

# PRABUDDHA BHARATA

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“उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत ।”

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

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## THE DIVINE MASTER

BY STARSON GOSSE

I searched my heart and at times see  
There is nothing but thy grace and thee;  
The outer greenness and radiant glow  
Get higher significance from thy musical flow.

Peace, Joy, Bliss, and effulgence of light  
Cover the earth, and in thy pure delight,  
I roam, swim, play, and sing;  
Thy smile on me new tidings bring.

The whole life becomes a music of glow,  
A deep meaning each particle doth know;  
Each moment takes its golden hue;  
O my Master! Before I never knew.

That I am so great, so deep, so noble,  
Deathless and formless, pass through double  
Existence, into that Reality, which is One;  
Allow me to love thee, till my music is done.

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## THREE OBEDIENT DISCIPLES

There was in ancient days a sage named Ayuda Dhaumya, who had three disciples: Veda, Aruni, and Upamanyu. Because he favoured the practice of obedience as the chief means of attaining spiritual knowledge, he took great care to perfect the disciples in this practice. Thus the discipline all three received was of the same order, though the preceptor varied it somewhat in each case, according to the individual temperament and needs.

To Veda, when this disciple first came to him, he said simply, 'My child, remain in my house and serve me. It will be to your profit'. Veda accordingly took his place with Ayuda Dhaumya's family, and life became for him a steady, never-varying round of service.

Like an ox under the burden of its owner, he bore endless inconveniences and privations, doing always the will of his preceptor. He suffered much, enduring heat and cold, hunger and thirst, ever without complaint.

Many years went by before Ayuda Dhaumya was entirely pleased with him, but eventually he blessed Veda with the highest knowledge, and the disciple departed in great joy and peace.

In the case of his disciple Aruni, Ayuda Dhaumya, after disciplining him in various ways, tested and tried him in one single experience.

On a certain day Ayuda Dhaumya said to Aruni, 'Go and stop the breach in the ridge bounding my field yonder, so that the water will not run out'. The disciple at once went where he was directed, but try as he would, he could not mend the breach through which the precious water was escaping. He knew that the disciple is never excused from carrying out the preceptor's wishes, however impossible to fulfil they may seem, and thus he realized that he must somehow manage to do Ayuda Dhaumya's bidding, that no other way was open to him. So he continued to work strenuously at the broken ridge, and at the same

time he tried very hard to think of some new means by which it could really be made secure again.

But all his thought and effort were fruitless, and so at last, as the only possible means of making good what was expected of him, he laid himself down at full length in the breach, and thus by his own body the water was retained in the field and no longer went to waste.

After many hours had passed, Ayuda Dhaumya noticed Aruni's absence and inquired of his other disciples concerning his whereabouts. They replied, 'You sent him, sir, to repair the breach in the field, and he has not yet returned'. The preceptor said, 'Let us go there and find out what has happened to him', and immediately he set out with his disciples.

Arriving at the field and seeing no sign of Aruni, he cried, 'O Aruni, where are you? Come here, my child!'

At the sound of his preceptor's voice, the disciple quickly arose from the breach in the ridge and stood before him.

When he had made his respectful salutations, he said, 'Sir, since it was impossible to prevent the escape of the water in any other way, I laid myself down in the breach and there I remained until I heard you calling me to come to you. I knew that by getting up I would cause the water to escape once more, but, O revered teacher, here I am in answer to your command. Kindly instruct me what to do now'.

Ayuda Dhaumya commended Aruni highly for his obedience. 'My child', he said, 'you have won my favour'.

From that moment Aruni's spiritual progress was very rapid, and in a comparatively short time he attained to illumination.

To his disciple Upamanyu, Ayuda Dhaumya said simply, 'Go, my child, and look after my cows'. The disciple did as he was told,

but every day, according to custom, he visited his preceptor to offer him his salutations.

After a few days had passed, Ayuda Dhaumya said, 'Upamanyu, how well you are looking! Tell me, by what means do you now obtain your food?'

Upamanyu answered, 'I support myself by begging'.

'But', objected the preceptor, 'that is not right, my child. How can you appropriate the results of your begging to yourself? You should offer everything you get to me'.

The disciple carried out this instruction. Whatever he obtained by begging he brought to Ayuda Dhaumya and offered to him. And every day he went on caring for the cows.

Soon again, however, when he was standing one day before Ayuda Dhaumya, the sage scrutinized him and said, 'My child, I take from you all that you get by begging, yet it seems you are still exceedingly plump! Tell me, then, how you are at present supporting yourself'.

Upamanyu answered, 'Sir, after relinquishing to you all that I acquire by begging, I go again to beg for myself'.

'This should not be!' declared Ayuda Dhaumya. 'By so doing you are not only disobedient to me, your preceptor, but you take for yourself what would otherwise be given to other and perhaps more worthy people who live by begging'.

Upamanyu promised not to repeat his mistake, and he went back to tend the cows. True to his word, he never again begged for the second time.

A number of days passed and Ayuda Dhaumya said, 'My child, I take from you all that you get by begging, and you have ceased to go out a second time to beg for yourself. How then do you manage to live?'

'Sir', replied the disciple, 'I drink some of the milk of your cows'.

Ayuda Dhaumya now prohibited Upamanyu from subsisting in this way, and the disciple obeyed; he took no more of the cows' milk.

Before long he was again questioned by his preceptor, who said, 'Strangely enough, you

are still looking well-fed. You do not support yourself by alms, you do not go begging a second time, you do not take milk from the cows. But it is evident that you still obtain food; please tell me how you do it'.

Upamanyu said, 'I am now living on the froth that falls from the lips of the calves as they drink their mothers' milk'.

The preceptor shook his head. 'You must discontinue this practice', he said. 'Out of kindness to you the calves let too much froth fall. You are depriving them of a full meal'.

Upamanyu thereafter made his meals on various kinds of foliage. One day, feeling the pangs of hunger more intensely than ever before, he failed to exercise sufficient caution and ate the leaves of a certain tree, the noxious properties of which affected his eyes, and became blind. Unable to see his way, he stumbled and fell into a deep well.

When Upamanyu did not come to pay his respects to Ayuda Dhaumya at the close of the day, the preceptor asked his other disciples if they knew the reason for his absence.

They replied, 'He was tending the cattle. That is all we know'.

The preceptor said, 'Perhaps Upamanyu is displeased because I have forbidden his obtaining food in practically every way. He may, therefore, be purposely staying away from me. Let us go and try to find him'.

When Ayuda Dhaumya came to the place where his missing disciple customarily watched over the cows, he called out, 'Upamanyu, where are you? Come here, my child!'

Then he heard a faint voice in the distance, crying, 'Sir, I am in this well'.

Ayuda Dhaumya went quickly in the direction of the voice. Soon he discovered the spot where his disciple had fallen into the well, and he told him to come out of it.

'I cannot, sir', came the reply. 'I ate the leaves of the *arka* tree, and so have become blind'.

The preceptor now instructed the disciple to pray to the gods for help, and Upamanyu, with all faith, began chanting Vedic hymns that celebrated the splendour of the gods.

This was pleasing to all the shining beings of the celestial realms, and soon one of them revealed himself to Upamanyu. It is related that the god even asked him, as a sign of his favour, to accept a cake from him.

But Upamanyu replied, 'I beg your pardon a thousand times, but I cannot take a cake even from you, without first asking my preceptor'.

The celestial visitor said, 'Upamanyu, I bless you for your devotion to your teacher. Your sight will be restored, and you will attain to the highest goal'.

Accordingly Upamanyu was again able to

see. When he had climbed out of the well, Ayuda Dhaumya embraced him, saying that the light of all sacred knowledge would shine in him. And even as the preceptor declared, so indeed it came about. Upamanyu very soon became an illumined sage.

Thus, by various practices of obedience, the three disciples of the great sage Ayuda Dhaumya, who were by name Veda, Aruni, and Upamanyu, became, each in his own way, masters of the body and the mind and completely obliterated their ego, so that, being free of every obstruction, all attained to the resplendent knowledge of the Self, to divine fulfilment.

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## THE PRACTICE OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD

BY THE EDITOR

'Many are the names of God, and infinite the forms through which He may be approached. In whatever name and form you worship Him, through that He will be realized by you'.

—*Sri Ramakrishna*

For many men and women today the importance of the values of life lies in the passing secular and material benefits they confer rather than in the lasting moral and spiritual progress they assuredly seek to promote. Such of them who take to life's adventure, seriously, while still feeling not a little sceptical about God, soul, and the unseen world, find it difficult, if not impossible, to view man and the universe as purely mechanical processes where natural forces automatically bring about changes. Life cannot be lived divested of its vital force and purpose, as a mere matter of the moment. Hence arose the humanistic philosophy which sought to conserve ethical and idealistic values without any belief in God. The existence of God as a valid objective reality is not vouched for by the application of the methods of science to the facts of religion and this has led many an

educated moderner to the realm of dogmatic atheism and godless secularism. The sensate and materialistic view of life, which is steadily breaking down the inherited spiritual traditions of man, is doubtless contributing to the growing tendency to disbelief in everything that concerns the idea of God and the truths of religion.

It has become the fashion to exaggerate the evils of irreligious acts perpetrated by fanatics under the guise of deep religious fervour and to decry faith in and love for God as the fond imaginings of weak and gullible minds. Under the sledge-hammer blows of scientific inventions and discoveries people are growing indifferent to religion and the higher interests of life. The cold logic of rationalism and intellectualism has not only strengthened the accumulating dissatisfaction with the dogmatism of established religion but also infected men's minds in such

a manner that they summarily dismiss God as a myth or the projection of a fear complex. In an age when religion is ridiculed as an 'opiate', or at best recognized as a merely social phenomenon, and when God is given the benefit of the doubt, it is no wonder that the well-founded truths of the domain of Spirit, revealed to and realized by countless seers, prophets, and mystics, are seen to be openly repudiated.

No demand of the human soul is more deep, earnest, and irrepressible than its cry for God. Man is so constituted that he cannot rest in a state of eternal disorder and disunity. He cannot rest satisfied with things ephemeral and finite. A make-believe of falsehood and illusion is discovered sooner or later and the soul seeks to express its passionate longing for the realization of That which is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent. Every religion has declared in more or less varying language that man's real nature is divine and man is in essence the imperishable *ātman* of undiminishing glory. God alone is real and man must live with the one end in view, viz. realization of God, which is the goal of life. From its earliest moment of conscious rational existence and all through life the soul hungers for union with and shelter under an extra-cosmic Being or Power that is in every respect stronger and more perfect than itself. As Swami Vivekananda proclaimed at the Chicago Parliament of Religions, 'Whatever may be the position of philosophy, whatever may be the position of metaphysics, so long as there is such a thing as death in the world, so long as there is such a thing as weakness in the human heart, so long as there is a cry going out of the heart of man in his very weakness, there shall be a faith in God'.

If we closely look at the world we cannot fail to realize that the Creator is ever present therein. This vast household of the created universe around us, which presents law, regularity, harmony, and unerring precision, itself stands as a telling proof against the argument that there is no intelligent Person or Power behind this cosmos to look after, regulate, and guide the facts and forces that

constitute it. 'What I cannot understand', writes Sir Francis Younghusband, 'is how any one who looks out on the world as a whole and sees all the beauty of Nature about him, and the marvels of goodness and beauty men have achieved, can doubt for an instant that a power of incalculable goodness must be at work in the heart of the universe to have produced such results'. It is common experience that the individual cares not for God's existence in the days of his prosperity and proud success, but seeks to find and earnestly pray to Him as soon as adversity and failure stare him in the face. When his actions bring him pleasure he feels elated and considers himself 'all-powerful'. Shortly after, when he receives hard knocks and feels miserable, out of his heart wells forth, in sheer despair and fear of the indefinite future, an ardent supplication to the Almighty for succour. Lack of spiritual awareness of the Supreme Self undermines confidence in oneself and man falls an easy prey to utter cynicism or godless hedonism. If the elevating experience of the all-pervading presence of God does not illumine the heart, there could possibly be no other effective means of dispelling the gloom of hate and jealousy, of violence and fraud, which repeatedly seek to envelop it.

Saints and prophets are the most direct witnesses of the nature and existence of God. The inscrutable ways in which and means through which God works can hardly be understood by the majority of men and women. Though God, like a magnet, attracts all unto Him and does not exhibit any partiality in favour of one as against another, man's vision of the inner Spirit is obscured by the veil of ignorance, impurity, and iniquity. When this impurity of heart is completely removed by earnest spiritual practice and unselfish good actions, the contemplation of God becomes easy and natural. 'Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God'. Purity of mind is indispensable to the realization of God. Swami Brahmananda used to say: 'The mind is just like a milch cow which gives a larger supply when fed well. Give the mind more food and you will find it giving you better

service in return. And what constitutes the food of the mind? Meditation and concentration, prayer and worship, and all such practices'. To work for the Lord, to know Him as the one object of love, to love Him and give up all other attachments, and have no ill feeling towards any one—this is the best method to attain Him. By love, sincerity, and ceaseless practice one gradually becomes established in the state of constant spiritual communion with God. This is what the Hindu seers and sages mean when they emphasize that real religion is 'realization', 'being and becoming'.

'Give up, renounce, the desires of the world if you wish to realize God and become one with Him' says the world teacher in every land. But the man of the world clings to sense-pleasures and wants to worship a God who will freely grant him every form of desire and comfort. The worldly-minded prefer the pleasures of the senses to the bliss of divine communion. Instead of entering the world after realizing God and steadying and purifying the mind, they begin to seek God when it is too late, after spending the greater part of life in the midst of lust and greed. Blinded by passions and prejudices and ignoring the unmistakable and timely warnings uttered by the eminent altruists and moral educators of the world, the pseudo-reformers of a secular civilization are never tired of proclaiming from the house-tops their fatuous theories and quack norms in support of a soulless materialistic philosophy of life. A few make no secret of their contemptuous disregard for anything superconscious or spiritual. Yet they are far from being free and independent agents. Thinking and acting mostly under the duress of dogmatic and compulsive fiats, they drift aimlessly down the current of pleasure and pain in a humdrum manner.

Man's quest for God is as old as the origin of man himself. But does man really need God? Cannot the world go on without God? And even if He were actually present, can and does man feel the presence and understand the nature of God? A study of the evolution of the conception of the Divinity

reveals that ideas of religion, God, and the soul of man, though not without an underlying thread of unity, have been different at different periods of time. Even as God is One and unchangeable, man, too, in essence is a changeless entity. But man's ideas of God are constantly changing and expanding. Vedanta, which is never dogmatic, accepts all forms of worship, embracing every type of temperament and every facet of divine manifestation. Out of His infinite mercy God reveals Himself to the earnest devotee according to the devotee's capacity for comprehension and realization of the Higher Reality. The Lord alone bestows the fruit of worship in the form of compassionate blessing, deepening the devotee's faith and granting him the realization of the divinity already in him. Sri Krishna says in the *Gita*, 'Whatever may be the form a devotee seeks to worship with faith,—in that form alone I make his faith unwavering'. We have it on the authority of Sri Ramakrishna that as a devotee cannot live without God, so also God cannot live without His devotee. The Lord and the devotee seek each other and find supreme joy in mutual union as a lover and his beloved.

Many people appear to be sure of what God is not rather than what He is. Infinite and incomprehensible are the aspects of God and innumerable are the ways in which He sports. Yet there has always cropped up the difficult enigma why under the reign of a just and compassionate God acts of cruelty, injustice, and war are seen to have been permitted. If God is all-loving and impartial, why so much more misery than happiness and so much more wickedness than good? In trying to find an adequate answer to this apparently mysterious and unsatisfactory state of affairs, naturalists and humanists are led into depths that are more mysterious and unsatisfactory. Even those who do not believe in God are exercised by the contradictory nature of the problem of evil and imperfection in a universe created, preserved, and regulated by the almighty but all-merciful Lord whom scriptures and saints alike praise. He is

Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute (*sac-cid-ānanda*); He is the repository of countless good and auspicious attributes, the veritable manifestation of the most intense form of Love, Truth, Beauty, and Goodness. A true lover of God is not unnerved by physical suffering or any other form of evil or injustice in the world, for he knows full well that this world is a Tantalus's hell where there is much to be endured and little to be enjoyed. God is above and beyond the petty joys and sorrows that the flesh is heir to.

The cry of anguish and protest at the understandable and seemingly inconsistent ways of Providence has found eloquent expression in the lives of some of the greatest devotees of the Lord. Suffering men, whose faith in a just God has somewhat been shaken, have, in spite of themselves, turned atheistic in utter desperation. This is more true of those who call upon God for obtaining worldly riches and benefits. To recall an interesting story in this connection:

There was a beggar who had travelled far and felt so tired that he could not walk any further. So he prayed, 'O Rama, give me a horse'. While he was thus praying for a horse whole-heartedly, a rich traveller happened to come along the road, on horseback, at the time leading several other horses including a young colt. As the traveller was on the look out for somebody to lift and carry the little colt which was finding it difficult to walk, he caught hold of the beggar and made him carry the colt. The beggar, once again calling upon the Lord, cried out, 'O Rama, you have misunderstood my prayer! Instead of a horse for carrying me I have been given a horse to carry'.

Similarly, people worship God with the object of securing such worldly things as power and position which in the end prove disastrous and lead them away from the path of God. He who prays to God for strength and devotion in order to pursue the practice of concentration and meditation on Him is the wisest of men.

Four types of virtuous men worship God as a rule, though in different ways: the man in distress (*ārta*), the man seeking knowledge (*jijñāsu*), the man seeking enjoyment (*arthārthi*), and the man endowed with wisdom

(*jñāni*). To the first type belong the vast majority of people who pray to God desiring to be saved from a hundred kinds of sorrow and suffering inevitable in life. But soon they forget God when their period of suffering ends, and remain deluded by the trumpery pleasures of the senses. When, once again, they are overwhelmed by sorrow and suffering they turn to God. This is regarded as the lowest form of prayer. The second type of persons, wishing to learn Self-knowledge or the Knowledge of God, pray to and worship God for the attainment of purity, truthfulness, and love. They do not feel worried over any sorrow or suffering they may be afflicted with. Sri Ramakrishna would often say, 'Let the body be bothered by the agony of illness, but may the mind ever remain filled with divine bliss!' The inquirer after knowledge strives to seek communion with the Lord through integration of personality and manifestation of the glorious higher qualities that so remarkably characterize the life of the Spirit. Prayer in this form becomes effective and brings peace of mind as well as the fruition of one's spiritual exercises.

Men who seek wealth, fame, and enjoyment—both here and hereafter—also pray to God with yearning for the fulfilment of their desires. There are cases where sincere devotees have had their prayers for worldly riches and enjoyments partly or wholly answered. The Lord, who is *kalpataru* (wish-fulfilling tree), bestows on man whatever he earnestly prays for, irrespective of its intrinsic value for his progress. Needless to say that this kind of approach to God is by no means commendable or spiritually beneficial.

It is said that once a fakir went to Emperor Akbar to ask for money. The Emperor was saying his prayers. He prayed, 'O Lord, give me money, give me wealth'. The fakir started to leave the place. But the Emperor motioned to him to wait. After finishing his prayers, Akbar came to the holy man and said, 'Why were you going away?' The fakir replied, 'You yourself were begging for money and wealth; so I thought that if I must beg I would beg of God and not of a beggar'.

He who renounces the desire for material

advantages and communes with God with single-minded devotion gets everything even without seeking for it. In the words of Sri Ramakrishna, 'Give up everything to Him, resign yourself to Him, and there will be no more trouble for you'. Jesus says: 'But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you'. One has to believe that the Lord is always with him and keep the mind ever fixed on Him ; He will do all that is needful.

Of the four types mentioned above, the fourth type, viz. the man endowed with wisdom, is the best among the worshippers of the Lord. The *Gita* says,

'Of these the wise man, ever steadfast and devoted to the One alone, is the best. For supremely dear am I to the man of wisdom, and he is dear to Me. Noble indeed are they all. But the man endowed with wisdom I deem to be My very Self. For, steadfast in mind, he remains fixed in Me alone as the Supreme Goal. At the end of many births the man of wisdom seeks refuge in Me, realizing that Vāsudeva is all. Rare indeed is such a high-souled person'.

The Jnani's practice of the presence of God is through the method of deep concentration and meditation. He does not pray for this thing or that but merely for the pure love of God, out of the joy of communion with God. By not seeking the transitory values of life he gains ultimately everything that is worth possessing. His prayer is not motivated by any selfish desire and he does not seek anything from God. He prays for unalloyed love and pure devotion and does not care for any occult powers or miracles. Occult powers, though acquired after much practice, beget pride and drag a person into temptations, making him forget God. A man is less God-centred to the extent he is subject to the lure of miracles and mysteries. One cannot realize the goal if one has even the least trace of desire. God is not only the *ultimate* but also the most *intimate* essence of man's being.

A good, holy, and complete life without God is as chimerical as a full-size statue without the head. If the kingdom of God on

earth is the ideal destiny of mankind, the urge for the quest of that kingdom cannot but form the dominant note of any serious and successful philosophy of life. One could as well ask: Why should one at all endeavour to improve oneself and better one's conduct? What if man follows the dictates of his selfish instincts and ignores ethical norms so long as his own welfare and profits are assured? We could no more expect to live without breathing than we could expect to become perfect ethically and spiritually without cherishing an abiding faith in God. Call by whatever name one may, without the constant practice of the all-pervading presence of the Lord,—in whom man lives, moves, and has his being,—a good and pure life of disciplined thought and action is well-nigh impossible, perhaps beyond a certain limit or except under certain circumstances. Every virtue that is admired and appreciated by society is indissolubly linked with the inner Self of man which is non-different from the Supreme Reality. Without the basis of godliness such values as self-surrender, charity, and service lose much of their enduring significance. By disowning God and the spiritual legacy of man none can make an iota of effort in promoting peace, love, and brotherhood. Religious life is a perilous adventure and God forms the apex of the triangle—God-Man- Universe.

The presence of God is more tangible than one's own body and mind if only one can realize it. Each soul is potentially divine and the goal is to manifest the divinity through conquest of Nature, through communion with the Godhead. The ultimate goal is reached through four broadly divided courses of spiritual disciplines, viz. philosophical discrimination through the Knowledge of the Self (Jñāna Yoga); concrete rituals and ceremonies through devotion and self-surrender (Bhakti-Yoga); psychic control and concentration (Rāja Yoga); selfless action through service of man equivalent to worship of God (Karma Yoga). When the mind becomes one-pointed and rests in a receptive mood, the aspirant feels the grace of God and His presence.



The active and the persevering alone inherit the kingdom of God even on this earth and in this very life. He who sees in this world of manifoldness that One running through all, he who finds in this world of death that One Infinite Life, and he who finds in this world of insentience and ignorance that One Light and Knowledge—unto him belongs

eternal peace and happiness,—unto none else. For those who believe in God no explanation is necessary. For those who do not believe in God no explanation is possible. It is not the fault of the pillar that the blind cannot see it. The aim of religion is self-perfection and in achieving this the practice of the presence of God is indispensable and vitally important.

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## THE SECRET STAIRS TO SUPERCONSCIOUSNESS

BY SWAMI YATISWARANANDA

What do we mean by superconsciousness? It is a mystifying subject, but we shall become clearer in our conception as we proceed. By superconsciousness we mean a consciousness quite different from that of our waking state, dream state, or the state of deep sleep.

The experience of Sri Ramakrishna aptly demonstrates this. In later years he narrated this incident of his boyhood: 'One day in June or July, when I was six or seven years old, I was walking along a narrow path separating the paddy-fields, eating some of the puffed rice which I was carrying in a basket. Looking up at the sky I saw a beautiful sombre thunder-cloud. As it spread rapidly, enveloping the whole sky, a flight of snow-white cranes flew overhead in front of it. It presented such a beautiful contrast that my mind wandered to far off regions. Lost to outward sense, I fell down. Some people found me in that plight and carried me home in their arms'. This was the first time that the Master had lost consciousness in ecstasy, overpowered by an inexpressible emotion and unspeakable joy.

Later he realized the Divine Mother of the universe as a limitless, effulgent ocean of consciousness and in the depths of his being he was conscious of the presence of the Divine Mother and also saw Her manifest everywhere

—in all beings, in all things. This experience is the very summit of superconsciousness. All mystics—Hindu, Christian, Sufi, and others—speak of it. 'Sometimes', the Master used to say, 'I find that the universe is saturated with the consciousness of God, as the earth is soaked with water in the rainy season'.

The teachers of Vedanta recognize different stages of superconscious experience: 'When I identify myself with the body, I look upon Thee, O Lord, as my Master and myself as Thy servant. When I think of myself as the individualized soul, I regard Thee as the Infinite Whole and myself as a part. When I look upon myself as the Spirit transcending all my limitations, my individuality is lost in Thee, and I realize that I am merely Thyself'. These are the three storeys, as it were, of superconsciousness. St. John of the Cross, one of the greatest of the Christian mystics, declared that on the last rung of the mystical ladder, divine love enables the soul to be entirely assimilated in God. 'This is an experience which only a few exceptional souls can gain, but even those who have realized it cannot describe the state of absolute assimilation with the Divine Essence'.

Hindu sages have likened it to the experience of a dumb man, who can savour a sweet taste but is powerless to describe it.

To illustrate this highest state, which is beyond all thought and speech, Sri Ramakrishna speaks of a doll of salt. It moves towards the ocean in its desire to measure the ocean's depth, but the moment it touches the water, it loses all shape and form and becomes lost in it.

There are spiritual seekers, who, tired of their individuality, their separate personality, long to become lost in superconsciousness. But most of us want 'not to become sugar, but to *taste* sugar'. We want to taste the bliss of Divine Consciousness. We (spiritual aspirants), who are identified with our own ego, mind, senses, and body, wish to free ourselves from their bondage, to feel ourselves as parts or modes of the Oversoul, the Supreme Spirit, the Soul of our souls. How can we attain this union?

In a wonderful poem, St. John of the Cross gives some clues to the spiritual seeker, as to how this union is brought about. He describes in mystical language the soul's journey to God the Beloved:

'By night, secure from sight,  
And by a secret stair, disguisedly,  
By night and privily,  
Forth from my house where all things  
quiet be,  
Blest night of wandering in secret,  
When by none might I be spied,  
Nor see I anything,  
Without a light to guide  
Save that which in my heart burnt in  
my side . . .  
That light did lead me on,  
More surely than the shining of noontide,  
Where well I knew that One did for my  
coming bide;  
Where He abode might none but He  
abide'.

Plotinus, who is called the father of Christian mysticism, speaks of the soul's movement towards the Godhead as 'the flight of the alone to the alone'. The soul leaves its home, body, all alone, by a secret stair to the abode of the Beloved ever waiting to be in union with 'an eternal portion of Himself'. This, clearly, is a plane of existence beyond all ordinary human consciousness.

The goal of all spiritual striving is the attainment of the superconscious experience or Samādhi as the Hindus call it. The *Secret Stairs* are called the Chakras in Sushumnā. In the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* we find the master mystic of our age giving us a picturesque description of what happened within himself. The Master describes the movement of the spiritual current or Kundalini along the Chakras or centres of consciousness. Speaking to his disciples he said: 'Some say that when I go into the superconscious state, my soul flies about like a bird in the Infinite Space. Once a Sādhu came here (Dakshineswar) and said to me, "In these Samadhis one feels the sensation of the spiritual current to be like the movement of an ant, a fish, a monkey, a bird, or a serpent". (Mystics use strange language). Sometimes the spiritual current rises through the spine, crawling like an ant. Sometimes, in Samadhi, the soul swims joyfully in the ocean of ecstasy, like a fish. Sometimes, when I lie down on my side, I feel the spiritual current pushing me like a monkey and playing with me joyfully. That current, like a monkey, suddenly with one jump reaches the Sahasrāra (the highest centre of consciousness). Sometimes, again, the spiritual current rises like a bird hopping from one branch to another (until the final flight). Sometimes the spiritual current moves up like a snake. Going in a zigzag way, at last it reaches the head and I go into Samadhi. A man's spiritual consciousness is not awakened unless his Kundalini is aroused'.

The Kundalini dwells in the Mulādhāra at the base of the spine. It passes along the Sushumna, the spiritual channel, until it finally induces Samadhi, the superconscious state. This state is never reached by merely reading books. One must pray to God, out of great restlessness and longing for liberation, for it is out of this restlessness for God that the Kundalini is first aroused. This restlessness, the real soul-hunger, this yearning—not artificially stimulated emotional outbursts—is to be intensified through systematic moral

purification, prayer, meditation and other spiritual exercises.

Describing his experience, Sri Ramakrishna says: 'Just before my attaining this state of mind (Samadhi), it had been revealed to me how the Kundalini is aroused, how the lotuses of the different centres blossom forth, and how all this culminates in Samadhi'.

These centres are like lotus flowers hanging downwards. As the spiritual current moves upward, each lotus stands erect and opens its petals. When the thousand-petalled lotus opens in the head, the goal is reached. 'Since then (after the blossoming of the thousand-petalled lotus)', said Sri Ramakrishna, 'I have been in this state'.

Meditation, without proper guidance, on the Muladhara, the basic centre where dwells the Kundalini, may stimulate animal desires and passions leading to disaster. For most of the people the safest course is to open up the higher centres by moving first along the side channels, called in Sanskrit 'Idā' and 'Pingalā'. These are connected with man's physical and psychic life, and, when the obstruction in the higher channel is partly removed, it is easier for the Kundalini to rise higher and higher.

The Yogis tell us that the bondage of the soul is due to its being controlled by the lower centres. Spiritual freedom is attained by making the higher centres active and enabling them to control the lower ones.

After the attainment of the highest state of superconsciousness, ordinary souls can no longer retain their physical body. But the greatest illumined souls, like the Divine Incarnations and their companions, can come down from their superconscious state, because they like to live in the company of devotees and enjoy the love of God. God retains in them the ego of knowledge and the ego of devotion, so that they may teach the world.

In their teachings one finds the description of the secret stairs to superconsciousness which is lying hidden in everyone. The power of introspection revealed to the sages

not only the microcosm but also the macrocosm. 'That which is not in the microcosm does not exist in the macrocosm'. During the days of his wanderings, after the passing away of the Master (Sri Ramakrishna), Swami Vivekananda had a remarkable experience which he wrote down in the note-book he always carried. 'The microcosm and the macrocosm are built on the same plan. Just as the individual soul is encased in the living body, so is the Universal Soul in the Living Prakriti (Nature)—the objective universe'. This is an ancient truth and it is well to keep it in mind while studying the teachings of the great ones.

The microcosm, the human personality, consists of three bodies: (1) the causal body, which, during the period of ignorance, limits consciousness and gives it the covering of the ego; (2) the mental or the emotion body; and (3) the gross body. Those who possess a subtle sense discover that our physical body is placed in a subtle body and that in turn is encased in the causal body. This is one complete microcosm which is a part of macrocosm.

The emotions play a tremendous part in physical life. The body can never be sufficiently healthy for spiritual practices unless the emotions, intellect, and will are harmonized as much as possible. Behind both the individual and the universal is the same Spirit, the one infinite Spirit manifesting itself both in the individual and the cosmic. Our little body is part of the infinite Cosmic Body; our little mind is part of the Divine Mind; our little ego is part of the Cosmic Ego. It is enough for us if we can experience the relation between the soul and the Oversoul. This is religion. Each of us dwells every moment in the eternal life but without knowing it. Through moral practice, prayer, and self-surrender, the spiritual seeker develops a new sense of introspection, a power which reveals to him the existence of the secret stairs. On rising above the limitations of the gross body, the subtle body, and the causal body, the aspirant experiences the macrocosm of the

Eternal God, and the soul finally comes in touch with the Oversoul.

The thoughts, emotions, and activities affect the sex organ, stomach, eyes, and the will-power. Schopenhauer says: When sex becomes the focus of the will, a new world opens up for youth. At other times the stomach becomes the focus of the will and at still other times the heart. There is an inseparable connection between the moods, bodily organs, and the centres of consciousness. Thoughts stimulate the nerve centres. Yogis tell us of the various Chakras, which, in the words of Arthur Avalon in his *Serpent Power*, are: 'subtle centres that vitalize and control the gross bodily tracts indicated by the various regions of the vertebral column, ganglia, plexus, nerves, arteries, and the organs situated in these respective regions'.

The lowest centre is at the base of the spinal column, close to the organ of evacuation. The next is located in the region corresponding to the sex-organ. The third is in the region of the navel, the fourth in the region of the heart, the fifth corresponds to the throat, and finally the sixth is between the eyebrows. Each of these centres, or Chakras, is a point of contact between the microcosm and the macrocosm. When a person dwells in a particular centre, he becomes conscious not only of himself but also of others. When the mind is immersed in worldliness, it dwells in the three lower planes, resulting in sensuality. The upper centres are connected with the spiritual life of man. When a man is spiritually awakened, his consciousness rises first to the heart. Then he sees a new spiritual light. 'In mute wonder he sees a radiance and cries out: What is this? What is this?' All mystics—Hindu, Christian, Sufi, and others—speak of this inner light.

The Yogis speak of the three Nādis or nerves in the spine. The central one is the channel for spiritual energy. This is known as Sushumna. The one to the left is Ida and that to the right Pingala. All the three have their junction at the base of the spine.

In the ordinary man the energy which

gathers at the confluence of the three channels flows only through the two side ones and is expressed as ordinary worldly thoughts, feelings, and activities. But in the Yogi, the current moves along the central channel. Ida and Pingala are like staircases while Sushumna is like an electric elevator. Kundalini is consciousness in its creative aspect as Power. It is the spiritual energy latent in man. In the worldly man it remains like a coiled serpent. The task in spiritual life is to make this spiritual energy flow through Sushumna—the central spiritual channel. With the upward movement of the serpent power, the spiritual seeker, or rather the soul, rises to higher and higher planes of consciousness.

But this spiritual channel, though latent in everyone, cannot be discovered without a certain degree of purity. Impurity is a great obstacle. The abuse of any of the bodily organs—sex, digestive, heart, brain, and others—creates obstruction and prevents the upward movement of the spiritual current. If all the energy flows along the side paths there is nothing left to carry us upwards. It is necessary to close the gateways of the lower channels with the help of well-regulated moral and spiritual life. Then the higher centres open up, enabling us to reach higher and higher planes of consciousness until there is a new vision, a new peace, and a new sense of existence.

I once visited a well-known Indologist in Germany who gave lectures on the Kundalini Yoga, and found his wife painting the Chakras from Arthur Avalon's *Serpent Power*. I asked, 'Don't you think it dangerous to play with this serpent?' He laughed and replied, 'Swami, none of these people who listen to the lectures takes them too seriously'. However, I know of some earnest but misguided souls ignorantly tampering with the serpent power and coming to grief.

Our teachers tell us: If you know how to use this serpent power properly, it will lead you to higher and higher planes of consciousness, but if you do not awaken it in the right way, it may vomit poison.

In the course of spiritual evolution all the contents of the sub-conscious may come forth. An aspirant must have great moral and spiritual strength to stand it. Partial awakening is dangerous.

A disciple once asked Swami Brahma-nanda: 'Sir, how can the Kundalini be aroused?' The Swami replied, 'According to some, there are special exercises, but I believe it can best be done through repetition of the Divine Name and meditation'. Especially suited to our present age is the practice of Japam or constant repetition of the Divine Name and meditation upon it. There is no spiritual practice easier than this. But meditation must accompany the repetition of the Mantra or the mystic word.

The body is like a stringed instrument. Each organ, each nerve centre, has a music of its own. When we become conscious of our heart, we find that there is a kind of music that belongs to the heart. Hindu Yogis give the analogy of the snake-charmer who holds the snake with music. By playing various tunes he can make it rise up on end. This has a mystic significance. By creating a spiritual music, the latent power of the Kundalini can be awakened. The finer the music and the more spiritual the musician, the higher will the subtle power rise, until it

reaches the highest and is united with the Supreme Spirit—the Soul of all souls.

There is a very apt analogy in the Upanishads. The body is likened to a tree, on which two birds are dwelling, one at the top and the other at the bottom. The lower bird, forgetful of its higher nature, is busy tasting the fruits of the tree to satisfy its hunger. The sweet fruits make it happy. The bitter and sour ones make it miserable. It hops upward, branch by branch, comes closer to the higher bird—the spectator unaffected by pleasure and pain—and becomes united with it. Similarly, the spiritual seeker feels himself separated until he rises upward and finds his soul united with the Oversoul.

On every spiritual path the first step is purification. Work and worship must become one, combined in a harmonious way of life. With the help of sincere devotion and meditation the soul becomes free from the bondage of the mind, and as it moves steadily from lower to higher planes of consciousness, the limitations dissolve and the soul at last meets the Beloved, the Oversoul, on the plane of superconsciousness. The soul attains its union with Sat-Chit-Ānanda or Eternal Existence-Consciousness-Bliss—the goal of all spiritual existence.

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## THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE PANCHARATRAS

BY BALADEVA UPADHYAYA

The Pancharātra school of Vaishnavism has, for many long centuries, exerted a tremendous influence upon the religious, social, and cultural life of India. In fact its influence has been so pervading and enduring that there hardly exists an aspect of Indian life which does not present an indisputable illustration of its impact upon its development. Vaishnavism has shed its lustre and has showered its

benedictions upon the chequered history of Indian culture and civilization. A somewhat misguided enthusiasm on the part of Western scholars is responsible for giving the credit of the propagation of *ahimsā* (the doctrine of non-injury) to the founder of Buddhism, which, on genuine historical grounds, belongs to the promulgators of Vaishnavism in India. It is accepted on reliable authority that the Vaish-

nava faith is earlier in origin than the Buddhist religion founded by Gautama Buddha in the sixth century B.C. That Vaishnavism as a system of religious thought and as a school of philosophy has exerted an all-round influence upon the social institutions, the literary attainments, and the artistic achievements of Hindus in India as well as in Greater India, is a thesis which does not require much laboured thinking for its justification and for its establishment.

#### MEANING OF THE WORD 'PANCHARATRA'

The word 'Pancharatra', signifying the Vaishnava system, is a word of doubtful origin. The simple meaning of the word—'a system connected with five nights'—proves that a certain religious rite performed for five nights may have been responsible for the designation of the system. As regards the clear meaning of the term, authorities are at variance with one another. The Shānti Parva of the *Mahābhārata* emphasizes the comprehensive nature of the system by asserting that all the four Vedas as well as the Sāṅkhya—five in all—are contained therein. The *Īsvara Samhitā*, one of the most important Samhitas of the sect, tells us that the system was propounded by Nārāyana in five nights to the five sages—Shāṅdilya, Aupagāyana, Maunjāyana, Kaushika, and Bhāradvāja, who later on became the recognized expounders of the system (Adhyāya 21). The *Padma Samhitā* asserts the supremacy of its philosophic thought by specially mentioning the fact that the five well-known Shāstras became completely futile and wholly ineffective in its presence. The *Nārada Pañcarātra* (I. 44), one of the popular texts of the system, takes the word *rātra* to mean knowledge and proposes an interpretation of the word which is supported by the *Ahirbudhnya Samhitā* (XI. 64), another equally authoritative book of the system. The Pancharatra system is so called because it discusses five topics of great spiritual import, viz. (1) the Highest Reality; (2) Final Emancipation; (3) Worldly Enjoyment (*bhukti*);

(4) mental concentration (*yoga*); (5) The world with its many-sided riddles (*visaya*). This difference of interpretation in assigning a uniform import to the term is highly significant and proves that it originated in an age of hoary antiquity whose traditions have become lost to the later generations.

A distant connection may be traced between the word Pancharatra and a Vedic sacrifice called Pancharatra Sattrā alluded to in the *Satapatha Brāhmaṇa* (XIII. 6. 1).<sup>1</sup> This passage says that the Puruṣa, Narayana, conceived the idea of a Pancharatra Sattrā (continued sacrifice for five days) as a means of obtaining superiority over all beings and becoming all beings; and the preceding chapter (XII. 3. 4) narrates in detail how He, by sacrificing Himself, actually became the whole world—a Vedic idea popularized by the famous *Puruṣa Sūkta* (*Rg-Veda*, X. 90), where Narayana, in the form of Puruṣa, has been eulogized as the origin and source of the manifold beings of the universe as a result of sacrifice performed in the beginning of creation. Thus it may be presumed that the name of the system is a distant echo of the Vaishnava sacrifice—Pancharatra Sattrā—which was performed by Narayana who projected himself by means of His *Parā*, *Vyūha*, *Vibhava*, *Antaryāmin*, and *Arcā* forms. This conjecture would well agree with the statement of the *Ahirbudhnya Samhitā* (XI, last verse) that the Lord Himself framed out of the original Shastra the system (*tantra*) called Pancharatra describing His fivefold nature known as *Parā*, *Vyūha*, etc. and that the highest will of Vishnu is called *Sudarśana* through which He split into five, appearing five-mouthed.

#### PANCHARATRA AND VEDA

The relation between the Pancharatras and the Vedas calls for a clear enunciation. This Vaishnava system propounds a unique doctrine called the *catur-vyūha* doctrine (the principle of the fourfold Emanation). It is

<sup>1</sup> Vide Bhandarkar: *Vaishnavism, Shaivism, and Minor Sects*, p. 31. Schrader: *Introduction to the Pancharatra*, pp. 25-26.

said that *San̄karṣana*, representing the soul, has emanated from *Vāsudeva*, the Highest Being, and later on he becomes the source of the origination of *Pradyumna* (mind) who gives birth to *Aniruddha*, the principle of *ahamkāra*. The great monist Shankara<sup>2</sup> holds it to be clearly a non-Vedic doctrine which goes against the philosophical enunciations of the Upanishads. On the other hand, Ramanuja, in his *Śri-Bhāṣya*, attempts to prove that Bādarāyana has not criticized the doctrine adversely, but has in fact supported it by cogent arguments. Even before Ramanuja the great Yāmunāchārya, and after him Vedānta Deshika, one of the stalwarts of the Sri Vaishnava school, have contributed their mite by their highly authoritative books to prove the thoroughly infallible character of the Pancharatra thought and to show that they stand on a par with the Vedas in the elucidation of spiritual doctrines.

On the authority of the various Samhitas we can assert that the system under the name of Ekāyana forms a separate Shākhā of Veda and possesses, therefore, the same authoritativeness and infallibility as belong to the Vedas themselves. The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (VII. 1. 2) knows of the Ekayana Vidyā which, according to the gloss of Ramanuja, means no other Shastra but the Pancharatra philosophy which teaches Narayana to be the *one means* (*eka ayana*), the sole saviour of the afflicted mortals from the triple afflictions of the mundane life. According to the testimony of Nāgesha, a recent writer on the Vedic Shakhas, the Ekayana Shakha is but another name for the Kānva Shakha of the White *Yajur-Veda*—a fact which would well agree with the statement of the *Jayākhya Samhitā* that the five earliest propounders of the system referred to above belonged to the Kanva Shakha of the *Yajur-Veda*.

Thus, in main, the system appears to be thoroughly Vedic in origin and in thought. It is idle to support, as has been done by vari-

ous Western scholars, that the system arose along with Jainism and Buddhism in opposition to the sacerdotal ritualism of the Vedic religion. In fact Vaishnavism is a staunch supporter of the Vedic sacrifices, the only improvement introduced being the shift of emphasis from *paśu-yāga* to *yava-yāga* which was performed solely with the offerings of barley and butter.

#### PANCHARATRA METAPHYSICS

The Highest Principle, variously termed as Vasudeva, Vishnu, or Narayana, is described in the Pancharatra Samhitas on the lines of the well-known Upanishadic passages. He is One without a second, without any beginning and without any end. Appearing as He does in the form of experience of immeasurable bliss, He dwells in every being, pervades the whole universe, unchangeable and devoid of any taint whatsoever. Hence He is generally compared with the great ocean, calm and unruffled, because it is not agitated by the slightest ripple. He is devoid of mundane attributes, but is endowed with supra-mundane attributes. He is an unlimited entity, knowing no limitations either in form, in time, or in space. His different names emphasize the different aspects of His nature. He is called Bhagavān, because of His being the repository of six well-known qualities; Vāsudeva, because of his indwelling (*√vas*, to dwell) in all the objects of the world; *Paramātmā*, because of his being the highest soul, higher than any soul existing in this universe. Thus the Pancharatra conception of the Highest Being is in strict accordance with the Upanishadic description of Brahman. What the *Ahīrbudhnya Samhitā* (II. 53) expounds is simply a paraphrase of the celebrated passages from the Upanishads.

The Highest Principle is conceived of as possessing the double aspects of *saguṇa* and *nirguṇa*. He is attributeless as well as endowed with attributes. In the sense that He has no connection whatsoever with the material qualities of various types, He is spoken of as entirely devoid of all attributes (*nirguṇa*). At the same time, for the creation and preser-

<sup>2</sup> Vide his Bhāṣya on the *Brahma-Sūtras*, II. 2. 42-45.

vation of the world order, He possesses six well-known qualities and is thus *saguṇa* as well. These qualities, known under the general name of *bhaga*, are six in number: (1) Knowledge (*jñāna*), (2) Power (*śakti*), (3) Majesty (*aiśvarya*), (4) Strength (*bala*), (5) Virility (*vīrya*), (6) Splendour (*tejas*). Out of these the first is taken to be the main attribute, while the remaining five serve as auxiliaries to it and are thus derivative in nature.

### THE SIX QUALITIES

Knowledge performs a dual function inasmuch as it is His form as well as His attribute. Shakti signifies that the highest Vishnu, besides being the creator of the universe, is, at the same time, the material cause of the universe. Majesty stands for the independent creation of the world, i.e. the Lord is the sole creator of the world, because He possesses complete independence and depends not on any outer help for His work. Strength means the omnipotence of the Lord in the sense that He experiences no fatigue in the arduous tasks He performs. Virility signifies the fact that in spite of His being the material cause He undergoes no change and remains completely unaffected by the countless transformations thus produced. Splendour speaks of the complete independence of the Lord who evolves the universe out of Himself and does not depend upon any material for the fashioning of the world. Vishnu serves both as the material and the instrumental cause of creation at the same time. He is independent and omnipotent, as He has not to look for help from any source whatsoever. The term *sarva-kāraṇa-kāraṇam* (cause of all causes), applied in the Samhitas in connection with Bhagavan, serves to prove His independence and all-powerfulness. Causeless as He is, He is the cause of all the causes—the Prime Spirit that moves the universe, guides it, and is the last resort in the final annihilation of the world.

Lakshmi is a common appellation for the power of the Lord. Bhagavan is endowed with Shakti and that Shakti is commonly

called Lakshmi. The relation between them is a matter of hot discussion among the Samhitas of the system. The mutual relation between Narayana and Lakshmi appears to be *apparently Advaitic* in nature, but there is in fact no identity between them. Even in the state of final dissolution, when the whole world becomes submerged in the Lord, complete unity or unification is not effected between Vishnu and Lakshmi. The divine couple enjoy what may be called 'complete embrace' in this condition, but still it is not complete unification since the two emerge as separate beings as soon as the time for creation comes. The *Ahirbudhnya Samhitā* (III. 25) speaks in unmistakable terms that Lakshmi as a principle is altogether different from the Lord. In their final embrace they appear to be locked up in unity, though in reality they are not, but are only *apparently one*, since they maintain their separateness even in that condition (IV. 78). The above statement purports to tell us that both Lakshmi and Narayana, united in one embrace, appear *as if* they represent one principle. The word *iva* ('as if') is a clear indication of the fact that in the last analysis both the principles retain their individuality and separateness and it is only an *apparent unity* which they signify.

### SRI AND NARAYANA

The dual form of the Deity constitutes the Highest Brahman, the Father-Mother principle of the universe. It may be said that the mutual relation of Sri and Narayana is one of *avinābhāva* like that of substance and attribute, light and luminosity, or sun and shine. Though they are regarded as distinct, there is no difference in their functions or tastes. It, however appears that the dualism is kept up for cosmic functions and liberation of selves.

### POWERS OF THE LORD

The power of Narayana, which is none other than this very self, becomes revealed in the beginning of creation through some unknowable and unimaginable cause. Creation is the immediate result of this revelation of



the Lord's Shakti,—which is variously termed as Lakshmi, Padmā, Sri, Ānandi, and Svatantrā. At the time of creation Lakshmi appears under two forms: Kriyā Shakti and Bhuti Shakti. Kriya Shakti signifies the divine will of creating the universe, while Bhuti Shakti stands for the transformation or emanation of the universe out of the celestial Narayana, the word Bhuti ( $\sqrt{bhū}$ , to be or to become) meaning the *becoming* or the formation of something into the other. For the creation and preservation of the world order, the dual Shakti is imperative, because its absence is thoroughly responsible in making the Lord suspend His cosmic functions.

The first manifestation of the Lord's Power is called 'pure creation' as distinguished from the 'impure creation' which is a result of the admixture of the triple Gunas of Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas. The central idea of 'pure creation' is the fact that the Divinity, for the sake of commonweal and the amelioration of afflicted humanity, manifests in a fourfold form (Vyuhās or emanations) already described. Out of the four Vyuhās, the highest is Vāsudeva, an etherial embodiment of all the six attributes. *Saṅkarṣana* represents within himself *Jñāna bala*; *Pradyumna* represents majesty and virility, while *Aniruddha* stands for power and splendour. The Vyuhās possess a psychological importance inasmuch as *Saṅkarṣana* is ruling over the individual soul, *Pradyumna* over *Manas*, and *Aniruddha* over *ahamkāra* (the principle of individuality).

Apart from the fourfold Vyuhās, there are three other manifestations of 'pure creation': (1) Vibhava, (2) Antaryamin, (3) Archāvatāra. Vibhava means an Avatara, pure and simple—descent of Ishvara among beings by means of forms similar to that genus, like the famous ten Avataras. The Antaryamin form of the Lord, modelled after the famous Upanishadic teachings,<sup>3</sup> shows Him to be abiding in the heart-lotus of every individual, engaged in guiding him from within. Archavatara means images of the Lord consecrated according to the

rules of the Pancharatra rites. The Lord 'descends' into the image with a non-material body.

As regards the order of 'impure creation', the Pancharatra works widely differ, but, in general, creation starts with *Pradyumna* and ends with the five elements—somewhat similar to the Sankhya system though differing in some details here and there.

### THE SOUL

The soul is a part of Lakshmi or a 'contraction' of Lakshmi, as the Goddess Herself calls it in the *Lakṣmī Tantra* (VI.36).

In Liberation and then in the Great Dissolution, the Jiva is not finally dissolved in the Lord; in the former case, he 'becomes one' (*ekī bhavati*) with the Lord, he joins the Lord in Vaikuntha; in the latter case, he becomes *latent* in Him when Vaikuntha, with everything else, is temporarily withdrawn. Thus apparently the Vaishnava Samhitas use Advaitic phraseology in describing the relation between the Jiva and the Paramatma; but they are *not Advaitic* in the absolute sense. They only mean the merging or the fusion of the two principles where each retains its own individuality and separateness.

Both bondage and liberation of the soul depend upon the special powers of the Lord. The Divine Will (technically termed *Sudarśana*) is supreme. Under the guidance of the Lord it works and achieves results designed by the Lord. It is countless in number, but still it manifests in five different ways. They are the Shaktis called Creation, Preservation, and Destruction—of the universe, Obstruction (Nigraha) and Favouring (Anugraha)—of the soul. The last two Shaktis are specially conceived of for explaining the bondage and liberation of the soul, which, sharing as it does in all the divine powers of the Lord, is otherwise not free from the shackles of mundane life. He is neither omnipotent nor omniscient. This anomaly calls for an explanation which this Tantra amply offers. Through His Nigraha Shakti the Lord obscures the all-round powers of the Jiva, which henceforth becomes 'atomic'

<sup>3</sup> Vide the *Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad*, III.7.

(*anu*) in form and therefore is able to achieve only a few things and to know only a few objects. This is the bondage of the soul which is the direct product of the threefold *mala* or taint. The Pancharatra asserts that the soul in itself is unable to achieve the Highest Bliss, and it is only when the Lord, out of His deep compassion for the destiny of the soul, raises it up from the mire of worldly life and gives it refuge under His protection that it becomes finally released and enjoys the pure bliss of 'oneness' with the Lord. It is the play of His divine grace which is technically called the 'Descent of Divine Grace' (*śakti-pāta*) in the Tantras.

#### RELEASE AND ITS MEANS

The highest purpose of the system is the achievement of eternal bliss, by the soul, from the loosening of the bondage in which it is temporarily entangled. And for this aim the Vaishnava system gives in detail rites and rituals connected with the worship of Vishnu. Detailed rules for the construction of temples, for the preparation of images of the various Avatars of Vishnu, for the installation of such images, and their daily worship along with the seasonal festivals, form the main part of the Pancharatra Samhitas. The major portion of these works essays to describe, in due detail, many such rituals and rules. For final release, devotion is considered to be the most effective means, meant for all without any difference of caste or creed. So the Vaishnava Dharma is a universal religion whose portals are open to all and from entering which not a single earnest seeker after Truth is ever debarred.

Devotion is of several types and the best type recognized by the Acharyas is called 'self-surrender' or 'taking refuge in the Lord' (*śaraṇāgati*). This self-surrender is of unique importance due to the fact that it seeks to compel the Lord to bestow His compassion upon afflicted and suffering humanity. Refuge in the Lord (*śaraṇāgati*), technically termed *nyāsa* in the Pancharatra books, has been minutely and psychologically analysed by theorists and has been shown to be of six types:

(1) Firm determination on the part of the devotee to remain agreeable to the Lord under all circumstances.

(2) Firm will to shun everything smacking of disagreeableness to the Lord, whatever the result might be.

(3) Firm faith in the saving power of the Lord that He will undoubtedly and without fail protect His devotees.

(4) To select the Lord alone as his saviour and guide.

(5) To surrender one's self whole-heartedly unto the lotus-feet of the Lord.

(6) Extreme humility of the devotees in the presence of the Lord.<sup>4</sup>

The Vaishnava devotee is called *pañca-kārajña* (one who knows the 'five' times), i.e. he is devoted to the worship of the Lord in five different modes:

(1) To be eager towards the Lord in mind, in speech, and in words (*abhigamana*).

(2) To collect different materials—flowers and other things—to be utilized in the service of the Lord (*upādāna*).

(3) Actual worship (*ijyā*).

(4) Hearing and meditating upon the meaning of the religious texts on devotion (*svādhyāya*).

(5) Concentration of the mind upon the lotus-feet of Narayana, after undergoing the eightfold Yogic path (*yoga*).<sup>5</sup>

Thus an earnest devotee should engage himself in external worship of the Supreme Being in His 'personal' aspect and in meditation upon His form through the recital of His names and other efficacious means.

By means of the method advocated, a devotee attains the highest Brahmā—that form of the Supreme which is most dear to his heart—the most lovable form of his *iṣṭa-devatā*. The *Jayākhya Samhitā* describes this union of the individual self with the Supreme Self on the lines of the Upanishads. According to the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, as the rivers flow towards the ocean and merge themselves into it, leaving

<sup>4</sup> *Ahīrbudhnya Samhitā*, XXXVII.28.

<sup>5</sup> *Jayākhya Samhitā*, XX. 65-75.

their names, forms, and identities, so the realized souls attain the Supreme Purusha, being freed from their forms, names, and separate individualities.<sup>6</sup> The Samhitas assert the same theory, but in the final analysis the Jivas have their distinctness even after absorption in the Lord.<sup>7</sup>

This is a brief analysis of the most important

<sup>6</sup> *Mundaka Upaniṣad*, III.2.8.

<sup>7</sup> *Jayākhya Samhitā*, IV.123.

Vaishnava tradition wellknown in the religious history of India. The *Bhagavad Gita* is claimed to be the most important text of the system, whose earliest treatment is to be found in the Shanti Parva of the *Mahābhārata*. Among the existing forms of Vaishnavism, Sri-Vaishnavism (popularized by Ramanuja) draws most of its materials from the cosmology, theology, and philosophy of the Pancharatra system.

## PRACTICAL TEACHINGS OF THE BHAGAVAD GITA

BY SWAMI NIKHILANANDA

(Continued from the June issue)

It has been stated before that the discipline of action and the discipline of contemplation are meant for two different types of people. 'Even of yore, O Arjuna, a twofold devotion was taught by Me to the world: devotion to knowledge for the contemplative, and devotion to work for the active' (III.31). As long as a man remains conscious of his social obligations, he must work. But there are some who regard worldly values as insignificant and transitory. They seek knowledge through contemplation and hanker after the peace that comes through actionlessness. But Sri Krishna says: 'Not by merely abstaining from action does a man reach the state of actionlessness, nor by mere renunciation does he arrive at perfection' (III.4). 'He who restrains his organs of action but continues to dwell in his mind on the objects of the senses, deludes himself and is called a hypocrite' (III.6). True renunciation of action is not possible without at first practising the discipline of action. Purified by action, one quickly realizes Brahman (V.6). In Sri Krishna's final and conclusive judgment, people with active minds should follow Karma Yoga, that is, perform action without attachment or desire for fruit (XVIII.6).

There are three kinds of renunciation that an active man may pursue. He can renounce an obligatory action through delusion. But this is positively harmful, for it darkens his inner spirit (XVIII.7). He may renounce a duty for fear of inflicting physical suffering upon himself or others. But by such renunciation he does not attain the peace he desires (XVIII.8). But when a man performs an obligatory action solely because it is to be done, and renounces all attachment and the fruit, he obtains the fruit of renunciation, namely, inner peace (XVIII.9). He never hates a duty because it is disagreeable, nor feels attached to a duty because it is agreeable (XVIII.10).

The *Bhagavad Gita* prescribes the way to transform the urge for action into a discipline for contemplation. It is, as we have seen, to perform action and at the same time preserve the spirit of renunciation, thus combining both action and renunciation. It urges men to work strenuously but not to be impelled by selfish motives. In other words, the advice of the *Gita* to the worldly-minded is not the renunciation of action but renunciation *in* action. The common business of life should not be abhorred, but selfish desires must be

suppressed. 'He who neither hates nor desires may be known as constantly practising renunciation' (V.3).

An action by itself, even a so-called violent action, is not necessarily evil. A judge who sends a criminal to the gallows, or a surgeon who performs an operation on a patient, or a general who leads an army in a righteous war, may not be engaging in a sinful action. What is sin? By what impelled does a man commit sin? Sri Krishna says: 'It is desire, it is wrath, which springs from *rajas*. Desire is our enemy on earth, all-devouring and the cause of all sin' (III.37). Why is this so? Because desire, in the form of ignorance, conceals the true Self of man, 'like smoke hiding fire, or dust hiding a mirror, or the womb hiding an unborn baby' (III.38). Desire finds its support in the senses, the mind, and the intellect and thus veils knowledge. The aspirant should start with the control of the senses. 'Even one of the roving senses, if the mind yields to it, carries away discrimination, as a gale carries away a ship on the waters' (II.67). When the senses are controlled, the mind and the intellect are gradually controlled.

All the factors necessary for an action should be spiritualized. Otherwise the desired fruit of self-purification is not attained. Knowledge, which is the basis of all action, should be characterized by all-embracing oneness. By means of such knowledge one sees unity in diversity (XVIII.21). The knowledge that emphasizes diversity or is confined to one single effect as if it were the whole, and which is trivial, is condemned (XVIII.21-22). The doer himself should be free from attachment and egoism, endowed with fortitude and zeal, and unruffled by success and failure (XVIII.26). The doer, who is passionately attached to action and desirous of its fruit, who is greedy and violent and is moved by sorrow and joy, or the doer who is unsteady, vulgar, arrogant, deceitful, indolent, desponding, and procrastinating, is not a real Karma Yogi, though he may be busy with many activities (XVIII.27-28).

The true understanding necessary for action is that which can discriminate between right and wrong, work and rest, and bondage and liberation (XVIII.30). Perverse understanding gives a distorted apprehension of right and wrong, of what ought to be done and what ought not to be done, and reverses all values (XVIII.32). Right firmness in action is accompanied by unswerving concentration and the control of the mind and the senses. Misdirected firmness holds fast, with intense attachment, to duty, pleasure, and wealth; or to grief, fear, sleep, despondency, and sensuality (XVIII.34-35). Happiness is accepted as the aim of action. Right happiness is born of the clear knowledge of the Self and is acquired by steady practice; it appears like 'poison' at first but like 'nectar' in the end (XVIII.36-37). The happiness that is generally sought by worldly people arises from the contact of the senses with their objects and is like nectar at first but like poison in the end (XVIII.38). But the happiness enjoyed by deluded persons arises principally from sleep, sloth, and error (XVIII.39). And lastly, action itself, in order to be right, should have a bearing on social welfare and be performed without love or hate and without longing for the fruit. The action that requires much effort and is performed to gratify desires, or is prompted by egoism, entangles the doer in the world. Degrading action is undertaken through ignorance, without regard to consequences or loss or injury, or without regard to one's ability (XVIII.25).

Action does not conflict with the spiritual aspiration of a man, be he a dualistic worshipper of the Personal God or a non-dualistic seeker of Self-knowledge. The special message of the *Gita* is that action performed in the right spirit can bring about both God-realization and Self-realization.

The dualists seek God through love. They see God alone as the real doer, and man as an instrument in His hands. They work for the satisfaction of the Lord. Unless done in that spirit, action binds a man to the world (III.9). This sort of action undoubtedly im-

plies a motive; but the desire for God-realization is not an evil. It is, on the contrary, extolled. Blessed is the person whom God chooses to be His instrument. Success or failure is beside the point. A devotee is like a sword in God's hand. There is a joy in being made, a joy in being used, and a joy in being broken and finally thrown away after the mission is fulfilled.

The purpose of the world need not be fulfilled through violence and destruction. Nature need not be 'red in tooth and claw'. It is man's total action that determines the cosmic process. As long as human nature remains a mixture of good and evil, the world also will be a mixture of good and evil, and God will use His instruments for both constructive and destructive purposes, to sustain His creation. It was Arjuna's destiny, created by his own past action, to be born in a military caste and be trained for war. Therefore he was exhorted to fight. 'Surrendering all actions to Me, with mind intent on the Self, freeing yourself from longing and selfishness, fight,—unperturbed by grief' (III.30). Even through this violent action Arjuna would ultimately attain God-realization. 'Therefore, at all times constantly remember Me and fight. With your mind absorbed in Me you will surely come to me' (VIII.7). It is reported that Socrates experienced divine ecstasy while marching with the army to the battle-field.

As a result of selfless action the devotee's heart is purified. It becomes free of ego, lust, and greed. The man of pure mind cultivates love for God. 'He treats alike all beings and attains supreme devotion to Me' (XVIII.54). The result of his devotion is complete absorption in God. 'By that devotion he knows Me, knows what in truth I am, and who I am. Then, having known Me in truth, he forthwith enters into Me' (XVIII.55). 'Even though engaged in all kinds of action, a man who has taken refuge in Me reaches, by My grace, the eternal and imperishable abode' (XVIII.56). He never falls from divine grace. 'He who sees Me everywhere

and sees everything in Me—to him I am never lost nor is he ever lost to me' (VI.30). Krishna gave Arjuna His plighted word that a devotee of God never comes to grief.

Action leads to Self-realization. Those who seek the knowledge of the Self follow, while performing action, the discipline of discrimination—the discrimination between the Self and the non-Self. The non-Self, consisting of body, senses, mind, intellect, and ego, is the effect of *ajñāna*, or ignorance, which as already stated, is compounded of the three Gunas. Action inheres in the non-Self. The Self, which is by nature pure, free, and blissful, is desireless and therefore actionless. It is the very stuff of peace. The notions of agency, action, and enjoyment of results do not belong to the Self. Nature, or Prakriti, creates all such ideas (V.14). 'All work is done by the Gunas of Prakriti ; but he whose mind is deluded by egotism thinks: "I am the doer".' (III.27). The sensations of pleasure and pain, through contact with agreeable or disagreeable objects, are natural for the senses. But the wise do not allow their Self to come under the sway of these sensations. Outer objects, the body, the senses, and the ego are the modifications of nature, that is to say, of the Gunas. It is the Gunas that, in the form of the ego, experience the Gunas in the form of objects. Therefore action is really the preoccupation of the Gunas with the Gunas (III.28). The Self, by its proximity, animates the insentient Gunas and looks on unconcerned without in any way participating in the action or experiencing the result. '“I do nothing at all”, thinks the Yogi, the knower of Brahman ; for in seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, and tasting ; in walking, breathing, and sleeping ; in speaking, emitting, and seizing ; in opening and closing the eyes, he is assured that it is only the senses busied with their objects' (V.8-9). Working without attachment, he remains 'untainted by sin, as a lotus leaf by water' (V.10). He thus dwells happily in the body, 'the city of nine gates, neither working nor causing work to be done' (V.13). He sees non-action in

action. Even when the body and mind are intensely active, he sees the Self to be actionless; he enjoys peace.

The result of such disciplined action is purity of mind. The seeker endowed with a pure mind devotes himself to hearing about the Self, reasoning about the Self, and lastly contemplating the Self with total devotion. In the depths of contemplation he realizes the identity of the Self and Brahman. He experiences the oneness of existence. 'With the heart concentrated by yoga, viewing all things with equal regard, he beholds himself in all beings and all beings in himself' (VI.29).

From what has been stated above it will be seen that disciplined action is effective for the active person, whether he seeks the knowledge of God or of the Self. The result in either case is the purification of the mind, followed by the love of God or knowledge of the Self. In the final stage all actions drop away and the seekers are completely absorbed in their respective ideals. In God-realization, the distinction between God and the individual self is retained, though the ordinary notion of the ego is transcended. In Self-realization, complete unity is experienced.

What, in the light of the *Gita's* teachings, is right work and what is wrong work? 'One has to understand what action really is, and likewise what forbidden action is, as also what non-action is. Hard to understand is the way of action' (IV.17). The real non-action belongs to the Self or Brahman. The individualized soul is always active. The non-action of the indolent is the reverse of the actionlessness of the illumined person. It appears that the *Bhagavad Gita* does not attempt to determine what is right or wrong in a given situation. That is left to the good sense and judgment of the individual who should be guided by the comprehensive Vedantic ideal of the oneness of existence or of the reality of the Godhead. Unity is the basic principle. Good is whatever promotes that unity; evil is what retards it and creates separation. In the dualistic context, good is

whatever brings one nearer to God, and evil is what takes one away from Him.

According to the *Gita*, a man's duty or right action is determined by his position in the Hindu caste system. The division of society into four groups or castes is ordained by Divine law. It is a natural division of human society. Each caste has its duties and obligations. The Brahmin, endowed with self-control, austerity, and Tirpightness, performs the duty of a teacher and a priest. The Kshatriya, endowed from birth with heroism, firmness, high spirit, sovereignty, and generosity, performs the duty of a king or a warrior. To look after the economic prosperity of society is the duty of the Vaishya, who is engaged in agriculture, trade, and cattle-rearing. The Shudra renders manual service. It is the duty of the other castes to protect him. The basis of the division is work and inborn qualities, which are again determined by a man's nature or Prakriti. A Brahmin's action is influenced by *sattva*, belonging to his own Prakriti; a military man possesses an excess of *rajas*. In the character of the merchant, *rajas* predominates over *tamas*; and in that of the Shudra, *tamas* prevails over *rajas*. So, according to the *Gita*, a man is born in a particular caste as the result of the quality of his nature, formed by his own action in the previous birth. All men are not born equal. The law of Karma explains this inequality. Neither God nor an unaccountable destiny is responsible for it. If a man fulfils his duty, determined by his present position, he will, by the same law of Karma, be born with qualities fitting him for a higher position. Thus in Hindu law and polity, fundamental duties take precedence over fundamental rights. Right is derived from service and fulfilment of obligations.

Like all earthly organizations, the caste system also, in course of time, lost its original meaning. It became stratified. The power of the Brahmins increased, and the privileges of the lower castes were gradually curtailed. But it can be truly said that the Hindus, through the caste system, tried to build up a

social structure on the basis of mutual goodwill and co-operation, and to remove the dangers of the competitive view of society and actually maintained for many centuries a wonderful social solidarity. The caste system in its vigorous days recognized the supremacy of wisdom over military power, wealth, and organized labour.

The duty determined by a man's caste is called Dharma. It is shaped by his own inner nature. Through obedience to Dharma, a man grows in spiritual stature. 'Man attains to high perfection by devotion to his own Dharma' (XVIII.45). One ought not to give up the duty to which one is born, though it has its imperfections; for all undertakings are beset with imperfections, as fire with smoke (XVIII.48). 'Better is one's own Dharma, though imperfect, than the Dharma of another well performed. He who does the duty ordained by his nature incurs no sin' (XVIII.47). To go against Dharma is to go against nature, and the result is disastrous. This duty is to be performed in the spirit of Karma Yoga, that is to say, by remaining unruffled by success or failure, relinquishing the fruit to God, and preserving inner serenity. 'By worshipping Him from whom all beings proceed and by whom the whole universe is pervaded—by worshipping Him by the performance of duty does a man attain perfection' (XVIII.46). Work, in this sense, is worship. Service to man is service to God.

Often the question is asked how Karma, or action, can be reconciled with freedom. Karma implies necessity; the cause must be followed by the effect, which in its turn becomes a new cause. The inexorable wheel of causality goes on. Man appears to be a mere cog in this wheel. He must work, in spite of himself, driven, as it were, by force (III.36). Where, then, is freedom? The *Bhagavad Gita* offers the answer in the following manner:

Every Karma done voluntarily produces a twofold result. One is immediate, in the form of pleasure and pain. This is unavoidable and should be accepted without demur. The

other is in the form of the subtle impression (*samskāra*), which expresses itself in concrete action in future. This tendency of the impression towards fruition can be controlled. One can check it by the exercise of will-power before it becomes a concrete action. The Vedanta philosophy in this connection gives the illustration of the hunter who shot an arrow at what he considered to be a deer. As he fixed the second arrow to finish off the victim, he suddenly discovered, to his great regret, that the object was not a deer but a sacred cow. Though he could not recall the first arrow, which had already left his hand, he was free to stop the second one.

Further, according to the *Gita*, a man is not a mere psycho-physical entity, in which case he would have no freedom. It is true that in the physical world, including the mental, he is bound by the causal law. But man has a higher Self, which is free. His lower self, which is the reflection of the higher, engages in actions, clamours for their results, and becomes bound by them. The ignorant person identifies himself with the lower self. Disciplined action, as described above, removes the veil of ignorance and reveals the higher Self, which is free from the limitations of time, space, and causality. Even while preoccupied with action through the mind and the senses, the illumined person experiences the freedom of the higher Self. To him action is really non-action.

One of the special messages of the *Bhagavad Gita* is that action is not inconsistent with perfection. The trend of the Upanishadic thought has been explained in different ways. According to a Hindu tradition, the body does not generally survive the all-annihilating experience of oneness or God-communion. According to the *Gita*, it appears that a man endowed with the knowledge of the Self or God can work for human welfare. It gives the illustrations of King Janaka and Sri Krishna. Krishna says to Arjuna: 'I have no duty; there is nothing in the three worlds that I have not gained, and nothing that I have to gain. Yet I continue

to work' (III. 22). An illumined person must not set the bad example of non-activity. 'For should I not ever engage, unwearied, in action, O Arjuna, men would in every way follow in my wake' (III. 23). Universal inactivity results in disaster. 'If I should cease to work, these worlds would perish; I should cause the mixture of castes and destroy all these creatures' (III. 24). The manner in which a perfect man works in the world with serenity and detachment is described in the second (55-72) and the fourteenth (27-28) chapters.

How did Arjuna react to Krishna's teachings? After the instruction was over, Krishna said to Arjuna: 'Has it been heard by you, O Pārtha, with an undivided mind? Has your delusion, born of ignorance, been destroyed, O Dhananjaya?' (XVIII. 72). The teachings did not fall on deaf ears. 'My delusion is gone,' replied Arjuna, 'I have regained my memory through your grace, O Krishna. I am firm; I am free from doubt. I will act according to your word' (XVIII. 73). He plunged into the battle and witnessed the death of even his own son, his cousins, nephews, teachers, elders, and friends. As a human being he undoubtedly was stricken with grief; but thanks to Krishna's teachings he did not allow this grief to overwhelm him or cloud his understanding. He won the battle,

destroying the power of evil and restoring moral order.

Arjuna's problem is the perennial problem of man. What is his duty when faced by the power of evil? Should he accept its challenge even at the sacrifice of his peaceful life? What if the evil is armed with physical power? Should he meet violence with violence? Sri Krishna's advice in the *Bhagavad Gita* seems to be that a man conscious of his obligations to society must perform his duty according to his Dharma and uphold justice. But he must first be convinced that he is on the side of righteousness. Also he must make every effort to win over the evil by peaceful means. But if that fails, he will have to fight evil with every weapon in his power. But his motive must be crystal clear. There should be no trace of malice and hatred, passion and selfishness, behind his actions. He should fight, regarding himself as God's instrument. When the social order is preserved, men get the opportunity to develop their highest spiritual potentialities. We are assured by the concluding verse of the *Bhagavad Gita* that when the power of the Spirit and the power of arms work in harmony, there is bound to follow victory, good fortune, prosperity, and all-round welfare.

(Concluded)

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## VEDANTA PHENOMENOLOGY

BY PRAVAS JIVAN CHAUDHURY

### I. AWARENESS AS THE METAPHYSICAL GROUND

Awareness is the ultimate principle of everything. For there can be nothing mentionable of which we are not aware. Any material principle such as space-time, wave-motion, or energy, cannot be as foundational or ultimate as awareness, for we are aware of matter as

constituting the world and we would have questions regarding the origin of matter of which we are aware as an object standing over against the subject that becomes aware of it. The objective pole of awareness, being passive and a part of awareness, cannot cover or explain awareness which is a spiritual activity and a whole including the subjective pole



besides the objective one. That is, this awareness must be held as more fundamental than any of its poles which can easily be derived from it. Any mental principle cannot be the ultimate metaphysical principle if it is such an obvious activity as thinking, willing, feeling, or sensing. For, then it becomes an object of awareness which is more fundamental. If it is a hypothetical entity such as a universal mental substance or mind, then, besides being uncertain like any hypothesis, it may be regarded either as a subject (like one's own mind) or as an object (like others' minds). In each case it would require, for its positing, awareness with the other pole. The universal subject cannot exist without being aware of a universal object and *vice versa*. Subject and object each presupposes the other and awareness of which they are poles. Moreover, in conceiving some universal objective mind (like the mind of God, conceived as the other) as the foundational principle, there is the further difficulty caused by the impossibility of deriving from it our mind which we experience as a subject and which is a part of reality. For, our mental activities are never felt as impelled by some other mind or Overmind, they appear as free and not externally controlled and they appear as subjective (as peculiarly ours), while the other mind is objective. We do become aware of an Overmind controlling our minds, but then we do not regard this Overmind as the other, rather we identify ourselves with this Overmind and regard it as our own; we, so to say, *become* it, and regard our individual self as an illusory object. So that, in a sense, the objective or the other mind may be derived from subjectivity, as it can be projected as an object by the higher subject (as is illustrated by such phenomena also as dream, illusion, and imagination), but subjectivity cannot be so derived from objectivity. Subjectivity is thus more fundamental than objectivity. And, as has been noted before, awareness is more fundamental than both of these which are its two poles presupposing it. Nothing can be asserted of which we are not directly aware and as this awareness is more primitive than

its object, it is the ultimate reality. Metaphysics, therefore, must be based on my personal experience and must not be speculative or hypothetical like science. It is the exposition of the self-evident by the self-evident, that is, explication and clarification of what is already there in personal awareness. The task of metaphysics, as phenomenology of Husserl and his followers now recognize, and what Vedanta and Yoga affirmed in the past, is not to 'tell stories' but to search for, discover, and state nothing that is not given in our experience in the very form in which they are stated. The ultimate reality is not to be a postulated or inferred something behind the world and beyond all experience, to be but dimly suspected and excitedly talked about, but it must be something given in experience and obtained by analysing performances and functions of consciousness. Of course, here consciousness is not restricted to its *ordinarily* explicit and obvious acts; it includes what are implicit in the obvious acts and what are *made* explicit through self-introspection or pursuing our ordinary experiences back to their origin. Philosophy is thus direct intuition involving discovery of the deeper layers of experience behind the superficial ones. It is a meditative research and revelation, and so far as the absolute realizes itself through 'my' meditations, philosophy cannot eliminate subjectivity. 'In you lies the endless sea, only you have not seen it', sings a Bengali *bāul*. 'Here likewise, in this body of yours, my son, you do not perceive the True; but there in fact it is. In that which is the subtle essence, all that exists has its self. That is the True, that is the Self, and thou, Shvetaketu, art That'. (*Chāndogya Upaniṣad*). The Truth to be asserted must be 'my' own realization, there is no escape from this position, call it solipsism or singularism, whatever one may.

Now this awareness cannot be questioned in any way. Its origin cannot be an object of enquiry, for we cannot be aware of any state more fundamental than awareness and to think that there may be non-awareness pre-

ceding or conditioning awareness is a self-contradictory proposition. Objects of awareness such as the world of things may come out of nothing, for this nothing or non-existence of all objects is itself an object of awareness, but awareness cannot come out of non-awareness, for the latter is never a possible state. It is a meaningless term. Now it may be thought that in deep dreamless sleep we have such non-awareness or absolute nought. But that is untenable. For, how is it that on waking we feel we slept well? We have a memory of the direct awareness of existence of objects as (perceptually or sensuously) unknown during sleep. This direct intuition or awareness is denied by some who argue that there was but absence of sense-objects during sleep, no positive awareness of this absence. But how is this absence known? They say this absence of sense-knowledge is known by inference from the absence of psychical conditions of knowledge, e.g. absence of attention. But this is untenable. For, first, the absence of conditions of knowledge and absence of knowledge of objects (i.e. absence of objects as known) must be known to have universal concomitance between them before the inference can take place, and this is impossible without having a direct awareness of absence of knowledge. In fact, absence of conditions of knowledge is inferred from the absence of knowledge which is directly intuited. If it is said that the absence of conditions of knowledge is not thus inferred, but from the inactivity of the senses during sleep, then it is also incorrect. For, inactivity of the senses is itself inferred from absence of conditions of knowledge which in its turn is inferred from an intuition of the absence of knowledge. To argue that inactivity of the senses is not thus inferred, but from a sense of ease we experience after sleep, is also incorrect, for no causal relation between the two have been experienced and similar sense of ease may be experienced even when the senses are active, as for instance, in a composed state of the mind when there is balance and harmony of the mental activities.

The above incidentally shows that what are

known as psychical and physical conditions of awareness are not the productive cause of awareness which is autonomous and self-subsisting and which employs the so-called conditions as means of expression. And there are cases of awareness of sense-objects without the senses being employed. Such extra-sensory perception (E.S.P.) is now an intriguing subject for the psychologists.

To return to our original contention, a condition of non-awareness is meaningless and the experience of deep dreamless sleep cannot provide any meaning to the term. There is awareness of absence of sense-knowledge during deep sleep and not any pure absence of sense-knowledge or pure nought. In death too we cannot conceive of a pure nought to descend, for we can be aware of an absence of all sense-knowledge (of objects), but not of non-awareness. To argue that this non-awareness may be inferred from absence of conditions of knowledge after death is again to fall into fallacies already pointed out.

Thus awareness is the ground of everything and nothing can exist in the universe of things and thought that cannot be placed with reference to awareness. Now the problem is to grade the items of this universe with regard to the manner in which we are aware of them. There are different grades or levels of awareness in order of comprehension and essence. The more comprehensive and essential awareness is implied by the lesser one, to understand which fully we must have the higher order of awareness. Again, the higher order of awareness holds its lower one as a contingent product and modification of the higher which is immanent in the lower, yet which is not wholly immanent, but transcendent also, for how else can the lower be felt as incomplete and eventually lighted up by the higher, seen through, and sublated? The lower is the self-obscuration by the higher of itself, which, as it were, in a spirit of sport forgets itself and projects a world it (in a deluded mood, as a lower self) takes for reality. When this self-forgetfulness is not complete, it views the projected world in a make-believe spirit,

enjoying it as the illusory taken deliberately for reality. In any case, this is veiling and distorting one's own real nature. Yet this real nature remains the basis of the illusory world which is never self-complete, ever pointing to the higher which, after its temporary lapse, comes to its own. This game of self-losing and self-restoring, projecting and sublating, in various degrees and in a serial manner, stage by stage, is a characteristic of awareness which, as has been pointed out, throughout the modifications remains in each level transcendent of the lower; then, it only loses self-awareness and works unconsciously from behind (or above) the lower and conscious level which becomes its mode of manifestation and contains in an implicit form the higher awareness. When this becomes explicit, that is, the higher wakes to self-consciousness, the lower appears illusory and vanishes. Hence awareness in itself, the highest level, is already implicit in its lower modes, and only becomes explicit gradually and by stages when they prove illusory and break up, following the silent will of the highest awareness.

## II. THE DREAM-AWARENESS: ART AND IMAGINATION

Now let us briefly examine the various orders of awareness starting from the lowest. This is the dream-awareness (including awareness in illusory perception which is a kind of dream). It is a modification of the wakeful awareness which is presupposed by it and which is present in it in an implicit manner or disguised form. The dream appears to be a continuation of the world of wakeful awareness; there is reference in it of the latter which is taken as real, whereas the wakeful awareness regards the dream as false. Again, the dream-world cannot exist without the wakeful one, whereas the reverse is not true. The wakeful awareness, giving us the empirical world as the object and the wakeful self as the subject, is more comprehensive and essential than the dream-awareness with its dream-

world as the object and the dreaming self as subjective counterpart of the latter.

This wakeful awareness is immanent in the dream-awareness in the sense that the latter takes itself to be a continuation of the former which remains the standard of reality, but this wakeful awareness remains transcendent too. For, we are not totally unaware of the wakeful world in our sleep or dream; we wake up at the appointed hour, the mother wakes up as soon as the baby cries, while she sleeps on even if greater noise be about her. There are many other facts of this nature. And then, sooner or later, this higher awareness asserts itself and comes to its own. It is the immediate creator and enjoyer of the dream-awareness that is an offshoot from it. The wakeful awareness, not being satisfied with the variety of the wakeful world that is rather rigid and stereotyped, projects or conjures up another world freer and more flexible, answering to its wishes and desires. To the question why we do have horrid and fearful dreams, the answer is that the wakeful awareness loves these for the mere love of variety and of display of freedom and creative activity. It hungers for experience of all kinds, for variety and intensity of emotions. We express this fact of which we are implicitly aware in our introspective mood; by saying that we *unconsciously* wish and enjoy every experience for its own sake. Since the dream-world is conjured up in order to fulfil emotional satisfaction, it has to be regarded as real while it lasts, for objects known as unreal do not give us as much emotion as those taken as real. But the dream breaks, sometimes due to external physical causes, conditions of sleep being then disturbed, but often due to internal psychical causes. And as modern psychologists have shown, the physical causes breaking sleep and dream, e.g. noise or thirst, are diverted away or moderated by this unconscious dream-mechanism which so interprets these stimuli that they fail to wake us up. Thus we dream of drinking water and then continue sleeping and dreaming other things instead of waking up for real

water. The transcendent wakeful awareness that is not wholly self-forgetful and immanent in the dream (to make it appear as the wakeful awareness), thus controls the dream from behind; but it comes to its own after remaining more or less unconscious for a while, watching the dream life, and asserts itself and activates the senses that are its handmaids. Often, even within the dream, we become faintly aware of the wakeful world and, so, aware of the dream-world as a shadow show. We also sometimes have the experience of producing dream-objects out of our own free will; simply through our wishing something to appear, we can make it appear. We then catch ourselves playing the trick of making something appear as objective which is really of our making. However, this world knowingly conjured up loses its grip on us and we soon have to either suppress or withdraw our wakeful awareness (as before sleep) which falls into unconsciousness, or to lose the dream-weaving capacity. The dream vanishes as the wakeful awareness fully asserts itself or manifests itself through determinate sense-knowledge. The dream-awareness appears to the wakeful awareness as a parasite (on the latter), but the reverse cannot be asserted. The dream is nourished by the wakeful awareness and the dream cannot deny this while it poses as the wakeful awareness (though it cannot also assert this); but this latter awareness never takes anything from the dream which it explicitly knows as illusory. This is the reason why the dream-awareness is placed lower in grade to wakeful awareness as explained before.

Imagination and fancy, both natural and artistic, reveal a kind of awareness that is dream-awareness in essence; only, in this case the objects conjured up are not so vivid and real, for the wakeful awareness is not so unself-conscious as in dreams. Here the wakeful awareness is more openly creating and enjoying the imaginary world projected by it, but the faith in the projected world is not as much as in dreams and so the emotional intensity is also poorer. The variety of emo-

tional effects is also comparatively limited for the imaginary world can enjoy less freedom and flexibility than the dream-world. We cannot have in imagination all those weird scenes, figures, and events suggesting strange emotions which we have in dreams, for in dreams our wakeful awareness is much less interfering, being much less self-conscious, than in imagination. An event that appears very improbable in imagination and, so, very little emotionally effective, does not appear the least improbable in a dream, though in dreams too we have a faint and dormant awareness of the wakeful world so that outrageously nonsensical objects or situations shock us out of dream. Because, imaginative awareness stands beside the waking awareness which is not so much held in abeyance or kept unconscious as in dream. We are conscious of the imaginary world as such, knowing it as a make-believe one; we have a detachment with regard to it which is almost absent in the case of the dream-world. This detachment, known technically as psychical distance or aesthetic disinterestedness, is one of the conditions of aesthetic delight which is regarded as impersonal. In the imaginative awareness we have, as Coleridge pointed out, a willing suspension of disbelief, whereas in the dream-awareness we are not conscious of this deliberate activity of the will which, however, works from behind the scenes, being transcendently operative.

The imaginary world of everyday life and of art is a dream-world that has lost much of its vividness and freedom for want of that extreme switching off (or pushing behind the scenes) of the wakeful awareness achieved in dream-awareness. Its pattern is the same as the dream-world and like the latter its terms of reference are the wakeful world which is thus immanently present in it. The liberty taken with the wakeful awareness in the creation of the imaginary world is less than in the dream-world, for the wakeful world is now already at the margin of consciousness and the deviations from it do not go unmarked. The memory-world is a step beyond the imaginary

one towards the wakeful world, the memory-objects being known as representations of the latter world. Memory-awareness is the awareness of imaginary objects as copies of the real objects. This wakeful reality is thus taken as the rigid standard for this kind of awareness with no scope for liberty in the creation of the memory-images.

In all these three varieties of the awareness of the unreal or shadow worlds, there is a natural delight, noticed particularly in the case of artistic imagination by many aestheticians. This delight is an accompaniment and immediate product of the activity of awareness that conjures up or bodies forth objects tingling with emotions. It is a projection or objectification of emotions in sensuous form. The awareness of the shadow world is at once the experience of various emotions, both pleasur-

able and painful, and the delight proceeds from the awareness itself, the creative exercise and the objects and experiences creatively enjoyed. Thus every dream is somehow enjoyable and all art, both tragedy and comedy, in fact, imaginative and recollecting activity, irrespective of their pleasure-pain quality, is agreeable. Awareness in any of its grades is, after all, awareness that has willingly modified itself into the lower forms in such a way that partly immanent in a form, it transcends it also and retracts it any moment. This awareness is essentially delightful. It is thus *saccidānanda* (being-awareness-bliss). The more we are explicitly aware of the higher forms of awareness the more will be the sense of creation and participation in the essence of awareness, and so, more will be the delight.

(To be continued)

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## THE CULTURAL BACKGROUND AND THE LEGACY OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA AND SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

BY DEVABRATA SINHA

India presents through the ages a vital flow of a distinct cultural heritage which is significant for its characteristically philosophic outlook that views existence and life against a background, broad and profound. The Supreme Truth has been revealed through the illumined consciousness of her great souls down from the age of the Vedas and the Upanishads. And in the light of their wisdom through realization and enlightened experience, values of life have been stressed in all their intensity and harmony. This is the spirit of Indian culture which we can trace in the depths of her indigenous thoughts, striving for a complete and integrated philosophy of life. We have to remember that philosophy, in the larger sense of the term, is 'the unseen foundation on

which the structure of civilization rests'.<sup>1</sup> The Indian spiritual tradition—(Sanātana Dharma), which embodies the spirit of Indian culture, has been vindicated more than once by the rationally thought out systems of philosophy. It is, again, her prophets and sages who have from time to time preserved and enlarged upon that tradition, emphasizing the godward endeavour of the human spirit.

### THE PERENNIAL PHILOSOPHY OF INDIA

Vedanta, which has its source in the Upanishads, is generally recognized as the dominant and representative philosophy of India. Indeed, in Vedanta we find the apex of the philosophical genius of the Hindu race.

<sup>1</sup> Dr. S. Radhakrishnan: *Kalki or The Future of Civilization*.

The tenets of wisdom, springing from the Upanishads, were nurtured and intellectually stabilized by the philosophic endeavour of later ages. Since the eighth century A.D. when, after the decline of Buddhism, it was revived and reasserted by the great genius of Shankaracharya, Vedanta philosophy has taken firm roots in the life and thought of the people, from the highest to the lowest.

However, in referring here to Vedanta—which is rather a comprehensive term—what is meant is the Advaita Vedanta which marks the highest and most rational synthesis arrived at by the Indian mind. Other systems of Vedanta such as Qualified Monism and Dualism are also based on the Upanishads and the *Brahma-Sūtras*, apart from numerous other scriptures. But the Advaita, without directly contradicting any other system, comprehends them all under a deeper synthetic unity. This philosophy of Advaita is the most satisfying formulation of the distinctive spirit of Hinduism, and in this sense it may be regarded as a synthesis of other systems of Indian philosophy, all of which seek to formulate this spirit; and it has also explicitly influenced the historical evolution of Hinduism. We may now turn to the study of how the same philosophic tradition of Vedantic thought and culture has exerted its inevitable influence towards a great spiritual renaissance in modern India in the shape of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda movement.

Vedanta represents such a broad and universal gospel for mankind that men in all ages have come to it for guidance in the path to perfection and ultimate realization through the eternal values that it steadily preserves. The makers of modern India, who have ushered in the new age, have all drawn inspiration in some form or other from the Vedanta philosophy. The synthetic outlook and the bold vision of harmony and unity, supported through and through by reason, have earned for this perennial philosophy of India a place of supreme honour. The intelligent acceptance of the spirit of Vedanta, in the light of the needs of contemporary society, is conspicuous in the

wake of the great spiritual renaissance ushered in by Sri Ramakrishna and fostered by Swami Vivekananda.

#### SRI RAMAKRISHNA AND SPIRITUAL RENAISSANCE

Long years of political subjection, it is needless to say, sapped the national vitality of this great and potent sub-continent. The economic exploitation and social disintegration which the alien administration was instrumental in bringing about naturally affected the cultural life of the people as a whole. An indifference towards our own culture, strengthened by blind imitation of Western culture and life, gradually crept in and there arose a sort of disrespect for the Indian way of life. The force of the Upanishadic heritage had gradually weakened in the course of centuries of political vicissitudes in the arena of Indian history. Consequently, the large mass of people ignored the teachings of Vedanta amidst the prevailing intellectual callousness and confusion. Vedanta, in theory and much less in practice, remained restricted within the intellectual deliberations of a few pundits. The great tradition of the Sanatana Dharma lay in a dormant state, only needing to be revitalized by the sparks of some genius, with the bold vision of linking the changing present with the glorious past.

Speaking of modern India, it was Rammohan Roy, the great intellectual and pioneer, who ushered in a bright phase of cultural regeneration. We find him reviving the Vedanta traditions, with a bold grasp of our age-old principles underlying the Indian way of life and thought. Rammohan Roy propagated the ideas of universalism and common brotherhood, basing them on the unitarian doctrine of the Upanishads. Through his keenly intellectual vindication of the spirit of Vedanta and his emphasis on religious monism as the ideal of life, Rammohan Roy did great service in the direction of the large-scale spiritual revival that came later to stem the tide of Western materialism.

The most striking phase of Vedantic revival, after Rammohan Roy, is to be found in the

great Ramakrishna-Vivekananda movement, beginning from the end of the nineteenth century. Sri Ramakrishna, through his uniquely religious life, brought about a thorough upheaval in the spiritual life of the country. It was Rammohan Roy, as we have already seen, who restored and enunciated the thread of Vedantic thought and culture, recognizing it to be the true genius of India. In it he saw the force of social dynamism which he tried to utilize for the new awakening of a sense of larger social solidarity and emancipation. But in Sri Ramakrishna we find a *living* embodiment of the Vedantic ideal of life, in its best expression in the present age. Sri Ramakrishna attained the highest state of divine bliss and reached the supreme 'Unity in the Godhead' through his manifold Sādhanā. With pure simplicity, strengthened by his intense realization, unhampered by intellectual sophistication, he demonstrated effectively the sublime truths of spiritual life.

Sri Ramakrishna taught the immanence of the Supreme One in the world. True to the Upanishadic way of *Brahma-darśana*, Sri Ramakrishna signified the truth that religion is a matter of experience and not merely an intellectual endeavour. He often urged the futility of discursive and dry reasoning, without direct experience of Truth. His stress on the need for the realization of the Supreme One and the relativity of the phenomenal universe is unmistakable. To his enlightened sense only God was real and all else unreal. Sri Ramakrishna's persistent search for the Godhead as the supreme, ultimate principle, by diverse paths, had culminated in his realization of the Advaita through Nirvikalpa Samādhi. He had reached, through Advaita Sadhana, the transcendental and impersonal aspect of God. Yet, the striking feature of Sri Ramakrishna's teachings is his organic synthesis between Jñāna and Bhakti. He harmonized both the aspects of the Supreme, viz. the personal or Ishvara and the impersonal or Brahman. 'God is formless and God is with form too, and He is that which transcends both form and formlessness.

He alone can say what else He is'. He represented them as the two aspects of the same Godhead, viewed through the two attitudes of pure knowledge and pure devotion respectively. And, while accepting the world as impermanent (*anitya*), having no ultimate significance, he also recognized its empirical (*vyāvahārika*) importance. Hence his stress on the need for the cultivation of Viveka (discrimination) and Vairāgya (renunciation or detachment), both of which are key-concepts in Vedantic discipline. And, above all, Sri Ramakrishna taught the divinity of man and the harmony of religions. The Upanishadic dictum—'Thou art That' (*tat-tvam-asi*) re-echoed with full vigour in his message—'Jiva is Shiva'. He urged men to realize their own Self, the living God, seated in the heart of every being. Sri Ramakrishna, reiterating this noble principle—'Jiva is Shiva', expounded it with immense significance for application in the wide social context. Hence he prescribed the service of man. Man is thus restored to his original dignity and magnitude. He recognized very aptly the stages in this spiritual development of man which Vedānta so radically emphasized.

According to Sri Ramakrishna, true Self-recognition, in all its integrity, amounts to the realization of the Supreme. He exhorted spiritual aspirants to be mindful of the practical disciplines for a truer life, especially complete purification of mind and inner detachment. In all his teachings Sri Ramakrishna relived the ancient Vedantic traditions and revealed to the modern mind the wider and deeper appeal of Vedānta. As Dr. Radhakrishnan says of him, 'He is an illustrious example of the mystical tradition which runs right through the religious history of this country from the days of the Vedic Rishis'.<sup>2</sup>

#### SWAMI VIVEKANANDA AND RESURGENT INDIA

Swami Vivekananda, the great disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, brought down from the immense source, in the summit of

<sup>2</sup> Dr. S. Radhakrishnan: 'Introduction to *The Cultural Heritage of India*'.

Revelation that Sri Ramakrishna was, the perennial stream, through manifold courses. Vivekananda directly inherited the spiritual potency of the great Master and united it with the living currents of Vedanta inherent in the depths of Hinduism. Swami Vivekananda's contribution is so vast and varied that we could at best confine ourselves to a very brief survey of Vedantic thought as it has been propounded by this great leader of modern India, in its comprehensive totality, in a manner suitable to the needs of the times.

Vivekananda's was a dynamic, broad, and complete philosophy of life. With him Vedanta was not a mere intellectual dogma or doctrine but the true basis of all social and moral progress. He brought out the vital potencies of Vedanta that lay hidden behind creeds, dogmas, and rituals. He revitalized the message of Vedanta in all its completeness. In Vedanta he found not merely the faith for a personal religion but a great force for the collective welfare of man. He insisted on a deeper acceptance of life in all its sanctity and sublimity. Vivekananda held forth the immortal message of *abhih* (fearlessness) and self-expansion which the Upanishads preached so boldly. Indeed, his teachings were the exposition of the eternal and universal truths the Upanishads contain. The uniqueness of Vivekananda's application of Vedanta to life lay in his interpretation of the broad basis of Advaita under which the diverse forms of Vedanta were comprehended. The three schools of Vedanta,—Dvaita, Vishishtādvaita, and Advaita—formed, as it were, the three stages of approach to Reality, the culmination being reached in Advaita. Advaita Vedanta is a harmonious doctrine of unity-in-variety, underlying the entire religious life of India, at the same time containing within it the basis for a universal religion of mankind.

One important feature of Vivekananda's message is his teaching of the divinity of man. The first essential in religion, according to him, is to realize the true status of man. His earnest exhortation was: 'Never forget the glory of human nature. We are the

greatest God that ever was or ever will be'. Underlying his inspiring teachings on the dignity of man was the Vedantic idea of 'I am Brahman' (*aham Brahmāsmi*) and the inherent faith in the infinity and immortality of the soul (*ātman*). This central truth of the divinity of man served to restore and re-establish the faith of man in himself. To his countrymen, who had lost confidence in themselves, owing to years of political subjugation, Vivekananda pointed out the Upanishadic dictum of strength invincible (*'nāyamātmā balahinena labhyah'*). He emphasized the great message of strength and exclaimed, 'He is an atheist who does not believe in himself'. He was of the firm opinion that the Vedantic truths of the divinity of the soul and the oneness of existence would serve on the one hand to unite the people of India by harmonizing their superficial differences and on the other to infuse enormous strength into the nation. The perennial truths of Vedanta, of the ultimate unity of man with God, directly give rise to the idea of the universal brotherhood of man, and, at the same time, form the basis of our moral and social life.

Advaita in practice formed, as it were, the core of Vivekananda's teachings. In a letter, he says: 'I am a Vedantist. Sachchidānanda—Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute is my God. I scarcely find any other God than the majestic form of my own Self'.<sup>3</sup> Regarding the doctrine of Maya he said, 'Maya is not a theory for the explanation of the world; it is simply a statement of facts as they exist'.<sup>4</sup> The world we live in is full of contradictions. And one must make one's way through this network of phenomenal existence to the domain of eternal Freedom which is the very essence of our being. To comprehend the real nature of our being, unfettered by the shackles of Maya, is the supreme goal (Mukti). Indeed, absolute Freedom was the key-note of Vivekananda's message to humanity, as of his philosophy of life. Referring to Vive-

<sup>3</sup> *Letters of Swami Vivekananda.*

<sup>4</sup> Lecture on 'Maya and Illusion', in *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. II.



kananda's majestic urge for Freedom, Romain Rolland, his great biographer, says: 'This ceaseless effort to escape from a closed trap has communicated a passion for freedom—ever fresh, ardent, and untiring—to all Indian geniuses, whether divine incarnations, wise philosophers, or poets; but I know few examples so striking as the personality of Vivekananda'.<sup>5</sup>

We see that another remarkable feature of Vivekananda's treatment of Vedanta is the formulation of what he called 'Practical Vedanta'. His aim was to present Vedanta in an understandable manner so that it could be practised by one and all. The supreme ideal of Oneness propounded by him was not a mere intellectual or theoretical doctrine but an active, living principle of life to be followed by men and women in every walk of life. He pointed out: 'In various Upanishads we find that this Vedanta philosophy is not the outcome of meditation in the forest only but that the very best parts of it were thought out and expressed by brains which were busiest in the everyday affairs of life'.<sup>6</sup> Vedanta requires us to combine harmoniously the actual with the ideal and relate intimately the present life to the Life Eternal. Vivekananda lays down the ethics of Vedanta in and through the positive ideas of the oneness of existence and the service of man. God is 'the Oneness, the Unity of all, the Reality of all life and all existence'. His positive and all-comprehending enunciation of 'Practical Vedanta' may be summed up, in his own words: 'In one word the ideal of Vedanta is to know man as he really is, and this is its message, that if you cannot worship your brother man, the manifested God, how can you worship a God who is unmanifested?'<sup>7</sup> The transformed state of affairs that the Vedantic attitude to life would bring about, consequent on one's realization of one's divine nature, is expressed by him as follows:

<sup>5</sup> Romain Rolland: *The Life of Vivekananda and the Universal Gospel*.

<sup>6</sup> *Practical Vedanta*.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

'When we have become free, we need not go mad and throw up society and rush off to die in the forest or the cave; we shall remain where we were, only we shall understand the whole thing'.<sup>8</sup> By its insistence on a deeper and more harmonious combination of Contemplation and Action, of Jñāna and Karma, Practical Vedanta served to fulfil the task begun by the earlier apparently exclusively metaphysical Vedanta.

No mundane distinctions of birth, caste, or creed, can place disabilities on the individual in his freedom to pursue the path of spiritual attainment. What matters is the stage of the individual's self-culture. This was fully recognized by Vivekananda. 'Take every man where he stands and push him forward'—was his advice. He desired that religious teaching should always be constructive, never destructive or condemnatory, because religion, as he has often declared, is the manifestation of the divinity (or perfection) already in man.

Man commits no sin but only error. Ordinarily errors are committed because of weakness or fear, which, in turn, arise from ignorance. Vivekananda taught that man has to become divine by realizing the Divine, by conquering Nature—external and internal. His was the Religion of Truth and Advaita was its firm foundation. 'Truth and nothing but truth, is the watchword of the Advaitist'.<sup>9</sup> In accordance with the principle of Adhikāribheda, Vivekananda very well recognized the importance of the several symbolic forms of worship prescribed for various types of spiritual aspirants. 'The Hindus have discovered that the absolute can only be realized or thought of or stated through the relative, and the images, crosses, and crescents are so many symbols, so many pegs to hang the spiritual ideas on'.<sup>10</sup>

Taking his stand on the rational funda-

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> In the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* we find the exhortation: 'satyameva jayate'.

<sup>10</sup> 'Paper on Hinduism', *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. I.

mentals of Vedanta, Vivekananda formulated his Ideal of a Universal Religion. The concept of Yoga served as a key to this synthetic formulation,—Yoga with its fourfold division, viz. Rāja Yoga, Karma Yoga, Jñāna Yoga, and Bhakti Yoga, meant for persons of different types and temperaments. This central concept of a Universal Religion, emphasized by Vivekananda, would ever serve as the common ground of all religions of the world and go to unite the whole of mankind. That religion is 'the whole soul becoming changed into what it believes' can hardly be challenged. 'It is being and becoming'.<sup>11</sup> Inasmuch as this forms the essence of religion, doctrines or dogmas or rituals or other outer forms have only secondary importance. The intuitive experimental aspect of religion, viz. that religion ultimately is a matter of realization and actual Becoming (*aṣarokṣānubhūti*) was reiterated by Vivekananda who looked upon Vedanta as 'the rationale of religion'.

Throughout his teachings, Vivekananda strove to effect the much-desired reorientation of Vedanta, directly applying the wisdom of the ancient Rishis to the solution of the problems of the present age. Modern and practical Vedanta, as it was incarnate in Swami Vivekananda, the prophet and patriot of India, had its roots in the ageless tradition, and reinvigorated the flow of national genius along right channels, restoring the dignity of and the people's faith in the motherland. Vedanta

<sup>11</sup> 'The Ideal of a Universal Religion', *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. II.

no longer remained any rigidly orthodox, uncompromising, 'other-worldly' doctrine. At the hands of Vivekananda it received a strength and dynamism unprecedented in the recent religious history of the land. It enabled Indians to draw nourishment from the life-giving ideas and ideals of Vedanta in all its integrity and completeness.

Though one could never ascribe any particular school of Vedanta to Swami Vivekananda, yet it may be seen that he laid great and important stress, and that rightly so, on Advaita—which he held would become the foundation of the future religion of thinking humanity. He imparted a synthetic completeness and a practical importance to the essential tenets of the religion and philosophy of the Vedas. 'Advaitism is the last word of religion and thought and the only position from which one can look upon all religions and sects with love'.<sup>12</sup> With his stupendous intellect and unparalleled energy, not to speak of his discerning spiritual vision, Vivekananda has given a wholly new shape to Vedanta, basing his universal gospel on it. As on the one hand he realized the greatness of humanity, so on the other, he visualized the unity and glory of the awakened India. He exhorted his countrymen with the clarion call of the Upanishads—'*Uttiṣṭhata jāgrata prāpya varānnibodhata*',<sup>13</sup> himself rendering it as, 'Arise, Awake! And stop not till the Goal is reached'.

<sup>12</sup> *Letters of Swami Vivekananda*.

<sup>13</sup> *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, I. iii.14.

"To put the Hindu ideas into English and then make out of dry Philosophy and intricate Mythology and queer startling Psychology, a religion which shall be easy, simple, popular and at the same time meet the requirements of the highest minds—is a task only those can understand who have attempted it. The abstract Advaita must become living—poetic—in everyday life; out of hopelessly intricate Mythology must come concrete moral forms; and out of bewildering Yogi-ism must come the most scientific and practical Psychology—and all this must be put in a form so that a child may grasp it. That is my life's work."

—Swami Vivekananda

## NOTES AND COMMENTS

### TO OUR READERS

The story, *Three Obedient Disciples*, is adapted from the third chapter of the Ādi Parva of the *Mahābhārata*. . . .

In all religions the superconscious state is identical, though there are variations in the expositions of the same. Briefly expounding the theory and practice of Rāja (or Kundalini) Yoga, Swami Yatiswarananda of the Ramakrishna Mission describes the psychic centres (or Chakras) of Yogic power, which are, as it were, *The Secret Stairs to Superconsciousness*. . . .

The Pancharatras form a very important branch of the Religion of Bhakti. The Bhakta, with single-minded devotion to God, renounces all attachments and desires and sees Vāsudeva in all beings and all beings in Vasudeva. Prof. Baladeva Upadhyaya, M.A., Sahityacharya, of the Banaras Hindn University, makes an analytical and illuminating survey of *The Philosophy of the Pancharatras*, which is well known in the religious history of India and has exerted considerable influence on the social and cultural life of the people. . . .

Sri Pravas Jivan Chaudhury, M.Sc., P.R.S., D.PHIL. of Viswabharati University, with whose admirable writings our readers are already familiar, contributes a learned and thought-provoking article on the important aspects of *Vedanta Phenomenology*. This scholarly study of transcendental phenomenology reveals the author's profound knowledge of philosophy and science, both ancient and modern. . . .

In *The Cultural Background and the Legacy of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda*, Sri Devabrata Sinha, M.A., a new and welcome contributor to *Prabuddha Bharata*, investigates the process of cultural and spiritual renaissance in India since the advent of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda.

### VEDANTA AND THE WEST

On the evening of 26th March 1952 a new chapel was dedicated at the Vedanta Society, 34 west 71st street, New York City, N. Y., U.S.A. It was a truly inspiring and holy experience, demonstrating practically the Vedantic thesis that there is the same Truth in all religions. Ministers of five different religions heartily joined in offering prayers and invoking blessings on the Chapel.

Swami Pavitrananda, Head of the Vedanta Society, sounded the spiritual key-note of the great occasion and gave a brief but comprehensive outline of Vedantic teaching. Touching on the history of the Society, he told of the founding of the Society by Swami Vivekananda and the carrying on of the work by other direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna and of Swami Vivekananda.

Swami Akhilananda of the Vedanta Centres of Boston and Providence spoke of the spiritual message of Hinduism and its important impact upon the West. He was followed by Venerable Hosan Seki, Minister of the New York Buddhist Church, who offered a prayer in Japanese. Rabbi Samuel Segal of the Mt. Nebo Temple of New York read from the Old Testament in Hebrew and prayed in Hebrew. Reverend Allen E. Claxton, Minister of the Broadway Temple Methodist Church of New York, recited from the Epistles in the New Testament and offered his Christian prayer. Mr. Abraham Chowdhury, representative of Islam, concluded the prayers with an invocation in Arabic.

Mr. Christopher Isherwood, author and poet, with feeling humility spoke of his personal experiences and understanding of Vedanta and its application in the lives of all.

Mr. John van Druten, noted author and playwright, gave a masterful talk on Vedanta and the place of the chapel in our lives. He said:

'I would like to ask what this is that we are dedicating to-night. The invitation calls it a 'chapel'. Others may call it a church, or a temple. What do we mean by these words? What are they? There is a theory that a church is the residence of God—the home of God—a place set aside for worship for that reason, and therefore more holy, more sacred, more divine than other places.

'Do we believe this? Is not the teaching of the Advaita the fact that we ourselves are the temple, all of us? Is not our body the temple, our body and our minds, and the whole of the visible world? I heard the Swami say the other day that God is the world we see, and the world we do not see God is the whole universe. God is All. God Is. Is that not our teaching?

'How often do we know this? How often do we see it? Very seldom. That is the mystical experience for which we all long—the only thing we know that we should all long for—a glimpse outside of reason of what is deeper than reason. That is the final unbandaging of our eyes. It happens just occasionally by the grace of God, as the grace of God, this momentary, revelatory experience of universal Godhead in everything we see, so that it is revealed in the very cups and railings as Vivekananda saw it. . . . When we have seen it, we need no church or chapel; we know that we do not need them. The church or chapel is everywhere and in everything. But when we do not see it, when it is removed again from our awareness, when we feel the bandages on our eyes once more, then we need that chapel as a memorial, a mark of that unbandaging if we have ever felt it, a symbol that we believe in it and long for it, if we have it not'.

Interpreting broadly but briefly the meaning of religion, the learned speaker observed:

'What is our religion? I should omit that word "our". What is religion? A belief and an understanding of what the world is about. What do all the outer forms of religion teach and believe in? Three things, as Vivekananda has told us: sin, men, books.

Sin, especially. Sin is an essential to the forms and shows of most religious beliefs. But true religion—and I do not mean our religion, but religion as I have learned to see it wholly, as the basis of all religious faith—does not, cannot believe in sin. At best, it can believe only in mistakes, in ignorance, in going the wrong way to find that unbandaging.

'There are pictures on the walls here, and there are texts. What are these? They are signs of the right way, of the men who have found the right way, of words that may help us to the right way. They are signs on the right road, direction posts, milestones, bits and pieces of maps. That is all.

'Do we believe in a personal God, personally reincarnated? Vivekananda said that the impersonal God, when seen through the eyes of sense, becomes personal, and that His incarnation seems a personal one to us. He is incarnated so as many times as we need so to see it. Yet if God is impersonal, the personal eyes which present that personal sense are what is wrong. We need the removal of those personal bandages that make us see that way. The bandages are the signs of what we need to be delivered from'.

Ending his talk on the theme that all present were there in dedication of themselves in the search of the Truth that religion is all-embracing, Mr. van Druten said:

'All the churches, the books, the prayers to that outside personal God are what Vivekananda called the kindergarten of religion. Even this chapel that we are dedicating to-night is only a piece of that kindergarten. But it is a beautiful and a needed one. We are still children, in need of that unbandagement, and this is one of the places in which we may be helped to find it. We all feel that we need friends, and advisers, and doctors, and helpers, believing that we cannot exist or carry on alone. This is right if we mean by "alone" the independent existence of our so-called separate selves, and that is normally what we do mean when we say that. It is wrong if we know what we truly are, if we

know that no man is ever alone in that way unless he wishes to be, unless he is deluded into being. This is one of the places where we can learn that.

'At our best we feel that we must talk to God, our friend and teacher, or that we must listen to God and ask Him to talk to us. We feel that our homes, our personal lives are no place in which to meet or to receive that Friend. These have not yet been cleaned, they are too full of smoke and drink and sex and income-tax, and of desires and obsessions. That is why we feel that we need chapels, because they are better, cleaner places, until we learn that all places are the same, and

then our own homes will have nothing left to be cleaned of, and we will understand that the Friend is our own essence and the essence of all living.

'This chapel is the meeting-place for all men of any form of religion, where they can come together to hear the truth that embraces all, and makes all religions one—the truth that religion is an all-embracing experience. That is the basic teaching that we call Vedanta. We are here to-night for the dedication to the search for that last unbandaging; I would call it rather the dedication of ourselves to that search'.

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## REVIEWS AND NOTICES

MAHATMA (LIFE OF M. K. GANDHI) (Vol. III).  
By D. G. TENDULKAR, *Distributors: Publications Department, The Times of India Press, Fort, Bombay 1. Pages 416. Price Rs. 25.*

This third volume of the monumental eight-volume biography of Mahatma Gandhi, undertaken by the learned author D. G. Tendulkar, amply keeps up the uniformity of standard of the two previous volumes, both in the skilful handling of the wealth of biographical material as well as the array of highly useful illustrations and documents in facsimile and in the manner of its get-up and printing. The first two volumes gave us glimpses of the evolution of Gandhiji's personality in the light of the political, social, and religious movements which tended to transform the outlook of the Indian people. The story of Gandhiji's life up to the year 1929, covered by the two previous volumes, showed the revolution which Gandhiji effected in the policy of the Congress—from an attitude of meek subservience to and forced collaboration with the foreign power to one of bold challenge and non-co-operation in the name of the 'dumb millions of India'. The second volume appropriately closed with the passing of the famous resolution on complete independence at the Lahore session of the Congress.

The present volume takes up the thread of the narrative and covers the period from 1929 to 1934. This period, packed with events of great import for India and the world at large, is dealt with in the usual masterly manner, quoting, as before,

original sources where necessary. The technique of Satyagraha, as a means for effecting a non-violent transformation of society, reached its perfection in the historic Dandi March of Gandhiji (1930), undertaken to defy salt laws imposed on a people already burdened with taxes and groaning under poverty. The 'veiled form of martial law' which was let loose by the powers that be, the subsequent dramatic arrest of Gandhiji on the midnight of 4th May 1930, the storm of protests throughout the land, and the unabated enthusiasm with which Gandhiji's followers carried on the agitation form some of the most readable narrations in the biography. The next phase of Gandhiji's life, viz. the dominant role he played in the Round Table Conference held in London in 1931 (which he attended under the mandate from the Karachi session of the Congress) occupies a considerable part of this volume. The learned biographer reveals how this visit to the West gave Gandhiji ample opportunities for a study of Western social organization at close quarters and also for coming into personal contact with eminent savants like Romain Rolland and some political leaders. His contact with Western society convinced him all the more of the futility of a social organization based on force, and of the efficacy of non-violence as a broad basis for a peaceful reconstruction of society. His presence in the West, the simplicity of his life, and his firm advocacy of the philosophy of non-violence made a profound impression on many people there who hailed him as the 'spiritual ambassador of India'.

The year 1932, after his return from the R.T.C. in London, saw Gandhiji face to face with various intriguing situations in India created by the then Government in order to alienate the so-called 'untouchables' or the depressed classes—'Harijans', as Gandhiji loved to call them—from the body-politic. In addition there was the wave of repression following nationalist upsurge in various parts of India and the arrest of the leaders of the country. The arrest of Gandhiji on 4th January 1932, his epic fast in the cause of justice for the depressed classes, and his negotiations with leaders of different parties for an agreed settlement on the issue, are narrated with admirable clarity and accuracy.

The important phase of Gandhiji's activities in the cause of the upliftment of the Harijans forms the concluding portion of the book. As a medium for the expression of his views on such burning social questions, Gandhiji started the weekly *Harijan* in February 1933. His all-India tour (begun in 1933) in the cause of the Harijans, his untiring efforts for the relief of the people who suffered as a result of the great earthquake in Bihar, and his inauguration of the Swadeshi movement (in 1934) after the conclusion of his Harijan

tour bring us to the end of the present volume. This period of Gandhiji's life ends with the severance of his formal connection with the Congress. Nevertheless Gandhiji and Congress remained inseparable.

Great as he was as a political leader, Gandhiji was greater as a friend of the masses. This blend of a hero in action, a humanist, and a seeker after Truth, makes Gandhiji a unique personality in history. We congratulate the author for presenting this side of Gandhiji's personality faithfully and objectively. Moreover, the biographer has maintained the continuity of the narrative in the three volumes published. While political events are elaborately presented in their true perspective, the biography yet retains its human interest as a document of invaluable significance on the life and activities of one who synthesized great spiritual idealism and intense political fervour. Personal touches by the author, at places, regarding Gandhiji's life, add grace and dignity to the work.

Appendices I and II are two important—hitherto unpublished—letters of Gandhiji, one to Jawaharlal Nehru and the other to Vallabh Bhai Patel, stating reasons for severing his formal connection with the Congress.

## NEWS AND REPORTS

### RAMAKRISHNA MISSION SISTER NIVEDITA GIRLS' SCHOOL, CALCUTTA

#### GOLDEN JUBILEE AN APPEAL

Miss Margaret E. Noble, better known as Sister Nivedita, was the Founder of this Girls' School named after her. As a true disciple of Swami Vivekananda she could enter into the very spirit of Vedanta as reflected in the institutions and achievements of this country, and lay the foundations of a type of training and culture for our women which would gradually enable them to bring life into harmony with higher ideals.

In November 1898 Sister Nivedita had the institution inaugurated by the Holy Mother in the presence of Swami Vivekananda, Swami Brahma-nanda, and other leading disciples of Sri Ramakrishna. In 1918 it was affiliated to the Ramakrishna Mission.

For more than half a century this institution has been striving for the spread of education among women, with a staff of workers proud of the noble sacrifice and example of the distinguished Sister. Education was given free of cost till 1947, when,

for the first time, fees became payable in the Secondary Section only. Besides regular students many respectable ladies received education from here and many poor women got free vocational training from the Industrial Section and were enabled, to some extent, to earn their livelihood.

Taking the vow of poverty and self-denial, Sister Nivedita dedicated her life to the cause of education for women. Her contribution towards India's struggle for freedom has been no less important.

The authorities of the Ramakrishna Mission Sister Nivedita Girls' School have decided to offer their homage to the memory of the great Founder by organizing the School's Golden Jubilee Celebrations according to the following proposed scheme:

(1) The Golden Jubilee to be celebrated for one week in December, 1952.

(2) An authentic and detailed biography of Sister Nivedita to be published both in English and Bengali.

(3) A brief history of the School to be published.

(4) To bring out a historical review of the education of women in ancient India.

(5) To offer wreaths at the Sister's Memorial Pillar at the Darjeeling crematorium.

(6) To organize an essay competition on the life and work of Sister Nivedita among girls' schools of West Bengal.

(7) To arrange an exhibition of arts and crafts.

(8) To organize a public meeting to pay homage to the memory of the Sister.

(9) To arrange a reunion of old students of the Nivedita Girls' School.

(10) To organize sports and social performances by the present students.

(11) To make gifts of uniforms to the children of the Primary Section.

(12) To make an endowment to the Calcutts University for a Scholarship.

(13) To endow a fund with the University enabling it to award a gold medal annually to a talented student.

(14) To buy a piece of land for the development of the Industrial Section.

To give effect to the above scheme a sum of about Rs. 1,00,000 will be needed. We appeal to the sympathetic and generous public to come forward and help the Nivedita Girls' School to make the Golden Jubilee Celebrations a complete success. Contributions will be thankfully received and acknowledged by:

(1) Secretary, Nivedita Girls' School Golden Jubilee Fund,  
5, Nivedita Lane,  
Calcutta—3;

(2) General Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission,  
P. O. Belur Math,  
Dt. Howrah, West Bengal.

#### RAMAKRISHNA MISSION SEVASHRAMA, VRINDABAN

##### REPORT FOR 1951

The Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Vrindaban, an up to date hospital with 55 beds, has completed the forty-fifth year of its useful existence. The following is a brief account of its work during 1951.

*Indoor Hospital:* The total number of general cases (including eye cases) treated during the year was 1,559, and that of surgical cases was 2,091. The number of admitted cases was the maximum reached in the whole history of the Sevashrama.

*Nanda Baba Eye Hospital:* The total of indoor admissions was 893 and the out-patients department treated 26,855 cases. 5,037 major and minor operations were performed.

*Outdoor Dispensary:* The total number of cases

treated during the year was 1,07,499 of which 33,041 were new. The number of surgical cases was 1,344.

*X-Ray Department:* 185 patients were examined in the department.

*Clinical Laboratory and Electro-therapy:* 1,468 samples of blood, urine, and sputum were examined during the year in the clinical laboratory. 31 cases were treated by Electro-therapy.

*Refugee Relief:* 14 refugee patients were treated in the indoor hospital and 9,142 in the outdoor dispensary.

*Pecuniary Help:* Monthly and occasional relief was given to 30 persons, the expenditure amounting to Rs. 253.

*Financial Position:* The total receipts for the year, under the General Fund, amounted to Rs. 50,781-2-6 and the total expenditure was Rs. 54,180-12-0, leaving a deficit of Rs. 3,399-9-6. At the beginning of every year the Sevashrama has to take a loan in order to enable it to proceed with the transactions under the General Fund. It is, therefore, essential that the Fund should close with a minimum balance of Rs. 10,000. As such more contributions for the General Fund from the generous public are needed.

*Needs:* (1) The Sevashrama, being situated just on the banks of the Jamuna, is threatened every year with floods. It is also in an out of the way locality and patients cannot avail themselves of its services easily and that to the desired extent. To obviate these difficulties, it has been decided to shift the Sevashrama to a more prominent and safe site near the Mathura-Vrindaban main road. The Sevashrama was given possession of this new site, measuring 22.76 acres, by the Government of Uttar Pradesh on 1st October 1951. The total amount needed for the construction of the new hospital buildings, doctors' and nurses' quarters, monastery, shrine, etc., comes to Rs. 6,56,000. The management appeal to the generous public to contribute liberally for this genuine humanitarian project.

(2) The management of the Sevashrama is faced every year with the hard problem of raising about Rs. 20,000 towards the expenditure of the Sevashrama. It is, therefore, essential that the Permanent Fund of the Sevashrama should be considerably strengthened so that its finances may be stabilized to a reasonable extent. Persons desirous of endowing beds in memory of their friends and relatives may do so by kindly contributing Rs. 5,000 per bed.

Contributions in cash or kind may be sent to: The Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Vrindaban, Dist. Mathura, U.P.

## FAMINE IN 24-PARGANAS

### RAMAKRISHNA MISSION'S APPEAL

The public is already aware of the acute distress prevailing among the poor and some of the middle-class people in the district of 24-Parganas. There is scarcity of essential food-stuffs, specially rice, due to the famine condition prevalent in a good portion of the district. All visitors to these areas are moved to tears at the sad plight of thousands of ill-clad famished souls, begging for a morsel of food. Our representatives found that in each Union five to six thousand people on an average are affected, of whom about two thousand are severely hit owing to their lack of purchasing capacity. Utter starvation is threatening those helpless victims and is driving them to blank despair. Many women who come for doles wear tattered rags.

In the second week of June we purchased 250 maunds of rice, and since the third week we have been distributing doles in the Bhabanipur and Hingulganj Unions under Hasanabad P. S. and in Haroa P. S. The Government of West Bengal has sanctioned 1,000 maunds of rice and 1,000 maunds of Atta to be distributed by the Mission as gratuitous relief in the above two Thanas. Our survey of the affected area is continuing.

Large funds are required for this relief work, which has to be conducted on an extensive scale for some months. We appeal to the kind-hearted people all over the country to contribute liberally to our Relief Fund to enable us to mitigate the distress of our famine-stricken sisters and brothers. Contributions for the purpose will be thankfully received at the following addresses:

1. The General Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission, P. O. Belur Math (Howrah).
2. The Manager, Udbodhan Office, 1, Udbodhan Lane, Baghbazar, Calcutta-3.
3. The Manager, Advaita Ashrama, 4, Wellington Lane, Calcutta-13.
4. The Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, 111, Russa Rd., Calcutta-26.

Belur Math (Howrah)  
21-6-1952

SWAMI MADHAVANANDA,  
*General Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission*

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“Don't you see why I am starting orphanages, famine-relief works, etc.? Don't you see how Sister Nivedita, an English lady, has learnt to serve Indians so well, by doing even menial work for them? And can't you, being Indians, similarly serve your own fellow-countrymen? Go, all of you, wherever there is an outbreak of plague or famine, or wherever the people are in distress, and mitigate their sufferings. . . . Alas! the people of the country cannot get anything to eat, and how can we have the heart to raise food to our mouths? . . . Seeing the poor people of our country starving for food a desire comes to me to overthrow all ceremonial worship and learning, and go round from village to village collecting money from the rich by convincing them through force of character and Sadhana, and to spend the whole life in serving the poor.”

—Swami Vivekananda