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“उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत ।”

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

## LETTERS OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA\*

I

To Swami Abhedananda

C/o E. T. Sturdy,  
High View,  
Caversham,  
Reading, England,  
October, 1895.

You may have got my earlier letter. At present send all letters to me at the above address. Mr. Sturdy<sup>1</sup> is known to Tārakdā.<sup>1a</sup> He has brought me to his place, and we are both trying to create a stir in England. I shall this year leave again in November for America. So I require a man. . . . Now, if you have completely recovered, very well, come; . . . The

\* Translated from the original Bengali.

<sup>1</sup> Mr. E. T. Sturdy, an English devotee of Swami Vivekananda, who gave immense help to the Vedanta work of the Swami in England.

<sup>1a</sup> Swami Shivananda (Mahāpurush Maharaj), a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, and later President of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission.

work is to teach the devotees I shall be leaving here, to make them study the Vedanta, to do a little translation work into English, and to deliver occasional lectures. *Karmanā bādhyate buddhih*—‘Through work the Buddhi (intellect) gets bound’. . . . I am sending you a cheque along with this letter. Buy clothes and other necessary things—whoever comes. I am sending the cheque in the name of Master Mahashay Mahendra Babu.<sup>2</sup> Gangadhar’s<sup>3</sup> Tibetan *choga*<sup>4</sup> is in the Math; get the tailor to make a similar *choga* of *gerua*<sup>5</sup> colour. See that the collar is a little high, that is, the throat and neck should be covered . . . over all, you must have a woollen overcoat, for it is

<sup>2</sup> Mahendra Nath Gupta, the author of *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (in original Bengali).

<sup>3</sup> Swami Akhandananda, a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, and later President of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission.

<sup>4</sup> A special kind of loose outer garment, somewhat akin to the toga.

<sup>5</sup> Ochre dye.

very cold. If you do not put on an overcoat on the ship, you will suffer much. . . . I am sending a second-class ticket, as there is not much difference between a first-class and a second-class berth. . . .

Go to Bombay and see Messrs. King, King & Co., Fort, Bombay, and tell them that you are Mr. Sturdy's man. They will then give you a ticket to England. A letter is being sent from here to the Company with instructions. I am writing to the Maharaja of Khetri to instruct his Bombay agent to look after the booking of your passage. If this sum . . . is not sufficient for your outfit, get the remainder from Rakhali. I shall send him the amount afterwards. . . . Start as quickly as possible. Inform Mahendra Babu that he is my Calcutta agent. Tell him to send a letter to Mr. Sturdy by next mail informing him that he is ready to look after all business transactions in Calcutta on our behalf. In effect, Mr. Sturdy is my secretary in England, Mahendra Babu in Calcutta, and Alasinga<sup>6</sup> in Madras. Send this information to Madras also. Can any work be done unless all of us gird up our loins and be up and doing? *udyoginam puruṣasimhamupaiti Lakṣmīh* 'Fortune shines on the brave and the energetic'. Don't look back—forward! Infinite energy, infinite enthusiasm, infinite daring, and infinite patience—then alone can great deeds be accomplished. We must set the whole world afire.

Now on the day the steamer is due to start, write a letter to Mr. Sturdy informing him by which steamer you are leaving for England. Otherwise there is some likelihood of your having difficulties when you reach London. Take a steamer which will bring you to London direct, for even if it takes a few days longer on the voyage, the fares are less in it. At the moment our purse is lean. In time we shall send preachers in large numbers to all the quarters of the globe.

VIVEKANANDA

<sup>6</sup> Alasinga Perumāl of Madras, a devoted follower of Swami Vivekananda.

P.S. Write at once to the Maharaja of Khetri that you are going to Bombay and that you will be glad if his agent attends to the booking of your passage and sees you off on board.

Keep my address with you, written in a note-book, lest there should be difficulties afterwards.

V.

## II

To Swami Brahmananda

Khetri,  
8th December, 1897.

We shall start for Khetri tomorrow. Gradually the luggage has greatly increased. After Khetri I intend to send everybody to the Math. I could get done through them none of the work which I had hoped to. That is to say, it is quite certain that none of them can do anything if he always remains with me. Unless each goes about independently, he will not be able to do anything. . . .

Keep as a fund for some permanent work the balance of the money left after the famine relief. Do not spend the money for any other purpose, and after giving the full accounts of the famine work, note down thus, 'So much balance is left for some other good work'. . . .

Work I want—I don't want any humbug. To those who have no desire to work, I say, 'My dear fellow, now go and follow your own path'. As soon as I reach Khetri I will send you the power of attorney with my signature, if the document has reached there meanwhile. Open only those letters from America which bear the Boston postmark, not the others. Send all my letters to Khetri. I shall get money in Rajputana itself; no cause for anxiety on that score. Try energetically for the piece of land;<sup>7</sup> we must have the celebration<sup>8</sup> on our own ground this time.

Is the money in the Bengal Bank, or have you kept it elsewhere? Be very careful about

<sup>7</sup> For locating the Headquarters of the Math and Mission.

<sup>8</sup> Birth Anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna.



money matters; keep detailed accounts, and regarding money know for certain that one cannot put one's trust even in one's own father.

Give my love to all. Write to me how Hari<sup>9</sup> is doing. Recently I met at Dehra Dun the Udasi Sadhu, Kalyan Dev, and a few others. I hear the people at Hrishikesh are very eager to see me, and are asking again and again about me.

VIVEKANANDA

### III

*To a Brahmachari  
at Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati*

New York,  
August, 1900.

I had got a letter from you several days ago, but I could not reply earlier. Mr. Sevier<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Swami Turiyananda, a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna.

<sup>10</sup> Mr. J. H. Sevier, one of the most ardent English disciples of Swami Vivekananda, who, along with his wife, helped to establish the Advaita Ashrama at Mayavati where he lived till the end.

speaks well of you in his letter. I am very pleased at this.

Write to me in minute detail who all are there, and what each one is doing. Why don't you write letters to your mother? What is this? Devotion to the mother is the root of all welfare. How is your brother going on with his studies at Calcutta? The Sannyasinames of those there escape my memory—how to address each? Give my love to all conjointly. . . . Write to me whether the Seviars are attending to your comforts and other details. . . . Tell Swarup<sup>11</sup> that I am very much pleased with his conducting of the paper.<sup>12</sup> He is doing splendid work. Give to all others also my love and blessings. Tell everybody that my health is now all right. From here I shall go to England and from there to India very shortly.

With all blessings,

VIVEKANANDA

<sup>11</sup> Swami Swarupananda, a disciple of Swami Vivekananda. He was the first President of the Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, and also the second Editor of *Prabuddha Bharata*.

<sup>12</sup> *Prabuddha Bharata*.

## CONVERSATIONS OF SWAMI VIJNANANANDA

SRI RAMAKRISHNA MATH, ALLAHABAD: SUNDAY, 8 FEBRUARY 1920.

It was evening. Swami Vijnanananda was conversing with a group of devotees. In the course of conversation, he said: 'Do you think the Gopas and Gopis (cowherds and cowherdesses of Vrindavan) were just ordinary persons? Each one of them could create a world. In order to understand properly their (sublime) mental attitude (towards Krishna), the first essential thing (required of us) is becoming (absolutely) selfless. The passions have to be controlled and there must be the (firm) faith that the Lord is immanent everywhere.

'You see, the Lord constantly speaks to us

(as it were) from within and without, saying, "Why do you fear? Forsaking me, where do you think you will go? Well, you are desirous of 'playing' a little; so go on and finish your 'play'. After that you will find me in your own heart, you will find me as soon as you call on me. You will attain me the very moment you get complete control over your passions—you will find me within yourself as the self-effulgent and blissful Divinity."

'Call on the divine Mother three times (Sandhyās) a day (i.e. at dawn, noon, and

dusk), praying, "Mother, endow me with pure Knowledge, that Knowledge by which God is realized". It is the divine Mother who is manifesting Herself as the (cosmic) Law. If one follows the Law, if one obeys it implicitly, one can become omniscient; but if one goes against it (Law), destruction will be the inevitable result—you will be smashed to pieces. Law is an absolutely silent worker, but it is supreme and omnipotent. It is this (dynamic divine force of) Law that is called "Holy Ghost" by the Christians and "Shakti" by the Hindus.

'The divine Mother appears as Dashabhuja (ten-armed Goddess) and assures (us), saying, "Why do you fear? You have taken refuge in me and so I have assumed this Dashabhuja form and am protecting you. Can even Yama (the god of death) venture to lay his hands on you? In order to vouchsafe security to you, I have taken this form signifying Varābhaya (granter of boons and security). In order to save you from dangers and difficulties, I am holding the sword (in my hand)." Well, to tell you my own experience, I feel that the divine Mother has kept me under Her personal care and is protecting me always. Just see, she has not so far revealed to me Her marvellously enchanting form all these fifty-two years of my life; but still, even when there is a distant possibility of danger (to me), She at once forewarns me and guards me on all sides, environing me with Her protecting power. No evil can ever penetrate that protective "enclosure".

'The greatest of all wonders is that every man, nay every animate being, longs to *live* on (eternally). This itself indicates that the soul is certainly immortal and undying. He (the soul) who is within all beings is without beginning and end, and free from birth or death. He (the soul) cannot be said to "die" (in the physical sense). Just as one discards an old and torn garment and puts on a new one, even so the soul casts off a body that is worn out or has become unfit in any respect and takes on a new body.

'The greatest possession of man is his mind.

The Lord has constituted the mind in such a way that it shall obey you. If the mind were so constituted as to be disobedient (and not under our control), we should not then have been held responsible for any of our deeds; and again, man would not have been a free agent, and would not have become the best product of creation. You are the complete master of manner and to any shape you desire. Since the mind is within our grip, no other mental pabulum than (perfectly) pure thoughts should be made available to it. On the physical plane, we know well that we need wholesome and nutritious food for the proper maintenance of the body, and that impure or poisonous food is harmful to the system. So we do our best to give to the body healthy food only (at all costs). Similarly, we have to nourish the mind also by permitting it to dwell only on pure thoughts, healthy reasoning, and sublime discussions. As it is the case with unwholesome food (which should not be taken), even so the mind should not be allowed to dwell on impure thoughts or associate with evil company. He who is morally guilty is as good as "dead". Physical death is nothing in comparison with such a (moral) "death".

'When the mind vibrates in consonance with the higher laws, one obtains, (at the spot) between the eyebrows, the vision of the Ishta (chosen deity) or the (living) spiritual forms of gods and goddesses. You are the master (of your mind); keep the mind pure—that is all, and there ends your responsibility. All the rest lies in the hands of God. The Lord knows everything. He will help you in all other respects. He (the Lord) is the "Kalpataru" (the "wish-fulfilling" tree), and will provide you with everything (you need). (In this connection), that parable related by the Master (Sri Ramakrishna) is indeed significant. Once a man heard that "the Lord is Kalpataru" and that "one gets from Him whatever one prays for". Accordingly the man prayed to the Lord, asking for wealth and power, wife and children, horse and carriage, and various other covetable things—and obtained all of them. (Having got whatever he desired for the mere



asking), a casual but strange thought arose in his mind, and he said to himself, "If at this moment a tiger were to come and devour me, then I am done for!" Hardly had this thought arisen in his mind when a tiger (actually) appeared and devoured him. Thus God provides us with whatever we desire like a "faithful servant". (If we make a wrong choice), who is to blame—He or we? Our desires alone are the root of all evil; none else is to blame. That is why the wise pray to the Lord, saying, "Let Thy function (of dispensing what is good for us) vest in you alone. We are not the (real) doers; we work merely like an instrument (in Your hands)." There must be intense faith, firm resolve, and infinite hope—then everything can be accomplished. As you have taken refuge in the Master (Sri Ramakrishna), you have chosen the right

course. He (Sri Ramakrishna) came (to this world) in order to save all men and beings (from this Samsāra) and liberate them. Constantly repeat (i.e. make Japa of) his name. By looking at him (his form) even for a while all sins can be got rid of. He is the divine indweller (of our soul) and knows everything. Frankly open your heart to him. Do not approach him with any selfish motive. Will you pray to God asking for money and such other worthless things? Pray to Him (earnestly), and He will give you (unbounded) strength in order to be able to become (perfectly) pure and unselfish, and to realize the Truth. Hold on to Him and Him alone—there is nothing to fear. The mind is the great "sinner". It does not sincerely call on God (unless and) until it receives a heavy blow (in the course of life's calamitous struggles).'

## THE IDEAL OF RENUNCIATION

BY THE EDITOR

*Na karmanā, na prajayā, dhanena, tyāgenaike amṛtatvamānaśuh.*

'Neither by (ritualistic) work, nor by progeny, nor by wealth, but by renunciation (alone) some attained Immortality.'

—*Kaivalya Upaniṣad*, I. 3.

Every civilization and every society cherishes some lofty ideals for the successful achievement of which it unceasingly strives. All its energies and activities are regulated in a way that those ideals which it holds dear and precious may be expressed and fulfilled in and through the individuals and institutions of that particular society. Social, political, educational, and economic, and even religious systems are planned with a view to fulfilling the purpose with which those ideals are pursued. Individuals, like groups, live and work for certain ideals and regulate their activities in order to express their primary

objectives of life. Every person tries to control his or her life by a main life-purpose to which all others are subordinated. Each soul has its life's goal, its ultimate end in view, without which all its strivings and struggles would be meaningless. In fact, the action, feeling, thinking, and reasoning of the individual are dependent upon the ideals that dominate his view of life and the world.

Various ideals—such as social, political, economic, æsthetic, and religious—have been taken up and pursued by individuals and groups with various motives and purposes. But a general classification would divide them



into two broad groups, viz. religious and hedonistic. The religious ideal inspires man to find God or search into the nature of the Self. It urges him to direct his thought and action towards self-realization through unity and harmony. The hedonistic ideal emphasizes the importance of pleasure on the sense-plane as the primary objective of life. It underlines a utilitarian and materialistic philosophy of life, seeking to offer man the maximum amount of sensual pleasure in this world.

Naturally the view of life held by an individual (which invariably reflects that held by the group to which he belongs) will be either materialistic or spiritual according to his conception of himself, of the idea of his Self. Is man only a physical being or has he a spiritual basis? If he regards himself as a physical creature, owing to his fondness for the body and sense-pleasures, then he will naturally tend to follow the hedonistic ideal, the ideal of material happiness, devoting himself to the gaining of power and the enjoyment of material pleasures. Whenever a large number of individuals follow such an ideal, as an inevitable consequence that society to which they belong also becomes materialistic and aggressive, leading to war, bloodshed, and exploitation. If, on the other hand, man regards himself as a spiritual entity and firmly believes that his physical body and senses should be so employed as to serve a spiritual end in life, then he will naturally tend to follow the religious or spiritual ideal. Such an individual or group of individuals, far from exploiting or persecuting others in order to grab their wealth and possessions, follows the path of unselfishness, love, and renunciation. The religious ideal, in other words the ideal of universal love and brotherhood, of renunciation and service, of self-control and contemplation, engenders the much-sought-after equality between man and man and spontaneously inspires in society the cultivation of Self-knowledge at all times. Notwithstanding the occasional abuses committed by those who imperfectly follow the religious ideal, the true knowledge of Self or the innermost Spirit in

man becomes a vital force to promote peace and happiness of all.

It has been given to India to conceive and realize, to conserve and exemplify the spiritual ideal of man. The key-note of Indian life and culture is undoubtedly spirituality, although her rich contributions along secular lines have by no means been negligible. India has always upheld the eternal verities of existence and like the gentle dew that falls imperceptibly and yet brings into bloom the fairest of flowers, her influence on world civilization has always been silent and peaceful, yet powerful. And in leading man along the path of spirituality, Indian seers and scriptures have unequivocally laid great emphasis on the need for the practice of renunciation. For renunciation is indispensable to spiritual growth; it is the very foundation of harmony and peace in individual and collective life. Whatever the scientists and scholars of the hedonistic and materialistic ways of life think and say of the Indian ideal of true renunciation, any student of comparative religion will bear testimony to the fact that all religions and religious teachers have drawn their strength from supreme renunciation. It is no exaggeration to say that the great spiritual teachers of mankind, in all times and climes, have boldly declared,

'Give up, give up; to attain goodness and to ensure peace, give up everything for God. Be dispassionate. Without renunciation there is no peace. Therefore realize God or the Self by renouncing all craving for egotistic power and sensual pleasure.'

It needs no saying that man is continuously seeking what he considers to be 'pleasure' on the sense-plane in the external world, and at the same time is anxious to avoid what he feels to be painful and miserable. It is also common human experience that generally virtuous actions bring pleasure and vicious ones bring pain. So the majority of mankind is attached to those objects and actions which give pleasure and not to those which are thought to bring pain. But it is often seen that man is attracted by objects which, though apparently pleasing to his senses, bring him



pain at the end. This is inevitable in the case of one whose mind is deluded and unrestrained, and is forcibly carried away by those desires that are extremely strong in him. Those who follow the ideal of pleasure as the chief and ultimate good in life cannot but ignorantly obey the dictates of the infatuated senses which blindly serve the internal masters of lust, anger, greed, pride, and egotism. The ignorant person identifies himself with the body, unable to realize the Divinity within, and considers action, agency, and the accessories to be real. Therefore for him true renunciation is difficult of attainment.

To those who are given to discrimination and renunciation, the transitory enjoyments of earthly life, which bring a little pleasure this moment and an equal amount of, if not more, pain the next, hold no attraction. They know that good and evil are inextricably combined and that the former cannot be had all the time to the exclusion of the latter. Material happiness is but a transformation of material sorrow. Hence, if one has to renounce pain, he has also to renounce the corresponding pleasure that he so eagerly craves for. It is only by renouncing the finite joys of the sense-bound world that man attains the state of infinite bliss that knows no decay or diminution. Real happiness in conditions and environments which make light of renunciation and spirituality and instead emphasize the pleasure aspects of life in the objective realm is a myth. Men who follow an *ignis fatuus* all their lives and never succeed in fulfilling their desires on the sense-plane become not only frustrated, restless, and unhappy but also instrumental in giving rise to intersocial and international tensions and conflicts. Moreover, those who seek pleasure from the objects of the senses cannot stick to one particular enjoyment for more than a short while, nor do those objects of pleasure remain undefiled or last as long as one wishes them to.

Renunciation is the background of all religious thought, and of every form of orderly progress and collective welfare in secular life too. Without self-control, self-sacrifice, and

non-covetousness, the achievement of peace and progress is well-nigh impossible. Craving for enjoyment is the root cause of conflicts and frustrations of the mind which ultimately undermine the foundations of human relationship. It is true of all desires for enjoyment of which the human mind is capable that they can never be satisfied by sense-gratification. Yet, in the thrill of excitement and momentary pleasure, man is apt to forget the truth of those wise words of Yayāti who, after a thousand years of enjoyment of earthly life, declared,

'Verily, not by the physical enjoyment of pleasures is the craving for pleasure appeased; rather, that craving increases and becomes stronger by self-indulgence, like fire when ghee is poured upon it. Even the whole earth, filled with treasures, gold, and cattle, is not enough to satisfy the sensual cravings of one man. Considering this, seek calmness of mind (through self-conquest).'

The futility and transitory nature of selfish hopes and aspirations of enjoying pleasures in this world or in the next even have been expressed by Bhartrihari who says,

'Enjoyments earned by great accession of merit multiply so greatly in the case of people attached to them, only to bring them misery and peril'.

Complete renunciation is the ideal practised and preached by all great saints and prophets. Through it alone can man realize his oneness with God, can manifest the Divinity in him, and attain to that state of peace and contentment where his soul, having tasted the sweetness of divine bliss, finds no happiness in the common pleasures of the world. According to Hindu seers, renunciation (*vairāgya*) forms one of the four basic and fundamental instruments (*sādhana-catustaya*) of spiritual knowledge. The attainment of the Highest Truth demands this basic discipline of complete non-attachment to everything, including our own thoughts and ego. Renunciation of desires is therefore the fundamental requisite of the process of formation of character and also the spiritual training and equipment of man in order to restrain and properly regulate his desires, aspirations, and ambitions. The narrow self-centred outlook on life, resulting



from a contraction of the heart and from arrant ego-centricity, has to be got rid of by the practice of renunciation, by rejecting the unspiritual demands of the lower, Āsuric self in the shape of ever-changing and ever-renewing desires. The goal of human life is to become a knower of Brahman by practising renunciation and spirituality. Says Yājñavalkya, in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*,

'That which transcends hunger and thirst, grief, delusion, decay, and death, knowing this very Self, the Brahmanas renounce the desire for sons, for wealth, and for the worlds, and lead a mendicant life. That which is the desire for sons is the desire for wealth, and that which is the desire for wealth is the desire for the worlds, for both these are but desires. Therefore the knower of Brahman, . . . should try to live upon that strength which comes of Knowledge.'

Man endowed with renunciation and universal love born of purity and God vision can better face with courage and discrimination the trials and struggles of life.

Renunciation has been mentioned and defined in every great scripture, all of which lay considerable emphasis on the need for humility, inner serenity, and complete self-mastery before a spiritual aspirant can hope to achieve success in his efforts. It has been described as utter disregard of all temporal pleasures, ranging from the enjoyment of sensuous objects of this world to the experience of the happiness one expects in heaven after death. According to Patanjali, renunciation is that effect (of mental strength) which comes to those who have given up their thirst after objects, either seen or heard, and which wills to control the objects. Renunciation is the battling against these weakening temptations and desires which seek to hold man under their sway and lead him away from the knowledge and awareness of the real nature of his Self (*puruṣa*). In the *Gita*, the characteristics of a man of true renunciation are described thus:

'Free from pride and delusion, having conquered the evil of attachment, ever devoted to the Supreme Self, with desires completely stilled, liberated from the pairs of opposites known as pleasure and pain, the undeluded reach that immutable Goal.' 'That

man who lives devoid of longing, abandoning all desires, without the sense of 'I' and 'mine', he attains to peace.'

In the *Bhāgavata*, Sri Krishna tells Uddhava,

'Renounce attachment to friends and relatives, give up the sense of "me" and "mine", wander everywhere with thy mind absorbed in Me, seeing Me in all.' 'Men with discrimination and dispassion free themselves from evil and worldliness by their own exertions.'

We read in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* that young and fearless Nachiketa approached Yama, the god of death, for the knowledge of the Self. In order to test the youth's earnestness and spirit of renunciation, Yama tried to dissuade him by offering him the possessions of sons, grandsons, cattle, elephants, gold, and horses, and even tempted the young lad with the offer of the company of celestial damsels of exquisite beauty. And what a spirited reply did Nachiketa make, in the face of such tempting offers which no mortal would be able to resist! The renunciation and resolve of the boy were firm and unshakable, and he said,

'These are ephemeral and transitory, and only tend to the decay of the vigour of our senses. Even the longest life on earth is indeed short compared to immortality (of the Self). Keep your horses, dances, and songs for yourself.'

Wealth by itself can never make a man happy, though few would tend to believe the truth of the statement. In the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* is related how Yajnavalkya, desiring to renounce the householder's life for taking up the next Ashrama, told his wife Maitreyi that he wished to leave home after dividing his wealth and property between her and his other wife. Thereupon Maitreyi asked him, 'Sir, if indeed this whole earth full of wealth be mine, shall I be immortal through that?' 'No,' replied Yajnavalkya, 'your life will be just like that of people who have plenty of things, but there is no hope of immortality through wealth'. Then Maitreyi said, 'What shall I do with that which will not make me immortal? Tell me, sir, of that alone which you know (to be the only means of immortality).'

If we turn to the teachings of Christ and



Buddha, there too we find that they were great exponents of the ideal of renunciation. Jesus says:

'He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world (for my sake) shall keep it unto life eternal.' 'For what shall a man be profited, if he shall gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?' 'Lay not up for yourself treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven . . . For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.'

St. Paul says that to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is true life and peace on earth. When a rich young person came to Jesus and wanted to know what he should do to gain eternal life, the latter told him, 'If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell all that thou has and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven'. When it was said that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the gates of heaven, it is the greed and unholy attachment to wealth which were condemned as insurmountable obstacles in the path to perfection and to the realization of God.

According to Buddha, who also emphasized the high ideal of renunciation in no uncertain terms,

'If some men conquer in battle a thousand times a thousand men, and if another conquer himself, he (the latter) is the greatest of conquerors'. 'And he that ruleth himself (i.e. has full self-mastery through renunciation) is better than he that taketh a city.'

The sweetness and delight of true renunciation exceeds all lower delights and overcomes material things.

Swami Vivekananda said, 'The national ideals of India are renunciation and service. Intensify her in those channels and the rest will take care of itself.' The Swami constantly stressed the absolute need for keeping ablaze the ideal of renunciation, of purity and self-control, of making the spiritual goal the primary objective of life. Such renunciation

is necessary in these days when men have begun to think that they cannot live without what they consider to be their 'necessary luxuries and possessions' and which they are increasing out of all proportion notwithstanding the urgency of self-abnegation and moderation. As the Swami has pointed out,

'In the West, they are trying to solve the problem how much a man can possess, and we are trying here to solve the problem on how little a man can live. This struggle and this difference will still go on for some centuries. But if history has any truth in it, and if prognostications ever prove true, it must be that those who train themselves to live on the least and control themselves well, will in the end gain the battle, and that those who run after enjoyment and luxury, however vigorous they may seem for the moment, will have to die and become annihilated.'

For hedonism in any form, masked under any garb, cannot solve the problems of modern life. What is necessary in renunciation is the understanding of the truth that God (or the Self) alone is real, and that one has to give up all desires and cravings for temporal pleasures and concentrate on the one supreme desire to realize God.

Decadence and fear seize everything of this earth. Death is a universal phenomenon and stirs the deepest thoughts of man. Everything of this material world is subject to change, decay, and ultimate dissolution. The Spirit alone is the one abiding reality,—eternal, immutable, and full of pure knowledge and bliss. And the attainment of that pure knowledge and bliss is possible through renunciation alone—there is no other way to that goal (*nānyah panthā vidyate ayanāya*). As said by Bhartrihari,

'In enjoyment, there is the fear of disease; in social position, the fear of falling off; in wealth, the fear of (hostile) kings; in honour, the fear of humiliation; in power, the fear of foemen; in beauty, the fear of old age; in scriptural erudition, the fear of opponents; in virtue, the fear of traducers; in body, the fear of death. All the things of this world pertaining to man are attended with fear; *renunciation alone stands for fearlessness*.'

Renunciation does not mean mere dry dispassion for the world or the thoughtless



suppression and repression of the emotional urges in man. It should not be wrongly identified with a life of poverty and discomfort or with physical mortification and selfish seclusion. Renunciation is often misunderstood and misinterpreted as barren 'ascetic denial' or as 'escapism' and misanthropy. Far from these, true renunciation consists in acquiring intense longing for God thereby coming to realize the fact that no pleasure, whether here or hereafter, can have an infinite duration, since all pleasures are the result of finite and selfish actions. Sri Ramakrishna used to say, 'Renunciation is absolutely necessary. If one thing is placed upon another, you must remove the one to get the other. Can you get the second thing without removing the first? If you want to realize God, then you must cultivate intense dispassion. Nothing can be achieved (in spiritual life) without discrimination and renunciation.' Renunciation demands the total absence of all selfish motives, not mere abstinence from external contact. More than all, no matter what stage of renunciation a person may have reached, he must never lose sight of the positive ideal of renunciation, viz. the realization of God or the Self. That is the real purpose, the ultimate end and aim of renunciation. Short of that any purposeless or ostensible renunciation is bound to miss the mark and end in fruitless mortification and hypocritical austerity. As the Lord says in the *Gita*,

'He who restrains (merely) his organs of action, but continues to dwell in his mind (which is not yet free from desires) on the objects of the senses, deludes himself and is called a hypocrite'.

Without intense love for God, it is very difficult to practice spiritual disciplines in the right way, even after retiring into solitude.

The ideal of renunciation is doubtless hard to achieve and difficult to practise. It is a bugbear to those whose hankering for pleasure is too strong. Immediate and complete renunciation may not be for all at once and may not be advocated on a mass scale. This was well understood by the seers of India who knew that if a whole nation took to absolute renunciation

by prematurely embracing the monastic life, that would be not only of no gain but disastrous. Without the limit of enjoyment having been reached, true renunciation cannot come. But that does not preclude the propagation of the ideal of true renunciation as a necessary preliminary to the attainment of life's goal. Or else, a hedonistic ideal will take root in man's soul and perforce egg him on to pursue material gain and suicidal pleasure even at the cost of others. The vast majority of people will have to be gradually led upwards, step by step, from a less intense stage of renunciation to a more intense stage, along the path of duty, prosperity, and legitimate enjoyment. Hence the Rishis of yore, with wisdom and foresight, formulated the fourfold scheme of life—making the four Ashramas and the four Purushārthas obligatory on every individual. To retire from human society before one is ready for real renunciation is not only unwise but also ineffective and harmful.

The true ideal of renunciation strongly discountenances any vulgar demonstration of physical feats involving mortification of the flesh or self-torture. Spiritual austerity aims at the conquest of the mind which is much more difficult than the conquest of the body. The man of renunciation lives a normal and moderate life, following the 'golden mean' as to external observances, while he subdues all internal craving for pleasures and possessions and renounces the ego-sense. It is a travesty of renunciation to betake oneself to cowardly flight from the battle-field of life in the world and to become harsh, stern, and callous to one's fellow men. Such a person may be a pathological case of frustration and perversion, but certainly is not a man of renunciation.

The goal of spiritual dispassion or 'divine discontent' is not life-negation or world denial but a positive life-affirmation in and through a Reality infinitely higher and more enduring than this phenomenal world. Renunciation does not require a man to 'shun society like poison' or to reject the world as worthless and illusory, and grow inactive and inert like a



stock or stone, without caring for the welfare of those around him. On the contrary, the perfect ideal of renunciation demands that one should engage in intense activity for the benefit of not merely himself or his group or his country but of all mankind. To be *in* the world and yet not be *of* the world is the secret of renunciation. One who renounces the

cravings of his senses leads a life of blissful and unselfish activity, putting God in everything and knowing Him to be in every living being. One who renounces the ego of his limited, finite self becomes as powerful as the thunderbolt, and with the irresistible strength and indomitable courage born of true renunciation works for the highest good of humanity.

## THE ETHICAL AND SOCIAL BACKGROUND OF BUDDHISM

BY DR. N. V. BANERJI

Even a brief and cursory review of the sacred texts of the Buddhists cannot fail to bring out the change in the conception of discipline (Vinaya) that began to manifest itself in the history of Buddhism not longer than a century and a half after the death of Buddha. The originality of Buddha lay in his emphasizing the importance of discipline in human affairs. He did not, of course, arrive at his view of discipline at haphazard. It was, in fact, closely connected with a clearly conceived doctrine (Dhamma). But in the case of Buddha, the doctrine followed the discipline, and not the latter the former. The importance of discipline which he thus wished to establish in the world of human affairs could, however, be maintained so long as he as teacher of the discipline figured in the eyes of his disciples and the people at large not as a superhuman being whose perfection transcended the limits of human realization but as an ideal human being. There is no dearth of evidence for believing that during his lifetime Buddha succeeded in creating the impression that he was united with his fellowmen by the strongest of all ties, the tie of common humanity. This impression was indeed too strong to be effaced in a short time. In fact, it continued throughout the early history of Buddhism notwithstanding the currency of the belief that Buddha

was possessed of omniscience and supernatural powers unattainable by ordinary human beings. Hence the explanation of the fact that the canon belonging to early Buddhism was unparalleled in the whole history of Buddhism in its qualities of being clear-cut and well defined. The deterioration of the Vinaya in the case of both mixed Hinayāna Buddhism and the Mahāyāna school is due to the fact that it was mixed up with Buddhology which, as we shall presently see, grew up as a result of the disruption of the Buddhist Sangha. Another fact that stands explained equally well is that the discipline as taught by Buddha was never seriously called in question, nor was the solidarity of the Buddhist Sangha ever in danger of being lost in the early period of Buddhism.

To follow the path of duty unflinchingly or to submit to the rigour of strict discipline is, however, the most difficult thing in man's life. Man is naturally inclined to seek relaxation from the rigour of discipline. One way, in fact, the simplest and the most direct way of the expression of such inclination would be revolt against discipline or rather the authority that enforces it. It was such a way that found illustration in the conduct of Subhadda, a Buddhist monk who, on receipt of the news of Buddha's death, expressed his satisfaction that the monks were now free from the restraint of



Buddha's influence.<sup>1</sup> An incident such as this was, however, too insignificant to be of any consequence upon the moral influence of Buddha who had been united with the large body of his immediate disciples by the bond of enlightened comradeship.

But man's natural inclinations, specially, that of escaping from the authority of discipline, die hard. Even granted that Buddha's moral influence produced a lasting effect by way of making his followers incapable of expressing this inclination openly and directly, the possibility of its expression in a subtle and disguised form on the part of the adherents of the Buddhist faith was not precluded for all times to come. In fact, it was during the period of mixed Hinayana Buddhism that the earlier conception of Vinaya as strictly human, setting before the moral aspirant the goal of Arhatship as typified in the earthly life of Gautama the Buddha was replaced by the conception of it as superhuman in a final analysis, translating the ethical end to the transcendent height of Buddhahood which none may hope to reach except a supernatural being such as the Bodhisattva. It is necessary to note here that it was the Sarvāstivādins and the Mahāsaṅghikas who popularized the conception of the *paramis*, the virtues which the Bodhisattva must practise for the attainment of Buddhahood. As regards the Theravādins to whom this conception was previously unknown, they came to admit it only with a view to enlisting public sympathy, and it was far from them to encourage people in practising the *paramis*. Even the Sarvāstivādins and the Mahāsaṅghikas who insisted on the practice of these virtues by the masses did not desist from pointing out the difficulty of fulfilling them. It is, however, evident that mixed Hinayana Buddhism chiefly comprising these sects detached the Vinaya from its earlier

context of purely human interest and brought about its absorption into Buddhology, thus demonstrating the working of a subtle process of the relaxation of the authority of discipline over the adherents of the Buddhist faith. It was in such an altered form that the Vinaya presented itself in the *Mahāvastu* and allied Sanskrit texts, the process of the alteration, of course, having begun as early as the Buddhist Sangha showed signs of disruption. It would, then, be no exaggeration to say that the strictly human outlook on which the Vinaya was originally founded gradually became obscure, if not lost, with the growth of Buddhology which indeed became an essential feature of the later phases of Buddhism.

Buddhology was, in fact, the most outstanding result of the division of the Buddhist Sangha into rival sects. In the struggle for survival, each sect needed to propagate and popularize its particular faith. To this common end the rival sects invented stories after stories about the life of Buddha. These stories in which mixed Hinayana literature abounds not only referred, like the few Jātaka stories included in the scriptures of the early Buddhists, to Buddha's *pūrvānusmṛti* (reminiscence of previous existence) but centred round the new concepts of the Bodhisattvas as unborn and undefiled by the impurities of the mother's womb and of the Buddhas as supermundane (*lokottara*) in every possible sense. Thus in mixed Hinayana Buddhism, the religion founded by Buddha, in its endeavours to popularize itself, entered upon a new phase ushering in religion in its usual supernaturalistic sense with its primary appeal to the human sentiments of awe and reverence, which Gautama the Buddha and even early Buddhism seem to have avoided by rearing the superstructure of ethical idealism on the foundation of man's sense of duty.

The propagation of Buddhism naturally went hand in hand with its popularization. Even early Buddhism attracted the keen interest and enjoyed the staunch support of laymen inhabiting the small geographical area to which it was confined. But in the case of early

<sup>1</sup> As recorded in the Pali canon, Subhadda's statement to his fellow monks is as follows: 'Do not grieve, do not lament. We are happily rid of the great Shramaṇa. We used to be annoyed by being told "this beseems you, this beseems you not". But now we shall be able to do what we like, and what we do not like we shall not have to do.'



Buddhism and more or less similarly in that of mixed Hinayana Buddhism, the religion in its strict sense was meant specially for those who would retire from household life and enter the Order of monks, so that the laity could at best profit from the teachings of Buddha and his disciples but never be entitled to membership of the Sangha. Thus Buddhism was harnessed with the official recognition of the division between a privileged class vested with authority and the laity with no power or privilege except that of obeying. The fact that in the case of Buddhism, the authority or privilege was vested not in those who wielded material power but in those who were spiritually gifted only points to an ancient principle of the division between one community and another but is no justification for the division as recognized by Buddhism. For no manner of class-distinction, if recognized officially, can ultimately make for the true welfare of mankind. There is, however, no doubt that the religion of Buddha, if religion be it called, was a new one—new in that it was characterized by a predominantly ethical outlook evolved out of Buddha's clear and penetrating insight into the circumstances of individual and social life and was as free from supernaturalism as religion could be in that far off age. In particular, its ethical foundation lay in the Middle Way<sup>2</sup> of temperance which Buddha recommended in preference to either of two extremes: one conjoined with the passions and, therefore, low, vulgar, and ignoble and the other conjoined with asceticism or self-torture and, therefore, painful and, as Buddha believed, equally ignoble. A religion such as this could, in its full form, obviously be meant not for a chosen few endowed with special gifts but for men in general. But no man, however great, can realize his ideal, specially when the ideal is not individual but predominantly social as Buddha's

was, in complete disregard of the prevailing circumstances. Hence the creation of the monastic Order by Buddha himself and its importance in, and its integration into the Buddhist society through the ages.

But such was the genius of Buddhism that it did not allow the disability of the laity to be passed over in silence for long, but eventually took it up as a problem to be solved with care. One way of the solution, the way that was not adopted but would have been true to the inner spirit of the new religion which Buddha sought to introduce would, in the main, be the abolition of the Order of monks. With the monks as a privileged community society could not be a uniform whole, nor could it have a uniform code of discipline for all its members with the result that the moral order which Buddha burnt with enthusiasm to establish remained an idle dream. Besides, the monks who, like the priests, were the citadel of all manner of conservatism, supernaturalism, esoteric cults, and superstitions did not really fit in with the progressive and rather scientific outlook of Buddha who emphasized, more cogently and systematically than any one had done before, the paramount importance of right knowledge and right insight for a disciplined way of life. In fact, Buddha's own religion as distinguished from the historical religion associated with his name represented a complete and comprehensive outlook involving the synthesis of science and morals which is unique in the history of the human race. It is, of course, presumable that a parallel of such an outlook might have come into existence in the West had there ever been a real synthesis between the Greek tradition with its predominantly scientific outlook and Christianity with its emphasis on good life.

The way of the solution that was actually adopted as early as the beginning of the period of mixed Hinayana Buddhism was, however, very different from what would have been Buddha's own. The monks were allowed as before to enjoy their distinctive position of privilege and authority, and no substantial improvement was made on the relation of the laity to the Sangha. The most important thing

<sup>2</sup> Buddha taught the Middle Way in his First Sermon which the *Samyutta-Nikāya* calls *Dhammacakkappavattana-Sutta* (Sutta of turning the Wheel of the Doctrine). The Middle Way, according to him, is the same thing as the well-known Eightfold Path.



to have happened was that the monks tried to draw the laity closer to themselves and their religion by placing at the latter's disposal popular stories about the life of Buddha as recorded in the Jatakas and the Avadānas which were specially composed for the purpose.<sup>3</sup> In consequence, the ethical ideal of a perfectly disciplined life as taught by Buddha shed its purity and deteriorated, at least in the case of the laity, into the idea of earning religious merit by reading the Jatakas and the Avadanas, copying them in writing and representing in paintings and sculptures the stories narrated in them. Yet it must be admitted that Buddhism, specially the sect of the Sarvastivadins in the first instance and later on the Theravada sect, thus, proved a strong agency for the spread of education among the masses and stimulated the growth of popular literature, viz. the Jatakas and the Avadanas and the art of painting and, particularly, sculpture, the evidence for which is to be found in the few sculptures that are still preserved, for us at Sanchi and Bharhut. In short, the period of mixed Hinayana Buddhism witnessed, on the one hand, the decline of the moral earnestness which characterized Buddhism at the time of its birth and even persisted in some measure in its early history and, on the other, a great stir in the field of cultural activity in general and creative imagination in particular.

As seen above, the spread of Buddhism was in a large measure due to the propaganda carried on by the monks through the medium of popular literature such as the Jatakas and the Avadanas. But no less important in this respect was the part played by the ruling class in India of Buddha's time. Socrates was resisted and requited with hatred and ingratitude by men of position, and in the end condemned to death by the ruling power in Athens. Jesus commanded the most affectionate and respect-

ful hearing of the common people, but earned the bitterest hatred of the officialdom in his country, and had finally to give himself up to the death of the Cross through the machinations of the rulers in Jerusalem. But very different from Greece or Palestine was India where no call of the Spirit could go unheeded by the common people and the rulers alike. Buddha, therefore, had the most willing allegiance and support from both sections of society in the fulfilment of his mission. Of the kings who came under the personal influence of Buddha and gave him their whole-hearted co-operation the best known are Bimbisāra, king of Magadha, Pasenadi (or Prasenajit), king of Kosala, and Ajātasattu (or Ajātasātru), the parricidal son of Bimbisara, who succeeded the latter as king of Magadha. According to the Northern Buddhists, four kings were born at the same time as Buddha and were associated with Buddha's career. They were Bimbisara, Pasenadi, Pajjota (or Pradyota) the Cruel, king of Ujjeni (or Ujjayini), and Udena (or Udayana), king of the Vatsa country with Kosambi as its capital. About Udena it is of interest to note that Magandiya, a Brahmin girl, whose father made an unsuccessful attempt to get her married to Buddha, became one of his wives and out of sheer hatred against Buddha caused the death of Samavati, another wife of his, who was devoted to the Buddhists.

It was in course of his wanderings prior to his Enlightenment that Buddha met Bimbisara for the first time at Rajagriha. The king was so impressed by Buddha at this very first meeting that he offered him his whole kingdom which was, of course, of no use to Buddha who had already left the world for the sake of Enlightenment. The contact thus established between the two reached its culmination in the most willing conversion of Bimbisara and his wife Khema<sup>4</sup> to the Buddhist faith on Buddha's return to the Magadha kingdom after his attainment of Enlightenment. As a token of his

<sup>3</sup> With the emergence of these new types of literature, the earlier Navānga (ninefold) division of the scriptures was made into a Dvādashānga (twelve-fold) division by the addition of Avadana, Nidāna, and Upadesha to the list of the nine Angas already recognized.

<sup>4</sup> Khema subsequently became a nun, and, as recorded in the *Samyutta-Nikāya*, gave instructions to King Pasenadi on the question whether Buddha exists after death or not.



conversion, Bimbisara served a meal to Buddha with his own hands, and made a gift of a park, the famous Veluvana (bamboo grove) to Buddha and the Order. Just as Bimbisara thus became the royal patron of Buddha in Magadha, so Pasenadi was another royal supporter of his at Savatthi (or Shravasti), the capital of Kosala, though it appears that the latter could not reach the height of devotion which characterized all actions of the former in relation to the Master. This is indicated by the *Divyāvadāna* record that Buddha confounded the heretical teachers in the presence of King Pasenadi who befriended them after they had failed to receive any encouragement from King Bimbisara.

Ajatasattu was at first under the influence of Devadatta, Buddha's cousin and bitterest rival. It was at the instigation of Devadatta that Ajatasattu first made an unsuccessful attempt to kill King Bimbisara, his father. But in spite of the fact that he was not only pardoned but allowed by his father to succeed him, he, as the *Digha-Nikāya* informs, finally killed the latter. It was again due to his attachment to Devadatta that Ajatasattu not only began with apathy to the mission of Buddha, but lent his support to Devadatta's evil design to kill Buddha which turned out to be a failure. The murder of his father by his own hands, however, proved the turning-point in Ajatasattu's career by rousing him to the consciousness of guilt and the pangs of conscience. In such a predicament, in vain did he at first seek the help of the heretical teachers (Tirthikas), the adversaries of Buddha, for the redress of his mental agony. But it was on the advice of Jivaka, the famous physician, that Ajatasattu approached Buddha whose words of wisdom resolved his doubts and

anxieties and led to conversion to the Buddhist faith.

In fact, the support of the rulers attached to him, no less than the strength of his own personality, enabled Buddha to fight successfully his adversaries, the heretical teachers of his time, which not only helped the propagation of his new faith but was responsible for the growth of a strong and integrated Sangha during his lifetime. It was, therefore, natural to expect that the unitary Chaturdisa Sangha (the Church of the four regions) which, thus, was not wholly a natural growth would lose its cohesion with the death of Buddha and in the absence of royal support. As a matter of fact, since the death of Buddha no ruler in India with the exception of Ajatasattu who, as seen above, was never as remarkable for his attachment to Buddhism as his predecessors in the royal order, and who, as the Ceylonese chronicles inform, reigned for only fourteen years after Buddha's death, gave Buddhism any support worth the name for about two centuries, that is, till the time of the accession of Ashoka. The result was that the Sangha did not take longer than a century after Buddha's death to divide itself into rival sects which vied with one another throughout the period of mixed Hinayana Buddhism. The cohesion of the Sangha thus lost was not restored in spite of the patronage which Buddhism received from so eminent a ruler as Ashoka. For Ashoka's real interest lay, at least so long as he was in royal authority, in Buddhism as a way of life in the widest sense and not in the Buddhist Order or any sect of Buddhism in particular. Nor was there at his time a Master with the ability and the desire to unite, with his help, the rival sects into a homogeneous Sangha.

(To be continued)



# THE VEDIC RELIGION: A TWOFOLD WAY

## THE WAY OF PROSPERITY AND THE WAY OF SUPREME GOOD: HOW THEY MEET

BY SWAMI SATPRAKASHANANDA

(Continued from the April issue)

### VII. WORK WITH THE SPIRIT OF RENUNCIATION. HOW THE TWO WAYS MEET IN THE LIVES OF THE ROYAL SAGES.

After the attainment of Chitta-shuddhi (the purification of the mind), a Karma Yogi becomes a *bona fide* spiritual aspirant, a seeker of Supreme Good with an urge, being no longer held back by sense-desires. Leaving behind the way of activity, the path of desire, he has entered the way of renunciation, the path of desirelessness. As a follower of the way of renunciation, the seeker of Supreme Good, does not necessarily give up worldly duties and retire into seclusion. Though free from worldly desires, he may not renounce the world. He may continue his worldly activities with the spirit of renunciation. It depends upon his disposition and conditions of life. As already stated, renunciation should be both internal and external, or only internal. With regard to this type of worker, Sri Krishna says to Arjuna, 'He who neither hates nor craves should be known as a man of constant renunciation; for, being free from the dualities, O mightily-armed, he is easily liberated from bondage'.<sup>51</sup> It is said in the *Mundaka Upaniṣad*, 'This Atman (Self) cannot be attained by him who is devoid of strength, or through lack of vigilance, or through knowledge without renunciation'.<sup>52</sup> In the opinion of Anandagiri,<sup>53</sup> internal renunciation, and not the formal (monastic), is intended here; the

spirit of renunciation, and not its insignia, is the essential condition for Self-knowledge.

Even after Self-realization an illumined person may continue to work for the guidance of the world. Sri Krishna says, 'As the ignorant perform work, being attached to it, O Bhārata, so should an enlightened man work, but without attachment, in order to set people on the right path'.<sup>54</sup> But though working to all appearance, the enlightened worker does not work, for he is always aware of the non-dual, serene Self and does not identify himself with the mind, the senses, and the body, to which actions belong. Therefore, his is only a semblance of work, as Sri Krishna says: 'Giving up attachment to the fruit of action, ever content, and dependent on none, though engaged in work he does not work at all'.<sup>55</sup> Commenting on this verse Shankara remarks, 'Finding it impracticable for some reason to give up work, an enlightened person may be engaged in work as before, free from attachment to it and its result, without any selfish end, only with the object of guiding people to the right course. Such a man does not really work.'

Even some rulers of ancient India are reputed as illumined workers. They are called Rājārshis, royal sages. Janaka, King of Mithila (modern Bihar), is the most famous of them. In the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* he is spoken of as the knower of Brahman: 'This is the eternal glory of a knower of Brahman; it neither increases nor decreases through work. (Therefore) one should know the nature of that (glory) alone. Knowing it

<sup>51</sup> *Bhagavad Gita*, V. 3.

<sup>52</sup> III. ii. 4.

<sup>53</sup> The great annotator on Shankaracharya's commentaries on the Upanishads, the Brahma-Sutras, and the *Bhagavad Gita*.

<sup>54</sup> *Bhagavad Gita*, III. 25.

<sup>55</sup> *Bhagavad Gita*, IV. 20.



one is not touched by evil action.<sup>56</sup> Therefore he who knows it as such becomes self-controlled, calm, indrawn, enduring, and concentrated; he sees the Self in himself, and he sees all as the Self. Evil (comprising merit and demerit both) does not trouble him, (but) he consumes all evil. He becomes sinless, taintless, free from doubts, and a knower of Brahman. This is the domain of Brahman, O Emperor, and you have attained it,—said Yājñavalkya.<sup>57</sup>

In the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, King Ashvapati is mentioned as the teacher of the Cosmic Self (Vaishvānara Atman).<sup>58</sup> Once five great householders, who were Brahmanas and well versed in the Vedas, held a discussion as to 'who the Self is', and 'what is Brahman'. Unable to solve the problem they went to a famous Brahmana teacher, Uddālaka. He said to them as soon as they came, 'Sirs, at present Ashvapati Kaikeya knows the Cosmic Self. Let us all go to him.' Upon their arrival the king received each of them with due respect. The next morning he offered them gifts. When they refused, the king said, 'In my kingdom there is no thief, no miser, no drunkard, no man without the sacrificial fire, no ignorant person, no adulterer, whence then adulteress. I am going to perform a sacrificial rite, sirs; and as much wealth as I shall give to each priest I will give you too, please stay, sirs.' Then the Brahmanas said, 'We have not come for riches, O king. At this time you are the knower of the Cosmic Self. Please teach us that.' 'Tomorrow I will instruct you', replied the king. Early the next morning the Brahmanas duly approached him with sacrificial fuel in their hands.<sup>59</sup> Then the king imparted to them the knowledge of the Cosmic Self.

The *Bhāgavata* records the story of another royal sage, Rishabha. 'The sage Rishabha,'

<sup>56</sup> Good as well as evil action are meant, for both are evil, being the cause of bondage.

<sup>57</sup> IV. iv. 23.

<sup>58</sup> V. ii. 1-7.

<sup>59</sup> The offering is symbolic of humility, reverence, and willingness to serve, the virtues that make the pupil's mind receptive of spiritual knowledge.

says Shukadeva,<sup>60</sup> 'was himself a free soul, an experiencer of supreme bliss, had for ever eradicated the whole series of evil and was pure-hearted and established in self-rule, yet he performed work like a bound man and followed the religious order of the age to set an example to the unwise. Calm, compassionate, and even-minded, he was a friend of all and set the householders aright on the path consisting of virtue, wealth, pleasure, progeny, fame, and Liberation. What a great man does, people follow.'<sup>61</sup>

#### VIII. SUPREME GOOD IS BEYOND DUALITY. ESCAPISM AND DEFEATISM CANNOT MAKE MAN SPIRITUAL.

We have found that it is along the path of virtue that the seeker of prosperity gets at Karma Yoga and it is through Karma Yoga that he finds access to the way of Supreme Good. From the way of prosperity to the way of Supreme Good there is no other approach but Karma Yoga and the only approach to Karma Yoga is virtue. Therefore, unless the seeker of prosperity follows the path of virtue he has no chance of finding the way to Supreme Good. To turn away from the search of prosperity to the search of Supreme Good one has to realize not only the bitterness of want and misery but also the emptiness of plenty and pleasure. And without some experience of plenty and pleasure who can be convinced of their hollowness? It has already been noticed that an unrighteous man, prosperous though he may be, cannot be happy. His cares and worries do not permit him to enjoy his possessions. Since he cannot gain the most out of his wealth or position, there is always a discontent within him. His desires, finding no satisfaction, grow from more to more. His intellect is too muddled to see through their deceptiveness. With regard to men of demoniac nature Sri Krishna rightly observes: 'Giving themselves up to hypocrisy, pride, and arrogance, they hold false views through delusion and act with impure resolve.'

<sup>60</sup> Narrator of the *Bhāgavata* to King Parikshit. He was the son of the sage Veda-Vyāsa and a 'born-free' soul.

<sup>61</sup> V. iv. 14, 15.



Beset with innumerable cares, which will end only with death, looking on the gratification of desire as their highest goal, and feeling sure that this is all; bound by a hundred ties of hope, given up wholly to lust and wrath, they strive by unjust means to amass wealth for the satisfaction of their passions. Three are the gates of hell, ruinous of the self,—lust, anger, and greed; therefore one should forsake them. The man who has escaped these three gates of darkness, O son of Kunti, practices what is good for himself and thus goes to the supreme goal. He who discards the ordinance of the Shastras and acts upon the impulse of desire *attains neither purity of mind nor happiness nor the supreme goal.*<sup>62</sup> Then Sri Krishna concludes: 'So let the Shastras be your authority in determining what ought to be done and what ought not to be done. Having learnt the ordinance of the Shastras, you should do your work in the world.'<sup>63</sup> Here it is indicated that ethical conduct must be based on the scriptural knowledge, that is, on the fundamental unity of finite selves in the divine Being revealed to supersensuous experience, on which the scriptural teachings are based. It cannot rest secure on the egoistic view of life dependent on empirical knowledge. The scriptures give us, however, the guiding principles, the general rules of conduct, within the framework of which every individual has ample scope for the exercise of his understanding and judgment. It is said in *manu-Smṛiti*, 'The sources of Dharma are the Veda, the words and the deeds of those who know the Veda, the practice of the honest, and one's inner contentedness'.<sup>64</sup>

In this world we are trying to solve the problem of evil by good. We are trying to overcome poverty by plenty, sickness by health, ugliness by beauty, pain by pleasure, ignorance by knowledge, vice by virtue, and so forth. But when we succeed in these efforts, we find that just as poverty creates problems so does plenty, just as sickness creates problems so does health, just as pain creates problems so does

pleasure, just as ignorance creates problems so does knowledge, just as vice creates problems so does virtue; in short, both evil and good have their own problems. Indeed, the life is never free from problems. We solve one problem to face another. We get out of one difficulty to find ourselves in another. This is true not only of the life on this earth but also on any other plane of relative existence, no matter how high it may be. Just as a beggar-woman cannot conceive what problems a queen may have (although actually the queen has many more than she), similarly we, the denizens of this earth, cannot believe that there can be any problem in the heaven-world (Svarga-loka). The entire relative existence is marked by interdependence. Wherever we are we move from one stage of bondage to another. Bondage means dependence, freedom independence. Both evil and good bind us, the one is an iron chain and the other a golden chain, as it were. But the golden chain is no less strong to bind than the iron one, only its glitter hides its binding nature. Even moral virtues are not as good as they seem to be. Kindness requires misery for its existence, justice wrong, forgiveness fault. They are good as contingent ideals, but not as the ultimate goal. For instance, medical service is desirable while there is disease; it is not an end in itself. The end is sound health where there is neither disease nor its remedy. The Supreme Good is beyond the relativity of good and evil, beyond virtue and vice, beyond duality. To attain this the aspirant has to give up relative good as well as evil. But at first he has to overcome evil by good and then he can find the way out of relative good into the Supreme Good. As Sri Ramakrishna says, 'To take out one thorn you need another. But after removing the first thorn you discard the other as well. So you remove the thorn of ignorance by means of the thorn of knowledge and then go beyond knowledge to attain Supreme Knowledge.'<sup>65</sup>

After experiencing life's blessings here and hereafter, the virtuous alone among the seekers

<sup>62</sup> *Bhagavad Gita*, XVI. 10-12, 21-23.

<sup>63</sup> *Bhagavad Gita*, XVI. 24.

<sup>64</sup> II. 6.

<sup>65</sup> *Vide Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, p. 523 (Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Centre, New York, 1942).



of prosperity can be fully convinced of their futility. Then they can freely reject even the highest glories and joys of relative existence as vanity of vanities and seek the Supreme Good as the sole goal. Without this exalted attitude none can enter the spiritual path. Spiritual life begins only when one is ready to discard unhesitatingly all that is perishable for the sake of the Imperishable, all that is changeful for the sake of the Changeless, all that is apparent for the sake of the Real. Neither through fear of the battle of life nor through failure in it, neither through discontent nor through despair can a man turn away from the charms of the sense-world and be in the quest of God. Escapism or defeatism cannot make man spiritual. Neither can direct his mind's course from the visible universe to the unseen supreme Spirit. He who leaves the world out of fear or frustration must be lacking in the spirit of renunciation. The inflow of desires hidden within will not permit him to hold to the spiritual path. It is said by Shankaracharya, 'Those seekers after Liberation who have only apparent dispassion and are yet anxious to cross the ocean of relative existence, the shark of desire catches by the throat and violently snatching away, drowns them half way'.<sup>66</sup> Austerity without the spirit of renunciation is as unstable and false as the sandy bed of a subterranean stream.

The story of Nachiketas in the *Kātha Upaniṣad* beautifully illustrates the triumphant attitude of a spiritual aspirant towards the

allurements of the sense-world. This Brahmana boy approached Yama, the ruler of the departed spirits, for the knowledge of the Self in order to find the secret of death. Then Yama, to test the pupil's capacity and earnestness, at first tried to dissuade him from an enquiry into this puzzling mystery of all mysteries; failing in that he offered the youth not only earthly but also heavenly possessions and enjoyments that human beings may hanker after. 'Ask for sons and grandsons with a hundred years' long life,' continued Yama, 'ask for plenty of cattle, horses, elephants, and gold and for vast territory and live yourself as many years as you like. . . . Ask freely for whatever objects of desire are rare in this human world. These charming celestial damsels with their chariots and lutes are not attainable by mortals. Them I present to you. Let them serve you. Only do not ask me, O Nachiketas, about the secret of death.' But Nachiketas stood firm, proof against temptations, and spoke out, 'Transient are they, O King of Death, and still they sap the energy of all the senses of man. Even the longest life is short indeed. Let all these chariots, music, and dance be thine and thine alone. . . . Tell me, O King of Death, the truth about the great Beyond, on which human beings are so perplexed. No other boon does Nachiketas crave for than this that penetrates the profound secret.' Being satisfied as to the pupil's deservingness, Yama imparted to him the knowledge of the Self.<sup>67</sup>

(To be continued)

<sup>66</sup> *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, 79.

<sup>67</sup> I. i. 23, 25, 26, 29.

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'A current rushing down of its own nature falls into a hollow and makes a whirlpool, it emerges again in the form of the free current to go on unchecked. Each human life is like that current. It gets into the whirl, gets involved in this world of space, time, and causation, whirls round a little, crying out "my father, my brother, my name, my fame," and so on, and at last emerges out of it and regains its original freedom. Man's experience in the world is to enable him to get out of its whirlpool.'

—Swami Vivekananda



# INDIAN MYSTICISM

BY ANIRVAN

(Continued from the April issue)

The realization of *Sac-cid-ānanda* through Name and Form brings us to the mystic tradition of the Tantras, whose origins can be traced to the Vedic age. In the Tantras, mystic realization is sought through some specific aspect of the Divine answering to some deep craving of the human soul. Three Forms of the Divine stand out prominent in the Tantric cults: Śiva, Śakti, and Viṣṇu. The idea behind Śiva is the divine Quiescence and Illumination, behind Śakti the divine Energy, and behind Viṣṇu the divine Grace and Love. The Śaiva mysticism, especially as it had been developed in the Kashmir school of Śaivism, is closely parallel to the Vedantic mysticism as it culminates in the realization of the identity of Jīva the Individual with Śiva the Transcendent, laying an emphasis on the idealistic path of knowledge, though the path of devotion is not entirely ruled out. The Śākta and the Vaiṣṇava mysticism on the other hand emphasize the relation of dependence on and surrender to the Divine and take devotion to be the main contributing factor to God-realization; though here too, the end aimed at is the identification of the Self with the Divine essence. Śakti is looked upon as Mother—the divine Energy—that expresses Herself in the incessant processes of phenomenal change in Nature as well as in the subtle movements of spiritual dynamism in the soul. It is by being a little child and not by wrestling with Her that man can hope to win his way to Freedom in Her bosom, insists the Śākta mystic,—though this personal love and surrender is not the only attitude towards Śakti in Indian mysticism. While Śakti is the divine Mother, Viṣṇu is the divine Master, the divine Friend, the divine Lover, and even the divine Child. He is the God of Love in whom the yearnings of the human heart, expressed

in its personal relations, find their ultimate satisfaction.

In passing we may note that the idea of the Fatherhood of God is not so prominent in Indian mysticism, though in the Śākta cult, the idea of the Transcendent Śiva, as forming the background of the divine Energy, lends support to such a conception which however has not been developed into a separate cult. The unique transcendental emphasis in Indian mysticism, which has brought about the Jīva-Brahma equation, seems to have absorbed the concept of Fatherhood—which has reappeared as a projection, and not as a cult, in some forms of Tantric mystic thought.

From God we now come to Man as the object of the mystic cult. From the basic idea that the universe is a direct and essential manifestation of the Divine<sup>1</sup> and that Man is essentially identical with the Divine, the idea of the descent of the Divine into Man and the ascent of Man into the Divine by participation of the Divine nature is a simple intuition. The divine Incarnations as the object of mystic realization find expression in the cults of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa, both of whom are regarded as the incarnations of Viṣṇu. The Rāma cult, which is widespread in Northern India, has under-

<sup>1</sup> It is important to remember in this connection that this is not what is generally understood by pantheism in the West. The Indian theory of creation holds that the Divine manifests itself as the Universe but is not exhausted thereby. 'Only a quarter of Him has become the Universe, while His three quarters remain immortal in the supreme heights', declares the Rg-Veda. Strict spiritual monism can recognize no other Substance, Principle, or Energy except the Supreme Spirit and hence the creation must in every respect be contained in and possessed by the Divine. But the essential and potential Divinity of the creation is at once transcended (*ati-sthā*) by the Divine essence and potency.



gone a simple development, though it has always been one of the major social and spiritual forces of India and has a tremendous appeal to the mass mind. The mystic cult identifies Rāma with both the Inner Self and the Transcendent Brahma, with a recognition in Śītā of the Śakti aspect of the Divine, and is thus closely parallel to the original Vaiṣṇava cult of the Purāṇas. In its Śādhana or means of realization, it lays emphasis on the *dāsya-bhāva* or the attitude of the servant to the master and the lord.

But the Kṛṣṇa cult, which has a long history behind it, has developed into an extremely abstruse form of mysticism, especially in Bengal, consisting of cross-currents of many spiritual thoughts and practices to which justice cannot be done in a brief survey. It is, in the main, a fully developed cult of devotion based on a minute analysis of the human emotions and relations with a tendency to divinize everything that is human. Its extremely human interest and its diving into the depths of human psychology have brought into foreground some of the deepest problems of man's spiritual aspiration. The key-note of its mysticism may be said to be the obliteration of the difference between God and Man, not only on the transcendent plane but on the plane of phenomenal Reality also. The Divine appears here as Man the Lover, the Friend, and the Child and the drama of his Life Divine moves in a luminous atmosphere of mystery and revelation which may be said to be a supreme artistic projection of the God-intoxicated human spirit trying to take in Reality as an integral whole.

Mysticism has borne fruit along another line of spiritual endeavour, namely, Man's ascent into the Divine and his assumption of the Divine nature, by following the path of analysis and subjectivity. The systems of thought that have adopted this line of procedure, in their extreme rationalism do not find it necessary to accept the idea of God, and hence have often been mistakenly branded as atheistic; and some, especially the critics of the West, have refused to give the name of religion

to these cults. And yet, they have developed a mysticism of the highest order and their transcendentalism represents the highest flight to which the Spirit of man can soar in its search for naked Reality. Beyond the positive Absolute of Existence-Consciousness-Bliss (*sac-cid-ānanda*), they have taken a step farther and have declared Reality as a negative Absolute which they have called Non-Existence (*asat*) or the Void (*śūnya*). But this Void is not a non-entity: it is the indiscriminate and colourless background from which are projected the highest positive formulations of the Divine as knowable to the human spirit; and its reality is a fact of mystic experience to which even the love-intoxicated Vaiṣṇava will not demur to bear witness.

The cult of the Void has necessarily developed into a cult of Man, and from the earliest Vedic age down to the present day it has been a distinctive feature of Indian mysticism. A little thought will disclose its relation to the Jīva-Brahma equation of the Upanishads. 'He who knows *brahma*, verily becomes *brahma* himself', declares the Upanishad. If this dictum is translated into the language of the theist, it will of course sound as blasphemy; yet from considerations of spiritual psychology, we cannot deny that in any form of mystic experience knowing is not worth the name unless it is also a becoming. This becoming, as it unfolds the 'grand mystery' of the Infinite in the soul of the individual, may bring an illumined sense either of humility or of sublimation. In the former we have the Man of God, while in the latter we have the Man-God. With the Man-God begins the cult of Man which had a unique development in India, producing its uninterrupted line of Masters and Siddhas, and thus for a long time dispensing with the need of a theory of divine Incarnation to bring God-head closer to man.

In the medieval age, especially in Eastern India, this cult of Man produced the mysticism of Sahaja (innateness), which appeared in various correlated forms inasmuch as it became inspired by Buddhist, Śaiva, or Vaiṣṇava



Tantricism. The Sahaja is the innate, simple, and blissfully free nature of man to be discovered in the inmost depth of his being. The Sahaja is the great Void or the great Bliss—an utterance strangely reminiscent of the declaration of the Upanishadic seers, 'This luminous Void (*ākāśa*) is Bliss, and it lies in the little lotus-closet of the heart, overspreading the earth and transcending the heavens'. The Sahaja can be realized rationally by a simple intuition of the Void as linking all discrete experiences or as the ultimate rest towards which all activities tend, or it may be realized emotionally by a sublimation of human love. Indeed, Void and Love are two aspects of the same Reality; and the realization of their unity is the Supreme Bliss which is *innate* in man. And Man is the ultimate Truth of Existence.

With a deistic turn, this Sahaja becomes the simple Man, the Man of the Land of Eternity or the Man of the Heart as the Bāuls of Bengal call Him. The Man of the Heart is the unknown Bird of mysterious movements, the Bridegroom in the bridal-chamber of the Void, the Formless Beloved transcending even the incomprehensibility of the Absolute and yet so nearest to the heart of man. A deep faith, a sunlit rationalism, a crystal-clear vision, a wonderful freedom from every kind of pedantry and conventionalism, a love as deep as the sea and catholicity as wide as the earth, a spontaneity of expression that can hardly be matched anywhere are a few of the characteristics of this Sahaja cult, which for centuries have been a very strong undercurrent in Indian mysticism. It has a wide mass appeal which bids fair to make it a distinctive feature of the future form of mysticism that India's spirituality is going to evolve.<sup>2</sup>

And now a few words about the mystical practices and we come to the end of this brief survey. In the Vedas, mystic realization culminates in *sāyujya* or communion with the Divine, which has been variously described as

<sup>2</sup> It is very significant that in the Sahaja cult of medieval India, there was a confluence of the mystic currents of three of the great living religions, viz., Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam.

'attaining the Light (*svar vid, jyotir gam*)', 'reaching the Gods (*devān vid*)', or 'achieving immortality (*amṛtatvam aś*)'. In general, three steps are indicated on the mystic path through the successive instrumentation of the mind (*manas*), the beyond-mind (*manīṣā*), and the heart (*hrd*). The cardinal principle in all of these is of course inwardization which, on the mental plane, takes the form of concentration, known in the Vedas as *medhā*<sup>3</sup> and in the later Yogic cults as *samādhi*. Practice of *samādhi* leads to an ecstatic condition of the mind which in the Vedas has been called *man-īṣā* (lit. an upsurge of the mind)<sup>4</sup>. This corresponds to the plane of *viññāna* or *prajñā* (true knowledge) of the Upanishads and to the *dhyānacitta* (a state of habitual absorption of the mind) of the Yogis of the Rationalist school. This is of course the *sine qua non* of the mystic life: inwardization leads to a deepening, broadening, and heightening of consciousness (*cit*) which in its rarefied and homogeneous form of pristine purity contacts and assimilates Reality with an immediacy of supreme Identity and thus brings to the heart the ineffable Bliss (*ānanda*) of ecstatic communion. And this is sensing the Real (*sat*) and becoming the Real as the Upanishadic seers describe it. But the ecstatic upsurge of the consciousness does not stop here: 'the yearning seers', declares the *Rg-Veda*, 'pushed deeper into the heart with the ecstatic consciousness and found out the link of the Existence (*sat*) in Non-Existence (*asat*)'. And with the indeterminable mystery of the Void surrounding the luminosity of the ultimate realization, mysticism comes to the end of its quest.

The Vedic delineation of the mystic path has been developed with innumerable psychological details into a practical science based upon a well-knit system of philosophical theory by the mystics of the Rationalist school. Some

<sup>3</sup> Derived from *man dhā* 'to fix the mind', whence the mystic on the first step has been called *mandhātā* or *medhāvin*.

<sup>4</sup> Also described as *bodha* (awakening) or *dhyumna* (illumination).



two thousand years ago, their findings have been finally codified by Patañjali in a set of aphorisms which, in their comprehensive grasp of the mystical science, remain unsurpassed even to this day.

Patañjali has minutely described the subjective procedure of mystical practices which must be fundamentally the same in all mystic cults. But there is also an objective side to the question: the mind must seize upon some objective data before it can work its way up, and this has necessarily developed into different schools of mystic practices of which we can briefly notice here only a few of a representative character.

A dominant feature of Vedic mystical practice is what the Upanishads called the Cult of Symbols (*pratīkōpāsana*) in which some objective phenomenon is seized upon as a means of spiritual sublimation (*āpyāyana*) owing to some essential or analogical link being discovered between the object and the subject. The Upanishads have described it as the direct and sensuous (*pratyakṣa*) approach to Reality and from an analysis of our psychical organization have picked up five of its constituents as capable of sublimation and hence conducive to mystic realization. These they have called 'the gate-keepers of the consciousness of the Vast' and have enumerated them as Speech, Vision, Audition, Life, and Mind. This scheme has furnished the basis for the development of different Yogic cults of later ages.

Vision as a form of mystic experience (sometimes called photism) is quite well known and so we need not dilate upon it. Everywhere the Divine has been described as Light, and it is the preponderating feature of Vedic mysticism where a network of imageries has been woven round this concept in an attempt to attune the rhythm of the microcosm with that of the macrocosm.

Audition is another form of mystic experience though not in the sense of hearing Voices, but in the deeper sense of realizing the primordial Sound in the Void characterized as the Thrill from which are flashed out the

Names and Forms of cosmic manifestation. The cult is as old as the Vedas; but its philosophical basis has been worked out first by the Grammarians and then by the Tantrists who called it *nādānusandhāna* or the Quest of the Sound-Thrill which appears as a characteristic feature in the songs and poems of the mystics of the medieval age.

Closely connected with this is the Cult of Speech, also known as the Mantra-Yoga (or Yoga of the mystic formulæ), which is a dynamic supplementation of the Cult of Nāda. The Mantra-cult is specifically an ancient Vedic cult which has been continued by Tantricism up to the present day. But the subject is too vast to yield to a summary treatment. Its psychological basis is of course in the interrelation between Speech and Thought, but its mystic import lies in the Vedic theory of the primordial Sound and its potency to create. The Mantra, accepted as a translation in a subtle speech-form (often consisting of a single syllable) of the creative urge of an Idea is used accompanied by suitable psycho-physiological practices, as a force for liberating a dormant power of the Spirit. This is only a bare outline of the rationale of its process seen from the subjective point of view, but more than this cannot be dealt with here.

The Cult of Mind has been exhaustively treated by Patañjali in his system of Rāja Yoga, including an exposition of the occult practices based on philosophical rationalism. His system is supplemented by what may be called the Cult of Life-force or the Haṭha Yoga whose approach is more physiological than psychological. Assuming that Mind and Life are but the two aspects of the same force, Haṭha Yoga attempts to sublimate Mind by controlling the forces of Life. To some extent Patañjali also does the same thing, but the greatest discovery of the Haṭha Yogins is the 'coiled Life-power' lying dormant at the base of every organism and the means of awakening it by manipulating the life-currents carried through the channels called Nāḍīs. This Life-power has been symbolized as a coiled serpent and so has been called by some as the 'Serpent-



power'. The cult of the Life-force and its channels, the Nāḍīs, and the attendant cult of the spiritualization of the physical basis of Life are old Vedic ideas. They have a very close relation to the cult of the Soma sacrifice, which reappears in a subjective form with the cult of the Siddhas (or the Perfected Ones).

Indian mysticism, which has run an un-

interrupted course of thousands of years, is not only a great force in India's spiritual life, but is also progressive in character, always trying to discover new vistas of the Unknown and find out new forms of mystic practices that will have a more universal appeal and be more in harmony with the spirit of the age.

(Concluded)

## THE CONCEPTION OF THE SPORTIVE ABSOLUTE

BY PROF. AKSHAYA KUMAR BANERJEA

(Continued from the April issue)

### V. THE TRANSCENDENT SELF FURNISHING A CLUE TO THE NATURE OF THE ABSOLUTE

In course of its deepest reflection and meditation, the human consciousness discovers within its own innermost self a clue to the true nature of the Absolute. It finds that all its states and processes, all its changes and modifications, all its thoughts, perceptions, feelings, and desires, revolve round one permanent changeless centre, refer to one self-luminous and all-illuminating ground of unity, are owned and witnessed and governed and organized by one Self. The self and centre of the consciousness is pointed to as the 'I'. Without reference to the 'I' the consciousness has no existence. This 'I' is above and behind all its states and functions and is unconditioned by any of its modifications and limitations. This 'I' or Self is distinguished not only from the environments of the physical body, but from the physical body itself and even from the empirical mind and ego, which are all subject to changes and limitations and are by themselves non-self-luminous.

The Self is recognized as changeless, since all changes in the mind and the body and the external world appear before it, and are witnessed and illumined and linked together by it. In the absence of the changeless identity

of the Self, the changes could not be cognized as changes at all. The Self cannot belong either to the past or to the present or to the future, since it is the seer and organizer of the past, present, and future. The cognizer and illuminer of time must itself be above time. Since the Self witnesses, reveals, and holds together all relations, subjective as well as objective, it must itself transcend all relativity. As the Self is not a particular object (internal or external) of consciousness, but is the ultimate condition of the possibility of all functions of consciousness,—of all knowledge, feeling, and desire,—it cannot be rationally thought of as a finite reality among numerous realities—finite in the sense in which all objects of knowledge, feeling, and desire are finite. Even when a distinction is conceived between the Self and the not-selves—the I and the others—the true Self referred to above must be conceived as transcending the distinction and embracing both the Self and the not-selves. It is the transcendent Self that must hold and witness them together as mutually related objects of its transcendent changeless infinite consciousness, without itself being the object of any consciousness.

Though every individual consciousness is most deeply inwardly and immediately cons-



cious of the Self as its true 'I'—as the ultimate truth of itself,—as the transcendent source and support and illuminer and unifier of all its states and modifications and experiences and actions,—this Self in its essential character cannot be regarded as individual. The sense of individuality is itself empirical and relative and involves the consciousness of the presence of other individuals from which it distinguishes itself. The Self to which this sense of individuality and otherness and of all kinds of mutual exclusiveness and relatedness appears and by which this sense is illumined and sustained must be above individuality. Every ego is of course individual, but not the Self which is behind the ego. It is the universal illuminer and unifier of all individual egos.

Likewise the Self cannot be regarded either as pure subject or as pure object. It is really the self of both. Subject and object acquire their meaning from relation to each other and are necessarily involved in every process of consciousness. Subject, object, and the process must have their ground of unity in the Self. They must be held and revealed together in their relation to each other by the transcendent unity and luminosity of the Self. The Self accordingly must be regarded as existing and shining above them.

It is absurd to conceive this Self as merely an abstract principle. An abstract principle can have no existence apart from some concrete reality and can never be the substance and ground and illuminer of concrete realities of experience. Every abstract principle is the creation of the thinking subject and becomes itself an object of thought. The Self, being the ground of unity of both subject and object, must be a self-existent and self-shining reality above both, and can by no means be an abstract principle or general concept.

The Self cannot also be regarded either as a purely static entity or as a purely dynamic entity. The very distinction between static and dynamic arises from the relation of each to the other. It is impossible to conceive any static object without reference to a dynamic reality, and *vice versa*. The witness and illuminer of

the relation must be the meeting-ground of both. It is in the domain of empirical consciousness that the distinction appears. The Self to which and for which it appears is in itself above it.

Thus the human consciousness discovers in its own ultimate self or 'I'—which is the starting point of its phenomenal existence and the necessary self-existent self-luminous centre of all the revolving states and processes of its knowing, feeling, and willing—a reality which greatly satisfies its inherent yearning for the Absolute. The term *Spirit* (*ātman*) is used to signify the character of this Self. The Absolute must be of the nature of Spirit or the transcendent Self. The Absolute Reality must be the Absolute Spirit.

## VI. THE IDEA OF ONE ABSOLUTE POWER

To the human reason the idea of *causation* is necessarily associated with the idea of *power*, and the idea of *order* is associated with the idea of the *oneness of the cause*. Whatever is of a derivative, conditional, dependent, and relative nature, whatever comes into being from a prior state of apparent non-existence, must owe its origin to some power in which it must have been potentially present and from which it must have come into the manifested form. The operation of some power is also implied in the preservation of its particular form for the time being, in every change or modification in it, in what is called its destruction or the disappearance of its manifested form. It is in terms of power that the human reason naturally explains all phenomena of the objective world as well as all changes within the subjective consciousness. The material cause, the efficient cause, the formal cause as well as the final cause are all ultimately reduced into power. It is only as a seat or an embodiment of power or energy or force that a person or a thing or a phenomenon—any living or non-living, conscious or unconscious, gross or subtle, physical or mental or spiritual substance—is thought of as a cause or source or ground of any kind of change, of any process of production or substance or transformation or destruction.



Power in its pure form is perhaps directly intuited by the human consciousness in its functioning as *will*, in the experience of its making any effort and putting forth energy, and its meeting any obstacle or resisting force operating from outside. The consciousness gets the idea of power from within itself and applies it for explanation of all kinds of phenomena. Every phenomenon is conceived as a manifestation of power, and power is conceived as the potentiality of phenomena. The actual conception of a power or force or energy is always formed in terms of its effects or manifestations, in terms of what it produces, sustains, governs, transforms, or destroys. The power before manifestation is necessarily of an indefinable character. It becomes definable in relation to how it manifests itself. The human reason always looks for power for the causal explanation of phenomena, and when particular phenomena are thus explained, reference is made to some particular power, which again is conceived in terms of these phenomena explained.

Every particular power so conceived is found to be itself of a derivative, conditional, dependent, and relative nature, and hence it also demands causal explanation like the other phenomena of the objective world. The human consciousness, in its search for the causal explanation of the phenomenal world, cannot rest contented, until and unless it can arrive at the conception of one free, creative, absolute power, which can be rationally supposed to have been manifested in the form of this vast and complex cosmic order.

Again, wherever the human consciousness perceives order and adjustment, regularity and uniformity, system and organization, it is led by the fundamental demand of its own nature to think that there must be a unity underlying them. Search for unity behind organized plurality is as inherent in the character of the human reason as search for causal power behind all derivative existences. These two searches generally proceed and advance together.

As the acquaintance of the human consciousness with the nature of the objective realities and the laws of their origination, sustenance, development, and destruction, becomes wider and deeper, it progressively realizes that the entire universe is one organic whole that all the apparently bewildering diversities of the world are inwardly as well as outwardly linked together and that everything has its proper place and function in the scheme of this beautiful and sublime cosmic order. It feels that there is a definite plan and design, however incomprehensible to its finite and limited understanding this design may be, according to which all things are originated, arranged, developed, transformed, brought into various relations with one another, and then removed from the scene of experience. This deeply implants in the human consciousness the idea that the ultimate cause of the world of diversities must be one absolute power in the very nature of which there is not only the potentiality of all orders of relative existences but also a definite though inscrutable plan of self-manifestation.

*(To be continued)*

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'Does God exist only when the eyes are closed and cease to exist when the eyes are opened? The Lila belongs to Him to whom the Nitya belongs, and the Nitya belongs to Him to whom the Lila belongs. . . .

'The phenomenal world belongs to that very Reality to which the Absolute belongs; again, the Absolute belongs to that very Reality to which the phenomenal belongs. He who is realized as God has also become the universe and its living beings.'

—*Sri Ramakrishna*



# THE POWER OF PRAYER

BY DR. MOHAN LAL SETHI

For the last two centuries or so the West has been in the van of technological progress. Technology has given a fillip to materialism. Not that materialism was not known before but the combined forces of technology and materialism have dealt a stunning blow to religious belief, and people have lost faith in spiritual practices and the power of prayer. Spiritual values held in high esteem for centuries have lost their significance in the eyes of moderns under this combined onslaught. Hedonism has become the ruling doctrine of life and the political supremacy of the European peoples has carried its appeal to all the four corners of the world. Two devastating world wars in a single generation have made the thinking few realize that mankind has 'gone off the rails' and has forgotten the purpose of human existence. In the words of a contemporary thinker, 'Man's final end, the purpose of his existence, is to love, know, and be united with the immanent and transcendent Godhead'. Prayer is one of the methods for achieving the end of human existence.

Prayer is an activity of the human mind when it addresses God in His Personal or Impersonal aspect. In low or petitionary prayer, the suppliant asks for benefits for himself only. In middle or intercessory prayer, a person pleads for other people. In high prayer or contemplation, the suppliant adores the Deity and seeks nothing for himself or others but prays that His will be done.

Action or Karma, if not in harmony with low prayer to start with, falls into harmony with it sooner or later. Thus low prayer, perseveringly practised, results in an improvement of conduct. Middle prayer leads to improvement of character. Low and middle prayer result in purity of heart and passivity of Spirit without which high prayer cannot be entered. These three levels of prayer are

stages of the growth of human conduct, character, and consciousness. It is very common for people to start with low prayer and make no progress towards high prayer. In every generation, only a few progressive, sincere, and devout people reach high prayer. Thus prayer is a Yoga, a method of union with Reality. This Yoga has also been practised by Christian mystics in the West and Sufi saints in the East. The four recognized paths to this union with the Divine, in spiritual Hinduism, are Rāja Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Karma Yoga, and Jñāna Yoga. The Yoga of prayer, as practised by the Catholics and the Sufis, is very much akin to the Bhakti Yoga of the Hindus.

The power of prayer, in reference to low and middle prayer, means: Are prayers heard and answered? The answer is both 'yes' and 'no'. When the thing asked for, whether within the individual or outside in the environment, is in conflict with the law of Karma, the prayer shall not be answered. A student who does not work at his books but only prays for success in the examination shall fail. His Karma is in conflict with his prayer. Prayers are heard and answered when they are in harmony with Karma. Besides appropriate Karma, intense yearning and purity of life are the conditions for prayers to be heard.

It may be argued: If appropriate Karma is undertaken, the desired results will follow; where is the necessity of prayer? Past Karma determines the major part of the (mental) make-up of the subconscious mind of an individual. A fraction of the mental make-up, a part of the conscious mind, is free and plastic. This free and plastic part of the mind can be remodelled. The remodelling is wrought by factors the most important of which is prayer. Mental make-up, when suitably changed, leads to right Karma and improvement of conduct.



There is another benefit to be derived from low and middle prayer. This benefit is within everyone's reach and at all stages of evolution provided prayer is offered with faith. It is patent that in this world, constituted as it is at present, to every person has fallen his share of sorrow. When a sorrow-stricken soul pours out his or her heart in prayer, prayer acts as a healing balm. The prayer may or may not be answered, the cause of affliction may or may not be removed, but the immediate feeling of relief to the devout and faithful suppliant cannot be gainsaid. It is no mean office of prayer to soothe the afflicted in this fashion. This benefit is not denied to the worst sinner and may mean the end of his fall and the beginning of a new chapter in life.

The power of prayer, in reference to high prayer, means: Does prayer lead to union with the Reality or Godhead? The answer given by masters of prayer—and they are the only competent people who can answer—is in the affirmative. When high prayer is reached, low and middle prayer are unnecessary. They automatically drop off and are sometimes forbidden. According to Hindu belief, a person may or may not reach high prayer in one life. If low prayer is reached in one incarnation, with some degree of success, the soul carries the merit thereof with it to the next incarnation. In this way through successive incarnations the soul evolves and progress is made towards high prayer till it is finally reached.

Writing on the power of prayer, mention must be made of psychic powers or Siddhis. These are supernatural powers like levitation, looking into the future, reading other people's minds, and working certain miracles. Masters of prayer and Yogis, both in the East and West admit that the earnest seekers come to attain them. Invariably the great masters have sounded notes of warning that the seekers should not be attracted by and lost in the Siddhis. They are like superb views of the landscape which present themselves to the eyes of a mountaineer when he is attempting a high mountain peak. Woe betide the climber who tarries and wastes his precious time in

gazing at such views. He seldom reaches the summit and may be swept away by an avalanche. No less a tragedy awaits a seeker who is taken in by the Siddhis. He never attains liberation or union with the Divine which is the ultimate goal of human existence.

Apart from the Siddhis, the contemplative in high prayer can make the body completely subservient to the requirements of the Spirit. Guru Arjun Dev, the fifth Guru of the Sikhs, was subjected to bodily tortures of various types by his misguided persecutors. He was made to sit on hot frying-pans, and sand heated to redness was poured on his body. To the astonishment and discomfiture of his persecutors, he showed not the least sign of discomfort or pain. The Guru recited the scriptures all through these trials and was immersed in contemplation. It was the power of high prayer which enabled him to disregard such severe physical pain and come out unscathed through these ordeals.

Most people judge the power of prayer by immediate results, irrespective of the merit and Karma of the suppliant, and in the spectacular manner in which Draupadi's prayer was answered in the court of the vile Duryodhana. It was in a similar strain that the great Thomas Henry Huxley challenged the clergy of his day. Huxley invited the clergy to choose a hospital ward and pray for the recovery of the inmates and to withhold prayer from a similar ward which should serve as a control and then to adjudicate the power of prayer on the basis of the results obtained. The clergy did not accept the challenge. It was too crude a way to test the power of prayer. Prayer cannot be tested in the way we test sulphuric acid and its salts, the sulphates, by means of barium chloride in the laboratory.

It is a happy coincidence that a grandson of the great T. H. Huxley who challenged the clergy, Aldous Huxley, has written in vindication of the power of prayer in his book *The Perennial Philosophy*. Aldous Huxley is a writer and philosopher of repute, who is thoroughly versed in the modern sciences. His



earlier writings leave the impression on the reader's mind that the author is a hard-baked materialist and agnostic. But it redounds to the credit of this 'agnostic' that when he came into contact with the Swamis of the Ramakrishna Mission in Hollywood, U.S.A., and came across new evidence necessitating a change of opinion, he said good-bye to materialism and agnosticism. He is now firmly established in Vedanta. The erstwhile scoffing materialist has been converted into a firm believer in the power of prayer. Similarly many others who had given up prayer for good have returned to prayer.

The present writer may be accused of gullibility and taking things on authority. Are not so many things in science taken on authority? How many masters of science in

physics and mathematics understand the exact reasoning leading to an understanding of the theory of relativity? If a great majority of people, even with training in physics and mathematics, do accept the truth of relativity on authority, why should every man in the street demand 'scientific' proof for the power of prayer, especially of an order intelligible to his grade of understanding? Should not the authority of the great masters of prayer be held sufficient to be convinced of the power of prayer?

Prayer is a technique for the development of human conduct, character, and consciousness. It is a means whereby the soul, craving for separate life in ignorance, dispels that ignorance and attains union with the Divine.

## STUDIES IN THE BRIHADARANYAKA UPANISHAD

BY DR. NALINI KANTA BRAHMA

(Continued from the April issue)

The Vedanta reconciles the One and the Many by saying that the Many do not really exist but owe their existence to ignorance (*ajñāna*). It is ignorance or *ajñāna* that shows the One to be Many. The One remains as it is for ever without any change. The appearance of the Many is an *adhyāropa*, a superimposition, that is withdrawn or rejected as soon as true knowledge arises. The One and the Many are not both real. The One never becomes the Many nor is there a manifold oneness. The manifoldness is an appearance, a false show due to adjuncts (*upādhi*) and is corrected as soon as the adjuncts are perceived to possess no reality. There is therefore no contradiction involved in the relation of the One and the Many, the former being referred to true Knowledge and the latter to ignorance. The names and forms, the manifold, do not

stand in opposition to the One, the *ekam-  
evādvitīyam*, simply because they retain their reality so long as they are not perceived to be mere modifications, unsubstantial changes and appearances as distinct from the ever present, unchanging One. When differences, owing their existence to adjuncts and ultimately to ignorance, disappear on the rise of Knowledge, the One *prajñānaghana* Self, the Atman which is 'all Consciousness', 'all *cit*', shines in its full glory and all special (*viśeṣa*) manifestations cease to exist. Just as when there is no longer water, on which innumerable reflections of the sun and the moon appeared, the reflections all disappear, so when the root cause of the differences or the special appearances no longer exists, all names and forms disappear and the one thing that remains is the One *cit*, the all-pervading Consciousness. The Upani-



shades find no contradiction in asserting and denying the Many. There is a denial of the Many, there is absence of all special manifestations in the state of Knowledge when the *cidekarasa*, the all-conscious Self, shines. Before this Knowledge arises, the Many, the individual selves, the special manifestations,—all have their reality. This is the Vedantic solution of the controversy. Even in the state of deep sleep, the special appearances cease to exist; how can these be supposed to exist in the state of Knowledge when ignorance has been completely overcome? It is ignorance that is responsible for the appearance of the differences and therefore the differences cannot be supposed to have any existence when ignorance is completely rooted out by Knowledge. What disappears is the *viśeṣa*, the special name and form due to ignorance; there is and there can be no disappearance of the Self.

The Vedanta believes in the transcendental (*pāramārthika*) nature of the Self where there is no room for any heterogeneity or difference, and has accordingly prescribed *sannyāsa* (renunciation) as the direct and immediate means of attaining the transcendental wisdom. *Sannyāsa* is absolute renunciation where there is no scope for any sort of desire (*kāmanā*). There must be rising above all sorts of desire—desire for wealth (*vittaiṣaṇā*), desire for progeny (*putraiṣaṇā*), and desire for fame (*lokaiṣaṇā*). The means should be appropriate to the end. Nothing short of this absolute renunciation can be the means to the realization of the Self which stands by itself and for itself and does not admit of any difference within or without. Desire (*kāmanā*) implies difference, at least a differentiation between the seeker and the sought. In the pursuit of the Self, there is no room for any differentiation. There is nothing other than the Self, no *anya*, no not-Self. The Self is the Whole, the All. So long as this nature of the Self does not dawn on the seeker, so long as this all-inclusiveness and all-pervasiveness of the Self is not realized by him, so long as anything 'other' than the Self is not found to be

absorbed in the Self, the competence for the attainment of the Self is not acquired. There must be desire so long as there is the thought of any 'other', anything different from the Self. Rising above all desires which is the *sine qua non* of *sannyāsa* (renunciation) is, therefore, identical in a sense with Knowledge (*jñāna*) or realization of the Self. There is hardly any distinction between the means and the end, between *sannyāsa* and *jñāna*. At this stage, there is no room for any differentiation and as such identity prevails. The firm *conviction* that there is nothing other than the Self is alone competent to raise one above all desires and the *realization* that there is nothing but the Self is not far removed from this conviction. No *kriyā* (action) has any scope in the matter of the realization of the Self. Action implies and involves differentiation between the agent, means, and result and as such it cannot have any applicability to the realization of the Atman which is above all duality and division. When the Self is described as '*neti neti*', (not this, not this), it is implied that in the differenceless Self there is no scope for the endless things of the universe which are subject to action and reaction. The text *etāvān vai kāmah*, 'thus far is the domain of desire', also shows that there is something above the region of desire. The knower of Brahman has all his desires fulfilled (*āptakāma*) and 'desire' of the *āptakāma* is self-contradictory (*Brahmavidaśca āptakāmatvāt āptakāmasya kāmanupapatteh*). The seeker who takes recourse to renunciation (*sannyāsa*) has therefore nothing to gain from *karma* (action). *Sannyāsa* or *jñāna* is competent to yield liberation without the help of *karma*. The Self as Pure Consciousness or *cit*, which is beyond all adjuncts (*upādhi*), can have only one thing as the means to its attainment and this is perfect or absolute renunciation which is also above all many-sided activities and desires and is one-pointed and has the divisionless One Self as its end and goal. That *sannyāsa* has been prescribed as the last and indispensable step towards realization of the Self also indicates that the



Upanishads want to preach the ultimate reality of the divisionless, pure (*ekarasa*) Self and not that of a manifold unity or of a many-in-one or of a one-in-many.

#### IV

#### UPANISHAD AS SCIENCE OF PRANA OR AGNI-VIDYA i.e. CREATIVE ENERGY

Although the Upanishads have mainly dealt with the Absolute or Brahman, it is not true that they have disregarded every other topic. It is a mistake to suppose that in regarding Brahman to be the Absolute Reality, the Upanishads have discarded the reality of other principles. There is no doubt that the Upanishads have declared unequivocally that whereas the reality of Brahman is absolute, that of the other principles is only relative. But it is to be remembered that this relative reality is all that is meant by reality by other schools of thought. So, although a great fuss has been made of the so-called 'illusionism' of the Vedanta, there is hardly any truth in the charge levelled against it. Far from holding that the world is an illusion or a hallucination, the Upanishads have, with great care and enthusiasm, explained its creation and dealt with its details. They cannot in any way be supposed to 'explain away' the universe, as is generally thought by Western scholars. The origin (*sr̥ṣṭi*), maintenance (*sthiti*), and destruction (*pralaya*) of the universe have been discussed thoroughly and nowhere is to be found a better explanation. Those who think that the Upanishads have not given sufficient attention to the universe and have explained it 'away' instead of explaining it have either not understood the spirit of the Upanishads at all or have been under the impression that any explanation not coinciding with their own is no explanation. There are many stages or steps, many gradations, in the teachings of the Upanishads suiting different equipments (*adhikāra*) and a complete misunderstanding of the spirit of the teachings is bound to occur if one swears by a portion of them and ignores the rest. It is

true the Upanishads declare that Brahman is the source and substratum, the beginning and the end, the All of the universe; but it is also true that Brahman has been declared to be nothing of the universe. All these sayings have to be reconciled if one is to enter into their real spirit. Those who want an affirmation of the universe in Brahman ought to have enough of it in the Upanishads; but if it is only an affirmation that they are seeking and if they are in dread of a denial or rejection, they must be blind to most of the important texts and they will be missing the transcendence, the rising above the opposing categories, the Beyond that harmonizes and reconciles all opposition, just the very thing for which the Upanishads stand.

An earnest student of the Upanishads cannot fail to observe that they not only teach Brahma-vidyā, but that Agni-vidyā or science of Creative Energy occupies an important place in them. Prāṇa or Primal Energy has been described as the source of all things and the whole universe is nothing but the expansion (*vikāśa*) or manifestation of this Prāṇa. One who knows the contraction and expansion (*sankoca* and *vikāśa*), of Prāṇa knows all things of the universe in all their stages of development. This Prāṇa or Primal Energy has been described as Hiranyagarbha, also as *mṛtyu* (death), in the beginning of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*. Before the creation of names and forms, the whole of this universe was enveloped by death. Death here stands for the feeling of want, the desire to eat or absorb other things (*aśanāyā*). The subtle (*sūkṣma*) state, although the source and cause of the gross forms, is in one sense responsible for the non-appearance of the gross state. The subtle state envelopes the gross state. Continuance in one form resists manifestation in other forms. This resistance, this envelopment, is all that is meant by death. Hiranyagarbha represents the subtle state and as this resists the appearance of gross names it has been described as death. This death has been also designated as Aditi, which eats and absorbs all. All things spring out of this and



become absorbed also in the same. That which is *sarvātmā* is also *sarvabhuk*, that which is the source of all can alone absorb all things in it.

So far as this Prāṇa or Prāṇa is concerned, the Upanishads agree with the theistic schools of thought in regarding it to be the creator, maintainer, and destroyer of all things. This Prāṇa is described as *āṅgīrasah*, as the essence of the ingredients of the body, i.e. as the vital principles, because the body dries up and dies if the Prāṇa goes out. This Prāṇa is the source and support of speech. There can be no pronouncing either of prose or of verse, no chanting, no intensification or elongation of words, without the help of Prāṇa and hence it has been designated as *Brhaspati*. This has been designated as *sāma*, because it is the same in all. It is the universal principle of things and is present equally in all, same in the *prajāpati* (creator) as in the elephant or in the snake. It has got no limitation and is unlimited and is present everywhere. It is also known as *udgīthā* or that which carries upward. The power of raising upward belongs not to speech but to the Prāṇa that supports speech. He who worships this Prāṇa becomes sweet-voiced and his pronunciation becomes very clear.

An elaborate discussion showing the infinity and all-pervasiveness of Prāṇa is found in the Upanishads. All the sense-organs become vanquished by the Asuras or evil forces, because they work for themselves alone. Limitation enters into them and the sin of selfishness ruins them. It is *mukhya-prāṇa* or the Primal Energy that is alone free from limitation. It has no interest of its own as distinct from the interest of others. What it takes for itself, it devotes to others' interests. All are supported by the food that it takes. It is above selfishness and therefore the Asuras cannot destroy it but get themselves instantaneously destroyed in attempting to fight against it. One who is established in the worship of this universal Principle acquires all its characteristics, becomes as unlimited as the Prāṇa itself is, has all the wealth and glory of

the universe at one's disposal and can bring it to the use of one's own Self or of one's disciples through mere chanting (*āgāna*). This description of the effect of the worship of Prāṇa leaves no doubt that Prāṇa is nothing short of the Creative Energy and those who miss the theistic Principle in the Upanishads should do well to go through this portion of the teachings in order that their false impression may be removed.

This Prāṇa or Creative Principle is to be accepted as the Self or Atman inasmuch as this is the essence of all the organs of the body (*āṅgīrasa*) and as this has nothing special of its own (*viśeṣaṇāśritatvācca*) and is the soul of all causes and effects in general and is absolutely pure (*viśuddha*). Its purity is due to its want of limitation and attachment. It is absolutely non-attached and is not limited to anything. One of its designations is '*dūr*' which indicates that it is far removed from the death that is due to attachment. All the other organs—speech, sight, etc., were vanquished by the evil forces, the Asuras, because they had been subject to the sin of attachment and selfishness. The infinity, the want of limitation and attachment, the absolute purity of *mukhya-prāṇa* or the Creative Principle, not only destroyed the Asuras but also recovered the *devatva*, the purity of the other gods, viz. those of speech, sight, etc. Limitation or *pariccheda* is all that is meant by sin and all sins are washed away as soon as the limited is carried to the region of the unlimited. There is and there can be no partiality, no attachment, and no sin in the unlimited (*aparicchinna*) and the only way to wash away the sins of the limited effectively and permanently is to connect it with the unlimited and to acquire the vision of the infinite and to see the infinite in the finite. This is real purification, this going beyond the finitude of the finite and to find the infinite everywhere. The water carried by a *caṇḍāla* (pariah) in a jar is impure and is prohibited; but as soon as it is thrown into the current of the flowing river Gangā, it regains its purity because of having got rid of its limitations and again becomes fit



for drinking. The *mukhya-prāṇa* or the Creative Principle was able to recover their godhood for the various gods by making them realize their inherent freedom from limitation.

This Creative Principle serves the purpose of God of the theists. It is the real object of worship and it secures for its worshipper all the glory that attaches to itself. Brahman or Atman cannot be worshipped, because the duality or difference between the worshipper and the worshipped that is implied in worship is not available here. Brahman or Atman being *ekamevādvitīyam* (absolutely one without a second) leaves no room for worship. The *mukhya-prāṇa*, on the other hand, allowing a difference between the cause and the effects, between the ground and the consequents, between the One and the Many, forms the genuine object of worship. The purpose of all worship is to attain identity with the object of worship, is to bridge the gulf between the worshipper and the worshipped. So long as there is consciousness of difference, worship is necessary in order to bridge over the gulf. Mere knowing is not here sufficient and therefore worship of the Prāṇa or Creative Energy or the God of the theists is here indispensable. As a result of this worship, there is destruction of all sins (*pāpahāni*) and there is also the attainment of godhood (*devabhāva-prāpti*). Knowledge alone is sufficient in the case of Brahman or Atman, because here Knowledge takes the form of realization of the identity between the knower and the known inasmuch as there is no duality in Brahman or Atman. But in the case of *prāṇa-tattva*, there is duality, there is chasm between the knower and the known, and here mere knowledge is not sufficient to overcome the difference but worship has a genuine function to fulfil.

This Creative Principle has been described as Hiranyagarbha, also as *mṛtyu* or death. This is what envelopes all things before their manifestation or creation. All things in this world, all names and forms, may be traced to this Prāṇa as their source and substratum. It is described as *mṛtyu* or death because the gross (*sthūla*) names and forms are covered

by this subtle principle and their non-manifestation is due to this principle. The gross state appears out of this and hence it is its cause; but, again, the gross forms all disappear being merged in the subtle state. Hence the Prāṇa or the Hiranyagarbha is the source as well as the destination or death of the gross state. As it represents the *sūkṣma* or the subtle state, it is to be attained by the combination of both *jñāna* and *karma* (knowledge and action). Mere action is competent to deal with the gross state but not with the subtle. In order to attain the Prāṇa or the Hiranyagarbha, knowledge or *jñāna* has to be brought to the aid of *karma*. The Śruti prescribes *abhyāroha-japa*, the *japa* or recitation that leads upwards in the direction of godhood, for the purpose. It is called *abhyāroha*, because it helps the reciter to ascend upwards in the right direction, that is, face to face with the goal. The famous Mantra, 'Lead me from the evil to the good, lead me from darkness to light, lead me from death to deathlessness', has its application here. The gap between the finite and the infinite, between death and deathlessness, is felt very strongly and perceived clearly at this stage and from the innermost core of the heart comes the prayer so that the seeker may be first placed in the right path, the path of righteousness, may be first carried from the false path, the path of evil, to the path of goodness, and next may be led to the goal, the Light, the Beauty, the Truth along the path of infinitude, the bliss of deathlessness. It is to be remembered, however, that this deathlessness is only relative and is not absolute which is identical with *mokṣa* or liberation. The deathlessness here stated comes as a result of the combination of *jñāna* and *karma*, as a result of *upāsana* or worship and therefore, cannot be supposed to be identical with *mokṣa* which is eternal (*nitya*) and remains always attained from the transcendental point of view.

He who has attained the Self, the Atman or Brahman, need not do anything for the realization of the *prāṇa-tattva*, because the Prāṇa is included in the Atman or Brahman



and is not anything different or separate from it. But he who has not realized the Atman, has to work hard for the realization of the Prāṇa. This *prāṇa-tattva* which is the source and substratum of all created things is not the Atman or Brahman, because its realization does not completely drive away fear and dissatisfaction (*bhaya* and *arati*). It is shown in the Upanishads that the *prajāpati*, the creator, who is identical with *mukhya-prāṇa* could not himself completely get rid of fear and the feeling of something wanting. This Prāṇa is the highest principle from the standpoint of the world and is the highest that can be achieved as the result of *jñāna* and *karma*, of action combined with knowledge. But the Upanishads are not slow to point out that even this highest is not the Absolute. The Atman is perfect freedom, complete fearlessness and is infinite bliss. There is in it not the least touch of any feeling of anything wanting or of any 'other' which can cast a shadow of fear. It is *ānandam*, *amṛtam*, *abhayam*. If there is even the least barrier, the slightest gap, there is room for fear. The Atman which is *cideka-rasa*, which is *cit* or Pure Consciousness through and through, does not admit of any division, difference or gap. The Prāṇa which is the source of everything and is the highest principle in creation is as nothing compared to the transcendental reality of the Atman. The Prāṇa is everything of this world but it is nothing as contrasted with the *ekarasa*, unchanging, detached (*asanga*) Atman. It is not possible to realize the Atman unless there is a prior realization of the Prāṇa. The Upanishads have very carefully shown the distinction between the Prāṇa and the Atman and have also pointed out that the whole of creation must first be realized to have its origin in the Prāṇa and to be nothing other than the Prāṇa. The Prāṇa should next be realized to have its origin in the Atman and to be nothing other than it. Everything including the Prāṇa should be realized to be nothing other than the Atman, so that the thought of anything forming an 'other' to the Atman or Brahman may be annihilated for ever. The

theists who miss the universe in Brahman should remember that the Upanishads have intended the *prāṇa-tattva* to serve as their God responsible for creation, maintenance, and destruction of the universe. The Atman or Brahman of the Upanishads is a unique category and its transcendent character has no parallel in the history of philosophy.

The *Aśvamedha* (horse sacrifice) and the *udgīthā* (the chanting upwards) are the highest means of achieving *prajāpatitva* or the status of the creator. These two represent the combination of knowledge and action and it has been shown that even this highest achievement falls short of the Absolute. This achievement, the status of the *prajāpati* or the creator, signifying all that is attainable in this universe, is the indispensable preparation necessary for the realization of Brahman. When it is seen that even the status of the *virāt* is not free from fear and discontent, there results a spontaneous dispassion (*vairāgya*) for everything worldly. At any stage short of this, there lurks a subconscious feeling that a higher achievement, a greater possession or *aśvarya* might lead to the desired goal. So the seeker must pass through this stage, must be the possessor of the glory of the *virāt* or the *prajāpati*, before he can genuinely hanker after *mokṣa* (liberation); just as the person who has no thirst does not seek drink, so the person who has not realized the worthlessness of worldly possessions cannot seek the unity that is beyond the duality of the world.

In many places in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, it has been shown that *vāk* (speech), *cakṣu* (sight), *śrotra* (hearing), *manas* (mind), *prāṇa* (breath)—all these have their ground in the *hṛdaya* which is identical with *Buddhi* or *mukhya-prāṇa* or Creative Energy. This *Buddhi* or *Prāṇa* is all-pervading and is nearest to the Atman. It is the unifying principle that is at the root of all differentiation and expansion, and unless there is the passing from the Many to this One,—the *Buddhi* or the *Prāṇa* which is the real One-in-Many and Many-in-One,—there is no way to the Absolute. This may therefore be regarded as standing at the



very gate of the Brahmapura or the residence or abode of Brahman. First, the various manifestations of the Creative Energy or Prāṇa have got to be understood in their different characteristics; next, the integral character of the Prāṇa has to be realized; then, the all-pervading nature of the Prāṇa has got to be understood, and it is to be seen in everything. It is only at this stage that the Prāṇa is merged in the Atman and there is the realization of the divisionless One without a second—the *ekamevādvitīyam*.

It is to be remembered that the Prāṇa or Creative Energy occupies a very important position in the Upanishads. It is the source of all differences, the root of all expansion and the substratum of all elaborations. The differ-

ences have got to be traced to the One, the Prāṇa, in order that these may find their true explanation. The Prāṇa is the first manifestation from the Absolute and is the last step in the return journey from the world. It is all darkness and death judged from the standpoint of the world where all names and forms either become extinct or have not yet become manifest. From another standpoint it is the *prajāpati*, the creator, the source and support of all names and forms. The theistic schools do not go beyond this Principle and are satisfied with it. It is the Vedānta alone which speaks of the Atman beyond the Prāṇa, of the Brahman beyond the *prajāpati* or God, the creator. This fact should not be lost sight of in evaluating the Vedantic system of thought.

(To be continued)

## NOTES AND COMMENTS

### TO OUR READERS

Among some scholars, generally of the West, it has been an accepted opinion to regard the ethico-philosophical system of Buddhism as one of despair, inaction, and life-negation. Nothing can be farther from truth. Buddha set in motion a gigantic social movement and the highest moral ideas any nation cannot but be proud of. His teaching was as clear and objective as his feeling was warm and tender. Dr. N. V. Banerji, M.A., Ph.D., of the Delhi University, in his thought-provoking study of *The Ethical and Social Background of Buddhism*, shows how Buddha combined in himself the most practical realism with the boldest and most profound idealism in his endeavours to build up a stable social order on the foundation of the truths discovered by him. The learned writer makes a balanced appraisal of Buddha's true attitude towards the ancient Vedic religion and the caste system, regarding which there is seen to

exist some amount of misunderstanding among Buddhists as well as non-Buddhists. The article, which will be concluded in our next, will doubtless be read with special interest in view of the anniversary of the 'thrice-blessed day' of the Birth, Enlightenment, and Mahā-parinirvāṇa of Buddha falling this month. . . .

Prayer is as common and spontaneous to the human heart as food and sleep are to the body. But what is the efficacy of prayer? And do we really answer our own prayers? Writing on *The Power of Prayer*, Dr. Mohan Lal Sethi, D.Sc., points out the characteristics of the three forms of prayer—high, middle, and low—one commonly comes across, and emphasizes the progressive synthesis underlying all of them.

### THE TASK OF THE HISTORIAN IN FREE INDIA

The chequered annals of our motherland have been the theme of many a writer



of the East as well as the West. But it is no longer necessary to point out to those who possess a general but accurate knowledge of the history and civilization of India that the time has come when a fresh attempt should be made to write the history of India purely from the historical and national standpoint, untrammelled by any political or otherwise prejudiced points of view. A complete, authentic history of India has yet to be written in living terms for the first time. The history of this ancient land has to be rewritten and reinterpreted in the light of deeper and more recent researches into the country's great past and after a careful verification of much of the material generally contained in many existing works on Indian history by a class of historiographers who could not cast aside their assumptions of racial superiority and imperial preference. Though European scholars have rendered most valuable service by way of collecting materials for research in Indian history, one could hardly expect from them, barring rare exceptions, that amount of sympathy and broad-mindedness in thought and outlook which are necessary for forming a correct perspective of India's ancient history and civilization. Many a foreign scholar of repute who set the norm of modern historical research in India unfortunately allowed his point of view and angle of vision to be coloured by extraneous considerations unhelpful to an impartial and objective presentation of historical data and materials.

It is a happy augury that the desire to do original research in Indian history is widespread today among scholars and students alike. As Dr. Rajendra Prasad observed, in the course of his inaugural address to the last session of the Indian History Congress,

'The urge for presenting to our country not only a connected and correct account of events as they have happened and of the wars and conquests of kings and emperors, their heroic deeds and miserable misrule and political upheavals, but also of how our life has been lived and shaped, how great religious and cultural and literary movements have arisen and influenced not only Indians but hundreds of millions of people outside the natural boundaries of

India, how art and science, industry and commerce have developed and fructified, has been felt not only by historians but also by the laymen.'

This urge to resuscitate and rebuild the history of India's distant and glorious past is not without deep significance in a free and independent India. The rich and vital national heritage of the country provides inexhaustible material of every description. And there can be no doubt that competent and patriotic historians will not be wanting who will utilize the material available, viewing things from a different angle of vision than hitherto.

The need for a new approach to the study of India's history is all the more necessary and urgent at the present day when the world is witnessing the inevitable but unfortunate consequences of what is known as the purely 'materialistic' interpretation of the meaning and purpose of history. Such a hedonistic or totalitarian interpretation of the history of man on earth, stifling the individual's fundamental human rights and potentialities, is entirely foreign to India's spiritual culture. In India, history is viewed as man's spiritual opportunity, as a training-ground for the progressive spiritualization of man's energies, activities, and purposes through a conscious participation in and gradual expansion of the omniscient and omnipotent Spirit in him. In short, it is this distinctly national aspect, the spiritual interpretation of our history and civilization, that has to be emphasized by the historian of free India. With this unique national background, special stress has to be laid on the administrative, social, economic, and cultural aspects of Indian polity which have not so far received the attention that is their due in current works on Indian history.

History no doubt records and recalls actual events or accomplished facts and may not have anything to do with ideals or values as such. But a true historian cannot do justice to his subject of study by confining himself to merely chronicling political and military events in their chronological sequence in relation to personalities only and thereby failing to



present the broad movements in the march of humanity up the spiral of civilization, the evolution of institutions, and the progress achieved through the ages in social organization, economic life, literature, art, and religion. The national consciousness of a people expresses itself through history, even as a man realizes himself by the memories and associations of his life. Nothing could better give actuality to and make more meaningful the great progression of Indian history—sometimes wrongly referred to as the 'dead past'—than the abiding spiritual values that have unfailingly determined and guided the course of historical evolution of India down the ages.

### SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH FOR CONSTRUCTIVE PURPOSES

Man wants to live and be happy. Self-gratification is no less strong an urge in him than self-preservation. Naturally his efforts are directed to constructive as well as destructive purposes for the preservation of what he possesses and the acquisition of what he desires to possess. The gifts of modern science have revolutionized life and reduced man's helplessness in the face of Nature. Alongside of its great and numberless benefits, science has been freely applied to the production of formidable war-weapons which cause extensive devastation and destruction. But the task that lies ahead of modern scientific research is to consider how to make man happier and live a better life and not how to destroy life and civilization. Scientific research, when undertaken solely for the benefit of mankind and employed for constructive purposes, can help us solve many problems—individual, national, and international. Present-day America and Russia are unique examples of what technical advancement and industrial progress on scientific lines can achieve for the amelioration of the common man.

In the course of a thought-provoking address, delivered by him at the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Calcutta, Sir

J. C. Ghosh, an eminent scientist of India, observed:

'It is time our people realized that knowledge is power, that the store-house of scientific knowledge and technical skill in the possession of the nationals of a country is its greatest resource, and that new knowledge in fundamental science is the pace-maker of industrial progress. . . .

'The question is often asked in India, "Does scientific research pay?" The histories of all progressive industries leave no doubt that it does. No modern industry which has been brought into existence by scientific research can survive in this competitive world if continuous improvements are not effected through scientific research. It is often feared that research in applied sciences leads to technological unemployment; on the contrary it is due to lack of research that such situations occur. . . .

'A Chinese scholar once remarked to me, "It is better to go abroad and learn than to stay at home and teach". He pointed out that for a thousand years from the time of Ashoka, Chinese scholars came to India to study in the universities of Nalanda and Taxila, and then he observed that, the wheels of progress having moved round, we, the inhabitants of China and India, must now study how the United States of America has, from a poor beginning, built up her fabulous material prosperity. The transformation in thirty years of a nursery school into Harvard, one of the most famous universities in the world, is symbolic of the transformation that has come over that country which maintains today more than 150 million human beings at a standard of living which is the despair of the rest of the world. The farming community who represent not more than 20 per cent of the population not only feed well their fellow citizens, but have plenty to sell to foreign countries. The sanitary and prophylactic measures are so perfect that the average expectation of life is 63 years as against 26 in India. Ceaseless efforts are being made to gain increased mastery over the forces of Nature. They have proved conclusively that it is possible for a country to enjoy prosperity if two conditions are fulfilled—if the country has sufficient natural resources and if the people have the ability to explore and exploit those resources. . . .

'Here, in India, we are at the dawn of a new era which is full of hope for our millions. This dawn must not fade into darkness. Such a disaster will not happen if we have a clear idea of the content and meaning of science in relation to our national life, if we propagate the spirit of science and utilize the methods of science so that one man in future will be as efficient as a hundred now.'



## REVIEWS AND NOTICES

OUT OF MY LATER YEARS. BY ALBERT EINSTEIN. *Published by Philosophical Library, 15 East 40th Street, New York 16, U.S.A. Pages 282. Price \$ 4.75.*

Professor Albert Einstein is not only a foremost scientist but is also a great thinker and philosopher. This is clearly seen in the collected essays, letters, addresses, and miscellaneous papers written by the Professor, which constitute the book under review. According to Einstein education is the capacity for hard thinking. Having that, one can easily master any subject one likes. These sixty papers, covering a variety of subjects, from world peace to self-portrait and Negro question to the Common Languages of Science, indicate what an amount of hard thinking Prof. Einstein is capable of doing not only in his own subject of science but in many topics of public importance. And how courageous and honest with himself he is! He does not minimize an evil though powerless public opinion may take it as inevitable. He goes straight to the very root of the thing when he discusses any problem. And his deep love for humanity and great anguish for the retrograde steps the ruling nations of the world have now and then taken, imperilling the peace or the very safety of the world, are evident in some of his words. In this respect he reminds us of Poet Tagore who even from almost his last bed warned the power-intoxicated nations against their betrayal of humanity. This is an outstanding book, not only thoughtful and thought-provoking but also serving as a gleam of light amidst the darkening gloom of the present world affairs.

His personal philosophy is expressed in the following lines: 'The bitter and the sweet come from the outside, the hard from within, from one's own efforts. For the most part I do the thing which my own nature drives me to do. It is embarrassing to earn so much respect and love for it. Arrows of hate have been shot at me too; but they never hit me, because somehow they belonged to another world with which I have no connection whatsoever.'

'I live in that solitude which is painful in youth, but delicious in the years of maturity.'

S. P.

FOR PACIFISTS. BY M. K. GANDHI. *Published by Navajivan Publishing House, Kalupur, Ahmedabad. Pages 106. Price Rs. 1-4.*

Mahatma Gandhi's non-violence is quite different from and more potent than mere pacifism. He always thought positively and constructively.

While the pacifists are keen on simple avoidance of war and its corollaries, Gandhiji strove, in and through the life he lived and the valuable writings he has left behind, for the establishment of a new state of society, at once progressive and peaceful. His aim was a lasting, evolutionary revolution. He stood for peace based upon a new culture and discipline of mutual give and take, on equal terms, between nations.

The collection of Gandhiji's writings, presented in this volume, will give the reader a clear idea of the essential principles of Mahatma Gandhi's constructive thoughts on the ways and means of fostering a realistic attitude to the problems of pacifism and peace. The contents of this small volume provide thought-provoking material for pacifists in particular and lovers of world peace in general.

B. S. MATHUR

### BENGALI

CHITRA-CHARITRA. BY PRAMATHANATH BISHI. *Published by Bangabharati Granthalaya, Kulagachhia, P.O. Mahishrekha, Dt. Howrah. Pages 144. Price Rs. 6-8.*

It is a valuable collection of excellent character-studies of thirty-nine important persons of nineteenth-century Bengal, from Rammohan to Rabindranath. Of the characters studied, thirty-five are Bengalis and the remaining four are Westerners, namely Sister Nivedita, David Hare, William Carey and Daerzio. Though the title signifies that the book studies Charitra (character) through Chitra (picture), it is not so throughout. In a long learned preface, the author, who is a litterateur of Bengal, points out that he attempts to give in this book a life-history of Bengal of the nineteenth century. But it is neither a systematic history of the province nor a series of individual lives. It is, in fact, a biography of the age that dawned in Bengal in the last century. In the opinion of the author, every age has a particular leit-motif which manifests through contemporary men and women of light and leading.

Sri Ramakrishna is studied through two pictures—one seated and the other standing, both in Samadhi. The author compares Sri Ramakrishna with the sublime and lofty Himalayas, and his disciples with the rivers that flow from that great cluster of mountains. He concludes saying, 'Sri Ramakrishna's naturally half-closed eyes penetrate through the phenomena and intuit Reality. Most of the



great men are often too very great. But his greatness was beautifully balanced by his close concern for humanity. . . . The spiritual synthesis inaugurated in the nineteenth-century Bengal attained its fulfilment in him. . . . Has not Sri Ramakrishna widened our spiritual horizon? A saint, almost unlettered became the spiritual guide of anglicized Bengal.' While studying Swami Vivekananda, the thoughtful author makes some pregnant observations: 'Nineteenth century has not seen another dynamic and powerful personality like that of Vivekananda. The source of his extraordinary genius was his mighty personality. His creative inspiration found its fulfilment in Gandhiji. He intuitively saw Eternal India through the apparently misleading prostrate condition of Modern India and heralded the glorious future India now in sight.' This dissertation is aptly concluded with the Swami's oft-quoted exhortation to India. In the study of Sister Nivedita, the author rightly points out that she was enabled to love and understand Ideal India through the divine influence of her Guru Vivekananda.

Some of the other character-studies are of Rabindranath, Ramesh Datta, Vijaya Krishna Goswami, Upadhyaya Brahmabandhav, Bankim Chandra, and Michael Madhusudan. The book is characterized by deep thoughtfulness and broad vision, and the pen-pictures clothed in forceful language. The volume is illustrated with a picture of every character studied. These studies originally appeared in the Bengali weekly *Desh*. This nicely got-up volume will prove very useful to Bengali school-children whose young minds need to be enlightened and inspired by the illuminating life of the great men and women of our motherland.

S. J.

#### TAMIL—ENGLISH

KURAL. SELECTIONS, WITH ENGLISH TRANSLATION AND NOTES. BY C. RAJAGOPALACHARI. Published by Rochouse & Sons, Ltd., G. T., Madras. Pages 288. Price Rs. 5.

Sri C. Rajagopalachari needs no introduction to the public. Besides his great services to the people and the country at large, he has taken up the task of publishing simple books on sublime subjects. His books on the *Bhagavad Gita* and the Upanishads are popular among the young and old alike. In the book under review, he has brought, within easy reach of all people, one of the most important classical works in the Tamil language, viz. the *Kural*.

It can as well be said that no book in Tamil literature finds such a high place as the *Kural*. It is considered as good and important as the Vedas, since it deals with all the fundamental problems of human life and gives practical solutions to them. Valluvar, the author of this book, is said to have lived before the second century. He never wanted to call himself a follower of any particular religion or creed. His endeavour was to shape and strengthen the ethical life of the people. With a thorough knowledge of the workings of the human mind, he composed these superb verses in the form of small Sutras. The book deals with Dharma, Artha, and Kāma, the first three of the four Purushārthas. The charm of this famous classic has attracted the attention of people, far and wide, and it has been translated into Latin, French, German, and English.

As the learned translator is interested in giving to non-Tamil readers a comprehensive idea of the lofty ideals contained in the *Kural*, he has taken up for translation into English select verses from Books I and II, mainly dealing with personal ethics and duties in the first book, and principles of political science and state-craft in the second. The verses under the chapters included in the book are selected according to their importance and representative character. The first book, consisting of such subjects as Dharma, the good householder, rectitude, self-control, truthfulness, renunciation, etc. will surely benefit all types of readers. And the second book, consisting of subjects such as the prosperous State, just rule, the moral law, good nation, army, citizenship, etc., gives the readers a knowledge of the ideals of a good State. For each verse, the English translation is given first, and then comes the original text in Tamil, followed by short explanatory notes in English. The running translation of each verse is clothed in simple but attractive language, easily intelligible even to school-going children, to whom much of the contents of the first book will be of immense benefit. 'Keep the mind free from evil thoughts, this is the whole of Dharma. The rest is only of the nature of sound and show.' 'True religious life consists in the avoidance of four things: envy, the craving for pleasure, anger, and harsh speech.' Considering the importance and usefulness of the universal truths and principles contained in the *Kural*, this handy volume of selections from that great work, along with lucid translation and notes in English by one of our most eminent leaders, possessing a unique and popular distinction in the literary world as well, will certainly have a wide and striking appeal among all classes of the English-reading public.



## NEWS AND REPORTS

### VEDANTA CENTRE, ST. LOUIS, U.S.A.

#### REPORT FOR 1949

The following is a short report of the activities of the Vedanta Centre, St. Louis, Missouri, U.S.A., during the year 1949:

*Sunday Services:* Swami Satprakashananda, Head of the Centre, conducted a total number of 41 Sunday services during the year, when he spoke on different religious and philosophical topics.

*Classes and Meditations:* During the year, a total number of 49 weekly classes were held by the Swami. He also gave weekly discourses during summer, and conducted a meditation every week and on all special celebrations.

*Special Celebrations:* Devotional services were held on special occasions such as religious festivals and birthday anniversaries of world prophets and seers.

*Lectures Outside:* The Swami delivered lectures and gave talks at Alton and Columbia, both of which places he visited on special invitation. He also gave a radio talk while at the former place.

*Library:* The lending library of the Centre was well utilized by the members and the students.

*Interviews and Guests:* About 100 persons had special interviews with the Swami for the discussion of their spiritual problems. During the year under report, 25 guests visited the Centre, many of whom came especially to meet the Swami.

### RAMAKRISHNA MISSION ASHRAMA, VISAKHAPATNAM

#### REPORT FOR 1950

The Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Maharani-peta, Visakhapatnam, was started in 1938, and at present, besides its religious activities, it conducts a Students' Home and a Library and Reading Room open to the public. Given below is a short report of its work during the year 1950:

*Students' Home:* Visakhapatnam, being an important educational centre of Andhra Desha, the Ashrama organized, in 1940, a Students' Home with a view to giving ample opportunities for students to develop a healthy spiritual and cultural outlook and imbibe a spirit of sacrifice and service. Till 1948 the Home was a part of the Ashrama. A separate building to accommodate 16 students has been built since then at a cost of Rs. 34,000. The Home was declared open on the 4th February 1951 by Swami Madhavananda in the presence of a large and distinguished gathering.

*Library and Reading Room:* There were 850 volumes in the Library, and the Reading Room received 16 periodicals. 714 books were issued to readers during the year.

*Scriptural Classes:* Every Sunday the Swami in-charge conducts scriptural classes that are open to all. Occasional discourses on various subjects are also held in the town as well as in different mofussil places.

*Andhra Cyclone Relief:* To help the victims of the cyclone and flood which wrought severe havoc in several Andhra districts, in October 1949, the Ashrama started six relief centres at Anakapalle, Tuni, Amalapuram, Narasapur, Bhimavaram, and Kaikalur for providing clothes to the poor and educational requirements to schools and students. Altogether 6,300 students were supplied with books, clothes, fees, etc. in 153 schools, and clothes were distributed among 3,174 poor people who suffered in cyclone, floods, and tidal wave.

*Finances:* The total receipts during the year were Rs. 23,335-7-0 and expenses Rs. 25,257-7-6 thus causing a deficit of Rs. 1,922-0-6. The Ashrama needs funds for its general maintenance and also for completing its scheme of expanding the Students' Home to accommodate at least 30 students and also of improving and enlarging the Library and Reading Room.