

PRABUDDHA BHARATA

VOL. LV

SEPTEMBER 1950

No. 9



“उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत ।”

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

UNPUBLISHED LETTERS OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

I

To Mrs. Ole Bull (Dhārā Mātā)

Prabuddha Bharata Office,
Advaita Ashrama,
Mayavati (Via Almora),
Kumaon, Himalayas.
6 January 1901

My dear Mother,

I send you forthwith a translation of the Nāsadiya hymn sent by Dr. Bose through you. I have tried to make it as literal as possible.

I hope Dr. Bose has recovered his health perfectly by this time.

Mrs. Sevier is a strong woman, and has borne her loss¹ quietly and bravely. She is coming over to England in April and I am going over² with her. . . .

This place is very very beautiful and they have made it simply exquisite. It is a huge place, several miles in area, and is very well kept. I hope Mrs. Sevier will be in a position to keep it up in the future. She wishes it ever so much of course. . . .

. . . I am however very well in the Himalayas.

It is snowing heavily here. And I was caught in a blizzard on the way. But it is not very cold. And all this exposure to the snows for two days on my way here seems to have done me a world of good.

Today I walked over the snow uphill about a mile, seeing Mrs. Sevier's lands. She has made beautiful roads all over. Plenty of gardens, fields, orchards, and large forests—all in her land. The living houses are so simple, so clean, and so pretty, and, above all, so suited for the purpose. . . .

Ever your loving son,
Vivekananda

¹ Death of Mr. J. H. Sevier.

² Eventually the Swami did not go.

P.S. Kāli has taken two sacrifices. The cause has already two European martyrs.³ Now it is going to rise up splendidly.

V.

... The snow is lying all around six inches deep. The sun is bright and glorious. And now in the middle of the day, we are sitting outside, reading, and the snow is all about us. The winter here is very mild in spite of the snow. The air is dry and balmy, and the water beyond all praise.

V.

II

To Miss Mary Hale

New York,

6 January 1895

Many thanks, dear Sister, for your kind New Year's greetings. ... I have been in the midst of the genuine article in England. The English people received me with open arms ... Again some of the best men of England belonging to the English Church and some of the highest in position and fame became my truest friends. ... Everyone was kind to me there and I have left many noble friends of both sexes anxiously waiting my return in the spring.

As to my work there, the Vedantic thought has already permeated the higher classes of England. Many people of education and rank and amongst them not a few clergymen told me that the conquest of Greece by Rome was being re-enacted in England.

There are two sorts of Englishmen who have lived in India: one who hates everything Indian, but they are uneducated; the other to whom 'India' is the holy land, its very air is holy. And they try to out-Herod Herod in their Hinduism. ...

I had eight classes a week apart from public lectures and they were so crowded

³ Mr. J. J. Goodwin and Mr. J. H. Sevier.

that a good many people—even ladies of high rank—sat on the floor and did not think anything of it. In England I find strong-minded men and women to take up the work and carry it forward with the peculiar English grip and energy. This year my work in New York is going on splendidly. ...

... May the Lord bless you ever and ever.

Your affectionate brother,
Vivekananda

III

To the same

On board S.S. *Prinz Regent Leopold*

3 January 1897

Dear Mary,

I received your letter forwarded from London in Rome. It was very very kind of you to write such a beautiful letter, and I enjoyed every bit of it. I do not know anything about the evolution of the orchestra in Europe. We are nearing Port Said after four days of frightfully bad sailing from Naples. The ship is rolling as hard as she can and you must pardon my scrawls under such circumstances.

From Suez begins Asia. Once more Asia! What am I? Asiatic, European, or American? I feel a curious medley of personalities in me. ...

I land in a few days at Colombo and mean to 'do' Ceylon a bit. There was a time when Ceylon had more than twenty million inhabitants and a huge capital of which the ruins cover nearly a hundred square miles!

The Ceylonese are not Dravidians but pure Aryans. It was colonized from Bengal about 800 B.C. and they have kept a very clear history of their country from that time. It was the greatest trade centre of the ancient world, but Anuradhapura was the London of the ancients.

I enjoyed Rome more than anything in the West. And after seeing Pompeii, I have lost all regard for the so-called 'modern civilization'. With the exception of steam and electricity, they had everything else and infinitely more art conceptions and executions than the moderns. . . .

I am reading in Fergusson and other authorities that in Orissa or Juggernaut which I did not visit there are among the ruins human figures which for beauty and anatomical skill would compare with any production of the Greeks. . . .

But you must remember that everything almost has been destroyed by the iconoclastic Mohammedans. Yet the remnants are more than all European debris put together! I have travelled eight years and not seen many of the masterpieces.

Tell Sister Locke also that there is a ruined temple in a forest in India which and the Parthenon of Greece Fergusson considers as the climax of architectural art—each of its type—the one of conception and the other of conception and detail. The later Mogul buildings etc. of the Indo-Saracenic architecture do not compare a bit with the best types of the ancients.

. . . With all my love,

Vivekananda

IV

To the same

1719 Turk Street,
San Francisco.
26 March 1900

Well Blessed Mary,

This is to let you know 'I am very happy'. Not that I am getting into a shadowy optimism, but my power of suffering is increasing. I am being lifted up above the pestilential miasma of this world's joys and sorrows. They are losing their meaning. It is a land of dreams. It does not matter whether one enjoys or weeps, they are but dreams, and as such must break sooner or later. . . .

. . . So on, life is but a dream. Are not you glad it is so? My! They want an eternal heaven!! Thank God nothing is eternal except Himself! He alone can bear it, I am sure. Eternity of nonsense!

Things are beginning to hum for me. They will presently roar. I will remain quiet though, all the same. Things are not humming for you just now. I am so sorry; that is, I am trying to be, for I cannot be sorry of anything any more. I am attaining peace that passeth understanding, which is neither joy nor sorrow but something above them both. Tell Mother that my passing through the valley of death—physical and mental—the last two years, have helped me in this. Now I am nearing that Peace, the eternal *silence*. Now I mean to see things as they are—everything in that peace—perfect in its way. 'He whose joy is only in himself, whose desires are only in himself—he has *learned* his lessons.' This is the great lesson that we are here to learn, through myriads of births and heavens and hells, that there is nothing to be asked for, desired for, beyond one's Self. 'The greatest thing I can obtain is my Self.' 'I am free.' Therefore I require none else for my happiness. Alone through eternity, because I was free, am free, and will remain free for ever. This is Vedantism, I preached the theory so long. But, oh, the joy! Mary, my dear sister, I am realizing it now every day. Yes, 'I am free; alone, alone, I am the one without a second.'

Ever yours in the Sat-Chit-Ananda.
Vivekananda

P.S. Now I am going to be truly Vivekananda. Did you ever enjoy evil? Ha, Ha! All is good! Nonsense. Some good, some evil. I enjoy the good and I enjoy the evil. I was Jesus and I was Judas Iscariot, both my play, my fun. 'So long there are two, fear shall not leave thee.' Ostrich method? Hide your heads in the sand? And think there is nobody seeing you? All is good! Be brave and face everything. Come good,

come evil—both welcome—both of you my play. I have no good to attain, no ideal to clinch up to, no ambition to fulfil. I, the diamond mine, am playing with pebbles, good and evil. Good for you evil, come, good for you ; good, you come too. If the

universe tumbles round my ears what is that to me? I am Peace that passeth understanding. Understanding only gives us good or evil. I am beyond, I am Peace.

V.

CONVERSATIONS OF SWAMI VIJNANANANDA

PATNA : OCTOBER 1935

In the last week of October 1935, on the occasion of the Kāli Puja, Swami Vijnanananda came to Patna on a short visit and was putting up at the residence of a devotee who was celebrating the annual worship of Mother Kāli with great eclat. On the festive day of the Puja, the brother of the host approached Swami Vijnanananda and wanted to know from him why Mother Kāli has such a (dark and fearful) form. The Swami said, "Three different explanations of the meaning of this (Kāli's) form can be given. The esoteric meaning is this : When the Kundalini Shakti is awakened (through practice of Yoga), it rises upwards along the path of Sushumna and passes through the six Chakras (yogic plexuses). The form of Kāli symbolizes this awakened Kundalini Shakti in its upward course. And the exoteric meaning is this : It is the fearful form which Mother Kāli assumed when She fought with and destroyed the demons, on behalf of the gods, in the great conflict between the gods and the demons. The third and popular meaning of the form of Kāli is that it signifies the three aspects of the Divine Mother of the universe, according to which She creates (*srishti*), sustains (*sthiti*), and finally destroys (*laya*) the entire cosmos."

After a pause the Swami, in a deep spiritual mood, recited the following verses from the *Bhagavad Gita* :

*Yā nisā sarvabhūtānām tasyām jāgarti
samyamā,
Yasyām jāgrati bhūtāni sā nisā paśyato
muneh.*

'In that which is night to all beings, the man of self-control is awake ; and where all beings are awake, there is night for the Muni who sees.' (II. 69).

*Agnirjyotirahah śuklah śaṁmāsā
uttarāyanam,
Tatra prayātā gacchanti brahma brahma-
vido janāh.
Dhūmo nātristathā kṛṣṇah śaṁmāsā
dakṣiṇāyanam,
Tatra cāndramasam jyotiryogī prāpya
nivartate.*

'Fire, light, day-time, the bright half of the moon, and the six months of the northward passage of the sun—taking this path, the knowers of Brahman go to Brahman.

'Smoke, night, the dark half of the moon, and the six months of the southward passage of the sun—taking this path the Yogi reaches the lunar path and thence returns.' (VIII. 24, 25).

*Īśvarah sarvabhūtānām hr̥ddeśe' Arjuna
tiṣṭhati,
Bhrāmayansarvabhūtāni yantrārūdhāni
māyayā.
Tameva śaraṇam gaccha sarvabhāvena
Bhārata,*

*Tatprasādātpanām śāntim sthānam
prāpsyasi śāśvatam.*

'The Lord dwells in the hearts of all beings, O Arjuna, and by His Maya causes them to revolve as though mounted on a machine.

'Take refuge in Him alone with all your soul, O Bharata. By His grace will you gain Supreme Peace and the everlasting Abode.' (XVIII. 61, 62).

The Swami continued: 'While at Dakshineswar, once I asked the Master (Sri Ramakrishna), "Is God with form or without form?" The Master replied, "God is with form and also without form; again He is beyond both form and formlessness. Whatever you perceive is nothing but God." The Master uttered these words with such fervour that on hearing them I became as though mesmerized. I felt within me the dawn of spiritual illumination.

'Bhakta Prahlada was blessed with a similar illumination of divine wisdom. When his father Hiranyakashipu asked Prahlada whether God was present in the marble pillar, Prahlada replied, "Yes, God is present even in that". Soon after, the Lord incarnated Himself as Nrisimha, killed Hiranyakashipu, and affectionately took the devoted Prahlada on His lap.'

Again quoting from the *Gita*, the Swami said:

*Manmanā bhava madbhakto madyājī
mām namaskuru,
Māmevaiśyasi satyam te pratijāne
priyo'asi me.
Sarvadharmānparityajya māmekam
śaranam vraja,
Aham tvā sarvapāpebhyo mokṣayiṣyāmi
mā śucah.*

'Fix your heart on Me, give your love to Me, worship Me, bow down before Me; so shall you come to Me. This is My pledge to you, for you are dear to Me.

'Abandon all Dharmas and come to Me alone for shelter. I will deliver you from all sins; do not grieve.' (XVIII. 65, 66).

'He abides in all hearts. And if we can take refuge in Him, He certainly will grant us protection and redemption.'

* * *

On the day following the Kāli Puja, Swami Vijnanananda paid a visit to the Ramakrishna Ashrama, Patna. That day the Swami gave initiation for the first time to a Brahmacharin of the Ashrama. After the initiation ceremony, the Swami said, 'I have not so far given initiation to anybody. But today I see that the Master made me give the first initiation to this disciple. Later on, addressing the Brahmachari who had the rare privilege of becoming the Swami's first initiated disciple, the Swami said, 'Look upon the Master and the Holy Mother as one and non-different. Always keep in mind that one cannot reach the Holy Mother without the grace of the Master and the Master without the grace of the Holy Mother. The Master is as it were Lord Narayana, and the Holy Mother, the Goddess Lakshmi. Pray to Holy Mother for infinite power. For nothing worth the name can be achieved without Shakti. And pray to the Master for pure devotion. Adore Swamiji (Swami Vivekananda), looking upon him as Shiva.'

* * *

A devotee who knew that Swami Vijnanananda was engaged in translating the Ramayana into English and who was aware of the passionate fervour with which the Swami used to work at the translation, asked the Swami, 'Maharaj, is it a fact that when you are engrossed in translating the Ramayana you are so deeply absorbed as to be oblivious of everything else?'

Swami Vijnanananda: 'Yes; I can see those divine characters about whom I write. I see clearly before my eyes the particular scene (of the great epic) which I begin to describe in translation.'

After some time, the Swami said, 'Tulsidas visited Vrindaban in the company of his Guru. The Guru, pointing out a deity,

said to Tulsidas, "Behold, here is (the idol of) Sri Krishna!" and offered his salutations to the deity, uttering the following verse :

*Namo brahmanyadevāya gobrahmaṇahitāya ca,
Jagaddhitāya Kṛṣṇāya Govindāya namo namah.*

But Tulsidas offered his salutations to the same deity, uttering the verse—

*Rāmāya Rāmacandrāya Rāmabhadrāya vedhase,
Raghunāthāya nāthāya Sitāyāh pataye namah.*

At this his Guru exclaimed with surprise, "What? Don't you see this is the idol of Sri Krishna?" Tulsidas replied calmly, "I see in this idol Rama and Sita only. Where is Sri Krishna here?"

Thus it is seen that there is but one God who incarnates in different forms. Tulsidas was earnestly desirous of having Sri Rama's

darshan and was accordingly blessed with the same.'

* * *

The next day, Swami Vijnanananda left Patna for Allahabad. As preparations were being made for the Swami's departure, in the course of conversation some of the devotees made mention of the popular practice of selecting an auspicious day for starting on a journey. Referring to this, the Swami said, 'I never go anywhere by selecting an auspicious date for departure. I have myself seen that successful results have been achieved even when one has set out on a so-called inauspicious day. I find that only he who is apprehensive that something bad may happen generally meets with unhappy consequences. I have no such apprehensions, and have never suffered from any evil effects (of inauspicious days).'

HUMANITY AT THE CROSSROADS

BY THE EDITOR

*Yo devānām prabhavaścodbhavaśca
Viśvādhipo rudro maharṣih,
Hiraṇyagarbham janayāmasa pūrvam
Sa no buddhyā śubhayā samyunaktu.*

'May He, who created the gods (or the senses) and supports them; who is the origin also of the cosmic soul (or universal intelligence); who confers bliss and wisdom on the devoted, destroying their sins and sorrows, and who (duly) punishes all breaches of (His) laws, (physical, moral, and spiritual);—may He, the great seer (or eternal witness and subject) and the lord of all, endow us with good thoughts (or sound wisdom)'. (*Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, III. 4).

Mankind is passing through a period of revolutionary change in every phase of life. The conquest of distance and the ever growing inter-continental contacts in varied fields of human activity have made the modern world appear considerably less vast and more compact than what it was a quarter of a

century ago. As a consequence, no country or nation, however small, can choose to remain confined to a limited sphere any longer. Any major event or crisis in one country is bound to influence men and things in every other country of the world to a more or less appreciable extent. This inter-

dependence and the need for mutual co-operation among nations and States are more inevitably marked in the domain of politics and economics. In the spiritual and moral realm, it has been unequivocally stated by the great ones of the earth that men and women are but members of one blessed human family. To the saints and seers the entire universe is one complete whole, a well-knit frame of unity in diversity, unfolding in multitudinous ways the unfathomable purpose of the omnipotent and omnipresent Divinity. The days of narrow nationalism or smug isolationism seem to be at an end. And right-thinking men all the world over are seriously and sincerely thinking in terms of world unity through the establishment of a world government to guide the destinies of a world community. The Vedantic view of a world civilization offers to humanity the best and most practicable solution to the otherwise baffling problems of our age by emphasizing the perception of the Divinity underlying all forms of life and insisting on the grant of equal rights and privileges to all persons irrespective of race, religion, or nationality. There is none who does not long for a better and a happier world to live in. There is no government which does not desire to safeguard the best interests of the people by all manner of means at its disposal.

The world has doubtless witnessed inspiring and rapid progress during the past half century, though without much assurance of peace and plenty. But it often happens in life that we fall a prey to what we most dread. When the first world war came with all its attendant horrors, thinking people everywhere asked, 'What is the trouble with this world of ours? And why should peace and order be heralded by blood and violence instead of in a humane manner?' Obviously there was no satisfactory answer. After the war had ended and people had resumed their peaceful avocations, the general impression that naturally gained ground was that the nations on either side felt they had suffered

enough from war, and consequently they would thenceforth love to live as good neighbours, giving up their ways of war and violence. The League of Nations was perhaps the best that could be done in the direction of joint efforts for maintaining the peace. There was great hope in many quarters that the war to end all future wars had been fought and won. But alongside of this hope, a distinct, more or less universal, feeling of insecurity and dissatisfaction made itself felt. Political prophets were not wanting who clearly foresaw the potential danger of a second world war lurking under the unsatisfactory nature of peace terms imposed on the vanquished nations.

Before the second global conflict actually came, there were minor breaches of peace by individual nations under the pretext of offensive self-defence or restoration of order and 'civilized' life. The faith placed in the comity of nations was no stronger than a mere pious wish. No serious notice of these isolated wars of an internal or expeditionary character was taken. The enfeeblement of moral courage wrought by the first great war left the nations helpless in the face of many a breach of international laws perpetrated by those in power in certain countries who felt they had a just claim for recovery or revenge. The general desire of the peace-loving nations to be left in peace within their own countries, happen what may in other parts of the world, expressed itself in their following a policy of drift—of evading war, not of preventing. A lukewarm condemnation of the aggressor or the imposing of economic sanctions from without failed to prove effective in checking aggression. Those who were accused of acts of aggression pleaded they alone were not guilty in this respect as the accusers were no better in the aggressive pursuit of their colonial imperialism. Mutual confidence between nations, even between allies, broke down as a result of self-interest and group-interest prevailing over wider altruistic issues. The second

world war—more brutal in its prosecution and more tragic in its consequences—became inevitable. Once again the road to peace lay through a bath of blood.

The world emerged out of this holocaust, more bankrupt of human values and altruistic ideals, after allowing willy-nilly a few thousands to be destroyed and some hundreds of thousands to be persecuted. The nations which took active part in the war were no doubt thoroughly shaken and economically weakened. Other nations too could not escape the inevitable consequences of such a global catastrophe, especially in the fields of their economic and political life. The aftermath of war, which rendered millions of innocent men, women, and children destitute materially, morally, and spiritually, is much in evidence even today. Unlike the first world war this time the final peace treaties have not yet been signed, the end of military occupation of war theatres is not in sight, and a state of undeclared emergency continues to prevail in many parts of the world. Bleeding from war wounds and frightened by the feverish activity in building up more armaments, humanity is desperately struggling in its effort to save itself from another world war of which there are gloomy forebodings all around. The post-war period after the last war, in unfortunate contrast with the similar period after the first world war, has not so far returned to complete peacetime normalcy. Since the cessation of hostilities, the uncertainty of peace is the major concern of all human beings.

The United Nations was born out of a sincere desire on the part of the peace-loving nations of the world, big and small, to form a powerful world organization capable of enforcing the united will of the mass of mankind for stable peace. The U. N. Security Council was intended to act as the nucleus of a world government, as an effective mouthpiece of the great world assembly of free nations, and stabilize post-war peace in a way that even the most powerful nation

will not dare jeopardize. Ever since its formation, the United Nations has had a chequered career. It has had to deal with and solve highly contentious and extremely delicate problems of international significance. In spite of its apparent failures in taking just and quick decisions on some issues and in giving effect to its decisions on other issues, the United Nations is as yet the only light of hope amidst the encircling gloom of apartheid and war hysteria. The high hopes raised by the United Nations in its initial stages are gradually fading, giving place to despondency. At a time when the chances of yet another world war are considered to be 'fifty-fifty' it is deplorable that this powerful world organization is threatened with disunity among its member-nations. Some member-nations have kept away from its deliberations for their own valid reasons, some have begun to flout its authority and have refused to abide by its decisions, and many others find in its proceedings and conclusions nothing much to be enthusiastic about. It goes without saying that if the United Nations ultimately fails in its efforts to hold the major powers together, the much-dreaded third world war may become inevitable.

Today the world is enjoying a spell of peace that is more theoretical than practical, precariously balanced on a shaky foundation. It is legally peacetime so long as an officially declared state of war does not exist. Baffled by the insolubility of crucial problems, whose solutions one way or the other go counter to the interests of one another, nations are tending to form into rival blocs. It is no more a secret that power-politics has found its way into that august world parliament, the United Nations, which is becoming a battle-ground of the ideological differences and dissensions among the combinations of States with particular interests. What is popularly known as 'cold war' is oftentimes more insidiously noxious than an open war in undermining human solidarity and world understanding. The danger lies

in the people's self-complacent acquiescence, in such a subtle and calculated psychological indoctrination which cannot but create a vicious atmosphere advantageous to war-mongers. The sharp, though not explicit, cleavage between the major powers—unofficially referred to as the Western block, led by the U.S.A. and the Eastern block, led by the U.S.S.R.—is steadily widening, making it extremely difficult, if not impossible, for the United Nations to work or act in perfect unison. Neutral nations desirous of taking up a bold and independent stand, judging each issue on its own merits, find themselves in an unenviable position. If they do not toe the line, they run the risk of falling into disfavour of either bloc.

Conditions all over the world are so critical that a cool and correct appraisal of the gravity of the situation is the imperative need at the present time. But when feelings are inflamed by bitter prejudice or unprovoked aggression, it is not easy to think or act in an objective and dispassionate manner. The storm which has burst over South Korea is darkening the rest of the international horizon. Whether it is international 'police action' or full-scale war under the U.N. auspices, none can underestimate the dangers involved in the precarious situation. One need not necessarily be an alarmist or a pessimist if one cannot escape the feeling that the 'cold' war is perceptibly becoming 'hot' and that unless a supreme collective effort for peace is made, the world may be plunged into a total war. The voice of the peacemakers, feeble though, is almost drowned in the din and clatter of war-weapons. To think that the 'third world war' is not far off and that the United Nations may have to follow the old League of Nations into oblivion is yet an uncertain though gloomy prospect. For the over-all situation is not as bad as that at all. But it is not so very reassuring either.

The present crisis that faces humanity has been explained in so many ways. Some

are more than sure that it has been precipitated by despotic and ambitious men and nations actuated by dictatorial and aggressive intentions. Others view it as an inevitable fight to the finish between two inveterately opposed systems of government and life. There are yet others who attribute it to God or destiny, dealing out to mankind recompense according to its deserts, though most of them are unable to understand why a just and merciful God, who is the creator and protector of the universe, should permit such horrors and persecutions. The distressing aspect of present-day crisis has also been explained as the cumulative effect of conflicting, impersonal, economic and political forces, not unprecedented in human history. But whatever the correct explanation, it does not prove that mankind is incorrigible. Except for the few who find it profitable to fish in troubled waters, the majority of people even in countries that take to aggression, are seen to possess no abnormal hatred or wickedness in their hearts. If it is not incorrect to conclude that wars are inevitable by the very nature of things in the world, because man's propensity to war is incurable, then it is idle to expect stable world understanding and world peace. But fortunately it is incorrect, nay mendacious. Notwithstanding the tragedies and atrocities of our rich, advanced, modern world, the fountain-head of the milk of human kindness, of brotherhood, love, and charity, has not dried up. If the springs of human action remain sound and firm round the pivot of spirituality, it is certain that humanity will turn its back upon the precipice of war.

It is common knowledge that a recurrent malady calls for better preventive measures than curative ones. Wars have to be prevented before hostilities actually break out. Or else there is no knowing where, when, and how the conflict will end in spite of the best neutral efforts for a compromise. Experience tells us that even in a localized conflict, a major military decision in favour of one

side resulting in loss of face for the other greatly increases the danger of its developing into a world war. Peace efforts have to be intensified while there is yet time, for it is never too late to prevent an open clash. The greater the passivity the worse the problems become and the more scope there is for political adventurers to wield their power in a manner detrimental to peace. When once fighting starts, the task of the peacemaker becomes infinitely more difficult as the combatants are in a mood to show none of the wisdom and respect he hopefully expects of them. The military situation from day to day becomes an important and complex factor to be reckoned with. Quite naturally either side is reluctant to oblige the mediators by withdrawing to their original positions, after having staked enough men and material on the campaign.

If the nations of the world are earnest about the prevention of war, they cannot do better than take active and determined steps to eliminate the causes that engender war or that contribute to the creation of a situation likely to lead to war. The causes are numerous and deep-rooted. The difficulties in the way are many and varied, and appear insurmountable. These problems, formidably complex as they are can no longer be evaded or left unsolved. If the nations concerned continue to show disinclination to solve these problems without delay, they will do so at their peril. The infections produced by ego-centric and narrow-minded attitudes upon nations and groups in our age are well known. Imperialism and totalitarianism have had their day and are now on the wane. Democracy is passing through a testing time. It is highly deplorable that in some countries democracy has completely failed to uphold and protect human dignity and the freedom of the individual which form the bed-rock of a democratic way of life. A vast military power held in perfect readiness, with a stock-pile of strategic war materials, is doubtless a potential danger to peace. But how often

is it understood or admitted that greater danger to international peace lurks in wide spread poverty and economic insecurity, in racial or communal discrimination and persecution, in keeping down large masses of humanity, under-nourished and illiterate, with no better prospect than to be hewers of wood and drawers of water for the benefit of a handful of those who have enough money in their pockets and bayonets to boot?

Facts, even if harsh and disagreeable, have to be faced squarely and boldly. The world is not in the hands of blind and relentless in consequence. One has to reap as one has sown. The bulk of mankind fears war for it suffers want. Modern scientific knowledge and planned economy can provide an adequate diet for every one of the two billion inhabitants of the globe. But three-fourths of them, nearly fifteen hundred million men, women, and children, do not get a full meal a day. Man-made artificial scarcity and avoidable poverty has brought millions to the verge of starvation. The consequent resentment and bitterness have often expressed themselves in violent protests. The pernicious policy of apartheid, spreading the virus of racial hatred, and seeking to maintain the white man's domination over the coloured people in their own homeland, is causing much concern in many quarters. The world, already split into political blocs faces the menace of another split into racial camps. Democracy, in its extremely narrow forms, has, in some States, become identified with morbidly fanatical nationalism and patriotism. Irrational and unprincipled reverence of one's country, first and last, right or wrong, not unoften begets national arrogance and intolerance, blinding one to the higher vision of humanity.

The importance of human values in democratic nationalism need hardly be emphasized. In our effort to stem the tide of war we have to achieve, protect, and establish those essential values of life which are burning in our hearts. It has to be recogniz-

ed and realized that spirituality is the central driving force behind human movements. The leaders of nations have to base their reciprocal understanding on the spiritual kinship of man and not merely on mutual political arrangements. For when the latter break down, as they are bound to, humanity will be left with only one secure prospect, viz. war. As Field Marshall Viscount Montgomery observed and rightly so, 'Never let it be said that we saved the world and could not save ourselves, for today if we are financially and materially exhausted, there is no need for us to be spiritually bankrupt'. Religious idealism, above and in addition to all other forces—social, economic, or political—seems to us to be the most necessary and hopeful instrument for world peace.

Persons who are aware of the potency of newly devised deathdealing weapons have made no secret of the fact that they are meant to be used when necessary. To let loose the horrors of another world war with such means of destruction may well nigh prove the last straw on humanity already overburdened with endless and inconceivable agony. The burden of war falls mainly on the shoulders of the poor working classes of lower-income levels. And yet it is their voluntary effort and co-operation that contribute to the efficient prosecution of war. They are all decent enough people who want to live good lives. Why is it that in spite of themselves they are caught in the deadly tangles of such a world catastrophe? It is distressing to see so many persons ready to sacrifice life, liberty, and morality in the hope of achieving security. Contrariwise those few who have money and resources to maintain their own economic security, who do not feel the pinch of poverty even under

all-out inflation, and who are incapable of resisting the temptation to reap huge profits, do not seem to realize how wrong it is to be secure and supremely unconcerned when all over the world people are hungry, ragged, and homeless. Yet everybody acquiesces in this state of affairs which distinctly endangers world peace.

A perplexed and despondent humanity stands at the crossroad where the paths of peace and war cut across. It cannot tarry long and has to resume its march along either of the two paths. Ominous signs are not wanting, reinforcing apprehensions. As it is becoming increasingly evident that elaborate preparations for war are being made behind a smokescreen of vociferous peace propaganda, even the major progressive powers seem to waver in their faith in a peaceful and non-violent solution of the dispute. Everybody fully realizes that war is something utterly undesirable and should be avoided; but, at the same time, it is felt that it should certainly be provided against, as no risks can be taken. Some countries may find it necessary to be ready to face the worst—if the worst comes to the worst. But the large body of the United Nations should yet do its best in the direction of localizing and bringing about a speedy solution of all pending international disputes, before reconciling itself to the inevitability (or, perhaps, necessity) of a world war. Maybe a brighter future is at hand for mankind, and all this agony is the travail of a new birth! All that is humanly possible has to be done in effectively mobilizing spiritual and moral forces so as to enable mankind to proceed along the path of peace and civilization. It is for humanity itself to decide its destiny and sincerely strive for its realization.

THE PHILOSOPHIC BACKGROUND OF THE BHAGAVAD GITA

BY SWAMI RANGANATHANANDA

The religion preached by the sages of India is known by a significant title—the Sanātana Dharma, or the eternal religion. The conclusions of the Vedānta form its philosophical basis. It justifies this high title by its dispassionate study of life and experience in their wholeness and totality, and by a persistent effort to evaluate all bits of life and experience against the background of that *weltanschauung* or world-view. The sole aim of the thinkers of the Vedānta was to see into the truth of things. And they pursued this aim with a passion, vigour, and objectivity, rare in the history of philosophic thought. This spirit and temper of the Vedāntic thinkers has elicited unstinted praise from modern thinkers. 'Much of the excellency of the ancient Sanskrit philosophers', says Prof. Max Müller, 'is due to their having been undisturbed by the thought of there being a public to please or critics to appease. They thought of nothing but the work they had determined to do; their one aim was to make it as perfect as it could be made. ... Need we wonder then that their work was done as well as it could be done, and that it has lasted for thousands of years?'¹ On the nature of the edifice of thought so built and the courage of the builders, he remarks: 'It is surely astounding that such a system as the Vedānta should have been slowly elaborated by the indefatigable and intrepid thinkers of India, thousands of years ago, a system that even now makes us feel giddy, as in mounting the last steps of the swaying spire of an ancient Gothic cathedral. None of our philosophers, not excepting Heraclitus, Plato, Kant, or Hegel, has ventured to erect such a spire, never frightened by storms or lightnings. Stone follows on stone after regular success-

ion after once the first step has been made, after once it has been clearly seen that in the beginning there can have been but One, as there will be but One in the end, whether we call it Atman or Brahman.'²

This passion for the highest Truth, coupled with a deep interest in human happiness and welfare, has transformed a metaphysics into a living faith, a world-view into a social philosophy. An idea and a vision become transformed into a 'lamp unto our feet and a light unto our soul'; the Vedānta emerges as the Sanātana Dharma. And the book that registers this extension of the pure passion for truth into the wide channel of collective human welfare is the *Bhagavad Gita*; and its teacher Sri Krishna stands as the centre of this mighty change. This mood of the Upanishadic sages has been well expressed by a celebrated Vedāntic thinker of the eighth century A.D. Says Gaudapada in his *Māndūkya-Kārikā* (IV. 2): 'I salute this Yoga taught by the Vedānta which proclaims the unity of all existence, which promotes the happiness and welfare of all human beings, and which is free from strife and contradiction'. The *Bhagavad Gita* brings out of the deep spirituality of the Upanishads an emotionally satisfying religion centred round a Personal God, a personal morality leading to purity, strength, and gentleness of character, and a social ethics inspired with a passion for *Bhūta-Hita* and *Loka Sangraha*.

The Sanātana Dharma is thus based on the Upanishads; The *Gita* is the exposition of this Sanātana Dharma by a master mind who was 'Vedāntakrit' and 'Vedavit' in the words of the *Gita*, one who had digested the thoughts of the Upanishads, the scope and meaning of which find embodiment in the *Gita*

in a complete philosophy of life. An old verse compares the Upanishads to a cow, Sri Krishna to the milkman, Arjuna to the calf and the *Gita* to the milk that is drawn. And the verse significantly adds that the milk so drawn is the nectar that will nourish the spiritually hungry of the world: '*Sarvopani-shado gāvo, dogdhā Gopālanandanah ; Pārtho vatsah, sudhā bhoktā, dugdham Gītāmṛtam mahat*'.

These Upanishads mark the highest development of Vedic thought in philosophy and spirituality. On account of this, and also on account of their being the concluding portions of the vast and varied Vedic literature, the Upanishads are also called the Vedānta, the end or fulfilment of the Vedas, both as books which are twelve in number and as thought which is pervasive of them. The Vedas are called Shruti, a term which expresses their supreme trustworthiness in spiritual matters, being impersonal in spirit and universal in scope. The term Veda, according to Shankaracharya, primarily means Knowledge, beginningless and endless, capable of leading to liberation, and verifiable by one and all. 'By Vedas no books are meant', says Swami Vivekananda, addressing the Chicago Parliament of Religions; 'they are the accumulated treasury of spiritual laws discovered by different persons in different times. . . . The discoverers of these laws are called Rishis, and we honour them as perfected beings. I am glad to tell this audience that some of the very greatest of them were women.'

The Vedānta is both philosophy and religion. The Absolute of the Vedānta is not a mere logical postulate. It is a given fact of experience, an actuality, the basis of all pre-suppositions of logical thought and common experience, but ever beyond the grasp of both. It is that 'which speech and thought fail to express but through which speech and thought themselves express words and ideas'. It is the seer of thought and the witness of the universe. The Highest Reality it teaches

is at once the Absolute of metaphysics and the God of religion. It is the unity of reason and faith. It is the reality in man, the Atman or the real Self behind his ego or apparent self. As Ishvara it is the Personal God of religion, the highest reading of the Absolute by the human mind, the sum-total of all souls, human and non-human, whose limited expression in time and space is this world. Thus Vedānta speaks of one and the same reality as Brahman in its metaphysics, as Atman in its epistemology and mysticism, and as Ishvara or Bhagavan in its religion. It is the One in the many, and, though One, sages call it by various names. This great idea of divine Unity is beautifully expressed by the *Bhāgavata Purāna* (1.ii.11): '*Vadanti tat tatvavidah tatvam yad jñanam advayam ; brahmeti paramātmēti bhagavān iti śabdyate*'. 'Knowers of Truth declare that it is one and the same non-dual Reality that is variously called Brahman, Paramatman, and Bhagavan.'

Brahman as Atman, as the Reality behind the ego, gives us a God who, unlike the extra-cosmic God of monotheism, is not outside of us nor we of Him. He is the Soul of our soul, our very Self. He is the Pratyagatman, the Inner Self; He is the Antaryamin, the Indwelling One, the Inner Ruler. The finitude of man is underwritten by the Infinitude of God; man is divine and his redemption, therefore, is implicit in his very being. He is not sinful or wicked by nature. He is the child of Immortal Bliss (*amṛtasya putrah*).

But this our divine nature is remaining covered, lying forgotten. In Nature as well as in man, there is this mantle of darkness that covers Reality, this avidyā or Ajñāna which has made us forget our real nature. This veil of ignorance is thick or thin as the man is impure or pure. Its complete destruction is illumination or perfection. 'Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God.' Every advance in purity is a step in the tearing of this veil, while every

impure thought or act thickens the veil, and deepens the darkness. Herein lies the meaning of ethics and morality, says the Vedanta. Every moral action is, as it were, a blow struck on the citadel of our false self, and is a step towards the awareness of our true Self. Man is painfully aware of the bondage of finitude and the limitations of becoming; but in him is also a longing for freedom and the infinitude of being. The Vedanta teaches that the soul is divine, only held in bondage by matter; perfection will be reached when this bond will burst, and the word it uses for it is, therefore, 'Mukti'—freedom, freedom from the bonds of imperfection, freedom from death and misery. Man is thus a complex of freedom and bondage, of the infinite and the finite, of light and darkness. The awareness of the possibility of freedom by the side of the actuality of bondage makes man a restless pilgrim among God's creatures, and converts his heart into an abode of constructive peacelessness. Accordingly, his heart has been the venue of a great struggle between these two forces ever since he emerged into self-conscious activity; and the history of human civilization is the arresting story, with its ups and downs, of this great struggle, occasionally projected on to the plane of his material environment with a view to change it and mould it, but largely conducted in the field of his mental being, for fusing it and for forging ahead.

This truth of the ever present purity and perfection and freedom of his being, on the one hand, and his apparent alienation from it due to the veil of Avidyā, on the other, has been the one motive force in history, according to Vedanta, behind man's spiritual adventures, his hunger and thirst after righteousness, his struggles for the realization of political liberty and social justice, in short, behind all his endeavours to achieve civilization and culture. The brooding of the Spirit over the waters of Life produces social and political upheavals as much as scientific discoveries, moral achievements and

spiritual realizations. This is the meaning of history in its comprehensive sense, the stirring of the universal in the particular, the vibrations of the infinite in the finite, the struggle of eternity in the meshes of time. To the question as to the origin and nature of the universe, the Upanishads give the significant answer: 'From Freedom it comes, in Freedom it rests, and unto Freedom it returns.'

From the philosophical *weltanschauung* of the Vedanta flow certain important corollaries which have become fundamental features of the Sanatana Dharma and the source of its spiritual vitality down the ages. They form the inspiration behind the Hindu view of life and explain its appeal to rational minds in all ages.

The first impact of this view is on religion; it becomes a matter of experience and not one of mere dogma or creed. The test of religion is Anubhūti, realization. 'Ātmā vī are draṣṭavyah'—'The Atman is to be seen', say the Upanishads. Spirituality is the core of religion, the living and moving and having our being in God, as St. Paul puts it. If the divine Reality is our true nature, if it is not extra-cosmic and, as such, alien to us, man's hope for a fuller and better life becomes well founded; for, he can become the Divine by realizing the Divine; and this is the purpose and goal of life, according to Vedanta. If God were outside of us and far away, we could content ourselves with just a belief in His being and conduct our life as best we may in its light. Such a faith, while inspiring us with a moral fervour or a group discipline, may also breed narrowness of outlook and active intolerance. While proclaiming itself as a Universal Religion it may function as no better than a tribal faith. It is more fitted to sustain man in his national egoisms and group loyalties than to inspire him with a godward passion and a manward love. Religion at this level is a matter of injunctions and prohibitions, of belief and conformity. It does not light the inner fire

nor appease the hunger of the spiritual heart for the Bread of Life. Such a view of religion cannot explain the supreme phenomenon in history of men and women being moved by a strange hunger for spiritual awareness and certitude, by a feeling of homesickness for the infinite and transcendental. The awakening of this hunger is the very beginning of religion, according to Vedanta; religion ceases to be a pious belief or a matter of conformity and convention at this stage; it becomes a spiritual adventure, with the delights and perils attendant on an adventure, and man enters into a world of wider horizon, larger perspective, and deeper meaning than what the low-roofed world of monotheism could provide. A hungry man cannot live on words, or even on a faith in food; he eagerly desires to get at the food and eat it; he will strain every nerve in that direction, and even court death in the attempt. The conception of religion as an awakening of the spiritual hunger involves also the conception of the struggle to satisfy that hunger. We are at once introduced to the concept of *Sādhana*, spiritual practice, which converts religion from a thing of opinion and assent to a matter of conviction and endeavour. The spiritually awakened, says the *Gita*, transcend the sphere of the words of scripture; to them creeds and formulae are as stones to a hungry man. The statement of Jesus that the letter killeth but the Spirit giveth life conveys a meaning only to them. How can the words of scripture satisfy us when what we seek is the meaning behind all words and all thought? The Spirit, in forging ahead, leaves all these familiar landmarks far behind. The conception of *Sādhana* is thus fundamental to the Hindu view of religion; it is the dynamics of religion.

Infinite becomes the scope of religion so defined and diverse the forms in which it finds expression. The meaning and scope of religion so understood has been embodied by Swami Vivekananda in the following well-known statement of Vedantic faith:

'Each soul is potentially divine;
The Goal is to manifest this divine within
by controlling nature, external and
internal.

Do this either by work, or worship, or
psychic control, or philosophy, by one,
or more, or all of these—and be
free.

This is the whole of religion. Doctrines
of dogmas, or rituals or books or
temples or forms are but secondary
details.'

The whole object of Sanatana Dharma is to help man by constant struggle to become perfect, to become divine, to reach God and see God, and this reaching God, seeing God, becoming perfect even as the Father in Heaven is perfect, constitutes religion according to the Hindu sages. Religion, they hold, involves a ceaseless struggle, largely moral and spiritual, to purify one's emotions and thoughts, to compass, in the language of Christian mysticism, the death of the 'old man' within us. It is the *practice* of religion that is here insisted and not merely the *profession* of it. In the absence of this struggle, the Hindu sages find nothing to choose between the profession of the faithful and the denial of the faithless. This insistence on *Sādhana* makes religion for the Hindu a spiritual adventure here and now, and not a cheque for post-mortem cashing. It rules out at once mere belief and conformity as tests of faith. The only genuine test of faith is its capacity to set the soul on fire. The soul afire with faith and hungry for God cannot live on the air of professions or the stones of dogmas and creeds. Its bread is spiritual realization, and its way, the way of restless longing, ceaseless struggle. There is one rich word in Indian thought which expresses the entire variety and gamut of this longing and struggle. That word is Yoga, the way of union with the Divine. As understood in the Vedanta, this word conveys the simple and clear meaning of spiritual practice in its various forms, as well

as its temper and approach, all worked out with the precision and clarity of a science. There is nothing mystical in the sense of misty or mystifying about Yoga, though it cannot be denied that the handling of it by charlatans and quacks has resulted in giving it a bad odour. But sages like Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda have appeared in recent times and restored to it its ancient dignity, purity, and appeal. So much so that Yoga today means, in its various expressions, the science of religion, the art of the spiritual life.

This view of spiritual realization as the aim of religion as distinct from belief or scholarship, and this insistence on Sādhana as the means thereto, has saved religion in India, according to Dr. Radhakrishnan, from the vice of snobbery.

The second impact of the Vedantic world-view on life is harmony and positive fellowship. The Sanatana Dharma teaches not mere toleration but universal acceptance. The Hindu dislikes the attitude of superiority and patronage implied in the idea of toleration. He has learned the art of sympathy unspoilt by the vice of patronage; he has understood the meaning of fellowship. 'To him', says Swami Vivekananda in his Chicago speech, 'all the religions, from the lowest fetishism to the highest absolutism, mean so many attempts of the human soul to grasp and realize the Infinite, each determined by the conditions of its birth and association and each of these marks a stage of progress; and every soul is a young eagle soaring higher and higher, gathering more and more strength

till it reaches the glorious sun.' This is acceptance or active toleration based on understanding, sympathy, and reverence, and leading to harmony and active fellowship, unlike the usual variety of tolerance proceeding from pride or indifference or both, and leading to contempt or sufferance.

The third fruit of the Vedanta has been its liberating influence on mind and thought. Itself the product of a rational endeavour, it has released the human mind from credal anchors and allowed it to reflect on life and experience and find truth. Its terms of reference for thought is not a set dogma or a few untested assumptions but experience itself, the totality of all actual and possible experiences which it classifies into three categories of waking, dream, and dreamless sleep. The reality it preaches is what it finds in experience after a sifting inquiry, the reality of the pure and changeless Self beyond all cause and effect. The presence of the Divine in man and Nature makes life a travelling not from error to truth but from truth to truth, from truth that is lower to truth that is higher. All knowledge, therefore, is within the province of Vedanta, be it secular or sacred, material or spiritual. It actively promotes natural science as much as religion, itself being the consummation and synthesis of both. Philosophic knowledge is the synthesis of the knowledge of the Self and the not-Self, says Sri Krishna in the *Gita*. The Upanishads treat brahmavidyā or philosophy as the Science of sciences (*sarvavidyā-pratiṣṭhā*).

'The highest ideal of every man is called God. Ignorant or wise, saint or sinner, man or woman, educated or uneducated, cultivated or uncultivated, to every human being the highest ideals of beauty, of sublimity, and of power, gives us the completest conception of the loving and lovable God. These ideals exist, in some shape or other, in every mind naturally; they form a part and parcel of all our minds. All the active manifestations of human nature are struggles of those ideals to become realised in practical life.'

—Swami Vivekananda

THE HIMALAYAS OF THE SOUL

BY DR. P. NAGARAJA RAO

The American savant Thoreau rebuked his countrymen, to awaken them to the spiritual values of life, saying, 'Do not read the (New York) *Times*, read the *eternities*'. The Upanishads represent the 'eternities' and they constitute the chief documents of the perennial philosophy in its vastness and variety. In it we find the illumined reactions of the great mystic seers of India to the eternal problems of man, wrestling in earnest with the mystery and meaning of life.

Like all the great classics, the Upanishads have a quality of self-renewal. They are timeless and ageless and have a terrific topicality to the pressing problems that clamour for solution in our day, and are not without a definite message to our distracted times. When we seek and ponder over them, they re-emerge in answer to our present necessities. On this significant count, they are neither old nor new, they are 'eternal'. Modernity is a question not of date but of outlook. The chief appeal of the Upanishads consists in its power to produce from age to age the necessary corrective to men's sense of values and conduct of life by recreating the spiritual ideal which gives them the vision of the norm and Truth. 'Where there is no vision, the people perish.'

The Upanishads are the concluding portions of the Vedas. The Vedic vision of the seers is the poetic testament of a people's reaction to the wonder and awe of existence. The wonder and the poetry of the Vedic hymn is deepened and widened by the meditation of the seers. The seers of the Upanishads spoke of religious truths from the depths of mystic experience. Their's is a first-hand report of Truth. Mystic experience is the result of the total surrender of man to the Spirit, unlike that of the poet

who only surrenders his cognitive and affective aspects (thinking and feeling). The poet's will and the conduct of his life are not affected nor guided by the vision. He is content when he gives immortal shape and form in metre and words to his vision. The mystic or the seer is not content with that. His entire personality is illumined and transformed. His will is God-centred and no longer his own. His powers become angelic and his comprehension godlike. He can recapture his experience, unlike the poet, at will and strive to incorporate and incarnate the values on earth.

The Spanish writer J. Mascaro described the Upanishads as 'The Himalayas of the Soul'. Just as that great mountain range determines the climate, the rainfall, and the physical features of this peninsula, so do the heights of light and wisdom determine the scope and the quality of the spiritual life of the race that inhabits it. In point of popularity the Upanishads are second only to that great charter of Hinduism—the *Gita*. Ten of the Upanishads are marked as important and they are commented upon by the great system-builders like Shankara, Ramana, and Madhva. They were translated from Sanskrit into Persian by Dara Shikoh, son of Shahjahan, in 1640 in Kashmir. One Le Gentil, a French resident of Faizabad, attached to the court of Shuja Uddaulah, presented the manuscript to Antequetil Duperon who rendered the Persian version into Latin in 1801. Schopenhauer after reading them exclaimed, 'And oh! How the mind is here washed clean of all its early ingrafted Jewish superstitions! It is the most profitable and most elevated reading which is possible in the world. It has been the solace of my life, and will be the solace of my death.' Max Müller describes the Upani-

shads 'as the light of the morning, like the pure air of the mountains, so simple and so true if once understood'.

The Truth imparted to the disciples by the Rishis was regarded as invaluable; and they have shown a reluctance to impart the Highest Truths to everyone without discrimination, except to those who satisfied them of their worth and spiritual fitness for receiving the instruction. The Upanishads are the admitted basis of all the philosophical systems of India not excluding heterodox Buddhism. The language, though never bereft of charm, is mostly symbolic. The style is elliptical and needs explanation. The method is the method of dialogue. The dialogues are long. Women, kings, and ordinary men figure in it. The dialogue form helps to thrash the pros and cons of the problem and brings out the rational method of the Upanishads. The discussions are objective. What gives the Upanishads their unique quality and unfailing human appeal is the earnest sincerity of tone as of friends conferring upon matters of deep concern. Philosophy, to the Indian mind, is what matters most.

It may be asked what exactly is the substance of the Upanishads, and whether all of them teach the same doctrine. The agreement among the commentators does not extend beyond the general recognition of the unity of the Upanishadic teaching. They widely differ as to what exactly the nature of the teaching is. To the modern student there is no one view running through all the texts. Some are flashes of thought, others are long chains of arguments with profound illustrations, and yet others are poetic visions. But one does not miss the general tenor of the imperishable truths in them. Their philosophy, according to the great tradition of Shankara, is predominantly monistic and idealistic.

The central Reality is the divine ground called Brahman. This unitary principle is the goal and the ground of the world of

matter and individual souls. But for Brahman they cannot exist. They or anything as a matter of fact has no existence apart from Brahman. He is the sole and whole Reality. Objective analysis has taken the seers to this principle which cannot be described in intellectual terms, as there is nothing besides it to describe it with. We can only intuitively realize it and that realization unites us with it.

The subjective analysis of the Upanishadic seers have taken them to the concept of *Atman*. They have analyzed man and seen that he is in essence the 'spark divine', overlaid by thick layers of unreality. The eternal Self in man is apparently overcome by his passions, lust, and greed, and thus makes him blind to his real nature. Philosophical analysis and meditation will tell us that the imperishable in man is the Spirit. The body, intellect, and faculties work because of it. This Self in man is not a stranger, nor is it separate or other than that Brahman. As long as man suffers from unregenerate desires, the separatist vision continues, and we have conflicts and competition. The manifest destiny of man is twofold, to desire and to actually identify himself with the Spirit, i.e. Brahman, and gain unitive knowledge of the divine ground. The Upanishads effect the Brahman-Atman equation. It is brought out in the *Chhândogya Upanishad* in the dialogue between Uddâlaka and his son Shvetaketu, and in the *Brihadâraṇyaka Upanishad* in the dialogue between the immortal couple Yājñavalkya and Maitreyi.

The nature of the supreme is realizable by effort and discipline in the depths of one's soul even in this very lifetime. The Kingdom of Heaven is not yonder there, it is within us. It is not derivative and external to us. It is an inward growth, it is the rediscovery of what is within us. It is native to all of us. We need to become conscious of it. It is not a supernatural gift but a self-revelation. Perfection is transformed life, it is not a change of place or circumstance,

The spiritual soul after realization is not content with individual perfection but strives hard to incarnate the values on earth and incorporate them in life. He transforms the earth into a heaven. The fundamental realization of the oneness of Reality helps him to form fellowship with men. He loves others not as such but as himself, because he feels his identity with them. The Upanishads declare that all love is there because of the Atman. That is the reason why all religions exhort us to seek first the Kingdom of Heaven, and assure us that all other things will be added unto us. Our current civilization seeks first all else—brain power, brute strength, and latest scientific gadgets—and forgets the Kingdom of God.

The process of regeneration requires of us to tread the path which is sharp like the 'razor's edge'. We must acquire ceremonial purity, ethical excellence, and uninterrupted spiritual meditation to attain the goal. Rupture with normal life is not necessary. All the values, physical and economic, have to be harnessed to the spiritual end, and not erected into separate goals. We do not need to *suppress* our desires, we need to *sublimate* them.

The universal, progressive, non-sectarian, rational religion of the Upanishads has attracted the West for some time. The

German renaissance represented by Schopenhauer, Hartmann, and Nietzsche; the American philosophy in the writings of Emerson, Walt Whitman, and Thoreau; the poetry of W. B. Yeats, G. W. Russell (called AE), and George Moore in Ireland have been chiefly influenced by the Upanishads. On the Continent, the great thinkers, Maeterlinck, Romain Rolland, and Keyserling are influenced by the philosophy of the Upanishads. Today a group of the great contemporary British thinkers—Aldous Huxley, Gerald Heard, and poet Christopher Isherwood—are members of the Vedanta Society (Ramakrishna Mission), Hollywood, California. The Upanishads are the main-spring of the world's idealism in their hands. George Russell, the Irish poet, popularly known as AE, writes 'Goethe, Wordsworth, Emerson, and Thoreau, among moderns, have something of this vitality and wisdom, but we can find all they have said and much more in the grand sacred books of the East. The *Gita* and the Upanishads contain such godlike fullness of wisdom on all things that I feel the authors must have looked with calm remembrance back through a thousand passionate lives, full of feverish strife for and with shadows, ere they could have written with such certainty of things which the soul feels to be sure.'

SRI YAMUNACHARYA

BY SWAMI RITAJANANDA

The religion of devotion was well founded in South India as early as the first century of the Christian era. The Alvar saints were mainly responsible for the spread of this religion. The path of devotion, which they preached through their exquisite poetical compositions, brought religion within the

reach of all people, without distinction of caste or sex. Much stress was laid on self-surrender as thereby the saving grace of the Lord was assured. Later on came the Acharyas, who gave the proper metaphysical foundation to this religion which was mainly emotional and also brought the unification

of the doctrines of the Alvars and the teachings of the Sanskrit Agamas. The first Acharya, Nathamuni, discovered the sublime devotion embedded in the Tamil compositions of the Alvars and gave them a place along with the Vedas. With a thorough knowledge of the Sanskrit scriptures, he showed how the Alvars interpreted the ideas found in the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita, and the Pancharātra Agamas. His work was more effectively carried out by his grandson, Yamunacharya, and it was he who really laid the foundation of the Vishishtadvaitic philosophy, elaborated later on by the great Ramanujacharya. The interesting life of Yamunacharya shows clearly the wonderful qualities he possessed for becoming a great religious teacher.

Yamuna was born in a town called Viranarayanapuram (modern Mannargudi) in South India in the beginning of the tenth century. His grandfather gave him this name in order to commemorate his visit to Vrindaban on the banks of the Yamuna and he had high hopes in the child's future. Yamuna lost his father while still very young, but did not miss a proper education. He was a precocious child and exhibited extraordinary intellectual powers even from his boyhood. He learnt his lessons much quicker than his class-mates and had a thorough grasp of the various sections of the scriptures. Now and then he conducted the school giving a much-needed relief to his teacher, Mahabhashya Bhatta, a great scholar in Sanskrit grammar. During that time, there was a Pandit in the court of the Chola king, who, proud of his learning and position, used to collect tributes from all the scholars in the country, and Mahabhashya Bhatta also had to submit to this humiliation. One day, while he was out, Yamuna was conducting the class. Just then the messengers of Akki Alvan, the court Pandit came with the letter demanding the usual tribute. Yamuna went through the letter and was highly provoked by the

insolent attitude of the court Pandit towards his revered teacher. He immediately tore the letter to pieces and sent away the messengers with the words, 'Go and tell your master that no tributes will be paid by my preceptor. Even I, his humble disciple, is better qualified than your master and can enter into a disputation with him.' Never did Akki Alvan receive such an insult and that too from a stripling who was still in his teens. He complained to the king, and Yamuna was asked to meet the Pandit in the court. But Yamuna was not prepared to go to the court like an ordinary man and refused to go there unless he was taken with all the honour due to a scholar. Highly amused at the audacity of the young man, the king sent the palanquin and other marks of honour. Thus Yamuna suddenly became the hero of his place and he proceeded to the king's court followed by his friends and admirers.

It was a gala day and large crowds gathered to witness the intellectual combat. Pandits who were oppressed by the tyrannical Akki Alvan mustered strong to see his defeat at the hands of a young boy. In one corner sat Mahabhashya Bhatta, fearing the terrible consequences if his disciple lost the contest. The queen, who had heard about the spirited young man who dared to oppose Akki Alvan, was sitting with her husband. Yamuna, whose face beamed with intelligence, entered the court with a look of confidence. Looking at him the queen instinctively understood that he was an extraordinary genius, and predicted that he would be the victor. The king, who had more faith in his Pandit, promised to give a part of his kingdom to him who came out successful in the contest. The debate began. All the questions put by Akki Alvan were met by Yamuna with astonishing ease. The arrogant Pandit was no match for the intelligent youth. Tradition says that in the end Akki Alvan, finding no way of defeating Yamuna, burst out in anger, 'You are a young stripling !

There is no use arguing with such insignificant creatures like you. Let me test your intelligence. Make three propositions which cannot be contradicted. This will decide our contest.' Yamuna readily agreed and said, 'Please disprove the following three statements: "Your mother is not barren." "The king is supreme." "The queen is chaste."' The court Pandit had never bargained for such inconvenient questions. His scholarship deserted him here and he had to accept defeat. Whether this anecdote is true or not, Yamuna's victory is a recognized fact. He got the territory from the king and was addressed as 'Alavandar' (one who has come to rule) by the queen, by which name he was afterwards universally called.

The sudden turn of events separated Yamuna once for all from his friends at Viranarayanapuram. The new life lacked no luxuries and the royal pleasures were always at his command. Alavandar ruled his country very efficiently, maintaining peace and justice. His whole life would have ended in this manner had it not been for a trifling incident which brought a total transformation in his life.

Rama Mishra, the favourite disciple of Nathamuni, was entrusted with the task of training Yamuna on the lines of the religion of devotion as taught by his master. But Yamuna's occupying a throne put many obstacles in the way of Rama Mishra. It proved a difficult task for the humble Brahmin to get suitable opportunities to have private interviews with the king, engrossed in worldly life, and thereby give him spiritual instruction. So Rama Mishra devised a strange method of drawing the attention of the king. He gathered a good variety of greens and asked the king's cook to prepare a nice dish with them for the king. He continued this supply for six months. But the king, although he relished the dish, never took any special notice of it. One day Rama Mishra stopped the supply. Alavandar, missing the dish, asked the cook about the

matter, and when he heard the whole story, he asked him to bring Rama Mishra before him.

The next day Rama Mishra was taken to the king. The pious and dignified appearance of the Brahmin, radiating spirituality, touched the tender feelings of the king and he exclaimed, 'O holy sir, I beg your pardon for keeping you waiting all these months. I am extremely obliged to you for your kindness. Please let me know how I can express my gratitude. Wealth, lands, or anything in my possession will be placed at your service.' Rama Mishra smiled and said, 'O king, I am not in need of those things which you offer. I have come to give and not to accept. Your ancestors have left with me a very valuable treasure to be handed over to you.' Alavandar was surprised. The offer of a 'treasure' when he was badly in need of money roused his curiosity all the more. 'Where is it? How shall I get it?', Yamuna asked. 'Hear me, O king!', replied Rama Mishra, 'It is deposited in a very secure place. Please follow me and see it for yourself.' Strange to say, Alavandar agreed and followed the Brahmin. The journey was long and Rama Mishra utilized the days of travelling for opening the spiritual eyes of Yamuna. Trained by no less a person than the famous Acharya Nathamuni, he gave a splendid exposition of the Shastras in terms of the devotional songs of the Alvars. Then he brought out the message of the *Bhagavad Gita* and the culmination of devotion in complete self-surrender to God. As days rolled on Yamuna became a changed man and his yearning for the realization of God became intense. He began to press Rama Mishra to show him the way to God, and not the way to any mundane treasure. By this time they had come to the last chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita* and the Shloka 'Relinquishing all Dharmas, take refuge in Me alone. I shall liberate thee from all sins. Do not grieve,' was read and explained. This important Shloka removed all his doubts.

At last they reached the portals of the famous temple at Srirangam near Tiruchirappally. This temple is an important place of pilgrimage due to its association with the lives of many of the Alvars who always felt the divine presence of the Lord in the image of Ranganatha and have immortalized the place in their songs. Taking Yamuna close to the image, Rama Mishra said, 'Sir, who will not worship Rangam, the most holy, if he be wise? For doth not wisdom blossom here, and keep death out of sight? This is the priceless treasure left by your ancestors—your heritage.' A priceless treasure indeed! A heritage which can remove the miseries of the world once for all and bring in incomparable bliss! Yamuna silently gazed at the beautiful reclining image of the Lord. Vision after vision of great sages passed before his mind's eye and he stood there rapt in ecstasy. The last vestige of attachment to the world dropped off, and, with extreme remorse for the useless life he had led all these years, he exclaimed, 'O Lord! A miserable wretch I was that I completely lost myself in the mire of sensual pleasures. Out of your infinite mercy you have opened my eyes. What are wife and children and royal position compared to your divine company? Henceforth, my Lord, I am yours and yours alone.' So saying he renounced his kingship and the world immediately, and settled in Srirangam.

Visiting the shrine, prayer, meditation, and the exposition of the scriptures became his daily routine. Soon his fame spread far and wide, and people began to come to him in large numbers. Many became his disciples, whom he trained in the way of his masters. The scholarly way in which he expounded the scriptures laid the foundation of the religion of Sri Vaishnavism. During this period of his apostolic career he is said to have composed the *Siddhitraya*, *Gītārthasangraha*, and *Āgamaprāmānya*. Of these the first is considered to be very important as it helped in the development of the philo-

sophy of Vishishtadvaita. Mention also must be made of the *Stotraratna*, a gem of its class. It is a poem of sixty-five stanzas in adoration of Vishnu and is fully expressive of the doctrine of Prapatti, as the following stanzas show :

'The vessel of a thousand sins, and plunged
Deep in the heart of life's outrageous sea.
I seek in Thee, the refuge of despair ;
In mercy only, O Hari ! make me Thine.'
(48)

But for Thee I am masterless ; save me ;
There is none to earn Thy mercy since our
fate
Weaveth this bond between us, Master mine,
O' guard it well and cast it not away.'
(51)

Lord Madhava, whatever mine may be,
Whatever I, is all and wholly Thine ;
What offering can I bring, whose wakened soul
Seeth all Being bound to Thee for aye.'
(53)

(Translated by L.D. Barnett)

Years rolled on peacefully and Yamunacharya spent his life preaching his message throughout the length and breadth of South India. He made pilgrimages to all the important shrines. And during one of his visits to Kanchipuram he met the great Ramanujacharya, then a bright young lad. He immediately felt that Ramanuja would be his fitting successor. He lived up to a ripe old age, fully bearing the burden of his responsibility as a religious teacher till the last moment of his life. He had an attack of serious illness and the disciples were smitten with grief at the impending departure of their beloved master. They gathered round him and begged for his final instructions. 'Be it so', said Yamunacharya who gave them the following advice : 'Look upon Sri Ranganatha as your saviour. The Lord is beyond speech and mind. Give yourselves up entirely to Him and to His service. Even the services you do to His devotees are also

to Him alone. Does He not dwell in the hearts of His devotees? Where else shall we find Him if not in such saints like Thiruppana Alvar, Kuranga Purna and Kanchi Purna? These great souls, though born in very low castes, what sublime faith and devotion they had! Thiruppana Alvar has actually bewitched Sri Ranganatha by his music. Take him as your ideal for contemplation on the Divine. Consider him as your very soul. My dear children, I have taken refuge at the lotus feet of the Lord in whom all our hopes are centred. I am going to Him in whose service I have spent my life. You, noble souls, need not feel grieved at that. Have I not pointed out that a Prapanna (a person who has completely surrendered at the feet of the Lord) can never think of what will happen to his body or mind when he has resigned himself to God? Can a true believer in God's grace entertain any doubts about the safety of his soul? We are all His property, to be used as He wills. He is the master and we are His slaves. Why are you showing signs of grief since I am going to His ineffable Presence? How can a devotee of the Lord feel miserable at another's good fortune? The Lord of infinite compassion has taken you all in His protection.' But the disciples were not satisfied. Some did not like to survive their master. Coming to know of this, Yamunacharya called them to him and said, 'I tell you, if you have the least regard for me, never entertain such foolish ideas. God is the sole end and aim of our life. Know this fact that the Lord,

the preceptor, and the devotees equally deserve our respect. Here is my trusted disciple, Vara Ranga, whom you all know very well. I am entrusting him with the task of looking after your welfare.'

Subsequently Yamunacharya recovered a little and his immediate thought was to visit the temple. He prayed to the Lord, before the holy image, (for the last time) and returned to his monastery. A large number of his followers and devotees gathered there and that sight filled him with joy. Prostrating before this pious assembly, with folded hands he asked for forgiveness for all the offences committed by him consciously or otherwise. This extreme humility of their master was a great object-lesson to all the disciples who were filled with admiration. Some time later, Yamuna had another attack of illness from which he never recovered. Surrounded by devotees singing the praise of the Lord, he sat in Padmasana and, with mind absorbed in meditation, he entered into Mahasamadhi. A disciple was sent to bring Ramanuja whom Yamuna wanted to see before passing away. But unfortunately this last meeting with Ramanuja did not come to pass.

Yamunacharya's life presents before us a lofty and noble example. In him the qualities of a sovereign and a saint, a philosopher and a poet were beautifully combined. Great was he when he ascended the throne, but greater is he even to this day as a religious preceptor, philosopher, and saint.

'Seeing that the tree on which it has built its nest is being felled by cruel hands, the bird gives up all attachment, flies away from its nest, and seeks elsewhere its well-being. Similarly knowing that the tree of mortal existence is cut short by time, with its rotation of days and nights, the wise man gives up the thirst for life and realizes the supreme Lord.'

LANDMARKS IN SPIRITUAL PILGRIMAGE

BY ANTHONY ELENJIMITTAM

The clear landmarks in our spiritual journey are not many. Of these the central one is complete conquest of Kāma (lust) and Kānchana (greed). This has to be achieved before we can cross the sea of worldliness and win the freedom of the Spirit, seen by so few in this world, and reached and realized by still fewer souls. To renounce lust and greed is to be born anew in the Kingdom of God. There are no two ways about it. Bondage to sensual desires and passions and manifestation of the universal consciousness of Self are diametrically and irreconcilably opposed to each other. There is no room for toning down this truth of truths that lust must be conquered, brought under control, sublimated, and transcended before we can glimpse the vision of the Infinite Reality.

God is one of the many names connoting Reality, and supreme Reality is pure Consciousness. Reality is the ocean of 'I am', Reality or God is Truth, Beauty, Goodness, and Consciousness—pure, unsullied, unalloyed. It is by crossing the bridge of our own individual consciousness that we reach the shoreless ocean of universal Consciousness or God. A purified soul is God, beyond the taint of sin and temptation, beyond the reach of evil and misery. 'God (Ishvara)', says Patanjali, 'is a special Purusha untouched by actions and their results, misery, and desires'. (*Yoga-Sutras*, I 24). Consciousness is the unfailing light which if faithfully adhered to will truly and certainly lead us on to our heavenly abode from this earthly sojourn, from this world of war, malice, evil, and lust.

Our limited reasoning, relative prudence, and even virtues do not lead us to the vision of God's essence, nor lead us to our real goal which is beyond all reasoning, speaking, and

expressing, and even experiencing. That is why the torch of faith—living faith in living God and our own ideals—is interposed between our frail reasoning and God or Reality to lead us to the goal of human existence. Without faith it is just impossible to cross the sea of Samsāra or worldliness of lust and selfishness. Desires lead us into indulgence in pleasures and make us indifferent to the light of spirituality and Truth. The wise ones, both in the East and the West, have proclaimed that there is no sex distinction in the soul, in the Spirit. This phase is reached when one has got hold of Reality which is beyond all the pairs of opposites. Reality is beyond all these contradistinctions. The thesis and antithesis are made one in synthesis, harmonized in the one supreme Absolute which is pure Consciousness.

Only life of God-realized service is worthwhile in this world of evil, misery, and death. Only God-realization is the goal of life; not amassing riches, not gaining popular applause or fading fame. The first landmark in our pilgrimage is when divine dissatisfaction is felt within, expressing itself as a struggle, within the heart and conscience of man between the life he is leading and the life he ought to lead as a human being. The struggle is intense in sensitive and self-conscious people. The more delicate is one's conscience the more accurately is registered the tension that rages wild between the law of the flesh and the law of the Spirit, so mysteriously blended in one single unit called man. The Spirit or Consciousness pulls us up heavenwards, while the flesh drags us down earthwards. The life of the Spirit seeks purity, goodness, and chastity as the indispensable means for inner purification and enlightenment.

Our body is the vehicle of our mind and Spirit ; and as Spirit or Consciousness is in its essence and depth nothing but God, it is said that our body is the temple of living God. Through repeated manifestations of God or enlightened Consciousness within this frail body we ourselves are slowly attuned to the Infinite, gradually being purified and cleansed, and made worthy to receive the light of God and even become one with Him who is our Father in Heaven, from whom this entire creation has sprung, by whom it is sustained, and into whom it will finally merge. It is at this stage that we feel remorse when we go astray from the right path. Such restlessness does not cease until that inner poise and power come and man is reborn anew in God. All trace of hypocrisy, vacillating faith, and insincerity must depart before the poetry, power, and bliss of God can descend and transplant us into better regions and better skies even while we are in flesh and blood on this earth. As gold is tried in a furnace, as the birth-pangs precede the advent of the new-born babe, so God tests our souls, tries our faith, strengthens our character, enriches our experience, so that we may be serviceable to Him by serving His creation, His children.

There is no half-hearted path to God. Either we indulge in the desires of the flesh and die or renounce everything else, and soar high to the Himalayas of spiritual light. The dividing line, in our spiritual life is between flesh-thralldom and Spirit-freedom. In the realization of the freedom of the Spirit lie inherent clearer, more intense, and more subtle manifestations of enlightened Consciousness. Omniscience, knowing the past and the future in one instant, power to foresee, prophesy with infallible certainty, adamant will, and many other miraculous powers come one's way as one ascends higher up the mansion of God-realization and divine apostolate. But these miraculous powers more often than not prove detrimental to true spiritual upliftment by leading even the

staunch aspirant away from the right path of progress. We have to be on the alert and guard against such a disaster overtaking us on our spiritual pilgrimage. Not to be side-tracked by these powers (*siddhi*) is an indispensable condition for climbing the steps of spiritual perfection and seeing for oneself the indescribable treasures of happiness and bliss, light and love.

Saints and prophets, the spiritual exemplars of mankind, who are higher than artists, musicians, and litterateurs, are the mainstay of humanity. They stand aloft, beyond the limitations of time and space, race and nationality, and boldly preach their essentially redemptive gospel. The world and its temptations have no more hold on them ; hence they are free, as the blessed children of God. The magnet, when demagnetized, no longer attracts iron, nor turns northwards. Similarly when man is freed from *Kāma* and *Kānchana*, he is no more attracted by the ephemeral sensual pleasures of the world. Such a *Sthitaprajna* stands rooted in God. In God he breathes, in God he lives, moves, and has his being. 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God', says Jesus. Sri Ramakrishna says that as long as there is the least trace of lust and greed, there cannot be the vision of God and freedom of the Spirit. According to the teachers of Yoga, through the constant practice of *Brahmacharya* or perfect continence, a certain nerve called '*Medhā-nādi*' is aroused, which leads us to the portals of immortality and blessedness.

Phases, stages, and landmarks centre round a sexless and selfless life. That takes us more than half way between earth and heaven so that our soul naturally gravitates towards God, even as an object that has passed beyond half way between the earth and moon, is attracted towards the moon.

There are prophets who shed lustre by remaining calm and serene, and there are seers who show the way to others by themselves being intensely active. It is not the intention of Mother Nature that we stay out

of her lap all the time and get involved in struggles and tension only. When we have found the way in our life and have reached the goal of our individual existence in this very life, we can get that much-needed peace and bliss of heart. This is the way which we should pursue if we need keep our minds and hearts on the right track that leads us on to the very threshold of life eternal.

There is a stage in our spiritual pilgrimage when we reach the very core of humanity, when we feel, at least once in life, the glow of inner freedom and the intuitive glimpse of life immortal. Ours is to live just for the day; but it is God's to provide for our full-fledged emancipated life. And one of the most necessary things that should be observed if we want to reach the shores of immortal life is *purity*—purity of thought, word, and

deed to the maximum extent.

Gods themselves alight and tend upon souls given to the virtues of purity and chastity, and brave acts of heroism. It is only when we have transcended beyond the trammels and limitations of flesh and blood, that the rays of the Divine come and illumine us from above. This is the creed we learn from the depths of spiritual life as it unfolds in our heart—the throne of the Almighty within. We can have no rest, peace, or bliss till, after spiritual regeneration, we have soared beyond the skies and clouds, and touched the very throne of the Almighty. But, for this we need have to pray incessantly before Him who can deliver us from evil and inspire cheer and enthusiasm in our fading limbs and aching hearts.

THE GREAT SUFI BAYAZID AL-BISTAMI

BY DR. ROMA CHAUDHURI

Abu Yazid Tayfur or Bayazid al-Bistami was a famous Sufi saint of the ninth century A. D. He was held in high esteem by all his followers and successors; and his teachings are preserved in many treatises on Sufism and memoirs of saints, like Hujwiri's *Kashf Al-Mahjub* (Revelation of the Mystic), the most celebrated Persian treatise on Sufism, etc. Hujwiri reverently refers to Bayazid as 'the greatest of the *shaykhs* in state and dignity'. According to Hujwiri, Junayd, the greatest theosophist of his age, also said, 'Abu Yazid holds the same rank among us as Gabriel among the angels'.

Bayazid seems to have propounded a strictly monistic doctrine of the essential identity of God and man. Some of the sayings, attributed to him and preserved in Sufi manuals, almost echo the monistic teachings of the Upanishads, later on developed into the Advaita school of the Vedanta, such

as: 'Verily, I am God, there is no God except me, so worship me', 'Beneath this cloak of mine, there is nothing but God', 'I went from God to God until they cried: "O! Thou I"', 'Then I looked: I saw that lover, beloved, love are all one, for, in the world of unification all are one.' According to Bayazid, thus, there is a single, unitary Being or God, in whom, finally, all plurality and differences are merged and annihilated. Hence, Bayazid is taken as the first great exponent of the famous Sufi doctrine of *Fana* or self-annihilation. He emphasizes *Fana* or the complete dissolution of man's separate essence and individuality in God, rather than *Baqa* or the retention of man's own essence and personality, even when united with God. 'A gnostic's vestiges are effaced and his essence is annihilated', says Bayazid, 'by the essence of another and his traces are lost in another's traces'.

The great goal of life is, thus, this realization of one's non-difference from God. This is a supremely difficult goal to attain, for, in our unfathomable ignorance and equally colossal selfishness, we turn our faces away from God, and imagine ourselves to be independent, self-sufficient and perfect. Hence, a great deal of ethical training is necessary before we can even think of approaching God. Thus, Bayazid speaks of a twofold means to the supreme goal of union with God, viz: (i) the preliminary ethical means of self-control, patience, indifference, charity and absolute dependence on God; (ii) and the final supra-ethical means of gnosis, love and ecstasy.

Self-control means the complete control of the lower, physical side of our nature. Unless the soul or this selfish, brute self in us is first fully overpowered and put under the complete guidance of the higher, spiritual self, the heart is not free to receive divine light. 'The contraction of hearts' says Bayazid, 'consists in the expansion of souls, and the expansion of hearts in the contraction of souls'.

Patience is no less an essential ethical virtue to be cultivated by a saint, desiring to be united with God, for, the path of virtue is a thorny one, needing an iron will, indomitable courage, and steady faith.

Indifference to everything except God is an equally difficult ethical discipline. It not only means the actual absence of worldly enjoyment, but also the total absence of any desire thereof—'not only the empty hand, but also the empty heart'. Even the very thought of anything other than God pollutes the devotee, for which penances should be made. 'Whenever the thought of this world occurs to me' says Bayazid, 'I perform a purificatory rite; and whenever a thought of the next world occurs to me, I perform a complete ablution rite'.

Dependence on God means subordinating our selfish desires to God's commands and obeying Him with the unquestionable faith

of a child. Such a dependence is really the supreme form of independence, for, now only does a saint finally rend asunder the shackles that so long fettered him to the depths of degradation—the shackles of selfishness, of uncontrolled desires and passions. 'A prince is he' says Bayazid, 'who has no choice of his own, but to whom God's choice has become the only choice'.

Charity is the result of the realization of God's unity and immanence in the world. If everything is God in essence, everything must be loved and served like God Himself. Early Sufis, over-emphasizing asceticism and other-worldliness, despised natural human feelings and affections, and became, more or less, misanthropes. But later Sufis recognized the fundamental fact of religion that the love of God meant first the love of mankind. Hence, Bayazid says that when God loves and favours a man, He endows him with three divine qualities: a bounty like that of the sea, a sympathy like that of the sun, and a humility like that of the earth. Thus, a saint's bounty must be illimitable like the sea, his sympathy must be all-extending like the sun, and his humbleness and patience must be all-bearing like the earth.

When a saint has, thus, purified and uplifted himself through the above ethical disciplines, he becomes entitled to the higher means of gnosis, love and ecstasy. *Gnosis* means a direct intuition or an immediate spiritual vision of God. It is opposed to ordinary logical thinking, or intellect. 'Intellect', says the great Sufi Rumi, 'has a squint in the eye that makes it see double'. In Intellect, the knower and the known are kept apart and the duality of man and God persists. But in Intuition or Gnosis, the saint *feels* by the heart, and does not *know* by the mind, and thereby approaches towards a higher unitary vision. When his heart is illumined by divine light, God is mirrored on it in His entire essence and attributes, and the heart and God become one. Still, at this stage, a small trace of

duality remains — the duality between the illumined and the illuminer, the mirror and the mirrored, the realizer and the realized.

The saint, hankering for a complete union with God, then resorts to the second means *Love*. Love is the closest bond between two people, and so it is the only means of bringing man close to God. But unfortunately, love, too, rests on a dualistic conception of a difference between the lover and the beloved, and thus fails to bring about a complete union of man and God.

So, the saint has recourse to the final means *Ecstasy* or Intoxication. *Gnosis* and *Love* are but two sides of the same thing: *Gnosis* gives us an immediate apprehension of Divine Nature, *Love* brings us nearest to Divine Beauty. Thus, both bring us a direct realization of God, the first being more impersonal and intellectual, the second being more personal and emotional. But as pointed out above, in both, a small trace of duality persists which is completely superseded in the stage of *Ecstasy*. In this stage, the knower and the lover no longer regards himself as different from the object known and loved, but feels himself to be completely one with it. Here, love itself disappears and the lover and the Beloved become one.

Thus, *Gnosis* and *Love* constitute the first stage towards a realization of one's complete unity with God. Here, the plurality of ordinary knowledge and passion disappears, there remaining only the duality of man and God, the knower and the Known, the lover and the Beloved. Finally, even that duality is superseded in an all-embracing *Ecstasy* when nothing but a Unity is left, and man is completely merged in God. Such an annihilation of the lover in the eternity of love is, according to Bayazid, more perfect than his subsistence through the everlastingness of love. For, such a subsistence implies a difference between the lover and the Beloved, man and God, but a real lover cannot stand even the slightest

difference or separation from his Beloved. Such is the paradox of love: the lover to be really united with the Beloved must destroy himself as a separate personality, love to really bring the two together must itself disappear in the very act of uniting them.

This is the state of *Fana*, the state of complete union with God, when the gnostic realizes that knowledge, knower and Known, love, lover and Beloved are all one. This gnosis of unity being higher than gnosis itself is called, 'The Higher Gnosis or Truth' (*Haquiquat*) as distinguished from 'Gnosis' (*Marifat*). Even higher than this state of *Fana*, according to Bayazid, is the state of *Fana-al-Fana* or 'annihilation of annihilation', when the very consciousness of being united with God, too, disappears, and the feeling of ecstasy itself is swallowed up in a calm, neutral, feelingless, colourless state of undifferentiated oneness.

Like other Sufis, Bayazid, too, emphasized inner purity more than mere external observance of rites and rituals. Hence is his famous saying: 'The unbelief of the magnanimous is nobler than the Islam of the covetous.' He discourages needless pilgrimage to holy places and wanderings of saints thus: 'The inconsiderate walk by a dervish (saint) is a sign that he is heedless of God, for all that exists is attained in two steps: one step away from self-interest, and the other step firmly planted on the commandments of God' (Tr. by Nicholson).

This magnificent monistic system of Bayazid inevitably reminds us of the monistic Vedanta system of Shankara. But there is a fundamental difference between the two. Shankara realizes: 'I am Brahman', through knowledge and intuition; while Bayazid realizes: 'I am God through love and ecstasy. Hence, Bayazid's system is more similar to the later schools of Vaishnava emotional monism or mysticism, where the enraptured lover becomes one with the Beloved in the ecstasy of love.

KALI THE MOTHER

BY ELISE AYLEN

I am Kali,
The Merciful ;
I am the Mother ;
I am the Darkness,
That brings forth and takes again ;
I am the rest beyond conflict ;
I am peace beyond pain ;

I am the Mother ;
And the gods who are my children,
With the foolishness of children,
Build their intricate worlds,
And deem themselves almighty ;
But slowly and without sound,
The moments pass to their undoing ;
Slowly I unravel the tortuous web
Of time and space and worlds.
I dissolve its substance,
And its meaning ;
And laughing take it again into myself,
Laughing with terrible laughter,
At its sin and its folly and falsehood,

Built with a child's wanton will,
And its wanton lust of destruction.

I am Kali,
The Mother, the Mighty ;
Kali, the Destroyer of Time ;
And lo, at my breast,
Is the Peace that is Eternal.

I am Kali,
The Mother,
The Merciful,
Who takes all back again,
Into the womb,
Which is the final desire,
Of all living ;
Back into the secureful darkness ;
For light is weariness,
And life is unrest,
And is travail ;
But within me,
The stillness is waiting,
And only the dark is for ever.

A PLEA FOR BETTER MUSIC EDUCATION IN INDIA

BY NRIPENDRA NATH SEN

'A satisfactory feature of the Renaissance of Indian culture and Indian ideals, which characterizes the intellectual activity in India of the present day, is the attention that is paid to the revival of our ancient music,' so said Pandit Bhatkhande in 1916. Thanks to the lifelong endeavour of that savant who, more than anyone else in this country, sought to reconstruct a uniform and acceptable system of Hindusthani music out of a vast, incoherent and heterogeneous, though excellent, material left behind by our ancestors. Yet, unfortunately the educated class even now remains apathetic towards classical music, and makes no effort to rescue it from the illiterate and narrow-minded profes-

sionals. The majority of those who crowd our music institutions, or receive hereditary *taleem*, are either illiterate or semi-literate persons who choose music as their profession, just because all other vocations of life are closed to them for lack of ability. And those uneducated votaries of our music treat contemptuously Shastric injunctions and trample upon the most elementary principles of æsthetics, and thereby create almost a horror and disgust in the mind of the public, who readily form a biased opinion against classical music as a whole and remain almost unaware of the hidden treasure of this æsthetically superb and theoretically sound system of music. It is a pity that many highly educat-

ed persons make scurrilous remarks on classical music, and evince a colossal ignorance by comparing it with 'popular songs'. The pet theory prevalent among the common educated men is that music must appeal to all and sundry, and since 'popular songs' are more popular than classical music, they have more of music and æsthetic value in them. But they forget that the highest artistic creations require the requisite training and refinement of the mind. Can anyone appreciate the genius of Shakespeare or Goethe or Tagore without mastering the language which is the necessary medium of the noblest emotions, and without cultivating one's sensibilities to grasp the delicate experiences of life portrayed by the poets? Music, which neither employs concrete visual symbolisms, as art does, nor depends on words, like literature, is the most abstract form of art, and hence it requires considerable training of the ear and mind to appreciate it. A few educated men who are accidentally attracted to it rarely make a serious attempt to cultivate and propagate classical music in its proper form. What is urgently needed is a profound metamorphosis, and a very careful and critical sifting of the mass of unmusical forms which have unfortunately become an integral part of this system. In this essay, an attempt is made to point out some of the outstanding demerits of our present-day practice of music, which must be eliminated.

WANT OF PROPER VOICE CULTURE

It is very curious that some Ustads do not consider a harsh and unmelodious voice a serious demerit. Good voice does not seem necessary to them at all. It matters little to them if top notes become hardly discernible from shrieks, and base notes from groans. It is really unfortunate that often high technique, perfected by assiduous practice of several years, is marred completely by a harsh and unmelodious voice to which absolutely no attention is paid. Voice

production is almost originally neglected, and sometimes vocalists do not hesitate to distort consciously the natural grace of the voice, as some curiously contend that good voice conceals the real defects of music by captivating the mind of the audience all at once, and the uncritical listeners fail to get at the root of music and understand its subtleties. This perverse way of reasoning is so deep-rooted that it will take much time and effort to correct it. And it is this evil which is mostly responsible for the antipathy of the common people towards classical music. That music must be 'musical' does not require any proof or elucidation.

DISREGARD OF THE AUDIENCE

When any musical demonstration is given in public, the musician must adapt his music to the liking of the audience. But, often musicians try to compel the audience to hear hour after hour all their acrobatics and endless permutations and combinations of notes, which they have mastered through long years of practice, forgetting the limit of the patience and attention of an ordinary listener. They seem to pour forth their whole art in a single demonstration. Ordinarily, our Ustads seem to be mainly concerned with showing how speedily they can administer a *tān*, or how they can dislocate slyly the expert *tabalche* from *laya*. They should know how to be more precise in their presentation, and how to make all combinations novel and distinctive, guarding their performance against deteriorating into monotony. To earn the credit of singing or playing a *raga* for hours together, a musician often completely mars his own art by monotonous and stereotyped repetitions of combinations, which if sung or played once or twice would be immensely appealing but, if repeated, would produce just the contrary effect. The twin principles of spontaneity and novelty form the basis of all creative art, and hence they must not be allowed to

be suppressed by a blind adherence to form and style and monotonous repetitions.

To a common person, highly technical and artistic music cannot produce the same emotional and æsthetic impression as a non-technical piece of music with local effect (*deshi gāna*). A highly technical form is generally abstract, but is profound and lasting in its effect. Good music, like good poetry, can only be grasped in its fulness only by those who have cultivated their æsthetic or artistic faculty. But just as good poetry does not fail to produce almost imperceptibly a diffused impression on the layman, similarly good music also should make its way to every heart. To those, however, who maintain that music should always be such as to appeal to all, and that all its features should be easily comprehensible to every person, the answer is: it can never be so as long as music attempts to base itself on, and yet transcend, common experience, as all other forms of art in their higher phases do. But to the champions of *gāna*, we say that music, even in its highly technical form, must be spontaneous, and spontaneity springing from a joyful state of mind cannot fail to produce joy and mirth in all listeners, though in varying degrees, according to the sensitiveness and refinement of their mind. Hence, complete indifference of our musicians to public opinion can never be encouraged. Such attitude has been responsible for evoking corresponding apathy from the public who have begun to shun the company of the *gānavālas*.

DISTORTION OF WORDS AND DISREGARD FOR UNDERLYING SENTIMENT

In vocal music, distortion or mispronunciation of words is a customary practice. Words are broken into meaningless syllables, and they are again juxtaposed without any regard to the sense. Thus, from a line like *kai se kate rajani* are made queer combinations like *seka* and *tera* which form the nuclei of numerous *ālāps* and *tānas*. If the

musicians are asked to interpret the meaning of any line, most of them would say that it is none of their business; they are concerned with *sūr* and *tāl*. Though in higher types of music, words become secondary and melody is primary, words should not be absurdly disjointed and reunited, if they are at all used. Truly speaking, music should try to convey the underlying meaning of the song through melody. Music should convey those delicate shades of feeling which words miserably fail to depict.

SUBJUGATION OF FEELING TO TECHNIQUE

Music as an art can be successful to the extent it is able to touch the emotional core of our personality. All artistic creations aim at expressing our attitudes, feelings, and emotions. Their modes of expression are different, but their success is determined by the extent or degree to which they are able to express the profoundest feelings of the heart. From this point of view, music should not consist merely in combining notes in numerous forms but in translating innermost feelings of men into the language of melody. Music should be a melodious representation of the world of sentiments, feelings, and emotions. But this aspect is totally neglected, and the whole attention is directed towards technical perfections. Technique is necessary in every form of art. Musical technique is as much essential for music as literary technique is for literature. Technique regulates and directs the emotion, and gives it the most appropriate form, without which it would have remained undifferentiated and undistinguished. But mere technique is form without matter, as mere feeling is matter without form. Feeling and technique must go cheek by jowl. Art fulfils itself when both are happily wedded. Classical music, as it is prevalent today, must pay greater attention to feelings and emotions, and only then the mechanical performance will become animated and agitate the audience with genuine musical emotions.

LACK OF INNOVATIONS

At present, no serious and well-directed attempt is being made by the dogmatic stalwarts to compose new songs and *gats*, not to say anything of *rāgas*. The general tendency is to move within the circumference described by the old and ancient masters of music. Though there have been changes in music from time to time, yet innovations during the last two centuries were inconspicuous or negligible in comparison with the vastness of the Indian system of music. Time-honoured compositions have their own dignity and value; yet, art cannot remain stationary. We may turn back to Tansen, Adarang, and Sadarang for inspiration and guidance, but to remain perennially submerged in their creations is unwholesome for art. Dogmatism is so firmly rooted that if anyone seeks to introduce a new *rāga*, he is regarded as light-minded, though there is ample scope of innovations within the orbit of Indian *Svara* and *thāta* system. Even when new songs are composed their poetic diction or literary worth is very poor, as musicians are mostly not well versed.

DEFECTIVE SYSTEM OF TRAINING

In India, music lessons are imparted on a hereditary basis. There are numerous musical clans, *gharanas*, and lessons are given only to those who belong to a particular *gharana*. Ustads would be unwilling to give training to one outside their clans. Even when they have to teach outsiders they do so reluctantly and would not give away the best treasures they have, which they jealously guard against encroachments from outside. Beginners in music have often to face many difficulties. They have to please their Ustads who, if the mood at all comes, give one or two lines of a song in a spirit of utter condescension. Thus, long years are wasted without much benefit.

Training in music must begin in childhood, because it is the best time to foster

love of music. For the purpose of giving music training to children there must be an hierarchy of songs or *gats* from the relatively easier ones to the more difficult. But, unfortunately, simple and easy songs or *gats* in classical music are rare. The beginner, after learning the *Svarajnāna*, is taught the *Dhrupads* of Tansen or *Khyāls* of Adarang and Sadarang, which are the most difficult and intricate ones.

At present, very little attention is paid to devise the most suitable means of giving musical education. In Western countries, experimental methods of psychology have been employed in order to investigate the most profitable methods of learning. Well-established principles of learning (e.g. whole vs. part learning, spaced and unspaced repetitions, retroactive inhibitions, perseverance, etc.) should be applied in the field of music. This work cannot be done by individual workers. Music institutions of India, with the help of the Psychology Departments of Universities, must take up this work without further delay.

Another serious drawback in Indian music is the absence of a universally accepted system of notation. Different schools of music and different arts of the country have their own systems of notation, which are in no way perfect. Generally, traditional Indian musicians are sceptical about any training given through notation. They do not believe in self-education in music, even when one has thoroughly mastered the art. Of course, it is true that Indian music is such that all the features of it cannot be put down in writing, yet the skeleton can be represented. The use of notation helps wide dissemination and free interchange between different schools of music, which are so very essential at present. To the student of music, notations are of immense value since he has not to huddle his memory with thousands of compositions.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

TO OUR READERS

This number opens with some more *Unpublished Letters of Swami Vivekananda*, in continuation of the series begun in our last issue. . . .

The first of the six radio talks, on the 'Song Celestial', by Swami Ranganathananda of the Ramakrishna Mission, was published in the last issue. *The Philosophic Background of the Bhagavad Gita* comprises the text of the second and third talks of the series, combined under the title of the former, delivered by the Swami on the 17th and 24th February 1950. We are enabled to publish these talks by kind courtesy of the All India Radio (External Services Division). . . .

Dr. P. Nagaraja Rao gives in a short compass the sublime Message of the Upanishads under the appropriately fascinating title *The Himalayas of the Soul*. . . .

Swami Ritajananda contributes an illuminating article on *Sri Yamunacharya*, the well-known mystic-philosopher of South India, who exercised a vast and varied influence on the history of Vaishnava mysticism and Vishishtadvaita philosophy. . . .

Our Readers will be glad to welcome back an old and esteemed contributor, Sri Anthony Elenjittam, who writes on *Landmarks in Spiritual Pilgrimage*. . . .

Hinduism and Islam, though apparently far removed from each other, have much to gain by a study and understanding of the saints and mystics of either. The Sufi saints, whose spiritual realizations bear a remarkable similarity to those of our Vedantic seers, occupy a unique place in Islamic mysticism. Dr. Roma Chaudhury presents a lucid account of the mystic experiences of *The great Sufi Bayazid at-Bistami*. . . .

Sri Nripendra Nath Sen, M.A., Sangeeta Visharad, ably qualified for the task he is undertaking in attempting a critical survey

of present-day practices in Hindusthani music, makes *A Plea for Better Music Education in India*.

ABUSE OF LEARNING

The progress of civilization is marked by the advancement of knowledge, general as well as special. But man exhibits a disinclination to intellectual exertion even if knowledge were available for the mere asking. In every country, from very ancient times, the sanctity of learning has always been upheld and full encouragement and facilities accorded to everyone for the acquirement of knowledge through study and research. Knowledge conduces to unity, happiness, and enlightened catholicity. Ignorance and the lack of education among the masses are mainly responsible for much of the avoidable misery, superstition, and narrow-minded fanaticism in the world. Education is vitally instrumental in moulding young minds in their formative period. What they learn and assimilate at school and college exert a powerful influence on their character and conduct in later life, thereby affecting the future of the nation as a whole. As such, to make a man broad in his outlook and tolerant in his sympathies, it is essential that education should be unhampered by any restrictions—social, political, or communal—which operate against the best interests of the individual and the nation.

But man is a complex being, assailed by a variety of passions and prejudices. His civilization is often only skin-deep, and under the veneer of rationality and patriotism lie hidden irrational hate, vindictive envy, and parochial nationalism. He attempts to utilize every field of activity suited to further his own selfish ends. Even education has not escaped this fate. The powerful means of education have sometimes been used to indoctrinate the younger generation with ideas and a violent zeal in support of the

political or other policies of the State, or to gain a following for the party in power. In Hitlerite Germany, students were taught that it was just and proper to hate the Jews, and were made to believe that the Germans were the purest of Aryans, a chosen race of supermen, superior to all other nations, born to dominate the whole world. In communistic countries, class-hatred and antipathy to non-communistic forms of government or society are inculcated through education and other effective means. Learning is strictly censored and regulated by the State, and even those universal ideas and ideals which the State thinks are incompatible with its ideology are shut out from the study syllabus of educational institutions. Recently it was reported that a minister of a Central European country, explaining the policy of his Government regarding book publication, had said, 'All books whose contents conflict with the interests of the People's Democracy have been eliminated. . . . Only books which serve the purpose of our People's Democracy in building Socialism have been published.'

Another deplorable thing in the field of learning is that scholars and scientists are often required to toe the line for the benefit of political or other vested interests. Interested chroniclers are known to have been guilty of *suppressio veri* and *suggestio falsi* in their study of men and events, past and present. Truth and service of humanity, which ought to be the objects of learning, are often far removed from many of the present-day votaries of knowledge. Books based on such misrepresented and misinterpreted facts of history do not a little harm to a nation by belittling its national heritage before the eyes of the world. Last but not least, rank communalism and counterfeit secularism have invaded the sacred shrine of Saraswati.

The restriction or regimentation of knowledge in any form, with a view to discriminating against one set of persons or political theories does not augur well for the welfare and progress of democracy. The abuse of

learning has to cease, and the acquirement of knowledge should not be encumbered with extraneous political, religious, or other sectarian considerations. Education should be free, liberal, and universal as far as possible, so that every man and woman may avail himself or herself of the full benefits of learning, each according to his or her deserts. For it is a valuable personal right of every citizen to be at liberty to develop his natural faculties, physical and intellectual, which inhere in him. The exercise of such a right should be facilitated rather than impeded. For learning is not the monopoly of any political, racial, or religious group. It is open to everyone to strive for self-improvement and the attainment of knowledge through self-effort to the best of one's abilities. This democratic right of the individual was fully allowed and vindicated recently when a leading State High Court in India ruled that obviously discriminatory disparities between one class of citizens and another, seeking to restrict or deny the privilege of lawful and well-merited entry into the portals of learning merely on grounds of religion, race, or caste, were unconstitutional, nay, unjust.

LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

Literature is an important and indispensable requisite for the enshrinement, preservation, and propagation of culture. And language embodies literature. In India, Sanskrit has been occupying a pre-eminent place as the cultural language. For a proper understanding of Indian culture, at least a general knowledge of Sanskrit is essential. Since the last few centuries, study of Sanskrit has been neglected to such a deplorable extent that its vital importance and value have considerably declined in the eyes of the presentday generation which more often than not is likely to believe the myth that 'Sanskrit is a dead language'. Now that India is independent of foreign rule, the apathy towards Sanskrit is fast disappearing and its national importance is being recognized in all circles.

Principal Akshaya Kumar Banerjea, reviewing the prevailing condition of Sanskrit education in India, in his illuminating article *Bharatiya Samskriti Aur Samskriti-Shiksha* (Indian Culture and Sanskrit Education) in the *Kalyan* (Hindi monthly) for May 1950, has made very valuable suggestions for an all-round popular effort for the revivification of Sanskrit education and the study of Indian culture. He writes: 'The condition of Sanskrit education and the study of Indian culture in the country today, are comparable to the reverence shown to our departed forefathers and the oblations that are offered to them. Sanskrit is often invoked only to remember or to prove the state of civilization in ancient times, and how the "half-civilized" people of the past ages used to think and by what kinds of customs and manners they used to regulate their lives. . . . The result of Sanskrit education (based on such notions) is also in consonance with it. The group of scholars with pure Sanskrit education are becoming reluctant or incapable of grasping the modern thought-current. . . . It is not a surprising thing that a language in which, side by side with the varying vicissitudes of national life, fresh forms of literature, philosophy, science, etc. are not created, a language which fails to give proper mental pabulum according to the necessities of the intellect and heart of the educated people engaged in different fields of activity, and which does not flow in a smooth way, producing protean types of new works, giving expression to the many-sided achievements of human society both in the country and in the wide world should be called a "dead" language. The creative power of Sanskrit is unlimited; there are no bounds to its capacity to give literary embodiment to all the various conceptions and ideas of the human mind. But due to lack of ardent votaries and literary enthusiasts, we rarely meet with indications expressive of its inner vitality. . . . To revive the Sanskrit language and make it living once again, it

must be brought down from heaven to this mortal world and put to use as a medium for expressing all thoughts and ideas of the modern age. But along with this, its celestial spirit should be preserved intact. For this purpose it is necessary that scholars steeped in modern thought should take up the cause of Sanskrit education; and the Pandits devoted to the study of Sanskrit Shastras should become well acquainted with modern knowledge, science, and history. . . .'

Principal Banerjea also makes a fervent plea for the reorientation of existing Sanskrit educational institutions on modern lines in keeping with present-day needs. He opines that the students of these Sanskrit-teaching institutions should also be taught, in a general way, all modern subjects, through the medium of Sanskrit; but if it is not feasible at present owing to lack of suitable text-books in Sanskrit, then that basic general knowledge should be taught through the regional languages. For, he holds that 'unless the general knowledge of the student is improved, Sanskrit teaching cannot be made to meet the requirements of the present times, and it will not be possible for Sanskrit scholars, though well versed in various Sanskrit Shastras, to make their influence felt in the realm of State, society, and religion'.

INDIA AND BURMA

Apart from geographical contiguity and economic interrelation, India and Burma have had close cultural and historical ties from the earliest times. In fact recent archaeological survey of South-East Asian countries has amply proved the intimate and long-standing cultural and commercial intercourse between India and those countries in ancient times. Though these relations were interrupted for a few centuries prior to the establishment of British rule in India, they never again rose to the same heights of glory as in the past. Now that both India and Burma are fully independent republics, it will not be long before the two

neighbouring countries regain the original warmth and felicity of their mutual understanding and contacts. The Cultural Studies Group organized by the Ramakrishna Mission Society, Rangoon, has been earnestly endeavouring to promote Indo-Burma cultural contacts with a view to fostering better and deeper understanding between the peoples of the two countries.

Presiding over a public lecture under the auspices of the Cultural Studies Group of the Ramakrishna Mission Society, Rangoon, in June last, Hon'ble U Win, Education Minister, Government of Burma, recalled the ancient historical and cultural associations between India and Burma, and stressed the importance of and the need for closer and more amicable relations between the two nations. In the course of his illuminating presidential speech, U Win observed :

'Legends would have it that the Burmese race descended from the Shakya clan of an Indo-Himalayan race to which Lord Buddha belonged and which migrated to Burma to escape extermination by Vidhadupa. ... There are remains in various parts of Southern Burma which indicate Indian settlements. ... Then comes the epoch-making Buddhist evangelist movement. The amazing zeal of the early Buddhists of India spread the gospel of Lord Buddha far and wide over the continent of Asia, and Burma received the full benefit of it. ... Thus was laid the foundation of cultural association between India and Burma. With the spread of Buddhism other branches of Indian culture also appeared in Burma. The Burmese Buddhist Law

was derived from the Laws of Manu. The modern Burmese alphabet is the development of Devanagari and South Indian scripts. The Burmese dancing and musical instruments are modifications of the ancient Indian dancing and musical instruments. The epic of the *Ramayana* is still played all over Burma regularly with great ceremony and action. ...

In the struggle for freedom India has been a source of inspiration to the Burmans. ... Mahatma Gandhi, Lokamanya Tilak, Lala Lajpat Rai, and Pandit Motilal Nehru were bywords in Burma in the early phase of the fight for freedom. The sincerity and sacrifice of the Indian leaders had acted as shining examples to the leaders of Burma. The literature of Indian politics was read by the students and politicians of Burma with avidity. ...

'History has shown that India and Burma must march together in amity and concord if they were to achieve greatness in accordance with the direction of Nature. We know each other as few people do. Our understanding of each other's needs and difficulties is very profound and deep-rooted. ... Owing to her deep understanding of India through long association and her racial affinity with the people of South-East Asia, Burma is in an ideal position as a bridge between India and South-East Asian countries, if India is to take prominent part in the affairs of South-East Asia.'

At a time when general unrest and insecurity stalk along this fair earth, and a too narrow and intolerant type of nationalism threatens to wreck the comity of nations, such worthy endeavours as above at reviving helpful contacts between India and Burma will go a long way in strengthening mutual friendship and goodwill and in removing all causes of friction.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

VEDANTA THROUGH STORIES. BY SWAMI SAMBUDDHANANDA. *Published by the Author, President, Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, Khar, Bombay 21. Pages 180. Price Rs. 2-4; Foreign sh. 5 or \$ 1.*

The book under review, as its title clearly indicates, is a rich and superb collection of stories, anecdotes, and parables, intelligently culled from various authentic sources and impressively grouped together into suitable categories under striking headings, with a special view to popularizing the great principles of the Vedanta, the perennial philosophy of the world. The popular

mind still harbours the mistaken notion that Vedanta is an 'abstract other-worldly' philosophy, having nothing to do with our daily schemes of life in this world. Swami Vivekananda, one of the greatest exponents of the true ideal and purpose of Vedanta, has convincingly impressed upon the people of India in particular and the world in general that the sublime truths of the Vedantic religion can be and should be made intensely practical in and easily applicable to everyday life of the individual and the community. He wanted that the priceless spiritual treasures hidden in

the Upanishads and other scriptures of the world should be spread broadcast in a popular and intelligible form so that every ordinary man and woman, whatever his or her occupation in life, will be able to profit by them. The learned author of this book has remarkably succeeded in giving practical shape to this earnest wish of Swami Vivekananda by taking great pains to explain and popularize the fundamental tenets of the Vedanta with the help of appropriately chosen, yet authentic, narratives.

The stories narrated in this book are divided into three chapters: (i) Self-analysis—containing two sections, viz. ways of the world and ways of self-study; (ii) Self-unfoldment; and (iii) Self-fulfilment. The stories, anecdotes, and legends—over a hundred and forty in number on the whole—have been mainly taken from the Upanishads and from the lives and teachings of Rama, Krishna, Buddha, Shankara, Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, and other saints and seers. The stories are narrated in simple and lucid English, with an eye to the essential ethical and spiritual ideas they are meant to convey. As such the volume is sure to prove interesting and intelligible to youngsters at school for whom it can be prescribed as a worthy text-book. It is no less valuable and helpful to the general reader. For, as Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, former Minister of the Government of India, observes in his esteemed Foreword to the book, 'It is a magnificent attempt and will go a long way in spreading the message of the Vedanta among those who have neither the leisure nor the background to go through different philosophical discourses'.

The book, written with conspicuous ability and earnest conviction, will, we hope, find a large circle of readers. It is neatly printed and splendidly got up.

GANDHI MEMORIAL PEACE NUMBER.
EDITED BY KSHITIS ROY, *Visva-Bharati Quarterly, Santiniketan, Pp. 337. Price Rs. 10/-.*

While a great leader is alive he inspires countless people with the ideal to which he is pledged and wedded. But when he is gone, people cannot get the direct touch of his personality. So they try to make good the disadvantage by constantly keeping his teachings in the forefront of their minds or by discussing amongst themselves the full implication of his message. Here is an attempt to find out the import and significance of the ideal of Mahatma Gandhi in the set-up of the present world. Mahatma Gandhi lived for Truth and Non-violence. But this ideal of his was too idealistic for the sordid world of everyday life. So he had to pay the price by his life. Many doubt whether his ideal will ever be accepted in toto by the world.

But nevertheless the ideal must always be kept in view, for otherwise the world will go much lower down. Hence the utility of the spread of Gandhi literature.

This homage volume contains articles on the ideas and ideals of Mahatma Gandhi by various writers—some are his ardent followers, some are persons of international reputation. We congratulate the Editor on the publication of this excellent volume.

S.P.

PRACTICE AND PHILOSOPHY OF CO-OPERATION. BY V. VEERASINGHAM. *Published by the Author, Manipay Hindu College, Manipay, Ceylon. Pages 155.*

Sri V. Veerasingham's *Practice and Philosophy of Co-operation* is a welcome addition to the list of useful books. He has rightly emphasized the need for co-operation and traced the growth of the co-operative movement in Europe and in Ceylon, adding explanatory details where necessary. He pleads for the extension of the habit of co-operation beyond the economic field—to education, politics, and religion. Every page of the book reveals the patience of a scholar and the zeal of a missionary. The author hopes that with the spread of the co-operative spirit, the dream of a co-operative commonwealth of nations can be realized.

It would be difficult to claim originality for a book which speaks of universal love and brotherhood. But its value, therefore, is not the less, for to a mercenary age it is necessary to demonstrate that ideals are not merely graceful but useful as well. The purpose of the book would perhaps be better served if it is translated into the regional languages. It would be a helpful addition to the syllabus of social and rural education schemes.

SYMBOLISM OF THE YAJNOPAVITA. BY S. SRIKANTAYA. *Published by The Mythic Society, Daly Memorial Hall, Cenotaph Road, Bangalore 2. Pages 19. Price Rs. 1-8.*

Yajnopavita or the sacred thread worn by large sections of the Hindus has a very ancient history. Upanayana or the ceremony of the young Brahmacharin wearing the Yajnopavita for the first time is a very old and important institution in India, followed religiously even today. A somewhat similar ceremony is to be found among the Parsi community though in a different form and under a different name. In this brochure, the author throws much light on the symbolism of the Yajnopavita, giving its origin, its changing forms down the ages, the different ways of wearing it by men and women, and the meaning of its use, as they have obtained at various periods from the ancient times to the present day. There are some illustrations depicting the varied uses of Yajnopavita.

STRAY GLIMPSES OF BAPU. BY KAKA KALELKAR. *Nawajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad: Pp. 153. Price Rs. 2/-.*

This is a very fascinating book giving 101 anecdotes from the life of Mahatma Gandhi by one of his most ardent followers. It brings out the greatness of that unique personality in a much more telling manner than a regular biography. From the study of the book we find the Mahatma in different situations and we are amazed to see his reactions to them. It is said that the greatness of a man is proved by how he reacts to little things in life. And this is amply evidenced in the pages of the book. It deserves wide circulation. Books of this type are the antidotes to the moral bankruptcy of the present times about which one hears so much complaint.

S.P.

SANSKRIT-ENGLISH

'STOTRARATNA' OF YAMUNACHARYA. TRANSLATED BY SWAMI ADIDEVANANDA. Published by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras 4. Pages 85. Price As. 12.

The *Stotraratna* or 'Hymn-Jewel' of Sri Yamunacharya is, as the learned translator has pointed out in the Introductory Note, 'a lyrical masterpiece of devotion ... rarely surpassed by works of its class either in melody of diction or loftiness of devotion'. Yamunacharya, the well-known Vaishnava mystic and philosopher of the tenth century, was in every respect a worthy predecessor of the great Sri Ramanuja. He was a Bhakta of a very high order as this Hymn of his reveals. But he also 'combined within himself the fervid mystical experience of the Alvars with a prodigious knowledge of Vedanta'. Each one of the sixty-five stanzas comprising this 'jewel of hymns' gives us 'a glimpse of the passionate outpourings of his heart, in his attempt to obtain union with the Supreme'. The hymn inculcates in the reader a spirit of deep devotion and self-surrender to the Divine. The graceful diction and elegant, musical versification fill one with joy and peace when the hymn is recited or listened to.

The book gives the original text in Sanskrit and its running English translation on the opposite page facing it. The rendering is lucid and literal, and successfully conveys the spirit of the original. The translation is enriched by the addition of explanatory footnotes wherever necessary. The book is also furnished with a brief but informative introduction.

BENGALI

MAHAPURUSH SHIVANANDA. BY SWAMI APURVANANDA. Published by Udbodhan Karyalaya, 1, Udbodhan Lane, Baghbazar, Calcutta 5. Pages 382. Price Rs. 8-8.

This is the first complete and authentic biography in Bengali of Swami Shivananda, more popularly known as Mahapurush Maharaj (1855-1934), a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna and the Second President (1922-

1934) of the Ramakrishna Math. Swami Shivananda was a personality of great force, belonging to that brilliant galaxy of illustrious monastic disciples of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, every one of whom rose to the sublimest heights of spiritual attainment and contributed to the fulfilment of their Master's spiritual mission with superb success. Among these disciples, none of whom is with us today, the name of Swami Vivekananda is widely known all the world over. Though the general public knows very little about the other disciples of the Master, their sphere of influence and their contribution to the spiritual and national awakening in India are by no means small. As such, a close acquaintance with the lives and teachings of these mighty spiritual personalities is necessary and important for a proper study and understanding of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda movement in particular and Indian national and spiritual renaissance in general.

Swami Shivananda's life reveals an extraordinary story of religion in practice, rich in distinctive colour and individual quality. 'His leonine stature and dauntless vigour, his stolid indifference to praise or blame, his spontaneous moods and his profound serenity in times of storm and stress, invested with a singular appropriateness his monastic name which recalls the classical attributes of the great god Shiva.' Deeply impressed by his innate purity, holiness, and spirit of renunciation, Swami Vivekananda addressed him as 'Mahapurush', from which the title of this book has been so appropriately chosen.

The book under review is a great achievement on the part of the publishers and a greater one on the part of the author, Swami Apurvananda, who has had the rare privilege of intimate association with Mahapurush Maharaj for a number of years. Both the author and the publishers have earned the gratitude of the Bengali-reading public—especially those innumerable devotees and spiritual aspirants who are sincerely striving for God-realization—by removing a long-felt want for such a comprehensive biography of Swami Shivananda. The author has been singularly successful in presenting, in a lucid and artistic style, this biographical account of a real *mahapurush* who had lived and moved with God incarnate. The readers will derive infinite delight and profit from the many intimately human and soulful touches that they will come across in the course of this delineation of a myriad-faceted gem of divine brilliancy. No one can study the book without being made fitter for life. The contents of this fascinating book are of absorbing interest not only to the scholar but also to the man of the workaday world and will help them in successfully facing the practical problems of life. This wonderful, handsomely bound production of permanent value is sure to find a place in every home and library where the Bengali language is read and understood.

It may be mentioned that the author and publishers of this book have already offered to the public the most valuable 'Conversations of Swami Shivananda', in original Bengali, under the title *Shivananda-Vani*, in two parts, embodying the spiritual teachings of Mahapurush Maharaj. Most of those 'Conversations' were translated and serially published in the pages of the *Prabuddha Bharata* in the latter part of 1948 and throughout 1949.

PATRAVALI. (SECOND PART). BY SWAMI VIVEKANANDA. Published by Udbodhan Karyalaya, 1 Udbodhan Lane, Bughbazar, Calcutta 3. Pages 517. Price Rs. 4-8.

The Bengali-reading public have already been presented with the first part of *Patravali* (Letters of Swami Vivekananda). The book under review is the second part of *Patravali*, uniform in size and get up with the first. The speeches and writings of Swami Vivekananda are a priceless national heritage, an un-failing source of inspiration and guidance to the people, rousing them to great endeavours in the cause of the achievement of national regeneration. The Letters occupy a very important place among the valuable Works of Swami Vivekananda as they possess an irresistible force of their own, and address themselves directly to the heart of the readers. With the publication of this

second part of *Patravali*, a very large number of the Letters of Swami Vivekananda, obtainable so far, have been made available to the Bengali readers. In this volume are presented a total number of 240 Letters of which 169 are translated from the original English, 68 are (originally written) in Bengali, and 3 are translated from the original Sanskrit. The texts of the Sanskrit letters have also been given along with their translations. Many hitherto unpublished letters have been secured and included in this volume. The period covered by these letters extends over more than six years from the end of 1895 to the middle of 1902. As in the first part, these letters also have been arranged chronologically as far as possible, and the last letter is dated 14th June 1902, only twenty days prior to the Swami's passing away. Short notes acquainting the readers with the identity of important persons referred to in these Letters are given at the end, and a very elaborate and useful index has also been added.

The Udbodhan Karyalaya deserves hearty congratulations on the publication of this volume—an invaluable human document which will doubtless serve as a brilliant beacon to care-worn humanity—containing the dynamic and passionate writings of the great patriot-monk of modern India. The publishers have spared no pains in their efforts at attaining a high standard of perfection in the production of the book.

NEWS AND REPORTS

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION BOYS' HOME, RAHARA

REPORT FOR THE YEARS 1948-49

The Ramakrishna Mission Boys' Home, Rahara, West Bengal, has completed the sixth year of its useful existence. It came into being in 1944, for the exclusive benefit of homeless and parentless boys (whose number increased greatly as a result of the devastating famine of 1942-43) with the active help of the local Government and the generous public. The Government of West Bengal have kindly been contributing towards the recurring expenses for a large number of boys. They have also made a capital grant for accommodation and for meeting petty non-recurring expenses.

The Home is situated in the suburban retreat of the village of Rahara, about 12 miles north of Calcutta. In spirit it is a Brahmacharya Ashrama, though it has adopted some modern forms for imparting general as well as technical education to its alumni.

The Home is meant primarily for indigent and parentless boys. It provides all their physical and material needs and gives them an all-round training.

Admission is limited to boys between the ages of eight and twelve years.

The boys assemble every morning and evening in the prayer room and join in the congregational prayer. There is a regular weekly religious class. Besides, several religious festivals including Durga-Puja, Kali-Puja, and Saraswati-Puja are celebrated.

A Middle English School was started by the Mission in its own premises, for the boys. It has now developed into a full-fledged High School into which have been absorbed some non-resident boys as well. It has a library with 1142 books. Three daily papers and twelve monthly magazines are also received.

The boys of the Home conduct a quarterly manuscript magazine, 'Ashrama', in Bengali. Music classes are held regularly. Vocational training is given in weaving, toy-making, tailoring, and type-writing. They are encouraged to manage their own affairs as far as is practicable. The boys are encouraged to help themselves in minor household duties suitable to their age and physical capacity, and thus learn the dignity of labour. Their games include Bratachari, swimming,

riding, cycling, foot-ball, volley-ball, and other games. Gardening on a small scale is also done by the boys.

There were 197 boys in the Home during 1948 and 194 in 1949. In the year 1949 all the four boys who appeared for the Matriculation Examination came out successful.

In 1949 the Home was visited by Srimat Swami Virajanandaji Maharaj, the President of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission.

The Home needs funds for the construction of a prayer hall to accommodate about 250 boys and a kitchen with a dining hall, and also endowments for maintaining at least 20 boys. Contributions will be thankfully accepted and acknowledged by The Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Boys' Home, P.O. Rahara, (Khardaha), 24 Parganas, West Bengal.

RAMAKRISHNA MATH AND MISSION, MALDA REPORT FOR 1948

The Ramakrishna Math, Malda, West Bengal, came into existence in 1924, and the Mission section was added in 1942. The following is a brief report of its activities during the year 1948:

Preaching: During the year under report, 12 lectures were delivered and 284 classes were conducted in different parts of the district, and a pamphlet was also distributed.

Educational Work: A library and a reading room are conducted in the Ashrama premises, and two in the nearby village. The Ashrama library contains a special section for young children. There are 565 books in the library, and 12 monthlies, 3 weeklies, and one daily are received in the reading room.

The Ashrama conducts a students' home in which there were, during the period, 8 students. For lack of

accommodation 5 others stayed outside, taking their food at the Ashrama.

The Ashrama conducts a night school at Kutubpur for the boys and girls of the labouring class. There were 46 students on its rolls.

The Vivekananda Vidyalaya conducted by the Ashrama has two sections—Primary and Middle. During the year under review, there were 220 students in the former and 50 in the latter.

Charitable Dispensary: The Ashrama conducts a Homoeopathic dispensary in the Ashrama premises. The other dispensary at Champai-Nawabganj has had to be dissociated, as it fell in Pakistan territory. In different villages of the district there are four anti-malarial societies. During the year, 5,058 new cases and 11,478 repeated cases were treated in the dispensary. The anti-malarial societies distributed in different villages 1,400 quinine tablets, and 12,000 mepachrine and paludrine tablets.

Milk Distributing Centres: Since the 1943 famine, free milk canteens have been established in the town of Malda and in different villages, and through them milk has been distributed free to thousands of children, mothers in confinement, and patients. During the year under review 3 such centres were run and daily, on an average, 236 persons were given milk.

The Ashrama also conducted the Vivekananda Gymnasium in its premises. It also rendered occasional help in cash and kind.

The Math observed the birthdays of Sri Krishna, Buddha, Shankara, Christ, Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda, and other holy persons. On these occasions, special lectures were arranged and special Pujas were also observed. Weekly three religious classes were held in the Ashrama premises.

ASSAM EARTHQUAKE RELIEF

AN APPEAL

Assam is suffering from the disastrous after-effects of the recent earthquake which was one of the worst in history. The Ramakrishna Mission has sent its representatives for starting relief in North Lakhimpur which is the worst affected area. We appeal to our countrymen for financial assistance.

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

P. O. Belur Math, Dt. Howrah,
Dated 31st August, 1950.

Sd. SWAMI VIRESWARANANDA
General Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission