the social man.³ To seek power and enjoyment and the gratification of the instinct of megalomania is but natural to the vital mind; but a crisis is precipitated, when, for want of a true appraisal of spiritual values, the religious instinct of man can be prostituted for this purpose and the devil can quote scriptures to justify his own ends. The remedy lies not in turning society a-religious as man has sometimes been constrained to think, but in taking a scientific view of the whole thing and curing the psychological maladjustments that have been responsible for the crisis. Any form of religion that emphasizes the positivistic outlook on life, be its aspirations worldly or otherworldly, must be severely corrected by what may be called a cult of negation whose essential value is curative rather than destructive. It goes without saying that it means not the negation of Life as such, but rather the broadening of its base by discarding its surface-values. The

² *Gita* XVI.9,10,14,17; XVII.6.

³ Cf. *Gita* IV.7: *dharmasya glanir, abhyutthanam adharmasya.*

justification for this negative attitude lies in the fact that all ideas of real progress, if it is not to be a tardy mechanical process of inconscient Nature, must be based on the assumption of a psychological asset of the power of conscious projection which presupposes a power of withdrawal or gathering-in of the forces of being. The conative aspect of its process has been figuratively described by the Upanishadic philosophy as 'the intuned gaze of the seeker after Immortality,' while its cognitive aspect has been brought out by the well-known Sankhyan principle of discrimination which, by analyzing every complex of consciousness-movement into the polarity of subjectivity and objectivity, extricates, by a reversal of movement, the pure subject from the confusion of the subject-object whole of the natural being.

Now, this cult of introversion (*antara-vrittata*) and discrimination (*viveka*), in spite of its negative emphasis, does not contemplate a philosophy of denial or nihilism unless we choose it to be so. Broadly speaking, its positive gain for the psychological being may be said to be of a twofold nature. In the first place, it automatically induces a widening of the horizon of the inner vision which enables the subject to place the contents of his complex experience in a well-ordered relational whole inspired by a spirit of scientific detachment; and this, as modern psychology has rediscovered for the edification of the civilized society, means an introduction of the indispensable element of sanity into the pattern of human behaviour. In the second place, it envisages the economizing of the thought-forces by training the mind to think in terms of universals rather than of particulars, which raises the whole process of thinking to a higher psychological level, where the mind in its function of ratiocination can proceed from the direct perception of a comprehensive truth to the legitimate deduction of its particularized applications. For the intellect it means breathing in the free air of a few universal

truths of intrinsic value which have been secured for it by throwing overboard the age-long accumulations of jumbles and noxious stuffs. As a philosophical discipline, it stands for an integral perception of a total whole whose characteristics it derives not so much from inductively processing the particulars of experience as from evoking from the depth of the being a new instrumentation for the direct perception of the universal reals. It is herein that the process of introversion as a novel method of psychological investigation becomes an indispensable necessity.

The practical beginnings of the cult of negation lie in a serious attempt to live *beyond* the preoccupations of the habitual and the commonplace which are in most cases guided by motives of unregenerate vitalism. The natural man lives in a perpetual state of imbalance swayed by dualities (*dvanda*)⁴ of sensational, emotional, volitional character, the root-cause of which is in the inherently constricted sphere of his consciousness that can interpret all empirical contacts only in terms of an egoistic pursuit of a limited good. This is accentuated by the instinctive demands of the vital hunger which measures the fulfilment of life's purpose by the standard of the amelioration of sensuous living expressed in the widely propagated dictum: We must have and what we have we keep (*yogakshema*). It is of course a frank and brutal statement of the ageless cult of power and enjoyment which in psychological parlance will mean the satisfaction of the urges of the emotion and the will, and is as such only a natural function of our consciousness. As original forces of the being, emotion and will cannot be condemned outright for the simple reason that they have always prompted man to strive after the beyond by dynamizing his perceptions and

⁴ Spoken of in the *Gita* as *shatoshna*, *sukha-duhkha* and *icchha-dvesha*, all based on *matrasparsha* (II.14; VII.27). To these may be added the dualities caused at a higher level by the moral conflict of *sukrita-dushkrita* (II.50).

widening their scope.⁵ The search for the beyond in this sense can be construed as the attempt at unveiling the occult which man has sought to do by manipulating either the psychic forces as in some forms of religion or the material forces as in science. In both types of occultism, the idea of *yogakshema* has naturally loomed large in the unregenerate vital mind giving rise to a number of complicated problems of individual and social being to which it has been impossible for the ego-ridden consciousness to offer a complete solution, even if that ego has been magnified and exalted to the position of the bearer of 'a common will'. There is an intimate relation between the habitual imbalance created by the dualities of surface-living and the too common hankering after *yogakshema*; it may be said that the former constitutes the psychological motive of the latter and the two together form the source of all maladjustments from which human society is suffering. In recent times, the impulse of having and keeping has been dignified by the name of raising the standard of *physical* living, and in the context of a wide socio-political upheaval, it has got a certain amount of justification for its persistence for some time to come. But in the general clamour for rights, the sense of duty (*dharma*) which always carries with it the call for sacrifice (*yajna*) and can unhesitatingly be demanded of every individual as his most intimate and personal concern, has been allowed to wither away. Yet, it is the individual who can be looked upon as the real custodian of the social conscience and it is in him that any attempt at leading the

society out of the common rut can be intensified. So the cult of negation becomes his own personal *dharma*, a lone adventure of the spirit whose intrinsic worth is the only appeal to him. To ask the society as a whole to live beyond the preoccupation of the moment will appear as a preposterous demand: to a certain extent it will agree to try to live beyond the *dvandas* of passion and will, only to make decent social living possible; but to live beyond the idea of *yogakshema* is a horror of horrors to it, for has not experience taught it that it had to pay too dear a price for its emphasis on the cult of poverty and renunciation in the past?

Yet it is apparent to every thoughtful mind, that an over-emphasis on the positivistic outlook on life does not carry us very far as the trend of world-affairs for the last few decades has shown. Even if under completely changed circumstances, co-operation and mutual aid take the place of struggle and competition, that is to say, even if it is possible to erect a utopian superstructure of social justice and security by an ideal humanization of the methods of *yogakshema*, still we will be confronted by two problems. First, unless there is a radical change in human nature and the *asura* in it is transmuted into the *deva*, coercion in one form or other will be necessary to maintain the high ideal of social efficiency; and where there is a coercion, there always lurks the danger of frustration and retrogression. Secondly, if by some mysteriously happy means, we succeed in maintaining our utopia by ensuring a complete and harmonious satisfaction of the possessive instinct in man, we must make an outlet for his creative instinct; or in other words, the vital hunger being appeased, the creative urge must be given a full play lest we allow the life-impulse to stagnate and so run the risk of courting atavism. But then, every form of creative activity presupposes, as the ancients would say, a modicum of *tapas*—a spirit of sacrifice (*yajna*) and in-gathering of forces

⁵ The urge really comes from the Supreme Person (*parah purushah*) enshrined in our corporeal being as *bhokta maheshvara*, in whom power and enjoyment have found their supreme fulfilment. But in the spiritual evolution of the *Jiva*, this status represents the last of a series, viz. *upadrashta*, *anumanta* and *bharta* (Gita XIII.23). Real power and enjoyment can come to the individual only when the successive steps beginning from the status of the witness-consciousness (*upadrashta*) have been realized.

(*ni-vritti*), which are essentially human characteristics that distinguish man from brutes. Thus, even to make the ideal of *yogakshema* work with efficiency and security, we must at the last resort teach ourselves to live beyond the idea of *yogakshema*. And if, in the present context of human affairs, it is idle to expect a universal application of the principle of *nairyogakshema* (living above the hankering after having and keeping), still it is incumbent on the few individuals of discernment and vision to keep its fire burning in their life with the firm conviction that the *tapasya* of these *agnihotris* for realizing the combined ideal of the true uplift (*abhyudaya*) and the highest good (*nishreyasa*) of the human society can never go in vain, since, in spite of the official condemnation of the cult of negation as a piece of outworn medievalism, it represents an original urge deep-rooted in human nature, which must obey its dictates to make all its ideas of progression truly fruitful.

But the cult of negation, as has already been hinted at, aims at something positive, and positive in the real sense of the term. This positive ideal that is to be sought by withdrawing ourselves from the preoccupations of *dvanda* and *yogakshema*, has been described by the *Gita* as the status of an innate and immutable essentiality (*nityasattva*) and of selfhood (*atma*). From an analytic point of view, the former will represent the sole characteristic of what the *Gita* calls *para prakriti*, the matrix of pure individuality,⁶—as distinguished from the modal formulations of the lower Nature or *apara prakriti*; while the latter will of course stand for the conception of pure *Purusha*—the principle of Witness-Consciousness in which the illumination of the Cosmic and the Transcendent is a normal

⁶ *Nityasattva* is also known as *Shuddhasattva*, or as the Yoga system puts it, *sattvaparakarsha*, the specific attribute of God which is the source of His divine Knowledge and Activity (cf. *Tattvavaisharadi* on *Yogasutrabhashya* I.24).

potency. Coming to the ordinary level of empirical existence, if we seek to determine its values in terms of consciousness, we shall find that life has taken a decisive step in its evolutionary progress when it has changed consciousness into *self-consciousness* and has thus secured a better chance of gaining mastery over its environments by its capacity of translating objective facts into subjective values. This presupposes in the force of consciousness an inherent power of introversion and concentration, which though it does not acquire a distinctive prominence in our normal state of conscious living, yet forms its substratum and directive force, and at a certain stage of the evolution of the inner being can be made to follow its independent line of development. The culmination of introversion lies in a self-sufficiency of inner living,⁷ which is in man the criterion of a true spiritual growth; and in the attendant phenomenon of habitual concentration which a reversal of the force of being must bring about, the force of consciousness is intensified and a state of permanent wakefulness is attained which, though it may not have a content of distracting objectivity to maintain the conscious level as in our normal waking state, is nevertheless flooded by an illumination penetrating into the *essence* of the subjective and the objective orders of Reals and disclosing their inalienable inner identity. Though described as a form of immediate perception, still the content of this experience is not simply a pure staticity, but is 'a homogeneous thrill' of the silent symphony of a realized Will and a spontaneous Self-delight. The cult of negation, urged by an inner necessity of the evolving consciousness, as much seeks to divest it from the inertia of *tamas* as from the flutter of *rajas* natural to an extrovert existence and points to this illumination of *nityasattva* lighting up the indeterminable Void of the Supreme Selfhood

⁷ Cf. *Gita* III.8.

whose infinitude is at once the convergence and transcendence of all boundless finitudes of spiritual experience.

XIII

To live beyond the dualities of sensation, passion, and will in the calmness of an inner freedom and equanimity, and in one's external relations to keep oneself uncontaminated by the cravings of acquisition and possession, or in a wider sense, to live beyond the fluctuating modulations of the lower Nature which may encroach upon and exploit even the religious instinct in man; and as a positive complement of this cult of negation, to be poised in the inalienable dynamism of an essential illumination radiating from the shining core of the inner Self,—this then is the high ideal set before us, the realization of which is held out to be the unique factor conducive to the deliverance of the human soul from the 'great fears' that beset it.

But the question may arise: Cannot the lure of the Beyond be an irresistible vortex engulfing the being and making a return to the surface impossible? Considered logically, are not the immobility of self-poise and the dynamism of essential illumination two contradictory concepts? A tradition has grown up through the ages which has answered the above questions in the affirmative, taking its stand still on the natural dichotomizing function of the mind, which must deal with a total reality by splitting it into two components of thesis and antithesis and then concentrating itself upon one of the two. An integral Reality has thus been viewed under the dual aspects of passivity and activity, qualitative modulation and its absolute denial, unity and manifoldness, being and becoming, and even the extremest conceptual opposites of being and non-being. An acceptance of one aspect has commonly meant the rejection of the other, though integral realization repeatedly insisted upon the harmonious blending of all opposites in the totality of a comprehensive vision: the Potent and its Potency, the Void and its

Manifestations in an infinite plenitude of forms and modes, are but the diverse aspects of the one and same Real whose content can never be exhausted by any sort of affirmation or denial,⁸ even the Nihilist losing himself in the supreme height of absolute negation has been constrained to affirm the identity of the Becoming (*bhava*) and the Void (*nirvana*) as the uttermost of his subjective experience. This supreme and comprehensive synthesis is supported not only by the metaphysical reason which, to give the completest account of Existence, must subsume all modes of Reals under one Reality; but it is also proved in the characteristic status of the man of realization known in Indian mysticism as *jivanmukti* or the liberation of the living, in which there is a complete harmony between the status of the *brahmic* consciousness and its spontaneous energism (*brahma-karma-samadhi*).⁹ This synthesis is apparent even in our normal consciousness, whose functioning is, after all, a reflection of the consciousness of the Supreme and on whose modular renderings all systems of Indian philosophical thinking have been built. The human mind, whose incessant activity or restlessness has attained such notoriety among spiritual seekers, nevertheless contains at every moment of its functioning an element of witness-consciousness forming its background and directive force. The sense-mind which like all other senses is an extremely sensitive instrument responding to the confused mass of external and internal stimuli, is only a part of the total psychical apparatus; Indian psychology speaks of *buddhi*, even in its fluctuating form of *prakritic* modulation, as forming its better part and supplying to the being a core of personality (*sattva*) which assumes the role of a director of the *jiva*-consciousness. A

⁸ So Sri Ramakrishna would often say in answer to the disputes about the nature of the ultimate Reality: 'But He is with form, as also without form; and who knows what else He is?'

⁹ *Gita* IV.24.

deepening of this force of personality whose natural tendency is towards a calm deliberation born of a wideness of vision not generally vouchsafed to the sense-mind, means for the human organism a stable security of status from which a successful ordering of the empirical field is possible. And this is nothing but an avenue to the status of the integral *brahma*-consciousness whose absolute immobility is the axle-point that communicates its inexhaustible energy to the eternal dynamism of cosmic manifestations.

Though activity and passivity are thus harmoniously wedded together in an integral experience, we must be on guard on one important point. It has become fashionable of late to explain the message of the *Gita* as an exclusive call to activity, perhaps seasoned at times by a sprinkling of humanitarian motives, just as an emphasis had been laid upon it in the past as a gospel of purely personal liberation. May be, we have caught the contagion from the feverishly dynamic character of the young West; and if the present world-wide commotion is but a prelude to the opening up of a new chapter in human civilization bearing a significance of wider application and deeper content, then this outburst of dynamism is justifiable as a means of letting loose many hitherto untapped and pent-up forces. But the dance of force must be the Dance of Shiva and not the dance of a demoniacal host. Knowledge is Power, but Power does not necessarily mean Knowledge; there is no gain to human progress in a dogmatic affirmation of a philosophy of Power or Activity, just as there is no illumination in the Realism of the man in the street even if that be raised to the rank of an academical system. Their only value lies in a protest against the inertia of living and thinking which the decadence of ages brings in; but the worth of their contribution to the assessment of the real values of being as a whole suffers by prejudice and a wrong emphasis on the aim of existence. The philosophy of *karma* cannot stand by

itself even if it be inspired by the best altruistic motive, unless it has struck roots in the soil of *jnana*, and its ideologies are derived from a direct perception of the ultimate Real. Since *karma* can be imitated, so its philosophy also can be widely propagated, though necessarily with uncertain results; but the cult of *jnana* is specifically an individual concern and as yet we have not been able to discover any universal means for its communication except with the help of language, which is, however, not a perfect medium for the conveyance of the real meaning of a subjective experience,—especially when that experience is above the threshold of normal experiences that have so far been possible to make socially intelligible. The only means of removing this bar, (the occult means being of course excepted), lies in perfecting the *vyanjanashakti* or the power of suggestivity of language and this presupposes the creation of a charged atmosphere of the social mind whose hypersensitiveness might easily dispense with the dull and cumbrous means of mutual communication. But the social mind can be raised to such a pitch only by the age-long labours of the individuals, of the chosen few whose lonely adventures into the beyond bring not only the fulfilment of an indomitable longing for personal liberation but also a promise of the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth by an uplifting impact on the social mind (*atmano moksho jagaddhitam cha*). India's preoccupation with the Beyond and its attendant cult of negation which have almost assumed the character of a national trait, thus attain a significance of worldwide application; and if today, in the same context, the call to *karma* as a means of social cohesion and solidarity is growing increasingly insistent, the call to *buddhi* as a means of probing the depths of the inner being and discovering the true nature of the universal individual becomes no less insistent,—unless we choose to delude ourselves with our imperfect and biased understanding of the grand message of the *Gita*.

It is easy and even commendable to turn it into a gospel of *disinterested* social service; but that is only a means to an end,—the end being, as the *Gita* succinctly puts it, the self-purification (*atmashuddhi*) of an aspirant after Yoga.¹⁰ Everywhere the emphasis lies on the achievement of the individual, even if that has ultimately to be changed into a socially useful commodity. Disinterestedness

¹⁰ *Gita* V.11.

per se must have its point of origin in an intense interest in the harmonic expression of the Pure Self; otherwise it runs every risk of being turned into a mechanical affair obeying the laws of crowd-psychology and thus being exploited by a social or political dictatorship whose morals are inspired by a passion of the moment or a superficial estimate of the values of human life.

(*To be concluded*)

SOME IMPRESSIONS OF THE AMERICAN TOUR

BY C. P. RAMASWAMI AIYAR

A few months ago, I undertook a tour in North and South America and had the opportunity to meet many men and women that count in political, social, and literary life. Some of these had taken part in the administration of the country and had dealt with the problems of the New Deal and other baffling questions that confronted President Wilson and President Roosevelt. Others had detached themselves from the hurly-burly and the games of politics which, by the way, does not attract the most significant people of the United States. In spite of such detachment, all of them have, naturally, followed with increasing and anxious interest the developments of American life and thought. Persons like Pearl Buck, Mrs Norman, Louis Fischer, Upton Sinclair, George Creel, Lin yu Tang, and Walter Lippmann are not politicians in the narrower sense, but what they see and foresee are matters of utmost moment.

South America differs from the United States in that the intelligentsia are participants in the often-times hectic politics of their several countries, and at a gathering of the PEN in New York it was pointed out with pride that some prominent poets, novelists, and historians in places like Venezuela, Colombia, Brazil, and Chile have been in the forefront of public life. It struck me that perhaps the rapid fluctuations and vicissitudes

of political fortunes exercise a compelling attraction on people with artistic temperament, especially of the Latin races. Furthermore, the inter-mixture of the Spanish and the Portuguese with the Anglo-Saxon elements has perceptibly modified the pace of industrial achievement and, at the same time, saved the South Americans from those alternations of feverish and restless business activity and deep self-questioning which have recently characterized the North American Continent.

The phenomenal expansion of material prosperity, the pervasive developments of mass production, mass distribution, mass propaganda, mass journalism, and mass enjoyment operating through the agency of great monopolies and combines may be said to be the main feature of American existence. But already the idea is impinging itself on the American consciousness of the possible exhaustion of its natural resources and possibilities, however, vast they may have been, and some of the most prominent personalities are doubting the validity of maxims that were until recently accepted without question, especially those relating to the fundamentals of technological civilization. Some of the propositions that are being openly advanced are that an economy based on competitive struggle for profit cannot avoid periodic depressions and, as a conse-

quence, in the present circumstances, total wars. This shadow of depression often results in cynicism and escapism and, more than once, expression has been given to the feeling that this tempo of life is an obstacle to human unfoldment and development. What a Latin poet called *tedium quotidianarum formarum* (disgust over day to day happenings) is overcoming many thoughtful individuals. No better description of the prevailing discontent can be imagined than the following lines of Siegfried Sassoon :

Chained to the wheel of progress uncontrolled
World-masters with a foolish frightened face
Loud speakers, leaderless and sceptic souled
Aeroplane angels crashed from glory and grace
Deliver us from ourselves.

Generally speaking, the American men are, most of the time, inescapably busy and preoccupied and do not give themselves adequate time even for sleeping and eating, so intent are they in making money or devising means for earning it. In effect, intellectual and social life is largely guided and represented by the women of America. In the second place, in the un-ending quest for relaxation and relief, the psychological and spiritual prescriptions, many of them bogus or fraudulent, are resorted to. The individualistic civilization itself produces a reaction, and in moments of leisure, such as they are, the American man and woman tend to become more obviously gregarious than people of other countries. The Masonic ritual, the Rotary movement, groups like the Royal Elks, and clubs and gatherings of various sorts are more elaborately original and spectacular in their character than anywhere else. Moreover, every religious or mystic propaganda gets a more ready hearing there than anywhere else.

Before leaving for America, I re-read some of the inspiring letters of Swami Vivekananda which, to me, are even more revealing and helpful than many of his formal public pronouncements. Writing from Detroit in 1894 to an American friend, the Swami stated,

'This assertion of spiritual independence, this proving that man is not a machine, is the essence of all religious thought.' And he added. 'It is the tendency to bring everything to the level of a machine that has perhaps given to the West its wonderful prosperity and it is this which is thrusting away all religion from its doors. Even the little that is left, the West has reduced to a systematic drill.' Again, writing from Chicago, the Swamiji observed, 'America is, no doubt, the paradise of the poor and of women. Poverty, as we know it, is non-existent here and nowhere else in the world are women so free and cultured. They are everything in society.' In another letter, the Swamiji emphasized, 'The secret of success of the Westerner is the power of organization and combination. That is only possible with mutual trust and co-operation.' In the above passages, the Swamiji has really summarized the essential features of America as he saw it. But since his days, there has come about an accentuation of the problem in the United States. Prosperity and well-being have attained their climax. There is no comparison in the standards of life between America and any other country in the world. Nevertheless, wherever you go, there is a feeling of helpless rushing and a general bewailing over their own self-centeredness and a lack of unawareness not only of anticipated crises but of the heights and the depths of existence. At the same time, there is no desire to modify the present standard of living, and the dread of all forms of Marxism is most marked.

It is the longing for restfulness and a hankering for some authentic world message that produced what, to an Indian, was an unbelievably miraculous upsurge of feeling on the occasion of the assassination of Gandhiji. Men and women of all stations of life went about feeling that they had lost one who was very near to their souls and one whose message of peace was essential to the world. Practically every one lamented the absence of any authentic seer or leader in the Western world

which had so much and which yet lacked, according to them, the one thing that matters, namely, the essentials of mental and spiritual poise. What Swami Vivekananda said about men being too busy to educate themselves is repeated in other words and poignantly felt.

Having said so much, it is nevertheless impossible to forget that freedom of life and of expression, often carried to excess, is the main feature of American life. There is practically no barring of free thought and action of an individual. And further, the American capacity to pool their activities is remarkable. Drawing a contrast between American and Indian conditions, Vivekananda once said: 'Three men in India cannot act in concert for five minutes. Each one struggles for power and, in the long run, an organization comes to grief. When will we learn not to be jealous of each other?' And again, 'We, as a nation, have lost our individuality and we have to give back to the nation its lost individuality and raise the masses.' A great deal has been done in India since his days and the reproach is not so deserved now as it once was; but in these directions and in most matters relating to the encouragement of real talent and the faculty of organization. America has still, with all the drawbacks of an over-mechanized civilization, great lessons to teach us. Its Universities, its centres of research, and its cooperative and industrial groups and its untiring philanthropy are models for the world. Not long ago, in the course of a criticism of Francois Mauriac's *Journal*, it was stated in the *Times Literary Supplement*, 'The chief awareness of the contemporary mind, for all its exteriorization in science, technical achievement and the material mastery of man's environment is of individual loneliness, of the islanded, the pent, the unapproachable self.' Pascal, the great French seer, and a Tamil sage have almost in identical language expressed the fundamentals of peace in picturesque terms thus: 'The wretched-

ness of man comes from the fact that he cannot stay quietly by himself in a room.' Thus, in ultimate analysis, India and America have to learn a great deal from each other and to teach a great deal to each other.

And I found to my infinite satisfaction, the important task of promoting and diffusing mental peace and restfulness is being carried out with enthusiasm and comprehension by the band of men who are the inheritors of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda tradition. The Theosophical Society originated in the United States, but it has perhaps a greater hold now in South America than in the North. But from San Francisco and Los Angeles and other countries in California, through Chicago and St. Louis to New York, Providence, and Boston in the east, the Ramakrishna Mission Centres, under the guidance of dedicated souls, are doing unostentatious work, the value of which it is impossible to exaggerate. Each Centre has attracted to itself a group of men and women who devotedly participate in systematized life and mutual instruction and social service and the study of Indian philosophy and religion. As centres of humanitarian and religious work bereft of all fanaticism or intolerance or assumption of superiority, these Centres are, in spite of the comparative fewness of their numbers, an object lesson in the saving grace of the Indian approach to the problems of this life and of *karma* and deliverance. They are a living vindication of the belief that no cult or religion can or need be exalted over any other and that the essentials of the Hindu faith are consistent with the fundamentals of all the great creeds of man. By their catholicity, freedom from narrowness, and constant efforts towards reconciliation of the problems of this world and of the future, they embody and preach a gospel essential and adequate to the hurrying and tormented souls of this generation.

THE GITA AND THE PROBLEMS OF A REPRESENTATIVE MAN

BY SWAMI PAVITRANANDA

The *Gita* is the most popular of the Hindu scriptures. It is perhaps the most widely circulated religious book of the world, if we leave the *Bible* out of account. But whereas the circulation of *Bible* has been backed by propaganda, the *Gita* has made its own way everywhere because of its supreme intrinsic merit. The question naturally arises, What is the reason of the vast popularity of the *Gita*? Is it because the *Gita* is the Word of God? Is it because the *Gita* was told by Sri Krishna, who is regarded by many as an Incarnation of Divinity on earth? Well, there are persons whose veneration for Sri Krishna is not as high as that of the orthodox Hindus, but still they are admirers of the *Gita*. It is universally admitted that the *Gita* had a great influence over the life and writings of Emerson, but did he regard Sri Krishna as an *Avatar*? Even in India there are many persons who do not believe in the descent of God on earth but still they love the *Gita* like anything.

The popularity of the *Gita* cannot be attributed to its high philosophy even. For there are many other books famous for their high philosophy, as for instance, the *Brahma Sutras*, but they are not so popular. The *Gita* is called the essence of the *Upanishads*; but the *Upanishads* are not as popular as the *Gita*.

It is said that in the understanding of a book, the reader and the author meet half way. A book, in order to be popular, must be able to awaken the interest of the readers. As every book cannot interest every reader, it cannot be so popular. That book which appeals to the largest number of readers, is most popular. A book, in order to be very popular, must have a universal appeal. This characteristic is greatly found in the *Gita*. It has got a universal appeal. While reading this book,

everybody finds that some of his doubts are solved. If one reads it carefully and with devotion, he feels as if the *Gita* was spoken for him specially—so much light he gets from it.

It is for this reason that the *Gita* has got so many commentaries—perhaps the largest number of commentaries as far as Hindu scriptures are concerned. It is said that religious leaders in India, if they want to establish a new philosophy, must find out their new theories from the *Gita*, the *Upanishads*, and the *Vedanta Sutras*, and so they invariably write commentaries upon them. But it cannot be said that all the extant commentaries of the *Gita* arose that way. A better explanation for so many commentaries of the *Gita* is, perhaps, that as a new man found a new light from the book, he could not contain himself with the joy of that new discovery and felt a desire to preserve that for posterity and wrote his own commentary. In this way, one after another, commentaries were written, till at present one is bewildered to find out from them the right meaning of the *Gita*. The solution of this difficulty will be that every one should read the book independently of any commentator and see how the book appeals to him. Thus, while the intellectual gladiators will be fighting over the meaning of a particular verse or word, one will surely find infinite benefit from the book. For, what matters if the explanation that a reader gives to a particular verse does not fall in with the orthodox view of it—if only he derives the strength of life from that? In everyday life also it is found that when something is said, it appeals to different persons in different ways. Why should not that be true even of the *Gita*?

If we take any verse of the *Gita*, we can easily find how different interpretations can be

put on it by different persons under different circumstances. Let us take, for instance, the verse which describes the grief of Arjuna at the sight of his relatives arrayed in the battle-field. He says :

*Drishtvemam svajanam Krishna yuyutsum
samupasthitam*

Sidanti mama gatrani mukham cha parishushyati.

The literal translation of the verse is : 'Seeing, O Krishna, these, my kinsmen, gathered here, eager for fight, my limbs fail me, and my mouth is parched up.'

Now this might express the feeling of a man, who is seized with compassion at the prospect of bloodshed that is to be committed in the battle ; it might as well figuratively express the feeling of one who is in despair when faced with obstacles in the battle of life and wants to find lame excuses for his inability to be equal to the situation. It may also be told by one who meets with opposition from his dearest and nearest friends in pursuing an ideal. Christ said : 'Thy foes shall be of thy own household.' Sometimes one finds that the greatest obstacle comes from one's household, in following Truth ; one finds oneself in a tragic situation to make a choice between Truth and one's nearest friends. In such circumstances, an average man, finding it difficult to cut himself from the love of his relatives and friends, gives up the love of his ideal and cries in despair, 'Seeing the kinsmen standing in opposition, my limbs fail me, and my mouth is parched up.' The same verse might be an index to the thought of one who has given up the world and become a recluse. To him the word 'kinsmen' means his senses. The 'senses' drag him down and do not allow him to rise to a higher level of thought. He has to cut the Gordian knot of subduing the senses or he has to give up his search for God. As he finds it difficult to do the former, he cries in grief, 'My limbs fail me and my mouth is parched up.'

The starting-point of the *Gita* is that

Arjuna—a warrior, a hero—is suddenly seized with compassion in the battle-field and refuses to fight. This compassion is believed to be the guise of Arjuna's fear. Nowadays—about three thousand years after the battle of Kurukshetra—even a child laughs at the discomfiture of a warrior like Arjuna, that he should be so much given to fear and cowardice. But here lies the greatness of Arjuna in one sense. For, of all the people arrayed in the battle-field, Arjuna had a discriminating mind—he had the sharp intellect to weigh the pros and cons of the battle ; he alone thought deeply what the battle really meant. While Yudhishtira was simply following the customary code of conduct for a prince, while Bhima was, perhaps, moved by a consuming desire to wreak vengeance for the insult meted out to Draupadi, and while others, perhaps, simply followed the lead of the situation, Arjuna alone probed deeply into the matter and had the courage to say he would not be a party to the ghastly crime of killing the kinsmen. Very often it is said that Arjuna came prepared for the battle, why should he give way at the eleventh moment ? Well, that is no argument. One may give up an action even being advanced far in it, if it is found not right to proceed further.

It is said that in life one must be constantly discriminating if one seeks spiritual welfare. One qualification for a spiritual aspirant is that he must have great discrimination. Arjuna had that and hence it was that the *Gita* was told to him and to nobody else—not even to Yudhishtira, the son of Dharma. Now, in life, occasionally we find that however much we may be thinking we find no solution ; arguments are balanced against arguments. We are thrown into despair—we find ourselves helpless. Well, help from God comes only when we really feel helpless. The strength from God comes when we are altogether broken in life—broken in health, wealth, in all earthly hopes. When our hopes are shattered, when love betrays

or trust proves treacherous—when we are surrounded on all sides by grim darkness, well, when the very earth seems to slip away from under our feet—in that condition only we can completely surrender ourselves to the feet of God and seek refuge in His arms.

Such a tragic situation came in the life of Arjuna and so he was given the Light from Heaven. He says: 'With my nature overpowered by weak commiseration, with a mind in confusion about duty, I supplicate Thee. Say decidedly what is good for me. I am Thy disciple. Instruct me who have taken refuge in Thee.' Fancy! Arjuna surrenders so much to a friend—for Sri Krishna was only his friend—and wants to be his *disciple*. This gives a clue to the depth of the anguish of his mind. It is said of St. Ignatius that there came an occasion in his life when he was ready to fall at the feet of a cat even, if thereby Light could be found. If it be the will of God, help may come even from dust, and earnest prayer to Him is sure to bring its result. And Arjuna's friend gradually revealed Himself as the very Creator, Preserver, and Destroyer of the universe.

Arjuna represents a typical man, a true representative of humanity. As such his questions to Sri Krishna cover all the questions that might be pressing upon the mind of any man in life. If we read the *Gita* from the beginning to the end, we find that Arjuna's questions are beautiful as Sri Krishna's answers are valuable. As we said, Arjuna's was a discriminating mind—a questioning mind, and he draws out from Sri Krishna the answers for all the questions that might perplex the mind of any man.

The first question is whether Arjuna should fight, i.e. whether he should work. Then, if knowledge is better than work, why should one choose the more risky one? Then, there is a third path—quite different from that of knowledge and work—the path of Yoga, which might be easier than either of the two, pre-

viously mentioned. Then, how to control the mind? What becomes the future of a man who fails in his spiritual pursuit which he has undertaken at such a tremendous cost? Then, what is the condition after death and how to meet death? Step by step Sri Krishna also rises to the height of the situation and, incidentally, by telling of his *vibhuti* tries to bring conviction to Arjuna as to the truth of his words. But Arjuna is not to be satisfied so easily. He has doubt—and an honest doubt is the source of discovering truths—and so he cleverly asks Sri Krishna, what is the credential that all he says is true. This doubt Arjuna very nicely puts, when he says: 'If, O Lord, Thou thinkest me capable of seeing it, then, O Lord of Yogis, show me Thy immutable Self.' And the Light of the Universal Form (*visvarupa*) bursts upon him, till he can contain himself no longer. Arjuna is convinced that whom he considered as a friend only is no other than God Himself. Is it not significant that the chapter on *visvarupa* is followed by the chapter on *Bhakti*? Arjuna—a friend, turns into a devotee, and after some more light he has got as to the conduct of life, he says: 'Destroyed is my delusion, and I have gained my memory through Thy grace, O Achyuta; I am firm; my doubts are gone. I will do Thy word.' Now beginning with the word 'I will not fight my relatives' and ending in 'My delusion is broken and I will do Thy word,' Arjuna's utterances represent the psychological process through which a man passes before he realizes God and solves the riddle of life.

As we said, Arjuna represents a typical man and his questions are the questions of humanity at large. Now what are the questions that come uppermost in any man's life? These are: (1) How to meet life? (2) Is there any Truth or Reality behind the universe? (3) What are the means of realizing Truth? (4) Are they within the reach of an average man? (5) What is the goal of human life? Now, the *Gita* furnishes satisfactory

answers to all the above five problems of human life.

Of the first problem the solution of the *Gita* is that one should boldly meet the circumstances of one's life. One should not complain of the circumstances, but any situation should be turned into a tool for building one's spiritual life. Only an idler says that he would have acquitted himself better, if circumstances would not stand against him. Any circumstance is good enough to the bold. The *Gita* again and again emphasizes the need of following one's *swadharma*. Objectively it might mean that one should try to bring out as much as possible out of the circumstances in which one is placed. Subjectively it means that one should be true to oneself: a brahmin by nature should not hanker after the duties of a *kshatriya*, nor a *kshatriya* should ape a brahmin. In the world how many lives are ruined because of a wrong choice of vocation? When it is too late to return, persons find they are misfits in the profession they have chosen. The *Gita* tries to avert that tragedy and says that the Lord has divided humanity into four classes—*brahmana*, *kshatriya*, *vaishya*, and *shudra*—and each man should do the duties demanded by his own temperament. That is the only way to peace and happiness as also to salvation. This solution is so much in line with modern psychological theories. The greatest problem of education also is to find out for what work a child is most fitted by temperament; that found out, the child should be given freedom to grow in its own way. The greatest benefit will accrue to individuals, to society, and the world, if everybody can follow *his* or *her* line of action. The *Gita* foresaw the danger if the reverse were the case. Are not many chaos of the world attributable to the fact that man does not follow his own *dharma*?

As to whether there is a Reality or an Everlasting Existence behind the universe, the *Gita* does not enter into any controversy.

It takes for granted that there is—that the Atman is immortal, absolute, and indestructible. And this Atman is kindred with or the same as (as the monist will say) Brahman. For this, the *Gita* offers no reason. If one disputes the point, one finds no reply from the *Gita*. Is the *Gita* dogmatic on this point? Well, one who has fulfilled the conditions that are required of a spiritual aspirant, does not doubt the existence of a Reality behind the universe; to him the existence of God or Brahman, or whatever you call It, is a foregone conclusion. The *Gita* speaks to that man. And one strange thing. Such is the atmosphere of the *Gita* that if even an atheist reads the *Gita*, not from religious point of view but simply for the poetry of it, he is sure, after some days, to believe in the existence of God; for him, then, the problem will be how to realize God.

Now, what does the *Gita* say to this?—how to realize God? There has been much controversy from time immemorial as to what is the exact teaching of the *Gita*—is it *karma*? Is it *bhakti* or *jnana*? Some have said that *jnana* only, according to the *Gita*, is the way to God-realization and they interpret the verses that stand in the way of establishing their theory in their own way, however crude may be the attempt. Similar have been the attempts of those who belong to the school of *bhakti* or believe in *karma* alone. Now-a-days many are of opinion that the *Gita* is emphatic on *karma* and does not advocate the renunciation of *karma*, and relying on this theory they decry those who give up the world for the sake of God. Can we not apply the rule of *swadharma* even to those who renounce the world, if they are sincere? Indeed *karma* is the word which has been used the largest number of times in the *Gita*. But *karma* does not always mean *karma yoga*—*karma* can be done in the spirit of *karma yoga*, *bhakti yoga*, or even *jnana yoga*. And the worst is that those who nowadays loudly say that *karma* is the only teaching of the *Gita*

do not care to see the methods by which, according to the *Gita*, works should be done. They follow wheresoever their desires lead them—and when the question arises as to the rightness of their attitudes in life they try to hoodwink themselves as well as the world by saying that they are doing work on which the *Gita* is so insistent. Well, the way in which works should be done, if one is to follow the teachings of the *Gita*, requires the discipline of an ascetic life and not the happy-go-lucky attitude of a religious dilettante. But very few people consider that, while citing the authority of the *Gita*. It was for this reason that Swami Vivekananda said in great anguish, 'Well, you all ape to be Janakas of the modern age, whereas in fact you are simply *janakas* (fathers) of children.' It is doubtful whether the *Gita* insists on only one path alone as the means of realizing Truth. Verses can be found which equally emphasize *karma*, *bhakti*, *jnana*, or *yoga*. Why should we take for granted that the *Gita* has got only a single theme? Arjuna being a representative man, the Lord showed him all the paths that will lead to God, so that each man may choose his own. And Arjuna also wanted to know, we may say, of all the paths, so that he might find which would suit him most. This attitude, we think, will, for ever, stop the controversy that has been raised round the teachings of the *Gita*, and thus give better scope to one for one's spiritual practices and speedy success. If we agree that the *Gita* teaches the harmony of the four yogas we can easily deduce that it teaches the harmony of all the religions. For, some religions, we find, are philosophical, some ritualistic, whereas some emphasize devotion. Hence doubt arises as to which is the best religion. Preachers of many religions very often raise the smoke and fume of controversy by saying that theirs is the only way to salvation and that other religions are either wrong or less likely to be able to lead a man to Light. Well, if a man, by following his *swadharma*,

i.e. by following the path either of *karma*, or *bhakti*, or *jnana*—may realize Truth, a man by following the lead of any religion also may ultimately reach the goal of life. Thus the *Gita* offers a great solution to the many religious controversies of the present age.

Many might think that the above might be the way to realizing Truth, but they are not within the possibility of all. A man very naturally feels diffident that with so many weaknesses that are in him, he is not likely to attain the grace of God. But the *Gita* is a gospel of hope for all. It is emphatic on the point that the first condition of realizing God is that one should have self-confidence (*shraddha*). According to the *Gita*, *shraddhavan labhate jnanam*—'a man of faith attains the knowledge.' The echo of this we find in Swami Vivekananda when he says one must have faith in oneself first and then in God—for a man without faith in himself cannot have faith in God. Indeed, infinite is the power that is hidden in each tiny individual, it is only in our ignorance that we think that we are weak, we are sinners. We are to get rid of this attitude, if we are to attain success in life. For, a man who thinks himself weak, weak he becomes; thinking oneself impure, impure one becomes. We are to change this attitude. We are to be optimistic in outlook, we are to have great *shraddha*. That is what the *Gita* says.

Well, one may say that in life one is seen to be endowed with better qualities than another—one has an instinct for virtuous deeds, another has got an inclination for sinful actions—how can they equally attain God? The *Gita* gives a clear answer to this in the words of the Lord: 'I am the same to all beings; to Me there is none hateful nor dear. But those who worship Me with devotion are in Me, as I too am in them!'

And suppose there is a man who is deeply immersed in sin, who is a confirmed miscreant; even he need not despair. For, the Lord says: 'Even if the very wicked worship Me,

with single-minded devotion, he should be regarded as good, for he has rightly resolved.'

The *Gita* is found to be all eager to help humanity. In the chapter on *bhakti yoga*, we find the Lord coming down, step by step, to prescribe to humanity increasingly easier paths to realize Him. And in the last chapter the Lord, as if feeling that the least trouble on the part of His devotee will cause Him the greatest sorrow, says: 'Relinquishing all *dharma*s take refuge in Me alone; I will liberate thee from all sins; grieve not.'

But this is the secret of all secrets—it should not be told to all, it should not be told to one who is without proper discipline in life, or who is not a devotee; for in that case it is likely to be misunderstood. Indeed, to surrender oneself completely at the feet of God is the last word of religion. It is not possible to do this so long as we have got our ego sense. And the endeavour of the whole life of a spiritual aspirant is to destroy the ego. For, on the ashes of the lower self is the spiritual life built up; when the lower self is gone, the Higher Self is revealed. In the world how many people are found who camouflage their weaknesses with high-sounding philosophical phrases! They say, 'Thy will be done' while, as a matter of fact, they are slaves to 'their own will.' It is for this reason that Sri Ramakrishna said that the greatest desideratum in religious life is to have harmony between thought and speech—between words and actions. Indeed, it is so very difficult to be consistent in life, to be sincere in all circumstances; that demands the greatest price from us. And can we expect to realize God with any price less than that?

About the goal of life what the *Gita*

says will be welcomed by all at the very first instance. The *Gita* says one should aspire after 'that by getting which no other acquisition will seem superior to it, and where being established one is not moved even by the greatest sorrow.' Now, what is that which satisfies that test? It is only by knowing the Atman that one attains to that state. Then only one finds that the fever of life has ceased and all desires are satisfied. And when a person 'finds the Atman within himself,' he sees It also everywhere. So the last word about religion is to see the all-pervasive aspect of God and the best of *yogis* is he who judges of pleasure or pain everywhere by the same standard as he applies to himself. Now when a man sees God wherever he turns his eyes, he has got no personal desire, no personal will; he becomes the same in pleasure or sorrow, in heat or cold; he becomes unaffected by these dualities. Yet this is not a state of lifelessness, as a superficial thinker may suppose it to be. This state is attained only by one who has seen the Supreme. As the waters running into the ocean lose their individual existence, in the same way, the man of knowledge loses his separate entity and becomes identified with the Great Self. So long as a man thinks himself separate from God he suffers; when he knows himself as one with God, all his sufferings end. There are flow and ebb tides in the river, but it is all calm at the bosom of the ocean. Man is subject to joys and sorrows as long as he does not know his real Self. When he knows that he becomes calm, he becomes 'satisfied with the Self, and content in the Self alone.' That is the goal to which humanity is moving—that is the ideal for which man should try his best.

'What is the significance of the *Gita*? It is what you find by repeating the word ten times. As you repeat "Gita", "Gita", it becomes reversed into "tagi", "tagi" which means a person who has renounced everything for God. And the lesson of the *Gita* is: "O man, renounce everything and seek God alone." ... It contains the essence of all the scriptures.'

—SRI RAMAKRISHNA

MY FIRST VISION OF MAHAPURUSHJI

BY N. BANGARAYYA

I always cherish a worshipful attitude towards the monastery at Mylapore. It was there that I had my first vision of the Great One.

The day was perhaps particularly auspicious for me, because it happened to be my birthday, November 20, 1926. After having soared in the empyrean realms of spirituality at Ootacamund, Mahapurushji arrived at the monastery at Madras, I was among the batch of students who had his *darshan* immediately after his arrival there.

There was a friend of mine, a hostel mate—for I was then a student studying for law—with whom I had deposited a request to intimate me if a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna happened to arrive at the Math. As soon as he learnt about the arrival of Mahapurushji he phoned to the college for me. Not finding me there, in feverish anxiety, he despatched a common friend to search for me and fetch me to the Math.

It was about two or two-thirty in the afternoon when we reached the Math, but had to wait for two hours more for the arrival of the spiritual Sovereign. At last he arrived—a leonine figure enthroned in the Atman! One by one the monks of the Math fell at his feet. Among the party of the students who were waiting for his *darshan*, I and my companion were singular enough to salute him with folded hands.

Mahapurushji's face was wreathed in smiles. He was smoking a hookah with a long pipe and conversing with us. 'They say the Great Ones have the power of understanding us even without our having to explain any thing to them. So let me keep silent and see if he, of his own accord, gives me any instructions,' said I to myself. The Swami was talking about the starting of the Math at Ootacamund, the elections to the Legislative

Council, which were then going on, and a number of other allied topics. Now and then he was casting a benign smile upon me and putting occasional questions. I made it a point to give only laconic replies. After a few minutes somebody, presumably a rich citizen of Madras, alighted from an automobile. He must have been an old friend of the Math, for everybody greeted him with warmth. As soon as Swamiji saw him he exclaimed, 'Oh, here is so and so. Come, let us have a drive on the beach.' Both of them left the place. . . .

It was a case of sore disappointment for me. He did not give any spiritual instruction. On the other hand he talked on purely worldly matters' like elections. Is this the disciple of Ramakrishna, whom they adore? As soon as he saw a rich man he jumped into his car for a drive along the beach. What sort of a holy man is this? And then he was smoking from a long pipe of hookah! These trifles weighed tremendously with me and argued very strongly against the Swami.

Disappointed I returned to the hostel. I injected a little of my mind into my companions also. 'Perhaps I am not fit to receive any spiritual instruction. Perhaps (why perhaps?) I am full of egotism. Let me prepare myself fully for tomorrow through prayer and introspection,' thought I within myself. More or less the whole of that night I was praying to God to make me fit to receive instructions from the Swami.

Early next morning we went to the Math. This time we were determined to assail him with a volley of questions. Fortunately we found him all alone. There was only one Mr. Rajam Iyer, who, as we later on learnt, was an ardent Congress worker. We got ourselves introduced by a swami of the Madras Math and started our campaign. I recorded

the interview in a letter to a friend of mine. Almost all the questions were put by me. Now, as I read them I laugh at my foolishness for having put those questions. But to the Swami they were all welcome. He could see the little capital of earnestness out of which those questions proceeded. I share the entire interview with the reader.

I prepared the scheme of my questions at home only. My father, who became a monk in my twelfth year, sent a copy of the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, Part One (translated by M. himself), to my brother to be studied by him whenever he had leisure. That book caught my boyish imagination, and I read it from cover to cover even at that early age. As soon as I finished reading it I was seized with an earnest desire to act up to its teaching. I imagined that Sri Ramakrishna himself was my *guru*, repaired to solitude, and began to repeat some name of God which appealed to me. Whenever any doubt arose, I referred to the *Gospel* and guided my conduct according to the light I derived from it. Thus the *Gospel* formed the sheet anchor of my life from 1917 to the date on which I met the swami (and to this day also). Naturally, my first questions were about the validity of the *Gospel* and its author. My next questions were about the validity of Swami Shivananda (Mahapurushji) himself. And lastly I wanted to see if I could derive any help from the Swami in my spiritual pursuits. (The whole of the conversation took place in English.)

I : Swamiji, May I put some questions?

S : Oh yes, quite welcome.

I : Will you pardon me if there be any mistakes?

S : (Smiling) There can be no such thing as mistake or pardon.

I : Did you see Sri Ramakrishna? Are you his direct disciple?

S : (Folding his hands and shutting his eyes) Oh yes. I had the good fortune to sit at his feet.

I : How long did you bear company with him?

S : Say for seven years. Not continuously, but now and then I went to him.

I : In what year did you meet him?

The Swami tried to remember the year, but could not, and said 'About the same time when Vivekananda met 'him.'

I : Is the account given of Sri Ramakrishna in the *Gospel* a true one or an idealized picture?

S : It is all very true. It is recorded by a householder disciple called M.

I : Is it quite accurate?

S : Oh yes, quite accurate.

I : What is Mr. M. doing now? Is he alive?

S : Yes. He is the proprietor of a school in Calcutta.

I : Is it the Vidyasagar School?

S : No. It is called the Morton High School now. But he is steeped in Sri Ramakrishna.

I : Did you see God?

S : What do you mean?

I : I mean in the sense in which Sri Ramakrishna saw God.

S : Oh yes. I saw Sri Ramakrishna. Is it not the same thing as seeing God? I see him even now—not his physical body, but his spiritual body.

At this stage the Swamiji asked us to wait and went into the inner apartment of the monastery. After some time he returned and said, 'Well. Bolo. Bolo.' (Bengalee for speak, speak).

I : (Unconvinced of his God vision) Have you seen God as personal or impersonal?

I : Can you give me any help towards God-realization?

S : As both personal and impersonal.

S : Why, meditate upon Him. It all depends upon one's own efforts.

I : Is it possible to see God?

S : (Emphatically) Certainly. There is no doubt about it. It all depends upon one's own earnestness.

I : Does God hear our prayers?

S : Yes. He does hear.

- I : I have been praying for the last eight years. I am sure that my prayers are sincere. But I am not heard.
- S : (Drawingly) Then you are unfortunate. (Reassuringly) The thing is this. There is no such thing as misfortune. One must be patient.
- I : I have got lust. My mind is disturbed when I see women.
- S : Everything will be subdued. Only pray to Him.
- At this my companion interrupted me and asked, 'How are we to meditate?'
- S : Why, shut your eyes. Concentrate on the nose. (Pointing to the top of his head) Your meditation must reach here. Make some *Japa*.
- I : We must know the meaning of the *mantram*.
- S : What meaning will there be to a *mantram*? It will be some name of Krishna or so.
- I : What is the use of mechanically repeating like a parrot? We must think of some idea also.
- S : Yes, yes. Repeat the name of Krishna and along with it think of His attributes (He instanced some attributes).
- I : We imagine a picture of God, say Krishna or so. It is our own creation. It is subjective. Besides this, is there not an objective one, the Truth that exists independent of our imagination?
- S : There are both subjective and objective aspects. I have seen both.
- I : Did you talk with God?
- S : What do you mean?
- I : Why, Sri Ramakrishna says that he talked to his Mother. He consulted Kali whenever a difficulty arose.
- S : I can talk but not with this vocal organ.
- I : Sri Ramakrishna says that one can expect God's commandment only after seeing and talking to Him. He also speaks of a badge of authority.
- S : Yes. A badge, a badge.
- I : Have you any such badge?
- S : No, no. I have no badge.
- I : Then why do you go on teaching and doing work?
- S : I am doing work of my own accord. I know I am a child of Sri Ramakrishna.
- I : Is not such a work likely to be a mistaken one?
- S : Why, how can it be?
- I : How am I to know that the work I am doing is exactly the one God intended me to do?
- S : Why, if your work does good to men it is good work. (Pointing to the gentleman there) Look at Rajam Iyer. He is working for the Congress for the last so many years. People are being benefited by it.
- I : Why should a perfect man also depend upon circumstantial inference? Why should he not directly ascertain from God?
- (I do not exactly remember whether any reply was given to this question.)
- I : Did you never feel the necessity of seeing God as a person and kissing him? I long to kiss him and talk to Him. I do not think it is *kama*.
- S : No, no. It is not *kama*.
- I : Do you ever have such a desire?
- S : Sometimes I had it. But it subsided of itself. As a rule I am contented at heart.
- I : I am not contented; I sometimes feel very near God. At other times I do not.
- S : The Lord plays hide and seek with us.
- I : It is very troublesome for us. Is it not tantalizing?
- S : You must not be impatient. You must continue to pray.
- I : I will. Of course, I will not give Him up. I am knocking at the door. I will knock until it is opened. ...
- Meanwhile a swami came and told me very politely, 'Some ladies have come to pay their respects to him. Will you just come out a little?' We stood up to take our leave.

S : Come some other day, whenever you have leisure.

After folding our hands in salutation we took leave of him. He must have remained at Madras for sometime more. But we never cared to inquire about him again. We never sought another interview with him. So disgusted were we with him! What else can young and egotistic urchins do?

That was in 1926. We met him again at Calcutta in 1930. My companion took initiation from him in 1932. I successfully resisted the persuasions of some of the swamis of the Order, who pointed out that it was a rare opportunity. At home my mother, who is a very saintly lady, asked me, 'You went all the way to Calcutta. Why did you

not take initiation? No success in any field, much less in the spiritual, can be attained without initiation.' But I was adamant. I imagined that I was too strong for all these temptations. 'One and One alone can initiate me,' thought I within myself and that One is....?

* * * *

Now as I read about him in books, I hang my head in shame. It was a blunder of the first magnitude to have missed initiation from such a soul. But perhaps repentance comes when it is too late.

As I reflect upon the interview, the whole thing seems to be a dream—the face of the Swami swimming in my memory as a vision beyond my ken.

EXISTENTIALISM

BY YVES DUPLESSIS

First we have to live and then to philosophize.

While the disturbance caused by social disorders has impelled certain types of people like the surrealists to escape from the world, it has inspired some others like the Existentialists with the will to live. Surrealism was an effect of the first world-war, and Existentialism began to spread during the second.

Thus G. Marcel, J. P. Sartre and A. Camus felt that though philosophy was but an apanage of an elite, the disorders of the epoch had affected and tainted all their contemporaries through novels and plays which expressed them. This effort to diffuse knowledge corresponded to the change of orientation in philosophy which came down from abstractions to treat of the misery of human conditions.

There have been two kinds of doctrines: those of truth and those of reality. The first

build up rational and coherent systems, while the second seek to describe the concrete, that is, existence as it is. The latter type of philosophy is a protest against the impersonal systems, since the man who begins to philosophize finds himself in a given situation and it is only an illusion to believe that man can attain the Absolute by escaping from it. He is involved in a world which existed before him and will continue to revolve even after his death. It is therefore the scandal of personal existence that is the problem.

Already, in France, during the eighteenth century, Maine de Biran had drawn attention to man as he is. 'From my infancy,' he exclaimed, 'I have been astonished at the feeling that I exist.' Hence he kept a journal to seek to know himself. He was the initiator of the movement of the study of the ego of which W. James, Bergson, and Freud were the promoters. But it is to Denmark of the nineteenth century that we owe the birth of

the philosophy of Existentialism. Kierkegaard set himself against the intellectualism of the Hegelian dialectic by opposing to it the reality of the individual life, where all that happens is an event which has no significance except for him who experiences it. Thus every being interprets the world in a subjective and, therefore, intranslatable manner. Hegel was on a uniquely theoretical plane. He made man a consciousness instead of making consciousness the attribute of a man, a real man, living in a real, objective, and conditioned world. In opposition to German philosophy, which looks from the sky to the earth, we have to proceed from the earth to the sky. This will lead eventually to the destruction of German philosophy. Kierkegaard insisted on the singularity of this fact of existence, by effectuating a return to elementary and inevitable question laid down by human reality. This philosophy is a philosophy of a crisis and aims at the creation of an internal existence which alone makes man truly free.

We can thus well understand that this conception was particularly developed under German occupation. Man then became conscious of himself, of being distinct from the animal in this, that even though he be imprisoned and tortured, man has still the freedom to say 'No'. His liberty consists essentially in a refusal of limitations. Some are thus thrown in exceptional situations which reveal them to themselves, a proof that there does not exist any determined specific human nature but that man transforms himself constantly and can suddenly change the orientation of his life. The acts of a free man emanate from him and none can foresee his reactions under a great emotion, a war, an wound, or an unfortunate love. At that moment that which is called 'character' unfolds itself; we do not feel anything but our mental confusion, and liberty alone lives. And it is above all this liberty that is reclaimed by Existentialism. Tragic in its staggering effect is the position of the man who discovers that

he is free, since, having already lost his faith in God, he now finds himself deprived of the routine of his customary life which prevented him from thinking.

If, indeed, Kierkegaard had as his disciple the Catholic philosopher Jaspers, who inspired G. Marcel, he had also an adept pupil in Heidegger. It is to the atheistic Existentialism of the latter that J. P. Sartre refers. The situation of his characters is especially desperate, because it is by themselves that they have to solve the problems that preoccupy them. As soon as they reflect they feel they are not wanted in the world and their existence seems absurd to them. Thus for Roquentin, the hero of *La Nausee*, the existing world is essentially contingent, that is to say, without any logical necessity, and man as well as things cannot be deduced from nothing, since 'existence precedes essence.'

It is exactly from this 'disgust' which man feels in the presence of an incomprehensible Nature that philosophy has for a long time wished to cure him by showing—for example Spinoza—that the world can be deduced from abstract truths. But how can a man who is limited in his understanding comprehend the Absolute? We cannot prove that his existence is justified or that there is any reason for his being here rather than elsewhere. A. Camus has also developed the 'Philosophy of the Absurd' in his book *L'Étranger*, where he shows that man and the world are separate and that the object remains inert before the being, that is, unseizable.

But how is it that Pascal has remarked that even though he be but a reed, man is a 'thinking reed', and if he begins to live, he has afterwards the faculty of soaring to the future by making plans? He thus exhausts all his life in tending towards the being, but his hope is essentially in vain since he cannot escape from time, and that is why following Kierkegaard and Heidegger, J. P. Sartre considers that it is very difficult to escape from despair.

Man is not, however, confined in his subjectivity, because living in a given world, he must realize that in choosing for himself he chooses for all men. Indeed, we should act in such a way that in imagining the man we wish to be we should not at the same time create an image of the man as we estimate that he ought to be.... Thus our responsibility is much greater than we may think it to be, as it involves entire humanity. The action that is truly free is then accompanied by the anguish felt by the leader who decides on an attack knowing that the majority of the soldiers he sends for the purpose may not perhaps return. And it is this that makes the inorganic man distinct from the inorganic world, as it is the characteristic of consciousness.

Anguish overwhelms man especially when he feels 'forlorn', as Heidegger says, in a world where God does not exist. 'If indeed existence precedes essence, we can never explain his actions by reference to a human nature, given and congealed; in other words there is no determinism here, man is free and man is freedom.' We have therefore to create our moral qualities since 'we do not find lying before us some values or injunctions which legitimize our conduct'. Man is therefore 'condemned to be free', that is to say, being thrown on this earth without knowing the why, he feels this privilege, the consciousness of a painful burden. Liberty manifests itself, indeed, by the struggle against the obstacles of reality. J. P. Sartre considers that the dream and imagination turn man aside from his essence, for it does not exist except in the measure in which it has been realized; it is nothing other than the totality of his acts, nothing other than his life; whence appeared the manifesto in his review *Les Temps Modernes*, where raising the standard of revolt against the doctrine of 'Art for Art', J. P. Sartre affirms that the writer should not remain outside his time, but should engage himself therein. Instead of soaring above

his epoch, he should take his stand on the problems of the period.

In fact, as Heidegger has shown, man cannot think of himself without thinking of the world. A pure and absolute subject is a fiction. The datum, existence, is 'the being in the world.' That is why he has written that we are not particularly absorbed by things or by ourselves except when that totality appears to us, for example, in the general and profound weariness which, among others, allies itself with anguish. It is then an original and contingent characteristic of the consciousness that it cannot be conscious without being conscious of something.

Thus 'the discovery of my inmost recesses discloses to me at the same time the other as a liberty set before me, which thinks of me and wills either for or against me.' In seeking to be free, man perceives then that his liberty 'depends entirely on the liberty of others', as J. P. Sartre says, and that the liberty of others depends on his own. Thus is created a human community. In this sense Existentialism is humanism, since by action man goes beyond his subjectivity, that is to say, transcends it.

Although transcendence may be far from the Absolute, it is the faculty that the human being has to set up a world outside of himself. For the man who thinks thus, the external universe has a significance and the objects become, therefore, tools in his hands or obstacles working against him. On the other hand, the brute things apart from the thought which comprehends them are in a state of chaos. It is therefore only a kind of liberty that can make objects intelligible. Thus man being in a state of constant evolution, since 'he is that which he is not and he is not which he is', and being incapable of coinciding even with himself, is opposed to things which are static and inert. J. P. Sartre, like Heidegger, calls them the 'in oneself' while the given human beings endowed with thoughts are 'for oneself'. To the existence of things is then opposed the existence of consciousness.

Man who is both matter and liberty appertains, therefore, to those two worlds. Just as he does against things, he should fight against his body, since 'disgust' can generate not only a feeling of universal contingency but also the fall of consciousness to the life of the flesh where it slumbers as in sleep, which is the triumph of the body over the spirit.

Man, therefore, does not live freely until he is free from external constraints. But he cannot reach this state until he draws from his relations to them. Just as his consciousness is 'nothing but a past which has ceased to be, or a hollow that is always future', so to think of an object, we must, in the words of G. Marcel, surround it with a 'mantle' of the non-being, that is to say, perceive the void that separates it from the subject. And that sense of the void is still one of the causes of human anguish, but it is characteristic of life as it enables us to place in contrast these two, the 'for oneself' and in oneself. When dead, man becomes in fact an irremediable 'in himself'.

But J. P. Sartre would also shut out from him that supreme issue of escaping from the real by representing the beyond as a veritable hell. The characters of his play *Huis Clos* find themselves actually as prisoners of their past in so far as it has been completed, finished, and in so far as it is their ego without possible modifications, because they are outside time. They submit, therefore, to the torture of questioning themselves incessantly on the causes of their actions, hell being but the eternal return to the same problems and the same mysteries.

After the defeat of that last desperate attempt there remains then nothing more

'for oneself' than to return to the circle and to let oneself be tossed from the one to the other of these fundamental attitudes. One can either throw up one's personality and exist anonymously in the routine of everyday life, even sinking to the gratifications of the flesh, or recapture one's freedom by a revolt of the being choosing for oneself the human element and realizing its essence. It is this lucid consciousness alone that allows one to live the true life of the being, the free being' of Nietzsche.

This philosophy of anguish will therefore be a philosophy of courage; that of going without losing oneself, going up to the point of disillusionment, and without having recourse to faked subterfuges. Inexplicably involved in the world and yet free to make his way therein and especially freer as the anguish opens more widely a preach of lucidity in universal unconsciousness—such is man according to Existentialism.

Far from escaping on the wings of dream and poetry, this philosophy represents to us life in its sordid aspects, but that is merely to exalt it afterwards. 'Most of my characters,' writes J. P. Sartre, 'even those who seem now to be most mean prove indeed later on to be heroes, and it is indeed a romance of heroes that I wish to write. The sole difference as compared with our good thinkers is that I do not believe that heroism should be facile.' The third volume of *Les Chemins de la Liberté* has not yet been published, and we may suppose that it will give us a new conception of liberty, the freedom, in short, of a free being, that is, of a person who has become truly himself.

'The ancient sages penetrated deeper and deeper until they found that in the innermost core of the human soul is the centre of the whole universe. All the planes gravitate towards that one point; that is the common ground and standing there alone can we find a common solution.'

—SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

NOTES AND COMMENTS

TO OUR READERS

Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar went on a lecture tour in America at the beginning of the present year. He records in his *Some Impressions of the American Tour* what struck him as the prominent traits of contemporary American life and thought and also his appreciation of the work being carried on by the Vedanta Centres of the Ramakrishna Mission in the U.S.A. . . .

Existentialism by Madame Yves Duplessis completes the serial on certain philosophical trends that manifested themselves in France as a reaction to the profitless speculations of Western philosophical systems hardly having an answer to the concrete problems that confronted life, especially during the period of chaos and unsettlement created by the two world wars. These trends represent a frantic attempt, it seems, to resurrect certain values, by which an individual can live to some purpose, from the general welter of beliefs and norms which followed the negative rationalism of the nineteenth century and its consequence, namely, unrestrained egoism. The serial which began in January has been done into English from the original French by S. P. Seshadri Aiyar of Trivandrum, a great friend of the Ramakrishna Mission.

INDIAN CULTURE AND THE COMMUNAL PROBLEM

Addressing a public meeting at Meerut on 9 October 1948, Babu Purushottam Das Tandon said that 'the Muslims of India must now adopt Indian culture as their own as this is the only solution of the Hindu-Muslim problem.' . . . He advised the Muslims to be 'proud of Indian culture.' This is a tremendous statement and one which we wholeheartedly endorse, but its implications are to be clearly realized so that it may not give rise to unreasonable apprehensions among many as a call to cultural totalitarianism. In what sense can Indian culture be a solution of the communal problem?

India is a vast country with a long history. Many are the races that have come from outside and settled down here with varieties of religion, language and culture, but have been gradually assimilated into the main stream of Indian tradition. The conflict of races, religions and cultures have been solved on the basis of the principle enunciated in the *Vedas* that Truth is One, but error is manifold, and by shifting the emphasis, in religious matters, from the doctrines and dogmas that the various religions preached, to the practical realization of Truth which is One, but presents myriads of aspects to its worshippers. As a result, each religion was recognized as a way to the realization of that One Truth, in its own way, and any one could follow any religion and give expression to their ideas in their culture. The *Vedas* themselves emphasize realisation and not belief. They declare that a man of realization goes beyond the *Vedas*, *Vedo avedo bhavati*, and that what he speaks becomes the *Veda*, for, has he not seen the Truth face to face which the *Vedas* purport to point out?

Thus a composite Indian culture was formed of all the races with tolerance and acceptance as its characteristics and spiritual realization as its goal. This culture came to be called by the foreigners as the Hindu (peoples of India) culture, which really is this composite culture. Under it come those who believe in the *Vedas*, those who do not, and those who follow other scriptures. In a Paper on Hinduism read by Swami Vivekananda at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago, he said, 'from the high spiritual flights of the Vedanta philosophy, of which the latest discoveries of science seem like echoes, to the low ideas of idolatry with its multifarious mythology, the agnosticism of the Buddhists and the atheism of the Jains, each and all have a place in the Hindu's religion.' And under the broad sky of the Indian culture there is infinite space for all

the other religions that are in the world, and that may yet come in future.

This is the Indian Religion or culture. Strictly speaking, there is no Hindu religion as opposed to any other religion, for, by its very nature, it subsumes all. Thus a solution of the communal problem was found in ancient times, and on the basis of the same broad attitudes can the communal problem be solved in modern India. As in old times the initiative must again come from the majority community.

In modern India the communal problem is mainly confined to the three communities—Hindus, Muslims and Christians. And if a solution can be found to the more pressing problem of Hindus vs Muslims, the third will resolve itself, for the solution is the same.

The only practicable and permanent solution of the communal problem, therefore, lies in a common loyalty to Indian culture which means no more than a common loyalty to Truth. The persistence of communal feeling today shows that the process of cultural integration is not completed as yet. The Hindus and Mahomedans have lived together on the same soil for centuries without achieving a perfect fusion. The process which had started long ago was repeatedly arrested by periodical outbursts of ignorance and irrationalism and also by the machinations of the political power. The solution is not wanting, it is there on the ideal plane, but has to be worked out in practice. Two things are essential for this end. On the one hand, the Hindus must reconstruct their society in such a way as to shed all exclusiveness and provide the fullest scope for the free development of every one of its members. In short Vedanta must become practical and socialized, so that the masses may achieve true dignity and freedom. On the other hand, the Muslims must recognize that no determinate type of religious experience or expression can lay exclusive claim to Truth. A culture which is not open to Truth must perish. Truth is

never a function of culture, but is an objective fact which requires culture to shape itself according to its dictates. These conditions require to be fulfilled before an effective solution of the problem of cultural integration can be formed on a basis of common spiritual and moral values and a society free from all irrational features. Then will be formed in India a society deep as the ocean and broad as the sky, with 'Vedanta brain and Islam body'. This culture will 'lead mankind to the place where there is neither the *Vedas*, nor the *Bible*, nor the *Koran*; yet this has to be done by harmonizing the *Vedas*, the *Bible*, and the *Koran*. Mankind ought to be taught that religions are but the varied expressions of THE RELIGION, which is Oneness, so that each may choose the path that suits him best.' (Vide *Letters of Swami Vivekananda*, 4th Ed., p. 427.)

When it is said that the Muslims, Christians, and others must adopt the Indian culture, it is not meant that they should 'give up their religions and allegiance to their scriptures—they will hold on to them all the more strongly—but that they must adopt the broad attitude, shorn of all fanaticism and narrowness, which is characteristic of Indian culture and be loyal to the Indian tradition. Islam and Christianity in India must become truly Indian in character—they must become Indian Islam and Indian Christianity. Then it will be seen that they will not only influence these religions outside India, but would also find a ready field for the propagation of their ideas. Conversion to doctrines and not to the path of realization, be it attempted by any religious denomination, is contrary to Indian culture, for Indian culture is a totality of all faiths and ways of life, and is independent of each one of them.

This is the only way for the solution of the communal problem in India in tune with the spirit of Indian culture, which is *Unity in Variety*, and not the suppression of any community.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

THE GATHAS OF ZARATHUSHTRA. (Text with free English translation.) BY IRACH J. S. TARAPOREWALA, B.A., PH.D., BAR-AT-LAW, *Published by the author 7, Vatchagandhi Road, Gamdevi, Bombay 7 Pp. xviii+307, Price Rs. 3.*

Religion, when it is most needed, is badly neglected, sorely ignored, and even painfully ridiculed. Responsibility therefore falls heavily on the good elements of the society. It is they who have to carry on the fight with greater vigour and determination against the onslaught of the evil force that has risen in one or other sphere.

Prof. Irach Taraporewala, formerly of Calcutta University, is out on an yeoman service with a free English translation of the holy *Gathas* of Spitama Zarathushtra, the great prophet of ancient Iran and the chief subscriber to the Western part of the ancient Indo-Iranian culture. Zarathushtra lived sometime before the sixth century B.C. and left an inheritance that made Iran great and prosperous. But two unfortunate invasions by foreigners robbed the people of the land of the greater part of Zarathushtra's works, and the *Gathas* are only the remaining part of his own writings which, according to ancient philosopher Hermippus (who lived about 200 B.C. in Smyrna) ran into twenty volumes and contained about two million verses.

The *Gathas* have been translated by many European and Indian scholars, but most of the works are word-for-word literal translations. To make them interesting and inspiring even to an ordinary reader. Prof. Taraporewala has made a free translation in a poetic form and has also given the original text with *Avesta* phonetics in Roman transcription.

The message of all the prophets and seers of the world should be read and studied in the light of Truth, of knowledge, and of mental, moral, and spiritual development; and none of them should be refused, ignored or rejected because a particular one belonged to a particular caste or creed. In author's own words Zarathushtra, like other great prophets, 'was, and still is, in very truth the world-teacher and his message is for all humanity for all time.' His '*Gathas* are spiritual in the fullest sense of the word, and the Truth-seekers and students of religion will find Prof. Taraporewala's translation interesting and inspiring.

J. K. WADIA

STUDIES IN NYAYA-VAISESIKA METAPHYSICS. BY SADANANDA BHADURI, M.A. *Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona 4. Pp. 331. Price Rs 10.*

Dr. Sadananda Bhaduri, deserves the heartfelt con-

gratuations of all lovers and scholars of Sanskrit for bringing out this excellent treatise on the problems of metaphysics of the Nyaya-Vaisesika systems of philosophy. These two systems, as is well known to all scholars, are the most important of all the Realistic schools of Sanskrit philosophy. They, having much in common and being similar in their conclusions, are called *samanatantra*—similar systems. But they have got their peculiarities also. Dr Bhaduri, while dealing with the common fundamental problems of metaphysics of these two systems, has never lost sight of the peculiarities of each of them. He has very faithfully interpreted all the relevant theories concerning the Nyaya-Vaisesika systems of philosophy. In so doing he has, here and there, boldly criticized the old theories or parts thereof, but very honestly and sympathetically. An impartial and unbiassed reader cannot but be impressed with the beautiful and sincere method of treatment of all the relevant points by the learned author. Comparative study of the theories of Western philosophers has also been made wherever such a need has been felt for. One who is well acquainted with the original sanskrit works from which Dr Bhaduri has collected his materials will certainly be charmed with the honest and faithful interpretation of the theories by the learned author. Dr. Bhaduri is nowhere vain in claiming any cheap originality, which is, unfortunately, so often claimed by the Anglo-Sanskrit scholars of modern times.

We can unhesitatingly recommend the book to all lovers of Sanskrit philosophy as a very learned, objective, and illuminating treatment of Nyaya-Vaisesika metaphysics.

DINESH CHANDRA GUHA

UNITED ASIA. (International Journal of Asian Affairs. *Edited by G.S. Pohekar and U.R. Rao. Published by Inter-Asian Publishing House, 21, Noble Chambers, Parsi Bazaar Street, Fort, Bombay. Rs. 2 per copy. (Inaugural Number Rs. 5).*

The bugles that sounded the close of the last war also heralded the dawn of a new Asia, eager to assert her rightful place in the world after centuries of sloth and servitude. The Asian countries have awakened to national consciousness. They have asserted their independence and revolted against their political dependence on imperialistic Western Powers. This upsurge has been sweeping Asia from one end to the other and is expressing itself in many ways. The move to link up the Asian countries into some sort of a federation took its shape first in the Inter-Asian Conference that was held in New Delhi last year.

United Asia comes into the field of journalism as the authoritative voice of this upsurge in Asia with a

message of Asian Unity. We welcome its birth and look forward with hope for its successful and powerful career. Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Nehru, George Catlin, U. Win, J.H. Cousins, Soedarsono, and P.S. Lokanathan are some of the outstanding contributors among the galaxy of the eminent writers of the East and West who have contributed to this Inaugural Number.

The publishers of *United Asia* can justly be proud of the magnificent get-up of the journal. The paper with its elegant setting and tasteful arrangement of the articles and a good number of photographs can easily compete with any of the present-day high standard foreign magazines.

LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO. *Sri Aurobindo*

Circle, Nair Hospital Compound, near Bombay Central Station, Bombay. Pp. 416. Price Rs. 6.

This volume of the private letters of Sri Aurobindo brought out on the occasion of his seventy-fifth birthday deals with a large number of topics connected with his teachings and the practical problems of spiritual striving. Written in a less lofty and difficult style than his more metaphysical works, the letters are highly illuminating and instructive and throw fresh light on many questions concerning religion and philosophy and his views. The students of Aurobindo and others will find the work to be of great value in understanding him in a direct way.

NEWS AND REPORTS

THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION SCHOOLS, CEYLON

REPORT OF ACTIVITIES FOR THE PERIOD JULY 1947
TO JUNE 1948

English Schools: The most notable event of the year is the grading of English Schools, in which our schools fared well. According to the old classification all our three English Schools were in the third grade. But owing to the satisfactory progress maintained by them in recent years, Shivananda Vidyalaya, Batticaloa, was placed in grade I and Vaidyeswara Vidyalaya, Jaffna, in grade II. The Trincomalie Hindu College satisfied all the requirements of a first grade institution except a laboratory for teaching a second science subject. The Mission has, however, now equipped a new Botany laboratory besides making substantial additions to the existing Chemistry laboratory, so that ample facilities are now available for the teaching of both Science and Arts up to the Higher School Certificate and University Entrance Examinations. The Minister of Education was so impressed with the rapid progress of the school that he promised to raise it to a higher grade at the earliest possible opportunity.

The results produced by our English Schools at public examinations were quite good. Special mention may be made of the fact that Hindu College, Trincomalie, secured eighty-five per cent passes at the last S.S.C. Examination, one of the candidates obtaining the only first division pass in the Eastern Province and several candidates scoring distinctions in English, Literature, Mathematics, and Hinduism.

Owing to the phenomenal increase in the number of students seeking admission to English Schools, the Mission had to strain all its resources to provide sufficient and suitable accommodation for them.

Thanks to the donation of Rs. 6,000/- made by Mrs. Sellathurai of Kalladi Uppodai, Shivananda

Vidyalaya was able to erect a block of two class-rooms. Mr. L. H. L. Haridasa's donation of Rs. 3,500/- enabled the Mission to build a spacious class-room for the Hindu College. In addition to this, the Mission has, out of its own funds, built a hall measuring 80'x20', costing Rs. 3,000/- and a boundary wall costing Rs. 1,500/-. The staff of the Vaidyeswara Vidyalaya, Jaffna, is to be congratulated for collecting more than Rs. 30,000/-, and putting up a building to house three classes and the science laboratories.

A plot of land, little less than a quarter of an acre, adjoining the Hindu College, Trincomalie, was purchased recently for Rs. 5,250/-, with a view to securing sufficient room for expansion.

Bilingual Schools: The Bilingual school for girls at Batticaloa made satisfactory progress in the year under review. The staff was strengthened by the addition of a lady graduate in both Arts and Science. As the Education Department proposes to abolish this type of schools, the Mission has applied to the Director of Education for permission to run it as an English school. We are glad to mention that the Director has granted our request and the school will be regarded as an English school with effect from 1 October, 1948.

Tamil Schools: All the Tamil Schools recorded satisfactory progress. Attendance at most of the schools is on the decline, apparently owing to the glamour of free English education. Now that English has been made a compulsory subject for the Tamil Senior School Certificate Examination, most of our Tamil Senior Secondary Schools will be compelled to give up their S.S.C. Classes. Consequently a large majority of students of the post-primary classes of these schools are likely to seek admission to English schools. The future of our leading Tamil Schools, does not, therefore, appear to be very bright.

				<i>Statistics</i>	
Number of English Schools	..	..	4		
" " Tamil "	..	..	18		
		Total	..	22	
Number of Students in English Schools	..	..	1,334		
" " " " Tamil "	..	..	4,454		
		Total	..	5,788	
Number of Teachers in English Schools	..	..	41		
" " " " Tamil "	..	..	128		
		Total	..	169	

THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION, BOMBAY

The seventh general report of the Ramakrishna Mission, Khar, Bombay, reviews the activities of this institution for the three years from 1944 to 1946. During this period the Mission succeeded in developing its activities, missionary, educational, and charitable, to a considerable extent. A report of the activities is as follows:

Missionary: Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama at Khar is the centre of all activities of the Mission in Bombay. Monks stay here and carry on their spiritual practices, daily *puja* and prayers, and annually celebrate the birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother, Swami Vivekananda, and other religious prophets of the world. The Swamis conducted, during the years under report, regular weekly religious classes and discourses in various parts of the city and its suburbs. Frequently they also went out to other places in the Presidency on lecture tours.

Educational: To provide the students with facilities for the building up of character while carrying on their academic studies in colleges the authorities of the Mission opened a Students' Home in 1933, which now accommodates 16 inmates.

Library and Reading Room: The Library had 3,784 books at the end of the year 1946 on various subjects of interest, and the Reading Room received a good number of dailies and periodicals in many of the Indian regional languages. The Library and the Reading Room were very popular.

Charitable Dispensary: The Dispensary, started in 1923, has now developed into a well-equipped institution. It gives treatment both on homoeopathic and allopathic lines, 70,287, 76,913, and 94,937, patients were treated in 1944, 1945, and 1946 respectively. The Dispensary has been proving of increasing service to the local public.

Humanitarian Work: A very prominent feature of the Centre is its ready response to the crying appeals for funds made to it from the different parts of the country in times of dire need and nature's scourges, such

as floods, cyclones and famines. During the Bengal Famine of 1943-5, the Mission collected a large sum from the generous public of Bombay and was instrumental in giving some relief to those ill-fated sufferers in the different districts of Bengal. The Mission also rendered some help to Orissa when she suffered from scarcity in 1944. It thanks finally all those donors who came forward with contributions in cash and kind in helping their countrymen.

This Branch of the Mission has a very ambitious scheme for developing its activities on a large scale. It looks forward, with confidence, to the munificence of the sympathetic public for materializing this scheme.

THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION HOME OF SERVICE, BANARAS

REPORT FOR 1947

The forty-seventh annual report of this Home, which has been carrying on its work in a spirit of service to the afflicted humanity for over four decades, reviews its activities for the year 1947 as under:

Indoor Work: The General Hospital with 115 beds admitted 2,439 cases and conducted 2211 surgical cases of which 74 were major operations. The Refuge for Aged and Invalid had 25 and 50 beds separately for men and women respectively. Under the head Chandri Bibi Dharmasala Fund, 329 men and women were given food and shelter.

Outdoor Work: The total number of patients treated in the outdoor dispensaries (including the Shivala branch) was 3,10,762—89,907 new and 2,20,855 repeated cases. The average attendance came to over 850 daily and the total number of surgical cases was 1,539. Other kinds of help in cash and in kind were also given to the deserving persons. Some students were provided with books etc., and occasionally relief was also given to stranded travellers.

The total receipts of the Home for the year were Rs 87,584-8-11 and the expenditure Rs 1,03,734-0-8, and this leaves a deficit of over Rs 16,000, which indeed causes some anxiety to such a useful institution as this. In this connection the Home appeals for endowments of beds in the hospital which the donors may do in memory of their departed beloved ones to perpetuate their names. The Home is in urgent need of a septic surgical ward and an X-ray plant. Good quantities of bedding and clothing are constantly needed in a huge hospital like this. The construction of a separate building for the outdoor dispensary also has become an urgent need. For materializing all these the Home needs large funds. The management of the Home hopes that the generous public will not fail to respond liberally to the needs of a useful institution like this whose record for service in quality and quantity has achieved such noble standards.