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“उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत ।”

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

## TODAY I AM MY MOTHER'S CHILD

( TO SRI SARADA DEVI )

Today I am my Mother's child.  
Her wind of grace has found my heart  
And blown away the deep despair of  
haunting yesterdays.  
It fanned the tiny, sickly flame  
Until it glowed intense and bright  
And caused the fearful shadows to depart.

Today I am my Mother's child  
For She has rent with lightning stroke  
The sleazy and tormenting veil of Māyā's tyranny.  
Forgotten are the names of things—the false  
delights—the tinselly joy,  
The pull of life and cheap conceits—  
the ceaseless I—I—I.  
She firmly grasped my failing hand  
And lifted me from swirling shapes  
To lofty peaks of soundlessness and  
blissful quietude.  
The frenzied dance? It was Her play!  
I am my Mother's child today.

—CECILLE POMERENE

# 'GARNERED IN MY MEMORY'\*

(REMINISCENCES OF THE HOLY MOTHER)

BY SWAMI GAURISWARANANDA

From my childhood I have been interested in fruit and flower gardens. I had planted some jasmine, Beli (bael), lotus-oleander, marigold and other flowers in the courtyard in front of the Holy Mother's house and also along the edges of the 'Punya-pukur' pond next to the house. Mother used to feel delighted to see these flowers. One day I saw Mother after her noonday rest digging at the roots of the jasmine plant. When I took the spud away from her hand saying, 'I shall do that, you do not have to do it', she said, 'It is you who do everything. You see, I love jasmine flowers and so, seeing that it is nearly time for them to bloom, I am only making the ground ready for watering the plants'.

Once I took her a lemon graft I had prepared myself. It had seven or eight lemons on it. Mother was delighted and went about saying to everybody, 'See how clever the boy is! He has brought a scion actually in fruit!'

When the lotus-oleander bloomed for the first time, Mother would not let anyone pick the flowers. She would say to everybody 'Let R— (meaning me) come and see how many flowers have blossomed on his tree'. As soon as I arrived on a Saturday, Mother took me by the hand and leading me to the tree, pointed at the flowers saying, 'Do you see what beautiful flowers are out? And how sweet is their fragrance!' She handed me her flower-tray. After I had picked the flowers with my hands, she worshipped the Master (Sri Ramakrishna) with them.

Once I broke off a whole branch of the Āmalakī (emblic myrobalan) tree with fruits growing on it, and gave it to Mother. Mother felt displeased at this and forbade me ever to

break off branches with fruits on them, from a tree in fruit, especially the Amalaki tree. This particular Amalaki tree stood beside the river Āmodar and from this point the current of the river turned northward. Mother continued, 'The thirty-three crores of gods live in the shade of the Amalaki tree. Should one meditate and pray under the Amalaki, one's prayers will be all the more fruitful'. Later she asked me to put aside all the leaves growing on that branch, to be used for worship, and she explained, 'Like the leaves of the bael tree these leaves too may be used in Puja'.

On another occasion, J— Maharaj and I were planting some banana and other trees in the garden on the northern side of the 'Punya-pukur' pond. We had begun work early in the morning. When it became very late for breakfast, Mother stood by the ghat of the pond and began calling us to come and take our breakfast. We replied we would come away very soon. A little later, Mother again started calling us anxiously and urged us saying, 'After taking your breakfast you can go and finish the work'. I grew impatient, but J— Maharaj would not let me go. When Mother again called us for the third time, she called out to me only, leaving out J— Maharaj; so I immediately threw down my spade and ran to her. I did not listen to J— Maharaj who kept on saying that only a little of the work remained to be completed and that we would go together. Mother was very pleased and said, '... You wash your mouth and hands and sit down to eat'. As I was going to sit for my breakfast, Nalinī-di<sup>1</sup>

\* Translated by Srimati Lila Majumdar from the original Bengali article published in the *Udbodhan* (Vaishākh 1361 B.S.).

<sup>1</sup> A niece of the Holy Mother.

said that the spot of work in that garden was unclean and that I should not eat before I had had a bath; she insisted, 'Fie! How can you relish eating without having bathed?' But Mother rebuked her saying, 'Be quiet. They are boys and so are always clean. Nothing can defile them. Your own mind is unclean, and that is why you are always squeamishly worrying yourself to death about such contaminations'. When Mother said this, I commenced to eat. Mother too was pleased.

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Mother was always attentive even about minor details. One day I was getting ready some sal leaves on which food was to be served. I sprinkled a little water on them, shook them out and laid them down, when Mother said, 'Oh, dear, the boys will eat from them; do wash them properly, or else the dust will remain on them'.

Another day I was laying down some mats as seats for people to sit upon for their meal. From her veranda, Mother saw me doing it and said, 'They are not laid straight'. Even after I had made some slight alterations, she said, 'No, it is not right yet'. When I could not detect where the defect lay, she came over herself and laid the mat-seats down properly. Then I saw that the mats were laid in parallel lines and the front edges were all in a straight line.

One day a devotee had brought a very large bael fruit from Banaras. Mother had put it away under her bedstead. She was sitting on the veranda in front of Nalini-di's room and was cutting vegetables. When she had finished, she asked me to fetch the bael fruit. I had never seen such a huge bael. So taking it for a pumpkin, I said, 'Why, Mother, there is no bael under your bedstead'. Mother said, 'I put it there myself; where can it go? Look for it properly'. I said again, 'No, Mother, there is no bael'. Then she asked, 'What do you find under the bedstead?' I answered, 'There is a pumpkin'. Then Mother said, laughing, 'Well, then, bring that

"pumpkin" here'. As soon as I lifted it I knew it was a bael. Mother began to laugh all the more.

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The Holy Mother's expenses were certainly all paid, but she never had much money on her hands. She would open her box and give me money for marketing. She would give me almost all the money in the box and say, 'Well, bring a rupee's worth of oil, a rupee's worth of flour, two rupee's worth of ghee' and so on. I would say, 'No, Mother, let me note down what you tell me. Then I shall buy the things by weight—five seers of the one, two-and-a-half of the other, and so forth. It will be more economical'. Mother would feel delighted and say, 'Make whatever calculations you like and buy them. I can't keep such detailed accounts, any way'.

At times when all the money was spent, she would say, 'Well, Indu will be sending money in a few days; then we can buy things in larger quantities'. I seem to remember that Indu Babu of Ranchi used to send Mother fifteen rupees by the first or second of each month. In those days rice did not cost more than two rupees and eight annas per maund.

Once our teacher Prabodh Babu met Indu Babu at Jayrambati. The two of them would become engrossed in talk. Two or three days later Prabodh Babu expressed a wish to go and stay at Koālpāra, because too many guests would only mean more trouble for Mother. Mother however said, 'Why at Koalpara? Why not remain here? After all it means only an extra handful of food; it is no trouble to me. And the two of you are so friendly. Stay here itself as long as Indu is here'.

I was splitting thin strips of firewood for the kitchen. Saying, 'Give it to me', Prabodh Babu started splitting the wood. No sooner had he done so than the Mother came near the parlour herself and cried, 'No, my son. You do not have to do that. R— is used to it, let him do it. You people are advanced in age, your hands will begin to ache'. The teacher said, 'We are "gentlemen!" Therefore *disqualified!* We have not

the right to serve Mother even with our meagre effort'.

The Holy Mother was very fond of songs. Once I— Babu, Mokshada Babu, and some others had come to Jayrambati. They sang a number of songs for Mother. Mother would listen with great pleasure. At last they went round Mother in a circle singing devotional songs (*kīrtan*). Once revered B— sang many songs at Jayrambati. Our Head Pandit played on the drum in accompaniment. The singing continued till late at night and Mother was delighted. Many people of the village had come too.

When journals like the *Udbodhan* and the *Tattvamanjarī* arrived, Mother would inquire, 'Is there any writing by Sarat (meaning Swami Saradananda) in the *Udbodhan*?' If there was, she would ask us to read it out to her. Once a Sanskrit hymn was published in the *Tattvamanjarī*. When I read it out to her, Mother said, 'Say it translated into Bengali'. As I did not know the meaning of some of the words, and not having a dictionary at hand, I said, 'I do not know the meanings of all the words. When I go to school, I shall get our Pandit to explain it all to me, and then I shall come and tell you'. But she would not leave me and insisted, 'Tell me now as much as you can'.

When a woman devotee wished to serve the Holy Mother personally, Mother said, 'No, dear. The Master (Sri Ramakrishna) is worshipped here. It will not do. I am mother of both good men and bad men; I am mother of good women as well as bad women. But it will not do in the case of the worship of the Master. How many women are pure to the very bone? They can be counted on one's fingers'.

Once P—, a Brahmachari from Koalpara (Ashrama), came to Mother and expressed great sorrow because he had to attend to many duties like cutting grass for the cows, chopping hay for cattle, digging in the garden, weaving etc., so much so that he had no time left for Japa and meditation. Hearing this, Mother said, 'Quite so. You are the son of a weaver,

so you may weave. But how will it do to burden you with so much work? I am going to write to K— somewhat to lighten your work'. Mother asked me to write the letter. Like the affectionate mother that she was, she had the letter written. . . .

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When I first saw revered Sarat Maharaj (Swami Saradananda) at Jayrambati, I was afraid to go near him, having seen his huge person even from a distance. So having seen him on the road, I straightaway went to Mother. When I made my salutation to her, she said to me with great pleasure, 'R—, have you seen that Sarat is here?' I answered, 'Yes, Mother, I have seen him from a distance'. Mother said, 'Did you not go near him? Did you not make your salutation to Sarat?' I said, 'No, Mother, I am afraid'. Mother cried, 'You foolish boy! Who could ever be afraid of Sarat! You will see how he will love you. Go now'. I went to revered Sarat Maharaj from the inner apartment of Mother's house and made my obeisance. . . . He enquired of me my name, where my home was, why I had come to Jayrambati, and whether I had any friends or relations. Thinking that because I was quite young he did not understand that it was to Mother only that I used to come, I answered frankly, 'I come to Mother every Saturday and go back to school on Monday'. He then understood.

He spoke such affectionate words that I was filled with joy. A few minutes later, Mother began calling me by name and gave me something to eat. Then it was no longer difficult for revered Sarat Maharaj to realize that the Mother loved me very much. When he heard that I was well known to everyone in the house, Sarat Maharaj said to me, 'Look here, you just observe what work Mother does and when. Come and tell me when she has no work on hand. Then I will ask you to go and find out (from her) if I may go to her to make my salutation. Now remember to do exactly as I have told you. Don't try to apply your own cleverness'. I realized that he was cautioning me lest I should disturb

Mother by mentioning to her, when she was busy, about his wanting to come and pay his respects to her. I would do exactly as he had ordered and tell him, 'Maharaj, Mother has finished with the vegetables and is now sitting in her room'. As soon as he heard this, Maharaj would say, 'Go to her and ask her, with folded hands, if I may now go and make my salutation to her'. Soon after I asked Mother, she would say, 'Yes, dear, ask Sarat to come'.

I would follow Maharaj, stand on the veranda, and watch everything. The door of the Mother's room was narrow and Maharaj was quite stout. He could not enter straight

but had to pass through it sideways. Mother would be seated on her bedstead with her feet on the floor. Maharaj would kneel down, place his head on the blessed feet of Mother and thus make his obeisance to her. Mother would then place both her hands on his head and bless him. After that Maharaj would ask, 'Are you well, Mother?' Mother would answer, 'Yes, my son, I am well. Are you well?' He would reply, 'Yes, Mother, I am well'. Every day I would hear these same questions and answers. After he had made his obeisance, Maharaj would get up slowly and without turning his back on Mother, would walk backwards out of the room. . . .

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## WOMAN'S PLACE OF HONOUR IN HINDU SOCIETY

BY THE EDITOR

Well has it been said that the best thermometer to the determining of the rise or fall of progress of a nation is its treatment of its women. There is no better and truer index of a society's cultural and spiritual level than the status which it affords to woman and the loftiness of the aspirations with which it inspires her. As human beings, created and endowed by the divine will, women are as much entitled as men to opportunities for self-improvement. Though the distinction of sex and its limiting peculiarities necessitates a broad division of duties and responsibilities between man and woman, the popular emphasis on the inherent inferiority of the latter to the former is largely indefensible. The sensitivity with which the complex and mutually complementary character of the co-existence of men and women everywhere is seen to manifest itself becomes a test, as it were, of civilization. If society were pictured as a bird, man and woman become its two necessary and equally important wings. The history of the world is not merely the doings

of its great men only and no civilization can overlook the valuable contributions of many of its great women. In every society, from the most primitive to the most modern, men and women have played their respective roles, though the nature and extent of equality between the sexes has widely differed from place to place and from time to time on the face of the earth.

Masculine aggressiveness and feminine submissiveness have been known to have existed as natural traits from the earliest beginnings of mankind's sojourn on earth. As such, man has exercised his dominant role in his treatment of the opposite sex, though evidence is not wanting to show that there have been outstanding examples of women displaying more valour, strength, and martial spirit than men. But what constitutes a definite relationship between man and woman and determines the woman's honoured status in society is the family. Anthropologists give us to understand that marriage and motherhood have been considered the normally

accepted functions of woman in every human society, ancient or modern. Respect for womanhood arises from the fact that woman is privileged to be a mother, under whose affectionate and vigilant tutelage the young hopefuls of the next generation develop their distinctive gifts of head and heart. The historical survey of human marriage reveals that the family as a fundamental institution of civilized social organization afforded woman the best opportunity for the fulfilment of her natural and essentially feminine aspirations. As the stability of the family and the future destiny of the offspring depended largely on the woman, she received more than equal treatment, nay, honoured or privileged consideration, from man in most ancient societies. In this respect, ancient Hindu civilization, more than any other, recognized and rendered to woman her true place of honour and reverence.

Contrary to what modern criticism may aver or present-day social conditions may warrant, women in the India of the past enjoyed considerable freedom and privileges in the spheres of activity specially suited to them. The idea of perfect equality existed, without the least trace of rivalry or dissatisfaction so very characteristic of our times. The ancient Hindus gave practical expression to the idea of perfect womanhood by associating it with perfect and legitimate independence. To them such freedom on the part of woman was not meant to be construed as unrestricted liberty to act in any manner detrimental to the well-established traditions of the community. Freedom and equality, as between man and woman, have their delicately poised norms and etiquette, circumscribed by the ideals and values for which the nation stands. For the sake of one man's or woman's exclusive pleasure, where such pleasure clashes with the larger interest of the community, no time-honoured principle of universal well-being can be sacrificed. In accordance with this wisdom of the ages, the ancient lawgivers of India laid down rules for the guidance of both men and women (and not

women alone, to their disadvantage). The inequalities and disqualifications to which women were seen to have been subjected at a later period of India's history, whatever the justification in their behalf, have temporarily reversed the process of original Indian tradition. Yet, one cannot say without reservation that in all these later centuries, when the progressive emancipation of the Hindu woman became retarded, there was any deliberate desire on the part of the Hindu man to disrespect her or deprive her of her pristine place of honour in society.

The ideal woman in India is the mother. To the Hindu, within the family or without, the word 'woman' calls up to the mind motherhood first and foremost. This Hindu conception of woman as mother reaches its highest peak in the worship of God as Mother. From the hoary past to the modern times, the individual's religious consciousness, developing and deepening round this concept of the worship of the Divine Mother as the Goddess Almighty, has ingrained in the mind of every cultured (not necessarily literate) Indian a belief, stronger than reasoned conviction, that the woman as mother—either his own or another's or of his children—should be honoured. This tendency towards deification of any person or thing considered sacred or extraordinarily unique is conspicuous in the Indian nation. What greater veneration can characterize man's attitude to woman than to address her, young or old, as 'mother' and to look upon her as a human representation of the Mother Divine? The great lawgiver Manu, some of whose utterances regarding women are taken exception to by moderners, has extolled motherhood by saying, 'A spiritual preceptor is ten times superior (in glory) to a teacher. A father is a hundred times superior to the spiritual preceptor. But a mother is a hundred times superior (in glory) even to the father'.

It is but natural that where motherhood is held supreme, the ideal of monogamous marriage is insisted upon as the highest and best. By contrast, the life of a woman who

remained unmarried or was childless was considered incomplete. So, non-marriage or marriage without motherhood were held emotionally and socially undesirable and thus were not encouraged. The high ideal of married life, for which Hindu society is proverbially famous, has been nobly expressed in the marriage hymn of the *Rig-Veda*, as also in several Smritis and Tantras of later periods. Lifelong faith, devotion, and love between husband and wife were undoubtedly aimed at. The status of a wife is pictured clearly as one of dignity and importance, whereby she was assured of peace, joy, and prosperity. She is the mistress of the household and from that follows tremendous responsibility. Says Manu: 'Women are the light of their home and it is their glory that they are the mothers of the human race. Therefore they deserve worship from all. There is no difference between women and the Goddess of Fortune'. The woman, as wife, shares fully in all the joys and sorrows of her husband and becomes a real partner in all his activities. Her presence and active participation are obligatory in many religious sacrifices. The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* declares, 'One who is without a wife is not capable of worshipping God properly'.

From time immemorial life in India has centred round the family ideal, and the family is regarded as the proper and characteristic place for the full play of womanly virtues. Perverse thinking has interpreted this as an injustice to woman because she is encouraged to stay at home in preference to the rough and tumble of outdoor activity not befitting the physical and mental make-up natural to womanhood. Many specious untruths and half-truths about the so-called inferiority of the Hindu woman in society have been sedulously given currency by Western writers and some of their Indian apologists. In support of their views, these critics point out the status of woman during the period of foreign conquest when society grew rigid and reactionary and the stringency of man-made protective measures placed woman at a dis-

advantage. Social and political unrest during centuries of national struggle against invasions and insecurity of life and honour had compelled many changes, desirable and undesirable, resulting in a gradual decline in the position and status of women in our society. Women's freedom of speech, movement, and public appearance was curtailed, education and Vedic studies were somewhat restricted, proprietary rights were lessened, and in many other ways they felt helpless and dependent on men. But such an unsatisfactory state of affairs, whatever the causes of it, can never be justified, especially when we know for certain that ancient Hindu society had evolved and maintained highly satisfactory standards about the treatment of women. Though from the beginnings of the Smṛiti and Purāṇa period women were deprived of their rights to Upanayana, performance of Vedic sacrifices jointly with their husbands, and even advanced secular knowledge, no actual hardship in practical life was ever placed on them. However, compared with the Vedic period, there has been a general deterioration in the status of woman. Modern Hindu society has had to contend with the remote consequences of this process of decline and also with the confusion in ideals and practices engendered by the unfamiliar but alluring influences exerted by Semitic and Christian civilizations.

It is surprising that not many Indians, not to speak of foreigners, are aware of the fact that the Hindu scriptures give as high a place of honour to woman as to man. Both man and woman are permitted equal right to the highest spiritual realization. No other scripture of the world has given to the woman such equality with man as the Vedas of the Hindus. The Old Testament depicts woman as an instrument in the hands of Satan for the tempting and causing the fall of man. The Biblical account of woman, far from giving her a high place of honour, expresses, on the whole, the view that she is created for man's pleasure and because of her frailty has brought sin, suffering, and death into the world. The Semitic religions have generally

assigned to woman a place in the background, completely subordinate to that of man. With the spread of the ascetic and monastic views of life, overemphasized by Buddhism and Jainism, the attitude of society towards woman was further adversely affected in Hindu society. It was no better in the countries of the West, if not worse, even at a time when Indian civilization was at its height. According to Socrates, 'Woman is the source of all evil'. Says Tertullin, 'Woman is the gate of hell and mother of all evils'. To a great extent Hindu society of medieval and post-medieval periods came under the stern laws of religio-social leaders who moulded public opinion through their authoritative writings and injunctions. Naturally, without any deliberation and imperceptibly during a long period of chequered existence, the gradual decline in the honour and freedom due to woman became an unfortunate reality.

But it cannot be forgotten that the makers of the ordinances which imposed disabilities on women and compelled them to a position inferior to that of man took care to lay down many safeguards by which women enjoyed privileges and favoured treatment. Women were never to be hurt or killed on any account. For the same lapse, women were considered less culpable and liable to less severe punishment than men. Men had to make way for women on crowded streets and the latter were exempted from the payment of certain taxes and the compulsory performance of some expiatory ceremonies. Manu, whose *Smṛiti* became the ideal held in reverence all over the land in later days, has made observations about the duties and functions of women, which may appear needlessly harsh. It is quite reasonable to suppose that they were meant not as any condemnation but as a warning to both men and women to guard against human weakness and its susceptibility to the lowering of the moral standard. There are other observations by Manu and also by many a law-giver which

abundantly testify to the loftiness with which Hindu religion regarded its women.

According to Manu, 'Women must be honoured and adorned by their fathers, husbands, brothers, and brothers-in-law who desire their own welfare'. 'Where women are honoured, there the Devas (gods) are pleased; but where they are dishonoured, no sacred rite yields rewards'. 'Where female relations live in grief, the family soon wholly perishes; but that family where they are not unhappy ever prospers'. Manu also holds that 'the daughter is the highest object of tenderness'; that one should revere a maternal aunt, the wife of a maternal uncle, a mother-in-law, and a paternal aunt like the wife of one's spiritual preceptor; that one should have towards one's elder sister and the sister of one's father and mother the same respect as towards one's own mother.

The *Mahānirvāṇa Tantra* says: 'A girl also should be brought up and educated with great effort and care'. Women's right to Vedic studies was recognized as proved by the many cases of highly educated and cultured women, including poetesses, scholars, and Brahmavadinis. There have been some women seers (Rishis) of Vedic Mantras such as Romashā and Lopāmudrā. Scholarship and intellectual attainments were by no means rare among women. Whatever the disabilities the 'weaker sex' became subject to, the torch of learning was kept burning by Indian women all through the ages. Though there are conflicting views even in the recorded literature of the times, regarding the nature and extent of women's education, there is evidence to show that the learned daughter was highly prized by parents and that women, in common with men, had full right to be admitted to spiritual studentship (*brahmacharya*) and higher education. It is a well-known fact that Indian women had attained a high standard of learning and culture during the Vedic and post-Vedic ages. Women revealers of the supreme knowledge of Brahman, who lived the life of chastity,



renunciation, and service, are known to have possessed intellectual and poetic acumen and challenged men on subtle philosophical discussions. The reputed names of Maitreyi and Gārgi are household words. The spirit of renunciation and urge for spiritual knowledge of the former and the depth of scholarship and courage of conviction of the latter are eternal witnesses to the glory and supremacy of Indian womanhood.

At the time of Shankaracharya, when education of women was less common, we find Ubhayabhārati (or Śhāradā), a learned philosopher herself, and wife of a renowned philosopher Maṇḍana Mishra, at first acted as a judge in a heated debate between the two great philosophers and later she challenged Shankaracharya to a discussion on Kāmaśāstra. In the *Rāmāyaṇa* the position of woman is depicted as very satisfactory, though critics are not wanting who indulge in their stock-in-trade. Women had opportunities for education of all kinds, they enjoyed a high social position and equal political rights, and wifehood and motherhood were treated with signal honour. The *Mahābhārata* makes it still more clear that women rose to laudable levels of academic perfection and exercised the same rights as men in the domestic and social spheres. The wife is referred to as the best friend of man. Women are spoken of as objects of great veneration, as symbols of supreme auspiciousness, and as objects of special care and attention. Indian women know too well what an amount of inspiration they receive even to this day from the illustrious examples of Sitā, Sāvitrī, Draupadī, and Damayanti. Even if one were to doubt their historicity (as the moderns are prone to do!), one cannot deny that they have been true exemplars of the glorious and dignified status of Indian womanhood. Sulabhā, a great woman ascetic and Yogi, revealed her wonderful powers of head and heart in the open court of King Janaka, as related in the *Mahābhārata*.

As Swami Vivekananda has pointed out, India's degeneration was due, among other

causes, to the neglect of the women and the masses. 'There is no chance for the welfare of the world', says the Swami, 'unless the condition of women is improved. It is not possible for a bird to fly on only one wing'. He minced no words when he told the Indian people that instead of being given a helping hand in the solution of their own problems, the women of the country, the gentlest in the world, were treated with indifference and discouragement. He called upon Indian women to have faith in themselves and to come forward and take up the solution of all those problems that particularly concern them. He felt that men should keep their 'hands off' women's problems and extend all active support from without until women are able to produce their best leaders and thus regain their pristine status of the Vedic age. Women should decide for themselves what changes (for, changes there must be) they shall make in keeping with India's spiritual and cultural traditions. 'The Hindu women are very spiritual and very religious', observed the Swami in the course of a lecture in America, as far back as the year 1893, 'perhaps more so than any other women in the world. If we can preserve these beautiful characteristics and at the same time develop the intellects of our women, the Hindu woman of the future will be the ideal woman of the world'. In these simple, yet forceful, words are enshrined a prophecy and an inspiration that are rekindling the dormant hopes of our women in particular and the now independent motherland in general.

Indian women have for long lived within the domestic sphere, spontaneously taking to the ideals of wifehood and motherhood in the family. They have revealed unique intellectual and practical capacities even without finding it necessary to leave the home and the household. Yet, the twin factors,—viz. the need to give Indian women the dignity and right that should belong to them and the urge for some reorientation in accordance with present-day conditions of social life,—that ceaselessly call for attention from the leaders

and the legislators cannot be ignored any longer. If we desire progress of men as well as women, we have to go forward boldly and welcome every reform and innovation provided always that the change is for the better and carries us nearer the goal set before our vision of progress. To be modern one need not appear new-fangled or artificial. The Indian woman has shown, down the centuries of her country's vicissitudinous history, that she possesses a remarkable ability to adapt herself to changing circumstances, without abandoning those basic ideals and virtues for which Indian womanhood has earned the admiration of the world. India is on the march again and she will accept and suitably assimilate all that is great and good in the life of other nations. It is one thing to invite into our society whatever is best in those of the West and is likely to help our progress, and it is another and less desirable thing to seek the glamour of novelty in and heedless imitation of others' ways.

Uncharitable criticism of the status of Indian women,—the condition of widows, early marriage, slavish drudgery at home, etc.—has originated generally from equally uncharitable foreign missionaries and travellers who could wield a facile pen. Fortunately for India there have been other foreign authors, with a better knowledge of our social motives and spiritual ideals, who have exposed the baseless slander of thoughtless traducers by declaring that the general position of women in India is better than that of those in the West. One cannot think of a better foreigner, more qualified to express an opinion on the condition of women in India, than Sister Nivedita, who devoted herself to the cause of Indian women and had the opportunity to study conditions within and without the Indian home. She writes: 'Shall we, after centuries of an Indian womanhood, fashioned on the pattern of Sitā, of Sāvitrī, of Rāṇī Ahalyā Bāi, descend to the creation of coquettes and *divorcées*? Shall the Indian Padmini be succeeded by the Greek Helen? change there must be. But new learning

shall add to the old gravity and wisdom, without taking from the ancient holiness. Wider responsibilities shall make the pure more pure. Deeper knowledge shall be the source of a new and grander tenderness'. Woman should be permitted to have vote, power, glory, and every freedom to do what man does—this trend of feminine urge is gaining ground in India. There is no need for woman to pay man an unconscious tribute by rushing to imitate him, herself becoming masculine and mechanical.

Women of India can have no better appreciation of their distinguished status and of the honour they receive from their menfolk than what we see visibly manifested in the life and spiritual practices of Sri Ramakrishna. Sri Ramakrishna's acceptance of a learned and saintly woman as his first spiritual teacher, his own practising of a particular type of Sādhanā—dressed as a woman and conceiving himself as a woman or handmaid of the Lord, and his preaching the Motherhood of women, as representations of the Divine Mother,—all these betoken the glorious past of and the bright future that awaits Indian womanhood. And so, Swami Vivekananda declared that his first endeavour for the regeneration of women would be to start a Math for the proper training of pure-souled women. Brahmachāriṇīs and Sādhvis, who may renounce all worldly ties and totally dedicate themselves to Self-knowledge and selfless service. He wanted that these celibate nuns should in time act as teachers and preachers of secular and spiritual knowledge among the women of our land.

In ancient India, too, two classes of women are mentioned: Brahmavādinīs, who do not marry, but observe celibacy for life (like the Sannyāsin), and devote themselves to the study of the Vedas, performance of prescribed rites, and the attainment of Mokṣha; Sadyovadhus, who enter married life and reach the same goal of Mokṣha, as ideal householders. In the illustrious life of Sri Sarada Devi, our Holy Mother, we see both these ideals exemplified and elevated to perfection. She was the ideal wife, nun, and

mother in one, though motherhood was doubtless most prominent in her. As the spiritual consort of Sri Ramakrishna, she has set a glowing example of wifedom. Though married very young, she was in no way behind Sri Ramakrishna in spiritual hankering. She never allowed for a moment the thought of living a family life to enter her pure and noble mind. Such chastity and purity in wedded life were unparalleled. And, above all, she was the Mother *par excellence* to hundreds of lay and monastic devotees, a spiritual preceptor of a very high order, and

the silent guiding spirit behind the great Order of Ramakrishna for over thirty years after the Master had left her behind as his worthy spiritual successor. She stands so supreme, head and shoulders above all earthly mothers, that to say she is proof positive of the Hindu woman's status of honour is but to restate a self-evident truth. Indian womanhood, in all its glory, more than fulfils itself in the Holy Mother. We learn from her that women have been, are, and will be honoured everywhere in so far as they become repositories of spirituality, sacrifice, and self-control.

## 'MEDITATION' ON THE BHAGAVAD GITA

(A DISCOURSE ON THE GITA-DHYANA SHLOKAS)

BY SWAMI RANGANATHANANDA

A study of the great Upanishads—which served as the background out of which the *Bhagavad Gita* was born—helps to give us an insight into the atmosphere and texture of the *Gita* teaching. The *Gita* is a development out of that, and a proper study of the *Gita* will be most fruitful for all those who are struggling for the realization of higher values in life. Few and far between are questions of a practical nature raised in the Upanishads because they hover over regions far above the clouds of doubts and uncertainties of everyday life, they take the enquirer straight to the heart of reality itself. Though these questions are not discussed in the Upanishads, yet they provided immense inspiration for the treatment and solution of these questions by teachers and scriptures of subsequent ages. That inspiration has been taken up on a broad level by a great Teacher—Sri Krishna—a great leader—and he brings that inspiration, enhanced by his own personality, to bear upon life and its problems in his great teaching—the *Gita*. That is why this book is also an

Upanishad, but a practical Upanishad—an Upanishad meant for practical life. Hence the *Gita* is described as *Brahma-vidyā(a)n-targata Yoga-śhāstra*. This is an Upanishad or *Brahma-vidyā* as well as a *Yoga-śhāstra*, so much so that its status is high and utility great. Waters may be in the river, but unless dammed and brought to the field by irrigation channels, they cannot be of much use to us, and sometimes they may be harmful as well, as in floods. Applied in everyday life the teachings of the *Gita* lift us towards a broad understanding of life around us. The *Gita* comes down to our own level and uplifts us to a higher pedestal. This is the charm of the *Gita*; its teaching is practical, dynamic, and universal.

As Sri Krishna himself puts it in the 18th Chapter, we are on an adventure when we study the *Gita*—an adventure of the spirit. He calls it the sacrifice of the spirit or *Jñāna-yajña*. Various sacrifices are there by which we try to express our spiritual craving, by pouring oblations into the fire, which is an

elementary form of sacrifice; by making Japam, which is a little better; or by resorting to prayers and adoration with a concentrated mind, which is better still. But the best, as our Shāstras tell us, is this *Jñāna-yajña*, by which we try to live in the spirit and realize the spirit that is within us. This idea is expressed in the 18th Chapter (verse 70) where the Lord tells Arjuna—

अध्येष्यते च य इमं धर्म्यं संवादमाचयोः ।

ज्ञानयज्ञेन तेनाहमिष्टः स्यामिति मे मतिः ॥

‘Those persons who shall study this great teaching (conversation between Arjuna and Krishna), they shall be performing a great sacrifice, a sacrifice of knowledge, of thought and spirit. By this they shall become dear unto me’. That is how the Lord tells Arjuna and we are also now undertaking such a great *Jñāna-yajña*.

Before, however, commencing the *Gita* itself, I would like to read out and explain a group of verses which were composed by a great author of a later day in praise of the *Gita*. These beautiful verses appear in many of the *Gita* editions. They are called ‘Gitā-dhyāna’ śhlokas. Those who know Sanskrit will enjoy these verses better, for they are clothed in beautiful language. But their elevating sentiments can be shared by all.

These Dhyāna-śhlokas begin with the praise of the *Gita* and then make sweet references to Vyāsa, Sri Krishna, and the *Mahābhārata*, and lastly ends in a sublime note of adoration of the Supreme Being.

ॐ पार्थाय प्रतिबोधितां भगवता नारायणेन स्वयं

व्यासेन ग्रथितां पुराणमुनिना मध्ये महाभारतम् ।

अद्वैतामृतवर्षिणीं भगवतीं अष्टादशाध्यायिनी-

मम्ब त्वामनुसन्दधामि भगवद्गीते भवद्वेषिणीम् ॥ (१)

I meditate upon this great mother, the *Bhagavad Gita*,—says the verse. What is the nature of this *Gita*? It helps us to destroy the bondage of relative existence or Samsāra. This *Gita* has originated from the Supreme Lord Nārāyaṇa. It was composed by Vyasa, a great and ancient sage. He composed it

and introduced it in the midst of the *Mahābhārata*. It is a book which showers the nectar of the knowledge of Advaita, knowledge of non-separateness by which we destroy Samsāra and realize our unity with God and man. As the *Īshāvāsya Upaniṣhad* puts it, ‘*Īshāvāsyaṁ-idam sarvaṁ, yat kiñcha jagatyām jagat*’; all creation is permeated by that Supreme Reality which is the unity behind diversity. Such is the sublime teaching of the *Gita*, the fundamental unity of being. The *Gita* is viewed as a great Goddess in this verse, and hence its sanctity. It is a book consisting of 18 Chapters. This is the *Gita*, the Divine Mother; She helps to destroy the bondage of Samsāra; upon Her I meditate.

नमोऽस्तु ते व्यासविशालबुद्धे

फुल्लारचिन्दायतपत्रनेत्र ।

येन त्वया भारततैलपूर्णः

प्रज्वालितो ज्ञानमयः प्रदीपः ॥ (२)

Salutations to thee, O Vyasa, of great mind, of vast intellect, of deep understanding,—says this verse. Bhagavān Vyasa is incomparable. Those who study the *Mahābhārata* will realize what an intellectual giant he was; he was a perfect man ‘with eyes elongated like the petals of a full-blown lotus’. Great personalities are described in this way in our literature, including Bhagavan Sri Krishna himself. This great intellect has done one great service and that is the greatest service any one can do to humanity, viz. to light an undying lamp of wisdom for the world. The world was in darkness or gloom and the light has been not only lighted but enough oil, too, has been provided to make the lamp burn eternally, and we share the glory of that lamp today. This is the lamp of wisdom of the *Gita* enshrined in the *Mahābhārata*. This is the great service that the mighty Vyasa has done to humanity. To such Vyasa my salutations.

In the *Mahābhārata* there is a reference that Vyasa took three years to compose his great epic. Every day he used to get up and devoutly sit at it. The *Bhagavad Gita* is a

portion of that great work and Sri Krishna, its teacher, is now invoked.

**प्रपन्नपारिजाताय तोत्रवेत्रैकपाणये ।**

**ज्ञानमुद्राय कृष्णाय गीतामृतदुहे नमः ॥ (३)**

Salutations to Krishna who holds the reputed *Jñāna-mudrā*. Actually *Jñāna-mudrā* is a mental state; but thoughts and feelings in the mind have a way of expressing themselves through the body; and in every religion there are certain associations of physical gestures with mental states. Every religion has one or other of these gestures. In our country we associate *Jñāna* or wisdom with a particular *Mudrā* and that was Sri Krishna's *Jñāna-mudrā*. The *Śhloka* says, 'I salute Krishna in his *Jñāna-mudrā*, who is the milker of the nectar of the *Gita*.

This Krishna is something like a *Kalpataru*. He grants the wishes of all those who take refuge in him. Again, cowherd as he was in his early life, he keeps a cane in his hand. Such a Krishna who is the milker of the *Gita*, as he was a milker of the cows earlier, a milker of experience in all its totality,—Him I salute.

**सर्वोपनिषदो गावो दोग्धा गोपालनन्दनः ।**

**पार्थो वत्सः सुधीर्भोक्ता दुग्धं गीतामृतं महत् ॥ (४)**

Now comes a beautiful description of the nature of the milk so milked. Sri Krishna milked the cows at Vrindaban, which he drank himself, but the milk which he milked out of the Upanishads, he has left to us. The whole Upanishads are here treated as one single cow. But we care for the cow for the milk it yields. The mind must be directed to that part of the cow from which one gets nourishment. Sri Krishna knew that the Upanishads were vast, varied, and meaningful. As a friend of man he quietly milked the same and placed the milk before thirsty humanity. Here is a great idea expressed beautifully and in beautiful sequence. A little calf was necessary to induce the mother to yield its milk; that calf was Arjuna; he was just an instrument to induce the mother to

part with its milk; the milk is meant for the good people of the world, men of purified hearts, to nourish them in their life of ethical and spiritual struggle. This message will carry no meaning to those who have not resolved to be pure. But to all those who want to create a pattern of excellence out of their own lives, this *Gita* has a message. It is meant to nourish all the good people of the world without any distinction of caste, creed, or sex.

**वसुदेवसुतं देवं कंसचाणूरमर्दनम् ।**

**देवकीपरमानन्दं कृष्णं वन्दे जगद्गुरुम् ॥ (५)**

Again salutations are addressed to Sri Krishna in another form. 'I salute Sri Krishna who is the Guru of this Universe'. One of the highest conceptions of Vedanta, of God as the Teacher of the Universe, is given here. The Lord was born in this world as the son of Vasudeva. He was divine from his very birth. In his early life he had exhibited such wonderful prowess as killing demons like Kamsa and Chānūra. He was the supreme joy of his mother, Devaki. Such a Krishna, the Supreme Teacher of the Universe, I salute. God, the Indwelling One, as the Teacher of man, is a vital idea of the Upanishads. The *Chhāndogya Upaniṣhad* makes the following reference to the need of a teacher: **आचार्यवान् पुरुषो वेद ।**

In the country of the Gāndhāras, the present North-West Frontier Province in Pakistan, and surrounding area, which were part and parcel of the India of the *Mahābhārata* period, there was a person who was blindfolded by certain robbers, taken far away from his home-town, and left there to suffer and die. The man was very miserable. He could not see or walk. His hands were tied. He was feeling helpless. At that time, out of compassion, a passer-by said to himself, 'This man is in deep distress; he is blindfolded; let me help him'. This passer-by removed his bandages, led him out of the woods, and set him on the road to Gāndhāra and told him, 'Here is the way to Gandhara; now you may

go'. Now, because the stranger helped him by untying the bandages and finally showed him the way, the man was able to get out of the forest and reach his home. Similarly, men in this world, blinded and intoxicated, grope about in ignorance and misery. To such a person help comes in the form of guidance from a teacher who helps to remove his bandages (i.e. bonds) and put him on the road to Truth. If a man gets such a teacher he can consider himself fortunate. The moment he gets such guidance and proceeds in the way indicated by the teacher, he will feel secure; for, his liberation is assured. This teacher, the *Gita* says, is the innermost Self of us all. All those who can deeply feel that presence within them will get guidance and help. In the Vedanta mention is made of the Absolute from which the world has emerged, in which it rests, and unto which it returns. The true Teacher is this Absolute come to illumine the heart of man. One who realizes the Absolute becomes the Absolute; such a one is *the* teacher, *par excellence*.

The world is a mixture of truth and untruth, knowledge and ignorance. Ignorance and untruth lead to bondage and misery, and knowledge and truth to enlightenment and peace. These two impulses are present in the world from the very beginning of creation. The first is the function of natural impulse while the second is the fruit of divine guidance from within, which guidance is revealed palpably when the heart becomes pure. The Divine Teacher has functioned thus from the beginning of creation and has transmitted His touch through a line of the pure ones. This is called *Guru-paramparā* by which wisdom is transmitted from teacher to disciple generation after generation. This idea of *Guru-paramparā* comes from very ancient times in India. It would appear that when creation took place, introducing the bondage of duality and finitude, the idea of liberation, too, from the bondage of creation which is Maya, was put into it. This idea is also stressed in the opening verses of the fourth chapter of the *Gita*. There the Lord says, 'This great truth

I taught to Vivasvān, then it passed to Manu, Ikṣhvāku, and other royal sages'. When he says this, Arjuna gets frightened and asks, 'What do you mean? You are but a being of today'. Sri Krishna then tells him, 'Both of us have existed from eternity. As the Unborn Reality, Changeless and Ever-free, I was the ancient Teacher who is now teaching you also. You do not understand this truth because of your notion of duality and finitude. But I know it all'.

When such a person as Sri Krishna is born in this world, the whole universe is filled with joy. As Nārada says in his *Bhakti Sutras*, 'The world becomes happy and the gods dance in ecstasy when a divine teacher appears, and the earth gets a Redeemer'. Men and women feel happy. There is universal rejoicing. 'Gospel means good news; it is the news that the world has got a redeemer. He has redeemed himself and has come to redeem others'. Having crossed the ocean of Samsara themselves they offer to take others also across. Such persons are the salt of the earth and they are called *Jagad-gurus*—World Teachers. They have one rare quality—they speak a language which is meant for one and all and not for any little sect or creed. If a *Jagad-guru* preaches a religion, it will be in the interests of the world at large. Such *Jagad-gurus* have appeared at long intervals in this land and elsewhere and they have always kept this philosophic background of universality behind their teachings. On such character is the great Sri Krishna. Later, others came: Bhagavan Buddha and Shankara, and finally Sri Ramakrishna; these belong to one and all. This is the reason why the ideas proceeding from the Vedanta get reception from the hearts of men and women in all parts of the world. Wherever we go we meet with men and women sharing the same fundamental urges and facing the same fundamental problems; differences are there, but they refer to the surface aspects of life. The deeper problems of human life are universal. If a philosophy can bring home to the people solutions for their deeply-felt prob-

lems, it is bound to be universal in its appeal. The *Gita* deals with such deeply-felt urges and universal problems. The greatest Teachers, therefore, have been those who took humanity as a whole into consideration in expounding their ideas without respect to caste, creed, or race. Such was Krishna; this verse salutes Him as the *Jagad-guru*.

भीष्मद्रोणतरा जयद्रथजला गान्धारनीलोत्पला  
शल्यग्राहवती कृपेण वहनी कर्णेन वेलाकुला ।  
अश्वत्यामविकर्णघोरमकरा दुर्योधनावर्तिनी  
सोत्तीर्णा खलु पाण्डवै रणनदी कैवर्तकः  
केशवः ॥ (६)

Now comes a beautiful verse full of imagery, depicting the entire *Mahābhārata* war and the part Sri Krishna played in that war. The whole episode is described as a river which was swelling in the field of Kurukshetra. The two banks of the river are the great warriors Bhishma and Drona. The waters in the river are composed of Jayadratha who ruled Northern Sind, and Shalya, Kripa, Karṇa, Ashvatthāma, and Vikarṇa are other characters fitted into this grand imagery appropriately. Duryodhana is the whirlpool of this swelling river. Such a mighty river it was that the Pāṇḍavas had to cross. It presented a serious problem to them. Therefore they took recourse to One who could redeem them as well as all others, and that was Sri Krishna. He served them as a boat and a boatman. He made them cross the river in safety, in the role of a Kaiwartaka, or a fisherman who usually plies ferry-boats in our rivers.

पाराशर्यध्वजः सरोजममलं गीतार्थगन्धोत्कटं  
नानाख्यानककेसरं हरिकथा सम्बोधनाबोधितम् ।  
लोके सज्जनषट्पदैरहरहः पेपीयमानं मुदा  
भूयाद्भारतपङ्कजं कलिमलप्रध्वंसिनः श्रेयसे ॥ (७)

Let this teaching ensure the prosperity and welfare of the good people of this world, who want to destroy their own impurities, who want to transcend their own imperfections of

body and mind,—proclaims this verse. Now comes the reference to the *Mahābhārata* itself. It is the word of Vyasa, the son of Rishi Parāshara, and is compared to a lotus. It is spotless. From this full-blown lotus of the *Mahābhārata* rises the sweet and powerful scent of the message of the *Bhagavad Gita*. Beautiful anecdotes form its stamens. The *Mahābhārata* is full of inspiring stories and anecdotes. The lotus opens in all its beauty with the discourses on Hari or God; it naturally attracts many bees to it—bees in the form of swarms of good and pure people who flock to it day and night to suck its honey in joy. When the lotus opens, the bees themselves fly to it; no invitation is necessary to be sent out. The flavour of the *Gita* has been attracting men and women to this lotus of the *Mahābhārata* down the ages. Let this lotus, says this verse, be the source of happiness and solace to the people of this world who seek for the destruction of their own imperfections.

मूकं करोति वाचालं पङ्गुं लघयते गिरिम् ।  
यत्कृपा तमहं वन्दे परमानन्द माधवम् ॥ (८)

Here is another salutation to God, the giver of all good, in the form of Sri Krishna. He by whose grace the dumb becomes eloquent and the lame is able to cross mountains, that Supreme Teacher, Krishna, the embodiment of all bliss, I salute.

यं ब्रह्मावरुणेन्द्ररुद्रमरुतः स्तुन्वन्ति दिव्यैः स्तवै-  
र्वदैः साङ्गपदक्रमोपनिषदैर्गायन्ति यं सामगाः ।  
ध्यानावस्थिततद्गतेन मनसा पश्यन्ति यं योगिनो  
यस्यान्तं न विदुः सुरासुरगणा देवाय तस्मै नमः ॥ (९)

Finally, the whole invocation is summed up in a fine verse meant for meditation. It says: That God who has been described in the above verses, what is His real nature? He is the God of gods; Him the Vedas sing; Him the Yogis wrapt in contemplation perceive in their own hearts; the Limitless One—He is in the hearts of all beings. Him we salute in adoration. The idea of God as pure spirit, ensouling man and Nature, is given expression to in this verse in the light of the

highest philosophic and spiritual thought; this verse is recited with great devotion by our people.

Mark the statement—He who is adored by Brahmā, Varuna, Indra, and other gods. He is the Deva-deva, or the God of gods, to know whom is to become Him, who appears in the form of a human being as an Avatara or Incarnation. The conception of Deva-deva is born out of the philosophical development of the Vedas. Sri Krishna is considered as the Supreme Being who is above the gods, whom the gods do not know because He is their very Self. The chanters of Sāma-Veda also sing the glory of this Supreme Being only. Those who retire into the woods to practise Yoga, with eyes closed and mind stilled,—what do they attain? They also attain to this Supreme Being only as the consummation of their deep meditation. It is the same Great Being who is in the hearts of all, whom the Yogis try to realize through meditation, whose glory can never be comprehended by the hosts of Devas and Asuras (deities and demons), much less by human beings, as He is beyond speech and thought, and infinite. I salute that Supreme Being who is residing both outside as well as inside the world. The outgoing senses perceive Him only; the ingoing mind also perceives Him only whose glory is this universe, who is this universe, whose light is in the heart of man, who is the man. This is God as taught in the Upanishads. We are guided by this verse to adore Him and contemplate on Him.

As I said at the outset, these very beautiful verses were composed by an unknown author of a later day. Some attribute them to Sridharāchārya who wrote commentaries on the *Gita* and the *Bhāgavata*. The greatest works of poets and seers of our country often bear the stamp of anonymity.

There is a great need to know a little about the *Mahābhārata* about which we had reference here—a reference that makes one inquisitive to know more of this great epic which bears the *Gita* in its bosom. Many of us may have read portions of this literature;

many more may be acquainted with its story and theme. But there is need to have a more thorough acquaintance with its climate of thought and feeling so that we may grasp the teaching of the *Gita* better. The *Mahābhārata* is an epic which has no parallel in the world. Even taking the quantity of matter that it contains—the tremendous amount of characterization, the beautiful imageries, spiritual suggestions, religious thoughts, etc.—you will find the *Mahābhārata* has no equal in the world. It has over a lakh of verses in the aggregate. There is so much reference to historical data there that to the historian it yields plenty of material to reconstruct our own past history; to the politicians it must be of topical interest. As you will realize, every inch of soil of Delhi and its environs is sacred with the memory of this epic. After reading that matchless work we shall find (as we wander about) that we are treading on grounds trodden by the Pandavas and Sri Krishna. Not a single inch of this soil is there which cannot speak volumes about our ancient heroic history. The *Mahābhārata*, therefore, deserves to be a mine of inspiration to our historians and national leaders. This living background gives reality to the concept of history which is absent in the present study of our history—which has been barren of background stimulus and directional inspiration. Enriched by these, history affords a deeply interesting study. In other countries they read history with a passion. It speaks a language which touches the core of the citizen's heart. We in India also study various histories. We study foreign history especially with a deeper interest and greater fervour; we read everything about what is happening elsewhere. But the average student here knows very little about his own country's history or geography, while he might know a good deal about England, France, Russia, or America. This lack of interest in our history is the fruit of our period of bondage. With the attainment of national freedom a new passion for historical knowledge should seize us. We need to look back, far back, and with the



knowledge and inspiration so gained, go onward, forward, to forge a new destiny for ourselves.

A study of the *Mahābhārata* will prove a corrective to our present deficiencies by providing a national perspective. The record of a heroic age will instil confidence in us. It will provide us with the proper environment for conducting our lives, individual and collective, even today. With that stimulus we may capture a little bit of poetry in our lives. Without it, our lives have been rendered dull, drab, and prosaic. Every episode in the *Mahābhārata* will speak a language to the Indian of today about the events that happened here. The struggles and achievements and failures of men and women of our historic past cannot remain a mere abstract, academic, and intellectual study. Rousing national sentiments and historic passion, it will become a study in which the children experience a mystic participation in their parents' life and being.

This is the correct approach to the study of our history. Towards the end of the great epic, Vyasa, the author, majestically declares: 'Whatever there be in this world on the subject of the values that men seek after—

Dharma, Artha, Kāma or Mokṣha—this book expounds them all'. A study of the book will reveal that this proud claim is largely justified. The *Mahābhārata* has exhaustively and with practical illustrations touched upon subjects like economic and political theory, ethics—individual and social, war and peace, mythology and philosophy, and the highest ideal of liberation. The book is replete with inspiring stories like those of Nala and Damayanti, Shakuntala, Kacha and Devayāni, and a host of others. The subject of statecraft is discussed and dealt with from different points of view. Its political philosophy ranges from the Machiavellian to the Sermon-on-the-Mount types, some of which will sound strangely familiar to modern readers. The political doctrines of Kanika and Vidura have their representatives in our contemporary world. The character and personality of Vidura as well as his politics contain an abiding message to mankind. And lastly, there is the subject of religion discussed with such an authority and thoroughness as to carry conviction to all earnest seekers. This exposition gets added value from its two great exponents—Sri Krishna in the *Gita* and Bhishma in the *Śhānti Parva*. Such is the *Mahābhārata*.

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## THE CONTRIBUTION OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA AND SWAMI VIVEKANANDA TO THE MAKING OF MODERN INDIA

BY TARA KUMAR GHOSH

### I

The mystery of creation, as reflected in the conscient self of India and discovered by experience, shows that the Original Supreme Being—which is beyond all duality and sense-perception—is projecting, as if by the aid of a shrouded veil, its myriad forms in which its created beings live, move, and exist. In its progress of extended self there is a long

chain of the formless refined energy taking shape and form through time, space, and causation. Thus it explains how the Supreme Being projects itself through apparent transformation into different stages of graded existence. Each stage is needed for mystic experience and understanding of the Original Mind. In the progression from the Formless to the Form, man as an individual seeker has to

progress from the Form to the Formless not merely through mere intellectual attainment but also by being transformed into that One, because manifesting forces show that he is one with the Original Being.

In this attempt at growth, the seeker has to unfold himself and break his narrow bounds. This search after the Infinite, the striving to be in tune with the music of the infinite, can come when one, through his cessation of limitation by means of work, has geared himself up to universal fulfilment and unfoldment. Work one has to do, but not being a slave to its result. Being a master, one has to gain the higher advantage so as to create favourable circumstances for further unfoldment. This is the secret of advancement to enlightenment.

Sri Ramakrishna had established in his mortal existence the unfoldment of the possibility to that Original Sublimation, and, in the way of awakening to that state, had imbibed in him the best of the attainment of Indian culture and the existence of perfection in World culture—not only of this age but of all ages that have or will come. Sri Ramakrishna is the best fulfilment and expression of the awakening in the sublime Beauty, whose practical experience proved the possibility of transforming mortal existence with the glow of that flame of understanding which informs that. Thus the only significance in life is to understand, realize, readjust, and return to that Original Sublimity. Through him the Age has received the tinge of Infinite Beauty, and he being one with the Original Self ever remains as the awakened form of cultural fulness.

Sri Ramakrishna awakened in this Original Beauty with easeful growth. The question regarding the surrounding individual evanescent existence suggested in him an urge for diving deep in the nature of Original Sublimity—changeless and serene. Accordingly his researches began. As an aspirant and seeker after Truth he dedicated his whole soul to know, understand, and realize and in becoming or being bathed in that Truth. It

was not a mere word, question, or curiosity with him. It was an impetuosity, a reality, and with true ardency he began his uphill journey. The astounding feature of it was that he succeeded in attaining the Goal through every traversed path and in his realization the Truth was revealed in the same trail of ancient glory as was declared from time to time by the great seers, savants, and saints.

## II

Diving deep in the Fount of Harmony, Sri Ramakrishna has given us the glow of the revealed ecstatic joy, the fulsome emergence of enlightenment. The awakening in harmony is so much linked with the original unity that, as a corollary, the completeness and fulness in varied experiences are bound to be tuned up in concordant co-ordination. In the revealed self all discordance merges into effulgence and concordance, overflowing the disturbing links of disunity by canalising them into the purposeful right direction. With the growth of conscient divinity everything shines in the light of the original soul.

Established on the profound essence of conscient evolution, which as a logical sequence is equivalent to divine life, one can only see the essence, the reality and Truth, and the evanescent aspect, for, its very limitation vanishes, as it has practically no existence, except in the evanescent aspect of the mental plane. When one can successfully tune oneself into unison with the original Oneness, then and then only is revealed the Truth, that also lies in the attempts of other aspirants, saviours, and seekers at mingling in that Original Pool.

Results of researches of other savants in finding out Unity and Harmony must have an assonance with the experience of receding back in the individual existence to the Original Self in the way of awakening and unfoldment. The very unfoldment of the inner glow in Sri Ramakrishna led him to make experiment and verify as to how far the paths shown by savants and saviours of other climes and races could be effectual in awakening the

individuality to that conscient consciousness. To his revealed self, the truth of these diverse paths, with their divine attainment to the Original Sublimation, was so easily manifested that he had, out of fulness, declared that the ultimate Reality could be reached through all paths or any path and that all paths certainly led to reality. There is absolutely no difference in the Ultimate Attainment, but the external methods and processes are different. Though they proceed from different planes, they are so attuned to the Central Music that a faithful procedure with ardent effort will certainly lead to that Final Harmony. This is a grand achievement that any soul has ever declared to the great wisdom of the world, especially at a time when racial superiority has rent the world making narrow ends as the only means of material success. The great achievement in the unfoldment of the individual aspect, the revelation of the harmony of the different religious paths leading finally to the Original Sublimation, as experienced, declared, and perpetuated by Sri Ramakrishna is a most significant event. And even more important is the fact that in internationalism and practical politics this aspect of unity in harmony, which was an idea, has become a reality. In the colourful history of events, this achievement sings the sublime supremacy.

Thus established in this perpetual glow, it was easy for Sri Ramakrishna to show by practical application that the essence of religion was as a matter of fact infusible and communicable, because, being oneself master of the dynamic power, one could, if one liked, easily transfer, transmute, or transfuse that power to the evolution of the growing aspect of the latest faculties of the other aspirants. So religious experiences are not merely a matter of conversation, discussion, or discourse. It is neither dogma nor a code of ethics. It is being one with the essence. While being so submerged, with the glow, one gains so much dynamic power by being dynamic oneself that the transfusability is more real and tangible than the transference of any material object. Awakened

in this potentiality, the Aspirant aspires for gaining strength for reaching that original source and thus living, moving, and remaining in that divine existence. The essence of all religions is to become divine; and Sri Ramakrishna represented that very divinity in himself—thus expressing the Spirit of India.

### III

Political slavery, economic exploitation, and appalling ignorance and poverty of the masses had rendered this great and glorious country of ours an object of pity and mockery for the world. The abject aggression of the ruling class, resulting in political dependence and accelerating its perpetuation through internal strife and sectarian dissensions, had left the masses always at the mercy of the foreign inroads. Thus, generation after generation, foreign hordes robbed her wealth, destroyed her cities and great centres of learning, and when they returned left behind them murder, horror, and the moaning of millions. Fields full with crops were traversed, temples were defiled, and crowned heads were dragged down. To the common masses, groaning under the dreadful curse of ignorance, poverty, and pestilence, the high-sounding philosophy of the Absolute appeared a mere jargon of meaningless mockery. The starving souls, bereft of the vast wealth to which they had been the inheritors, forgot their past glory, and becoming objects of ridicule, began to pity themselves. Thus a great danger threatened the nation.

The baneful effect of political dependence is to be found in all-round disintegration, internal weakness, and inefficiency. In course of time, due to misinterpretation and wrong application of theoretical knowledge, there developed an insular expression of the disconnected edge, resulting in the development of certain types of complexes. The application of the privileged circumstances to the advantage of the upper selfish few prepared the way for the oppression of one's own poorer kinsmen and the fulfilment of the wishes and needs of the powerful masters. A wholesale anomaly thus pervaded the structure of the country and plunged it

deep into the abyss of ignorance. So the highest stage of truth-seeking, without being related to the reality of material needs, expressed itself as an incongruous abnormality, and that which once stood for the highest manifestation, having now been cut off from the main-spring, showed its futility in a vacant way. Her own children could not believe that the most normal way and national heritage could in fact be of any help to India even in this fallen condition.

Swami Vivekananda, the divine child of India, first found out the external anomaly in which India of his times was, and wanted to get the country relinked to the Fount of Original Harmony. The real spirit of India, coupled with the pragmatic knowledge of the West, was the solution to the problems of the country's institutional existence. He found that the main national trends of India were topsyturvyed, which led ultimately to such great confusion. But the Swami himself was perplexed at first. All round he found misery, squalor, and ignorance.

Swami Vivekananda saw that each group or class of Indian society, dissociated from its sphere of activity, was groping in the dark, in search of its own narrow ends, the total aim being to sacrifice the common weal to the slavish service of the foreigner. With grave concern he noticed that the state of affairs did not warrant the country's acceptance of too abstract an ideal. The people had wrongly laid emphasis on Tamas (inactivity), mistaking it for the highest Sattva (supreme calmness).

Against such a background it was doubted how the original supreme spiritual knowledge could save India from degradation and to what extent. Could the desired solution be found in every sphere of life—individual, social, political, and economic—in consonance with the Indian attitude to life? In the face of the strong influence of the Western civilization, it appeared that the civilization of India was old and effete.

With such serious apprehensions did Vivekananda at first see the Indian problem. What is the way out, he must have asked,

sensitive to and inquisitive of Truth as he was. In his analysis he found that the internecine dissensions had brought ruination and left their impress on every branch of existence. From all quarters and from the depth of each patriotic soul the question was raised, 'Will India die?'

But soon an answer came. Vivekananda, by dedicating his life at the altar of Truth, in order to search for solutions to India's great problems, soon found, in the asserted spirit of India, that 'Deathless she stands so long as she does not give up her own spirituality'.

India was reawakened through this renaissance of spirituality. She was again set marching on her own path.

#### IV

One touch, one glance, of Sri Ramakrishna had changed the whole course of the life of Vivekananda. It was a change turning the externally diffusive mind to the internal deep of the harmonious Fount and reawakening the mortal being in the glowing conscience of the Perennial Source. Reawakened and rejuvenated by this inner glow, Vivekananda, singing the main tune of India, went forth with redoubled strength and solidarity. Finding the callous way of life and institutionalism, he wanted to have a thorough readjustment in the most practical manner, leading to the source of peace and harmony. Hence we find his denunciation of priestcraft, of mutual jealousy, of the rigidity of the caste system, of the superiority-complex of the higher castes, of economic subjugation, and of the negative system of education.

We also find his acceptance of the glory of the divinity in man, of the act of worshipping the Lord by serving the poor, of the process of elevating the mind to the higher conscious plane so as to show equal respect to the Atman that resides in all individual souls, of the removal of ignorance, and of religion leading to the upliftment of the individual and social being. The redemption of the fallen souls is ensured by showing the path of purity and telling them the life-giving inspiration: 'Thou art That'.

In his path of divinity, Vivekananda realized that if the individual can be linked with profundity, by means of awakening in the song of Reality, then alone can he find assonance with the essence of universal sublimity. After establishing oneself on the basis of supreme and clear conscience, one can work in the real spirit of 'desirelessness', true to the spirit of India. Man, in his individual life, should—in the first place—make himself physically, mentally, and morally strong. Then being effectively awakened in the higher mental existence by overcoming physical needs, he will automatically gear himself up to the Divinity. Thus giving up all binding forces, curbing the elements, and neutralizing the effect of circumstances, one should prepare oneself to be an effective fighter for embracing, nay, in becoming one with, the Beauty Sublime. This attitude towards life and the world is not despondency. It is bathing in strength, beauty, light, and sublimity. In this awakening lies the Swami's eternal call, in assonance with the Upanishads, 'Arise, awake, and stop not till the goal is reached'. Atman, he declared, is sexless, fearless, and above all bindings. 'We are the children of Bliss', why should we then remain morose and sombre?

A soul awakened to this truth must be by inherent capacity a dynamic force. From such a one will emerge the true spirit of selfless devotion, work, desire for service, the vibrant aspect of patriotism, love for fellow beings, and brotherhood with the whole world. A strong sense of sameness to other as one has in the feeling for one's own self, even as what the Buddha had, stemming from the root of divinity, can best solve the riddle of war and violence.

Being bathed in this rejuvenation, the Swami declared that all men being *one* in essence and origin, the superimposition of egoism in the form of untouchability should go, and the good conscience of service, help, extension of knowledge, and spread of higher ideals should come and rescue the down-trodden soul. The existence of humanity proves that the breaking of the adamant

walls of narrowness and partiality is inevitable.

So the ball was set (it was required to be set) rolling in the supreme path of the Highest Knowledge of India in an all-embracing way. It was no respecter of caste, creed, or privilege. It overspread like pealing music over the whole world. Vivekananda understood that this knowledge was in its very essence universal and all-comprehensive. It comes from the very depth of profound harmony. So it is not the ethical application of some principles for better living, but it is the surcharging of the whole of existence with the essence of life-giving spiritual force.

## V

Vivekananda found that this urge, this inner glow of development, this effulgence for capturing the hue, is in itself based on such principles that constitute the most blissful way in the awakening of Self-knowledge. So the efforts of men should be based on the knowledge of the Self and the destiny of India lay in that secret of success.

Thus keeping in tune with this spirit of India, the political situations should be surcharged with this glow of original knowledge. Such effort will not lead to the creation of either a secular or a theocratic state in the notion of the West, but a conscient dynamic state, ready to respond to the higher significance and permeating the whole structure with the beauty of that sublimity.

He urged that the individual attempt to obtain liberation through final cessation of worldly illusoriness, though ultimately desirable, should in no circumstance be circumscribed by a contracting circle of individual-centred interest only. The supreme Truth, so received, is to be transmitted to others for the betterment of society. And the Swami pleaded strongly with one and all for taking recourse to unselfish work in self-dedication to the cause of humanity. Thus Swami Vivekananda enunciated his unique formula for man's progress, in the shape of serving the needy and suffering humanity,—service, nay, worship, not of the individual but of the Lord manifested in and through these forms of humanity.

# KENA UPANISHAD

(A PHILOSOPHICAL EXPOSITION)

BY DR. PRAVAS JIVAN CHAUDHURY

(Continued from the November issue)

## VERSES 3—9

There not the eye goes, nor goes the  
  speech, nor mind,  
How can one teach It we know not,  
  nor understand.  
'Other than the known It is, above  
  the unknown'—  
Thus from the ancients we've heard,  
  those who explained It.  
That which no speech can express,  
          through which<sup>1</sup> speech expresses, . . .  
That which no mind can think, through  
  which mind does think, . . .  
That which no eye can see, through  
  which the eye does see, . . .  
That which no ear can hear, through  
  which the ear does hear, . . .  
That which no breath can breathe,  
          through which the breath does breathe,  
*That alone know you as Brahman,*  
  *not what men worship.*<sup>2</sup>

The transcendental self, Brahman, found to be the ultimate ground of all our mental activities, cannot itself be an object of these. So, it remains unseen, unspoken (i.e. empirically unconceived, for speech signifies its objects through general concepts), and unknown (empirically). So it cannot be communicated or taught. Yet it cannot be said to be absolutely unknown. For, it reveals itself as the ground of every empirical know-

<sup>1</sup> By means of, Brahman being the ground of all faculties.

<sup>2</sup> In the original, this last line is repeated after every line in the Verses 5 to 9, as indicated by dots. 'Not what men worship' means not any *Ishvara* or gods whom men worship thinking them as other than their own self.

ledge as the latter occurs. Just as the sun reveals itself through little openings in a closed room, in the form of chinks, cracks, and key-holes, It is realized *notionally* as the essential being or ground of the timeless subject revealed in every knowledge; again *notionally*, through a philosophical introspection into the knowledge situation. This notional or philosophical knowledge, which certifies or warrants only the plausibility of the self as a subject and also as a pure subjectless being, is supplemented and perfected by *Sādhanā* which yields the direct verification of these notions. The testimony of the ancients, i.e. scripture, is an aid to such an intellectual undertaking, as it gives us an initial faith and self-confidence.

Verses 5 to 9 assert this finding that the transcendent ground of any psychological function cannot be an object of that function. This ground is Brahman which is different from the deities, including *Ishvara*, which man generally worships. But they depend for their existence and power on Brahman, who is thus the supreme power and should be the real object of worship. But, since this Brahman is our very self, we cannot really worship it if we realize its true being. It is not an object and not conceivable in any form; so, how can one worship it? Even *Ishvara*, who—as the subject of all empirical knowledge and as consciousness imaging forth this world of objects—cannot be known as an empirical object, is somehow conceivable as a person, a creator and a knower even like us, only greater in magnitude and excellence. So He may be worshipped. But this is not the



The Brahman is our own true self and also of gods. To know it requires self-knowledge which, as we just saw, is of a different order from empirical knowledge of objects. So any alleged knowledge of Brahman, the ultimate reality, got in an empirical manner, is but an error and confusion. Thus to think of Brahman as a substance, either vital, material, or even spiritual, is a mistake, for it is nothing but our own self that knows (in its knowing mood, as Ishvara) substance, spirit, matter, etc. It is not to be described in any empirical term, even in such as creator, sustainer, knower, etc., as applied to Ishvara, but by negatives only, *neti, neti*, not this, not this, as the Upanishad does. The tendency of the mind to grasp its very basis is an intellectual snare. The individual Self or consciousness (of men as well as of superior beings or gods) is really Brahman so far as it is consciousness, but it is narrowly circumscribed so far as it is individual, involving psycho-physical faculties which are the adjuncts of Brahman. So, to know individual consciousness as Brahman is to know it partially or fragmentarily. It is like knowing a piece of glass reflecting sunlight as the sun.

Brahman is thus not to be known in the sense we know any empirical object, nor in the sense we know individual selves. Yet Brahman is not to be given up as absolutely unknowable. For, we do have a *notion* of it which is a presupposition of all our empirical knowledge. Philosophical introspection into the latter reveals it, though we cannot determine its nature in any empirical manner, it being the presupposition of all empirical thought. He who knows this principle or paradox about knowing Brahman really understands the mystery, and he may realize It fully (after having at first a notion of It). Realization of Brahman means salvation from the succession of births and deaths.

with its double meaning to rouse the reader and to incite him to solve the paradox. The last line simply means 'He who knows this formula knows Brahman and, so, he is then not aware of any ignorance regarding It'.

## VERSES 12—14

Not thought by him who thinks it,  
  not grasped when thought,  
Not known by those who know It,  
  they know who know not.

Intuiting It in every cognition,<sup>6</sup>  
  one is mortal no more,  
Gets strength by the Self, by knowledge  
  wins deathlessness.

If here<sup>7</sup> man knows It, truth he attains;  
If not, destruction is dire;  
Realizing It in things and beings all about,  
The wise, from this world departing,  
  cross death for ever.

Brahman is said to be revealed in every cognition as its ground. As noted before, Brahman is not itself the knowing self or the subject in each cognition, rather it is the ground of the subject, pure un-self-conscious Self, bare awareness which adopts the knowing and creative mood and becomes Ishvara. But this becoming of the absolute Being, this self-differentiation into subjective and objective poles, is apparent only, a *Maya*, from an ultimate point of view. From this standpoint of Brahman or pure consciousness the world is never created or projected in imagination and known as such on the same level of reality which contains It (Brahman). Just as the dream objects are created and known by us in a different plane of reality than that in which we create and know ordinary objects, so are Ishvarahood and His fancied creation and knowledge of the world to Brahman which is therefore not to be characterized by creativity and subjecthood. We know the dream objects to be not really existing, but appearing only, not mere nothings, yet not to be compared or ranked with empirical objects; so does Brahman know its Ishvarahood and the fancied world, externally appearing, but not existing.

<sup>6</sup> The original is '*prati-bodha veditam*', meaning literally 'known with regard to every cognition'. Every act of understanding reveals Brahman as the ground.

<sup>7</sup> In this life.



Thus there are these levels of reality. Brahman, the highest, becomes, *as it were* (i.e. in imagination), Ishvara imaging forth and knowing an imaginary world which He knows as real as individual egos (Jiva), who, in His turn, can image forth fantasy worlds knowing them as imaginary but also as real in a deluded mood (as in dreams). Thus Brahman is immanent in every level, but transcendent also. It does not accept creatorship and knowership (i.e. Ishvarahood) as its own real characters, just as we do not accept our similar characters as adopted in imagination or dream. The world, as it appears to us, then, is a dream within a dream, so to say. It is known as a fantasy by Ishvara while He and His very knowing are known as a fantasy by Brahman which thus denies the reality of any creation and knowledge of the world even in fancy. Brahman denies the reality of the empirical world even as we deny the reality of an object seen in a dream that was itself within a dream, or of a snake seen in an illusion which itself appears to be a mistake or error and is disbelieved.

To Ishvara, Maya, i.e. illusory appearance of the world, is real (as the world really appears), but to Brahman this Maya is unreal (as the world does not really appear, but only does so illusorily). To Ishvara the world is neither real (for it appears as an object of imagination) nor unreal (for it really appears or has derived reality) and so indescribable either as real or as unreal (*anirvāchya*), but to Brahman the world is unreal (*tuchchha*) as this illusory appearance itself is illusory. Of course, so far as this illusoriness of the illusory is itself real, the world is real to Brahman and enjoys a derived reality two stages removed from the ultimate reality, the ground of all reality. Thus the world is neither pure nought nor Brahman, literally an identity, both of which are impossible ideas. The statements in the scripture as well as in the commentaries speaking of Brahman as a pure identity must be interpreted in this light and not literally.

It may be questioned that the Upanishads

have spoken of Brahman as creating the world (e.g. *Bṛih. Up.* 1. 2) out of its own substance. How can then this creator Brahman and Its creation be regarded as unreal? To this we may answer in the words of Shankara: 'The scripture has not indicated the two forms of Brahman to establish both as true, but has simply enquired into the two popularly conceived and accepted forms in order that they might be negatived and the pure incorruptible form of Brahman established, (Shankara's commentary on *Brahma Sutras*, III. 2. 22). The scripture, after speaking of Brahman in various terms, ends with *neti, neti*, not this, not this. It is the lower Brahman or Ishvara that is negatived, for He is conceivable, viz. as a person, creator, sustainer, destroyer, and knower, while the true or higher Brahman cannot be conceived or spoken of at all in any empirically meaningful term as it is pure consciousness itself, the ground of all such conceptualization or speech.

### III

In this section there is a story which runs thus. When the Devas got victory over the Asuras, they thought they were the real agents and not that Brahman ordained it and they were only instruments of Brahman. So Brahman appeared in the disguise of a Yaksha and challenged the powers of Agni (the Fire-god), who could not burn a straw, and then of Vāyu (the god of the atmosphere) who could not move it. Then Indra (the king of the gods) approached It, but It vanished. Parvati stood there and told Indra that It was Brahman who had come to break the conceit of the gods. Because these gods came near Brahman they became superior to the other gods and because Indra first knew Brahman, he became the foremost of them in knowledge and power.

The teaching of this story is plain enough. It is that everything in the world is ultimately grounded on Brahman which is the real agency behind all the apparent ones that are but its accessories only. (Yet the agency of Brahman

is but what is adopted in imagination and not a real or essential character of it, the transcendent will that governs the world is its passing fancy, as we noted before). The appearance of Brahman for a short time to the gods teaches that we have at first a momentary realization of it, which, though

immanent in Nature, is hidden by it. Yet when once Brahman bursts on the mind of a person for even a moment, he becomes regenerated and will have a mental mood to realize Brahman permanently. This he will achieve through mental culture, Sādhanā.

(Concluded)

## REAL EFFICIENCY—A PRODUCT OF REALIZED PRACTICAL RELIGION

BY R. K. MURTI

In this age of scepticism it is an almost impossible task to convince people in general and the persons directly interested in efficiency in particular about the potency of the fundamental religious principles for improving personal efficiency in day to day life by maintaining a close spiritual contact which brings out the practical potential also. For they think that efficiency is a modern scientific gadget which is new to most of us. But it must be made as clear as possible, in various ways, that the principles of efficiency, being inherent in rational religion, are not to be divorced from their roots, that they are as old as our sacred scriptures, and that India is their birth-place. Moreover, we firmly believe that efficiency is inborn in everybody, that it is the undoubted birthright of all of us, since each individual is always potentially or explicitly efficient in one thing or another, that it is not the monopoly of one individual or of one nation, and that it can easily be drawn out, developed, and cultivated.

### INDIA—ITS ORIGINAL HOME

India was once the richest and the most civilized country in the world when all other nations were not far removed from the primitive state. If this was not due to an efficient,

religious, and practical way of life, what else could it be due to—one may naturally ask. It is seen from India's past that all knowledge, culture, and efficiency have flown from the normal spiritual spring of thought and way of life. There are many monumental works in various fields of human endeavour still existing today to show that we had innumerable efficient workers even thousands of years ago. Many original things were done first in India which other nations cannot bring about even today, in spite of all their reputed genius for inventiveness.

Over six thousand years ago, our sages and seers made a good deal of research in all fields of work and put on record the efficient way of living which they discovered, viz. the way to improve everything that concerned man by adopting Nature's fundamental laws to the whole philosophy of life in and through religion or spirituality. This way of life arose out of human needs and it meant the canons of philosophy applied to everyday life. This attitude pervades each and every minute detail of our activity. It is based on scientific principles. It is a kind of direct spiritual experience. It is a system of life lived and power utilized.

### REAL BACKBONE OF OUR LIFE

Our sages and other great men have demonstrated in their own lives the fact that every good action is an instance of efficiency; that goodness itself is religion; that religion itself is efficiency and is an exact science of personal and social living which would take us to the highest goal.

This spiritual science is as great as, perhaps even greater and more valuable than, the laws of chemistry, physics, electronics, or atomics as admitted by great thinkers, educationists, and scientists of the West such as Alexis Carrel, Lewis Mumford, and others. In our times, saints and leaders like Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Swami Vivekananda, and Mahatma Gandhi have released to an immense extent great power and efficiency from within their ethical and spiritual life and realizations. This is education proper, the unfolding of the real Self by the practice of simple religious principles, which every individual in our country, and in all other countries, needs at the present moment. This is from where knowledge or its synonym 'efficiency' stems, as if from within one's own heart, opening up hidden sources of insight and inspiration. Efficiency is inherent in religion, as the tree in its seed. It is therefore impossible to create a really efficient man unless he has some kind of spiritual experience which alone can give him the final touch of power to success or happiness, for efficiency forms one of the elements of power.

### EXPERIENTIAL PHILOSOPHY

For proof, we have only to turn to the teachings of the *Bhagavad Gita*. It is really an efficiency epitome left to us as a legacy by our sages as the sayings of the Lord Himself. Efficiency or skill in action is the *yoga* of the *Gita* (II. 50) which gives a perfected and integrated system of the philosophy of efficiency, covering all our undertakings and all phases of life. It would not be less than correct to say that I have delved deep into it and found it adaptable to the modern ways of thinking and living. There is no other

system so completely designed to impart skill, power, and efficiency to those who might sincerely seek it.

The fundamental spiritual principles suggested in the *Gita* are not related to a theoretical view, but constitute a natural and practical way of life. If we were to sincerely follow the simple religious principles, we would get rid of our troubles and solve our life's problems successfully. The spiritual principles alone can change our mental outlook and make us really happy in every way. By adopting spiritual principles mentioned in the *Gita*, we can transform ourselves, the world in which we live, our domestic conditions, working conditions, business conditions, economic conditions, in fact our whole life. Thus we will be having the source of all material and intellectual progress also, the motive power behind the enthusiasm that pushes mankind forward, permeating the whole of human life. Therefore, this is efficiency, a wonderful elixir that imparts a sense of power or ability to shoulder responsibilities, which in its turn increases the capacity for work; that also increases our pleasure in whatever we might be doing; and that, at the same time, *relieves automatically the prevailing malady of the modern world—high strain and tension*. To put it in other words, by practising the technique of spiritual living, we can establish contact with the basic flow of energy which we call God's power and which has its headquarters right within us. Spiritual energy, thus created, must renew the store of power in the soul and carry it to the mind and the body; and this again would create the efficiency required for performance of our duties not only now, but always, and well.

### MASTER-KEY TO ALL PROBLEMS

Religion or efficiency, we reiterate, is the master-key to success which unlocks any door; it can and does solve all problems relating to personal and domestic life, to school and college careers, to service, to office and business management, to industrial improvement and to all the various activities and situations which go to make up what we call our life.

Even our present economic problems can be solved easily and almost automatically, if each of us (in this country) were to cultivate spirituality through religious development. We can also say with confidence that, in the evolution of the individual, the political economy of the future may have to take into account, some day or other, those higher mental and spiritual forms of wages which it now ignores, but which are still the most powerful factors in the well-being of men and nations. Unless and until we are spiritually strong and educated, we may have to keep on changing the conditions every time to maintain the balance both internally and externally, in the case of the individual as well as of the country.

#### ORIGIN: DHARMA CHAKRA

The Lord created work along with His creatures, ordaining that 'this obligatory duty, being the milch-cow, *Kāmadhenu*, will satisfy all the desires by which every one can enjoy and prosper' (*Gita*, III. 10). That is, if man were to perform his prescribed duties in the proper spirit of sacrifice, he would inevitably continue to prosper in life, and ultimately rise to a superior level of existence. The Lord further says: 'He who does not follow this wheel of creation, thus set revolving, (he who does not perform his duties), lives in vain, living in sin and satisfied in the senses' (*Gita*, III. 16). If we follow this wheel of creation, which is complete in itself, in all respects, we can enjoy and prosper in this world. We may call it 'wheel of life', or wheel of existence, action, or efficiency, or 'wheel of virtue' (*Dharma Chakra*), the centre being represented by the Lord or by work, our obligatory duty, around which our whole life revolves. He who tries to avoid this wheel of work, by shirking duty or by not doing it sincerely, faithfully, and honestly, will live in vain, stagnating and creating for himself endless troubles, miseries, and worries. This is the practical experience today all over the world.

In other words, people nowadays generally work against the very things they want. It is

the work that brings them income in various shapes and forms, which means the necessary things in life. How shall men expect to get them by shirking or malingering? Even the bare maintenance of the body will not be possible if we are inactive, that is, if obligatory duties are not carried out in the proper spirit,—so says the Lord in the *Gita* (III. 8).

The *Śvetāśhvataṛa Upaniṣad* says (I.4):

'God is meditated as the wheel of this universe. The universe itself is compared to a wheel in order to indicate its dynamic nature—its perpetual motion. It also alludes to the cyclic nature of all worldly processes—the movement of all heavenly bodies etc'.

That being the case, how can we avoid this wheel of life if we really want to prosper and avoid suffering?

#### THE REAL PATH

The Lord Himself, not only demonstrated everything by His own act of creation at the beginning, showing to humanity that efficiency or skill in action should start at the top so that others may follow, but He also emphasized the fact by saying (*Gita*, III. 20-23): 'You should perform action simply with a view to the guidance of men. Whatsoever the superior person does, that very thing other men also do; whatever he demonstrates by action, the people follow the same. I have no duty, nothing that I have not gained, and nothing that I have to gain, in the three worlds; yet, I continue in action. Should I not always engage in action unwearied, men would follow my path in all matters'. So, the heads of families, men in superior positions, and supervisors in Government and other organizations, and also the leaders of all associations, should first improve their own personal efficiency by following religious principles so that the ranks too may follow the same path.

#### OUR PERFECTED SYSTEM

The fundamental idea in our indigenous method is that individuals are far more important than systems and machinery which are being invented only by men, men who have improved their personal efficiency to a very

high degree. If we study the story of all inventors and other great men, we would be able to understand that all of them went beyond the limitations of sense-pleasures, concentrating their attention mainly on their work. It is only this concentration that helped them to become highly spiritual—but they do not know it—and, at the same time, to achieve greatness. Similarly, every individual can attain the same or even greater heights by cultivating the spiritual side through religion, which helps, in turn, not only concentration, but also a *balanced development* of our faculties, all the benefits of which directly go to the individual concerned, to the organization, and to the country. The spiritual ideal, being the greatest motive power behind the human-mind, can instil into an individual a great mass of energy. The inventors and scientists could not make any research work like our Rishis of yore to find out that all knowledge comes from within by the cultivation of spirituality through religious development; otherwise they, like our sages, would have easily advised their followers and countrymen to adopt the simple religious principles as one of their normal duties. So let us put forth our energies to cultivate and acquire that—our spirituality—which not only never fails, but, the mind being thus steadied, also obtains a mastery which extends from the Atomic to the Infinite. The secret of all success lies in this. At any rate, those who are spiritual will have within themselves a treasure of knowledge and efficiency which never runs out, as demonstrated by our great sages and others. The morale of organizations can easily be raised on this basis alone. In the present crisis, in fact at all times, this is the one unailing way to improve efficiency and ensure success either for an individual or for an organization.

Here is a system of efficiency unknown to many in foreign countries. Here we are already in possession of much efficiency and consequently it is easier to effect permanent improvement in efficiency by application of our spiritual system on our own lines rather than by enforcement of artificial and soulless

Western systems of efficiency from outside,—systems which put the human being on a par with machinery. This is not yet fully recognized even in our country at the present time.

#### SPIRITUAL FACTOR IN MAN

If we want to build up our industry and carry it to the front rank, let the leaders of the Government, businessmen, industrialists, employers, and employees pause for a little while, and look back into the eternal fountains of our past for individual inspiration and guidance. For, without looking back we cannot hope for progress. It is out of the past that we will have to fashion and mould our future—and not on borrowed spurious plumes, joining hands together and spiritualizing the industries with the real, universal concept of religion, the power of which, broadened and purified, will permeate every facet of human life. Thus shall we revitalize the industries of the world with our spirituality, just as Mahatma Gandhi utilized the same process of thought and action to lift politics to the higher regions of religion. Without a genuine spiritual background, any system of efficiency will completely fail to click, for it must necessarily be soulless. When we create a new life in our own way, all other systems must die a natural death. It is a realized fact that, being based on truth, self-sacrifice, and unselfishness, our system alone can bring harmony everywhere.

If we want to improve personal efficiency, it is quite essential to understand and analyse the nature of human beings. Man, a composite of matter and spirit is the most mysteriously marvellous and the most singularly delicate machine endowed with inventive genius. The Spirit is the most important principle of life, even as the flame is the most significant part of a lamp. If, then, man is deprived of God, he must inescapably suffer from miseries, worries, and troubles and that would surely be the greatest tragedy for man. Therefore, the more the spiritual factor is unravelled in man, the more efficient he becomes for good work. But this vital thing has been allowed to stagnate and gradually deteriorate in the absence of

improvement, due to an alien system of education instead of our own ancient original method.

It is rightly said that man does not live by bread alone, meaning thereby that man cannot live usefully without rational religion in its correct sense. And that is why no education can be adequate so long as it does not provide due scope for development of all these factors. This important aspect has been overlooked in many books on the subject of efficiency published in foreign countries. Efficiency can be maintained without deterioration and decay, only when the spiritual strain in man, being pervasive, informs and energizes all other constituents of his composite nature. So all human achievement lies in the plane of the spirit, and not of matter. Swami Vivekananda says: 'This is the message of Sri Ramakrishna to the modern world: "Do not care for doctrines, do not care for dogmas, or sects or churches or temples; they count for little compared with the essence of existence in each man, which is spirituality, and the more this is developed, the more powerful is he for good".'

#### THE KEY TO TRUE KNOWLEDGE

The religious or spiritual or efficient way is the gate to a new life which changes the tragedy of those who, with the capacity to stand erect, yet crawl through life on their hands and knees; who, in the midst of economic plenty, starve; who, having God with them in full, starve spiritually; and who, being surrounded by unmatched potentialities for good life, lead a very bad one. Here is the real talisman for all those who say, 'I should have done. . . I ought not to have done', and who have no place to turn to for guidance. This gives a new and necessary approach to the personal difficulties which beset the modern man. This regenerates the individual and puts him into touch with his own creative forces which are linked up with the infinite sources of the universe. This, therefore, is a dynamic way of life. It is up to us to make an effort to master the art of faith in a Higher Power and draw constantly on the inner sources of

strength for crossing over the inevitable difficulties which all of us have to face.

Another point we wish to emphasize here is that the key knowledge, which is Self-knowledge, must be acquired by spiritual practice if success has to be attained. Without Self-knowledge, without a searching exposure and rooting out ignorance, and without a consequent positive effort towards self-transformation, the forces that now threaten to barbarize us and reduce human beings to mere animals and machines can hardly be overcome. The way has been shown in our world-famous classical 'efficiency book', the *Bhagavad Gita* (XIII. 7—II) about six thousand years ago. If adopted, the true knowledge will come from within.

#### URGENT NEED

Hardly has any attempt been made by the leaders of the Government and of other types of organizations and associations to improve, in the first instance, the inner and vital efficiency of men even in our Industry. That is why they fail to achieve their targets in their respective fields. If this hiatus is removed, a great many improvements and inventions can easily be made in their respective organizations. To understand the facts relating to the fundamental principles and the natural laws underlying the spiritual thought-forces through religion is a very simple and easy matter. It will be clear even to an illiterate person, because it is our own practical way of life, even a child will be able to grasp the fundamentals and make use of them. Just as we learn the laws which govern the body and other material things in the world, so also we should learn the laws, particularly moral laws—which govern the soul. The secret of success of the individual or of increase in production in an organization lies in this. At any rate a cult of efficiency, based on our spiritual and ethical culture is, therefore, urgently needed—and there is no other alternative—to transmute our industrial organizations and eradicate the evils now associated with them. Emphasis should be on the efficiency of the

individual and through him of the organization. This is the real education which is needed at present. It should be included in the present scheme of 'Training within Industry' so as to give the needed spiritual background to the soulless Western system.

#### UNMISTAKABLE FUTURE

We, however, realize that a day will come soon when every person will think that religious principles are the most skilful and the most necessary adjuncts in developing successful and efficient men and women, in whatever profession they are, and will adopt spiritual thinking in their daily lives as preached in their respective religions. Signs are not wanting to this effect, and the process can also be seen from the steady growth of the Ramakrishna Mission throughout the world. Not only this; as individuals begin to adopt the philosophical practicality of religion, even scientists and political economists will be gradually forced to give up materialism and finally accept and adopt religious values to solve most of our problems, as in days of yore, without merely concentrating on the manipulation of the ever-changing external conditions and circumstances, as at present.

#### OUR WAY OF LIFE

The view-points, spiritual and practical, are at their base and in their essence neither mutually exclusive, nor even incompatible; on the contrary, they both mix to make up the chemical compound called Life. And efficiency or skill in action, as defined in our ancient books, is their very salt, individually and collectively. It sustains life, improves its texture, turns it into an art, brings zest to the mind which fashions it, and provides human reason with a *rationale*—a logical basis—for doing one's bit cheerfully, with heart within and God above.

If we proceed in this leading spirit—which is *our own way*,—it will automatically bring us to the state of integrated personality, the sum and substance of which is efficiency. The way for the realization of this desirable consummation is paved by direct contact with the source of power, the soul or life force. The man of

integrated personality offers guidance to all other men and women in all conditions of life, including the common man who works and lives by the product of his work. By virtue of the spiritual alchemy that has taken place in his consciousness, he finds himself as a power for good, helping and guiding others, seeing them as units of a vast unified family—Humanity—without any outward distinctions of race, creed, nationality, or condition, as do the members of the Ramakrishna Mission all over the world. In this changed atmosphere, our work becomes a love of labour and a labour of love; it is like leaving far behind the job which was considered deadly monotonous only the day before and allowing it never to return.

An integrated personality can guide us in all the stages through which we have to pass in the onward march from the lower stages to the higher ones, even to that of the highly spiritual man, covering all the branches of human activity. Above all, it definitely leads from the very beginning to team spirit and better relationship, a thing which is sadly lacking generally in us today in all associations and organizations, sects, castes, and communities. And this co-operative spirit prepares the proper atmosphere for the best of results, especially in industrial organizations, for true production of goods both qualitatively and quantitatively and at the lowest cost, carrying the message of freedom to the very doors of the common man in terms of improved conditions, amenities, and opportunities and of higher standards of living.

As free citizens, we have now to address ourselves to this task of improving our efficiency in this our own original way which sets us working together, fulfilling the R̥g-Vedic ideal—the experience of our sages—which is *efficiency par excellence*:

Common be your prayer;  
Common be your end;  
Common be your purpose;  
Common be your deliberation;  
Common be your desires;  
Common be your hearts;  
Common be your intentions;  
Perfect be the union amongst you.

(*R̥g-Veda*, X.191.3-4.)

# SRI-BHASHYA

BY SWAMI VIRESWARANANDA

(Continued from the November issue)

## A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE FIRST PĀDA

It has been shown in Section (Pāda) I, that a person who has studied the Purva Mimāmsa and has thus scrutinized and examined the true nature of work and has come to know that the results of work are ephemeral and therefore cannot help him to attain the highest aim of man viz., Liberation (Mokṣha), while he finds in another part of the Vedas, viz. the Vedānta part of them, that the knowledge of Brahman leads to this Liberation, and who being convinced that words are capable of conveying knowledge about things existing and need not necessarily have any relation to things to be done, and so thinks the Vedāntic texts are authoritative so far as they convey knowledge of Brahman, which is the highest aim of man, should inquire into Brahman by a study of the Uttara Mimāmsa or Shāririka Mimāmsa.

Scriptural texts declare a threefold classification: matter, individual souls and Brahman—matter being the object of enjoyment, souls, the enjoyers and Brahman, the ruling principle. Matter and souls which other texts declare to be connected with Brahman as Its body are controlled by It. It is therefore the Self of everything—the inner Ruler. 'He who inhabits the earth but is within it' etc. (*Bṛih.* 3. 7. 3-23). Other texts again teach that Brahman which has matter and souls for Its body exists as this world both in the causal and effected states, and hence speak of this world in both these aspects as that which is the real (Sat). 'Sat alone was this in the beginning, One only without a second' etc. (*Ch.* 6. 2. 8); 'He wished, "May I be many"' etc. (*Taitt.* 2. 6) and so on. These texts also uphold the threefold entities essentially distinct

in nature from one another—a view which is supported by texts like, 'Let me enter these three divine beings with this living self and then evolve names and forms', where the three divine beings or primordial elements stand for the whole material world and the living self refers to the individual soul. Brahman is in Its causal or effected condition, according as It has for Its body matter and souls either in their subtle or gross state. The effect being thus non-different from the cause, it is known through the knowledge of the cause, and the initial promissory statement of the scriptures that by the knowledge of one thing everything is known holds good. As Brahman which has for Its body matter and souls in their gross and subtle states constitutes the effect and the cause, we can well say that It is the material (Upādāna) cause of this world.

Texts which teach that Brahman is without qualities teach that It is free from all evil qualities. Similarly texts like, 'True, infinite, knowledge is Brahman', which declare knowledge as Its essential nature declare that the essential nature of Brahman which is all-knowing can be defined as knowledge, while texts like, 'He who is all-knowing' etc., show that It is essentially a knowing subject. Again texts like, 'He desired, "May I be many"' (*Taitt.* 2. 6), teach that Brahman exists as this manifold world, thereby denying the reality of all things different from It, which is the true import of texts like, 'From death to death he goes who sees any plurality here' (*Bṛih.* 4. 4. 19). Thus we find that texts which declare matter, souls and Brahman to be essentially different in nature, which declare



Brahman to be the cause and the world the effect, and finally the cause and effect to be non-different, do not in the least contradict the texts which declare matter and soul in causal condition existing in a subtle state, not having assumed as yet names and forms, while in the gross or effected state they are designated by such names and forms. Thus some texts declare that matter, souls and Brahman are three different entities, while others teach that matter and souls in all their states form the body of God who is their Self, while still other texts teach that It in Its causal and effected states comprises within It these three entities. 'All this is Brahman'.

Bondage is real and is the result of ignorance which is of the nature of Karma without a beginning. This bondage can be destroyed only through knowledge, i.e., through the knowledge that Brahman is the inner Ruler different from souls and matter. Such knowledge alone leads to final release or Moksha. This knowledge is attained through the Grace of the Lord pleased by the due performance of the daily duties prescribed for different castes and stages of life, duties performed not with the idea of attaining any results but with the idea of propitiating the Lord. Works done with a desire of results lead to impermanent results while those performed with the idea of pleasing the Lord result in the knowledge of the nature of devout meditation which in turn leads to the intuition of Brahman as the inner Self different from souls and matter. This leads to Moksha.

It has also been shown that the Taittiriya text 'That from which these beings are born', etc. (3. 1) defines Brahman and that this Brahman can be known only through the

Scriptures and not through any other means of knowledge. 'I ask you of that Being who is to be known only from the Upanishads (Aupanishadam)' (*Bṛih.* 3. 9. 26) where the word *only* shows that it can be known only through the Upanishads which alone are authority with respect to It. As all these texts refer to Brahman and have Brahman as their main purport which is the highest aim of man, these texts though not related to actions are authoritative and purposeful. That this Brahman, which is the First Cause is an intelligent principle, different from the insentient Pradhāna inasmuch as thinking is attributed to It. It has also been proved that this First cause is different from the individual soul be it either in the state of bondage or release, as It is said to be all-knowing, infinite bliss, the inner Ruler of all beings, sentient and insentient, etc. That this Brahman has a form which is immaterial (Aprākṛita) and which form is not a result of Karma. That terms like Ākasha (ether) and Prāṇa (breath) though ordinarily refer to the well known material things yet in the texts where they occur they refer to Brahman because Its characteristics are mentioned. Similarly the word 'light' has been shown as referring to Brahman on account of its connection with heaven. That due to the characteristic of Brahman, viz., the attainment of Liberation through Its knowledge, the word 'Indra' refers to Brahman as it is in keeping with scriptural teaching.

The result therefore arrived at was that the Scriptural texts have for their purport only Brahman which possesses an infinite number of good qualities and that It cannot be known through other sources.

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'In this world we find that all happiness is followed by misery as its shadow. Life has its shadow, death. They must go together, because they are not contradictory, not two separate existences, but different manifestations of the same unit, life and death, sorrow and happiness, good and evil'.

—Swami Vivekananda

## NOTES AND COMMENTS

### TO OUR READERS

'Meditation' on the *Bhagavad Gita* is largely based on the first of a series of weekly lectures on the *Gita*, delivered by Swami Ranganathananda, Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission, New Delhi. In the course of his illuminating discourse, the Swami gives a detailed and instructive exposition of the well-known '*Gita-Dhyāna*' Shlokas. . . .

Sri Tara Kumar Ghosh's brief but brilliant survey of *The Contribution of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda to the Making of Modern India* makes interesting reading. . . .

Ours is an age of speed and efficiency. The industrially advanced countries of the West and some of those of the East regard efficiency as a product of able training and assiduous practice. But is that all? And what is the essential element in the individual which brings out the best in him and thus makes him more and more efficient? Dealing with this important topic of universal interest, Sri R. K. Murti, Principal, Institute of Efficiency, Bombay, and author of *Practical Guide to Efficiency*, brings to bear on the subject his expert knowledge and personal experience in the field. It is a thought-provoking article that seeks to establish the Vedantic view—which combines the realistic as well as the idealistic demands of life—that *Real Efficiency is A Product of Realized Practical Religion*. . . .

Swami Vireswarananda of the Ramakrishna Mission,—whose translation of Ramakrishna's *Sri-Bhāṣya* has been serially appearing in these columns for some months,—concludes, in this instalment, the First Section of the First Chapter of the *Sūtras*. . . .

Swami Satswarupananda will be the Editor of the *Prabuddha Bharata* from January 1955.

### THE HOLY MOTHER BIRTH CENTENARY

Sri Sarada Devi, known as the Holy Mother, was the divine consort of Sri Ramakrishna. She was born on 22nd December 1853. As is well known to our readers, the year-long celebrations in different parts of India and the world in commemoration of the Birth Centenary of the Holy Mother, which commenced on 27th December 1953 (the Hundredth Anniversary of her birth), will have the concluding functions held at Belur Math and Calcutta in the course of this month (December 1954). Besides various functions at the Belur Math, beginning on Holy Mother's 101st Birth Anniversary (16th December 1954 and ending on 26th December, there will be the following activities in Calcutta:

(1) An All-India Arts, Crafts, and Culture Exhibition, opening on 5th December.

(2) An Essay Competition, mainly on the life and teachings of the Holy Mother, among school and college students in India, Nepal, Pakistan, Ceylon, and Burma. A detailed announcement of the Scheme for the Competition already appeared in our last issue.

(3) A three-day All-India Women Music Conference, commencing on 17th December.

(4) A Women's Cultural Conference, commencing on the 20th December, including a Students' Day.

(5) A grand procession on 26th December, terminating at the Calcutta Maidan, where speeches on the significance of the Holy Mother's advent will be delivered.

### THE HERITAGE OF INDIA

Speaking on the occasion of the Birth Anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna, in March last, at the Ramakrishna Mission, New Delhi, Sri G. V. Mavalankar, Speaker of the Lok

Sabha, referred to the cultural and spiritual treasures India possessed and reminded his countrymen of what their aims and aspirations should be and what the outside world expects of them. He dwelt at some length on the life and realizations of Sri Ramakrishna and called upon his hearers to study, understand, and put into personal practice as many of Sri Ramakrishna's teachings as possible. Sri Mavalankar observed (among other things):

'I have always felt the lives of our saints as unfathomable sources of inspiration to live a life leading to Mokṣha or Nirvāṇa. By this I do not mean the life of a recluse, who keeps away from the mass of society and seeks to attain a personal salvation. I believe that it is possible, nay, necessary, that every one who wishes to live an intensely religious life not only can but ought to live it in the midst of society so that the philosophy of life that one practises might reflect itself in the ordinary social standards and conduct of society. . . .'

'Asia has been aptly said to be the cradle of religions and India can be said to be the land where deep thought has been given since ancient times to the most fascinating problem of "Life and Death". The problem has been considered in all its aspects in relation to the nature of life, the purpose of life, and the meaning of death. In other words, one is taken to drink deep at the fountain of spirituality and this thought of our ancients has got a beauty of its own which, though fascinating, is not yet grasped by other nations of the world; steeped in materialism, they stand wondering at it and attempt to understand what this spirituality is and what it means.

'But this spirituality is really not a matter that can be understood by words or by intellectual processes of reasoning. It is a matter of experience of the individual with an urge to develop a spiritual outlook and code of conduct. It is faith in and practice of the fundamentals of spirituality which have dominated the Indian conception of "Life and Death" and that is why she has borne the shock of a thousand impacts of other religions, the followers of which have increased in numbers, but have not been able to conquer the basic Hindu philosophy of "Life and Death".'

It is of general importance for Indians to know that they stand before the world as the fortunate inheritors of a hoary and valuable cultural bequest. Sri Mavalankar has done well in drawing attention to the little-understood fact that all the world has expectation of a great lead from India in the cause of

world peace and progress of humanity. He said:

'This spirituality gives us the solid rocky foundation on which all our sages stood firm, giving the beacon-light of their message to the generations coming after them. This is what the great Ramakrishna Paramahansa and the saints who preceded him, Swami Vivekananda and the Sannyasins of the Ramakrishna Order, and men like Mahatma Gandhi and others have done. . . .'

'Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna lived a life to realize God. He moulded his life for this end, as he believed that true religion meant not the forms of worship or other set rules of behaviour, but it meant unity with God. His first impulse was to rid himself of the superstition of social distinction, to be rid of the last trace of social vanity, to make himself equal of the lowest. This led him to identify himself with the *chaṇḍāla*. . . . He wanted to be a servant of humanity. He was thus a true teacher who knew truth at first hand and not through an intermediary'.

'"First realize truth yourself and there will be many to whom you can teach it afterwards", he used to say. He criticized none, condemned none, and saw the good in all. By his way of life he showed that religion is a reality to be felt and sensed in a way infinitely more intensive than the way in which we can see and feel the world about us. In his view religion is neither words nor doctrines nor theories, nor is it sectarianism. Religion consists in realization of the relation between the soul and God. He also showed by his way of life that even in this body man may be perfect.

'In the world conditions of today, which exhibit tenseness and narrowness of outlook and a run after materialism,' stated Sri Mavalankar, towards the close of his address, 'it becomes our duty to study and understand Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna—his life and philosophy. This is all the more necessary and essential not only in view of our own duty, but in view of the expectations of the world and the role that India is destined to play for the peace of the world and progress of humanity'.

#### FOUNDATIONS OF A NATION

It can be said that no government, however powerful, can successfully tackle its national problems and lead the nation to glory solely depending on its political power. The active co-operation of the people is

essential. A large share of the responsibility for solving the country's problems and working for its prosperity lies on the shoulders of the masses. A government can at best co-ordinate and guide the collective efforts of the people, together with the resources of the country, along fruitful channels. A democratic people cannot but be always watchful of the extent to which their government is expected to discharge its functions and responsibilities properly. All the same a people who look up to their government alone for everything, without voluntary initiative or effort on their part to help themselves, cannot hope to go far on the path of progress. It has to be borne in mind that democratic rights and privileges accrue to the people only when they fulfil their duties and responsibilities as primary citizens. This aspect of national self-government, which underlines the importance of the individual citizen's sense of responsibility more than the actual form of government, has been stressed by right-minded thinkers and far-sighted leaders in every country. A nation, like an individual, when disciplined and possessed of character, stands stable on the foundations of unassailable principles.

In order to transform the character of the individual,—and not merely his behaviour,—the ideals and aspirations that are to inspire him should touch the core of his being, must be in harmony with his make-up. They have to arouse his latent goodness or divinity, and make him feel his oneness with the rest of the nation. Primarily it is spiritual culture alone which can achieve this. Secondly, national ideals—educational, social, economic, etc.—help to a great extent in sublimating the selfish personality. The spiritual ideal must be strengthened in and through the national ideals. In India the spiritual ideal is the

basis of all national ideals, as was pointed out by Swami Vivekananda who urged that national union in India should be strengthened by the gathering-up of her scattered spiritual forces. When asked about his ideas on the right method of India's national regeneration, the Swami said: 'Our method is very easily described. It simply consists in reasserting the national life. Buddha preached renunciation. India heard, and yet in six centuries she reached her greatest height. The secret lies there. The national ideals of India are Renunciation and Service. Intensify her in those channels and the rest will take care of itself. The banner of the spiritual cannot be raised too high in this country. In it alone is salvation'.

In trying to adapt the so-called secular ideal of the West to Indian circumstances, we cannot overlook the risk of taking an extreme and hasty step unsuited to our nation. It is not over-emphasis on religion that breeds communalism. Lack of understanding of the unitary idea underlying religious practices makes men susceptible to bigoted intolerance. The view that religion is the personal and private concern of every individual does not help the situation. It leaves untouched the misconceptions about religion that are at the root of the fanaticism that is often seen to sway the illiterate masses. Students of history know too well that the sources of communal strife are to be found, in the majority of cases, in political, social, or economic rivalry. Secular values create endless problems for man and spiritual values act as the eternal healing balm. 'Religion is the force of belief that cleanses the inner parts', says Prof. A. N. Whitehead. A nation gathers real strength as it advances on the path of the spirit, and it simultaneously gains every other value needed for its all-round welfare.

## REVIEWS AND NOTICES

THE REIGN OF QUANTITY AND THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES. BY RENE GUENON. Published by Luzac & Company, Ltd., 46, Great Russell Street, London W.C.1. Pages 363. Price 25s.

Many readers already know the author's general position as expounded in his *La crise du Monde moderne*, and perhaps a few will share the present reviewer's dissatisfaction with the overtone of arrogance therein embodied, through a capricious

claim for the views discussed and lack of restraint. The present work leaves much the same impression. We are told that this volume gives a concise but comprehensive view of ancient wisdom, formerly common to the East and West, but now lost sight of.

From the outset the author establishes a theory, namely, the lowest point is, as it were, the obscure reflection or the inverted image of the highest point, and from this follows the consequence that the most complete absence of all principle implies a sort of 'counterfeit' of the principle itself. This theory is connected with a modern tendency to bring everything down to an exclusively *quantitative* point of view. This tendency is as conspicuous in the 'scientific' conceptions of recent centuries as it is in other domains, notably in that of social organization. The reduction to the quantitative is strictly in conformity with the conditions of the cyclic phase at which humanity has now arrived. This 'descent' is but a gradual movement away from the principle which is inherent in any process of manifestation. The lowest point of 'descent' takes on the aspect of pure quantity, deprived of every qualitative distinction. Quality is Puruṣha or Essence, and the quantity is Prakṛiti or substance. This, the first of all cosmic dualities, is the starting-point of manifestation. They are the two poles between which all manifestation is produced.

In the light of this metaphysical theory the author indicates the nature of modern deviation and the part played by modern philosophy and science, with their accompanying notions of progress and evolution in the formation of the present society. He has no sympathy for some modern cults and movements which he describes as 'pseudo-initiatic' organizations. The 'syncretism' of these cults is nothing but an amalgam of elements borrowed from almost anywhere without any genuine understanding of what they really represent in the various traditions to which they properly belong.

This work would have been certainly an antidote and corrective to many profane traditions and false movements, which are exploiting the religious consciousness of people, if the author had presented his theories with restraint, dignity, and sympathy. While applying a metaphysical theory to modern conditions, a philosopher must not be too much hide-bound. One can wonder at the audacity of this philosopher when he rejects *in toto* everything that does not fit into the framework of his notions. And there remains yet another point concerning the author's claim for pure tradition. It is obviously impossible to accuse anyone for lacking a virtue when one does not possess oneself. We would like to know: from what source did the author receive his initiation into traditional Vedanta? Traditional Vedanta uncompromisingly demands that a student should sit at the feet of a

great teacher for knowing the nature of Reality. To ask this question is only reasonable, though not discreet!

In spite of such serious defects, there are some points which are commendable. He says the very use of the word Yoga becomes a mere absurdity, when the spiritual aim, which alone constitutes the essence of Yoga, is not taken into account. The reviewer agrees with him when he says, 'Yoga is in fact no more a kind of psychic therapy than it is a kind of physiological therapy, and its methods are in no way and in no degree a treatment for people who are in any way ill or unbalanced'.

F. H. Bradley is said to have humorously remarked that he would like to force all German *Metaphysikers* to write in French under pain of death, for the reason if they had to express themselves in a foreign language they would have to know before they begin a sentence how they meant it to end. Probably the same would be true if the present work had been originally written in English.

SWAMI ADIDEVANANDA

WORDS FROM THE VEDAS. BY A. C. BOSE. Published by Republican Era Publishers, 24, M. J. Building, Chandni Chowk, Delhi. Pages 364. Price Rs. 5.

*Words from the Vedas* is a valuable and helpful anthology of Vedic verses with English translation and commentary by Dr. Abinash Chandra Bose, a well-known professor of English literature and a deep scholar of comparative other literature, with learned research in India's ancient lore to his credit. The anthology consists of important Mantras selected from the four Vedic Samhitas, chiefly the *Rig-Veda*. The translation is literal and accurate as far as practicable, thus enabling the common reader to establish direct contact with the world's oldest literature and the source-books of Indian culture and religion. The translation is free from any individual bias or sectarian outlook and therefore doubly welcome at the time when we are in need of harmony and understanding even in matters religious. A delectable feature in this book is the translator's long and illuminating Introduction, covering over 100 pages, wherein he has critically considered the merits and limitations of Western Vedic scholars as well as of Indian commentators and given a survey of the history of Vedic religion and culture through the ages introducing interesting comparative studies. The classification of the verses into separate sections in accordance with different religious attitudes, in the manner of the *Gita* is a unique and commendable venture. This beautiful anthology touches the poetic and literary as well as the philosophical and religious aspects of the Vedas.

THE GLORY OF AMARNATH. BY YUVARAJ KARAN SINGH. Published by the Trade Agent,

*Government of Jammu and Kashmir, 129, Mahatma Gandhi Road, Fort, Bombay. Pages 24. Price Re. 1.*

In this exquisitely printed and illustrated brochure, the author gives a description, with a wealth of poetic detail, of his pilgrimage to the famous hallowed Cave of Amarnath, one of the most important places of Hindu pilgrimage in the interior of the Kashmir Himalayas. This pilgrimage was undertaken one month before the traditional annual Yātrā. The author describes with feeling his emotional experience before the ice-image of the Shiva-Lingam in the Cave and also at the sight of the fascinating scenery and natural beauty *en route*. He narrates short accounts of many legends with which almost every stage of the journey is associated. Illustrated in two colours, with a tri-colour illustration of Hara-Pārvati on the front cover, the booklet contains photographs taken by the author himself. The author has done well in adding a short Appendix giving some information regarding the Amarnath Yatra, which information will prove useful to pilgrims and tourists. Coming from the pen of so distinguished a pilgrim as the Head of State of Jammu and Kashmir, the booklet possesses an extraordinary authenticity and appeal for all.

#### BENGALI

SATPRASANGE SWAMI VIJNANANANDA.  
COMPILED BY SWAMI APURVANANDA. *Published by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Muthiganj, Allahabad, U.P. Pages 219. Price Rs. 3.*

Swami Vijnananandaji, familiarly known as Hariprasanna Maharaj, was one of the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna and the fourth President of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission. He met Sri Ramakrishna more than once and was the recipient of deep love and profound spiritual instructions from the Master. He lived one of the purest and most austere lives and had attained to a high order of spiritual realization and God-consciousness. As the Spiritual Head of the Order he initiated a large number of aspirants into real religious life and practice. His very valuable spiritual teachings and instructions have been compiled from various authentic sources and chronologically arranged in this book. The compiler has spared no pains to sift carefully all available material and present a comprehensive collection of the spiritual conversations of Swami Vijnananandaji. The period covered is from the year 1920 to near about the time of the Swami's passing away in 1938. The collection is representative of almost every aspect of spiritual practice and will prove of immense benefit to earnest seekers of God. The book contains a short life of the Swami from the lucid pen of the compiler. An esteemed Foreword to the book, contributed by Swami Sankaranandaji, present President of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, impressively

expresses the profound significance of Swami Vijnananandaji's life and teachings.

PRĀRTHANĀ-O-SANGIT. COMPILED BY SWAMI TEJASANANDA. *Published by Ramakrishna Mission Saradapitha, Belur Math P.O., Dt. Howrah, West Bengal. Pages 102. Price Re. 1.*

This is a superb well-planned collection of select hymns, songs, and Vedic passages suitably arranged as a weekly routine for the convenience of school and college boys and girls both at home and in the hostels. The respective hymns, chants, and Bhajanas for each day of the week, meant to be conducted in the morning and the evening when community prayers and singing are generally held, have been clearly indicated. This daily routine of prayers (*prārthanā*) and songs (*sangit*) is followed by the resident students of the Ramakrishna Mission Vidyamandira, a residential college situated close to the Belur Math, the Headquarters of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission. The learned compiler, who is the present Principal of the Vidyamandira, has made this collection fully representative of the different faiths and creeds of Hindu religious thought and has rightly included a song on Jesus Christ and two on Buddha. As such the valuable contents of this brochure will bring within the easy reach of its readers select and well known Bengali and Hindi songs, Sanskrit Stotras, and Upanishadic passages for recitation, which otherwise are seen to lie scattered in different books. It is also evident that the lofty plan and purpose of this compilation is to inculcate upon the plastic minds of the youth not only a truly spiritual ideal in keeping with the nation's cultural heritage but also a basic harmony of religions as preached by Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda.

The book contains nearly a hundred items, about 70 songs, 20 hymns, and 10 Vedic passages. Among the useful features of the book are the inclusion of musical notations (*svoralipi*) of some of the Sanskrit hymns and the introduction of indicatory marks for the correct intonation of the Upanishadic texts. Our two celebrated national songs and the entire text of the Rāmanāma Sankirtana also find a place in this book. We commend this useful pocket-size selection of prayers and songs to educational institutions and hostels where boys and girls are trained for a higher and better life.

ADVAITĀMṚITAVARṢHINI. BY AMULPADA CHATTOPADHYAYA. *Published by the Author, 14/3C, Balaram Bose Ghat Road, Calcutta 25. Pages 274. Price Rs. 2-8.*

It is a work of worthy endeavour and contains, as the title indicates, valuable and thought-provoking writings on the salient features of monistic Vedanta, with special reference to the philosophy of the *Bhagavad Gita*. Advaita Vedanta, as expounded by Shankaracharya and interpreted and

commented upon by successive scholars, past and present, is now more or less widely recognized and studied as the acme of philosophic thought and experience. The aim of the author is to make this book an easy and reliable treatise on the philosophy of Advaita or non-dualism, at the same time discussing in detail the metaphysics of the *Gita* from the standpoint of Advaita. The subject-matter is dealt with in seventeen well-written essays and contains the gist of Vedantic thought, together with copious quotations and references drawn from other systems of Hindu philosophy. The *Gita* forms the *leit-motiv* of the author's work, while he has made a commendable attempt at revealing the monistic

theme that pervades the *Gita* teaching. The author's liberal and non-dogmatic exposition of Advaita is praiseworthy. He has at the same time discussed the role of dualistic rituals and forms of worship. The author has described, with much clarity and conviction, the spiritual practices according to the paths of Karma (unselfish action), Yoga, and Bhakti, and has shown them to be complementary to and helpful in attaining the highest realization of non-dual Reality. The book can serve the Bengali-reading public as a short and intelligible introduction to Hindu religious and philosophic thought and as an expository study in the metaphysics of the *Bhagavad Gita*.

## NEWS AND REPORTS

### RAMAKRISHNA VEDANTA CENTRE, LONDON SARADA (HOLY MOTHER) BIRTH CENTENARY

The Sarada (Holy Mother) Birth Centenary Women's Conference—a women's religious conference organized by the Centenary Celebrations Departmental Committee of the Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre of London—was held at the Caxton Hall, London, on the 30th June 1954. Women of different religions took leading parts and all the major religions received attention. The subject was, 'Contributions to Spiritual Life by Women of different Religions'. The Conference opened with the chanting of a Sanskrit hymn to Sarada Devi by a group of Indian women-students. The first address at the Conference was by Phyllis Austin, Secretary of the Sarada Centenary, who gave an account of the Holy Mother's life. Miss Beatrice Saxon Snell, of the Society of Friends, gave an interesting talk on the contribution of Quaker women to spiritual life. Begum Piari Rashid, Secretary of the U. K. Branch of the All-Pakistan Women's Association, dealt with the contributions to spiritual life by the outstanding women of Islam, especially Rabia, the Sufi saint. Mrs. Basil Henriques, of the London Jewish Settlement, gave a lively talk on Jewish women. The line of numerous Hindu women-saints from Vedic times to the present was traced in brief by Miss Suman Rao. Mrs. Maureen Proudman threw light on the glory of the ancient Buddhist Order of nuns. The contribution to spiritual life by Christian women was briefly dealt with by Miss Sylvia Carmen. In closing the Conference, the Chairman, Mrs. Maud Amor, emphasized the value of the practice of the harmony of religions.

### VIVEKANANDA ASHRAMA, SHYAMALA TAL HOLY MOTHER BIRTH CENTENARY

The celebration of the Holy Mother Birth Centenary was held at the Vivekananda Ashrama, Shyamala Tal (Dt. Almora), in the Himalayas, on

the 22nd October 1954. The functions, simple yet impressive,—which included special Puja, devotional music, readings from the life and teachings of the Holy Mother, and a public meeting,—were well attended by over two hundred people from the villages of this hilly area. A large quantity of sweets and 101 Saris (for women) were distributed free among the inhabitants of the surrounding villages.

### RAMAKRISHNA MISSION SEVASHRAMA, VRINDABAN

#### REPORT FOR 1953

The Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Vrindaban, an up to date hospital with 55 beds, has completed the forty-seventh year of its useful existence. The following is a brief account of its work during 1953:

*Indoor Hospital:* The total number of cases (including eye cases) treated during the year was 1,992 and that of surgical cases (including eye operations) was 2,693. The number of admitted cases was the maximum reached in the whole history of the Sevashrama.

*Nanda Baba Eye Hospital:* The total number of indoor admissions was 1,071 and the out-patients department treated 29,517 cases. 8,606 major and minor eye operations were performed.

*Outdoor Dispensary:* The total number of cases treated during the year was 1,35,065, of which 42,267 were new. The number of surgical cases was 2,437 (including those of the Eye Dept.). The average daily outdoor attendance was 370.

*X-ray Department:* 402 patients were examined in the department.

*Clinical Laboratory and Electro-therapy:* 2,401 samples of blood, urine, etc. were examined during the year in the clinical laboratory. 24 patients were treated by electro-therapy.

*Pecuniary Help:* Monthly and occasional relief

was given to 21 persons, the expenditure amounting to Rs. 139-4-0.

*Financial Position:* The total receipts for the year, under the General Fund, amounted to Rs. 51,443-3-11 and the total expenditure was Rs. 57,905-10-5, this leaving a net deficit of Rs. 6,462-6-6.

*Needs:* (1) 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 to the General Fund from the generous public are needed.

(2) 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 construction of the new hospital buildings, doctors' and workers' quarters, monastery, shrine, etc. on this new site is estimated to cost Rs. 19,01,000. Against this target figure, the amount realized or promised up to the end of the year under review, in the form of donations, interests, etc. was about Rs. 1,15,000. A sum of about Rs. 17,86,000 is still to be collected as early as possible. The management appeal to the generous public to contribute liberally for this genuine humanitarian project.

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

#### RAMAKRISHNA MISSION ASHRAMA, PATNA REPORT FOR 1953

The following is a brief report of the activities of the Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Bankipore, Patna, for the year 1953:

*Medical:* (i) *The Bhuvaneshvar Charitable Homoeopathic Dispensary* treated 80,927 cases.

(ii) The Allopathic section, which also contained a first-aid and surgical department, treated 18,686 cases.

*Educational:* (i) *The Swami Adbhutananda Upper Primary Pāṭhaśhālā* imparted education to 144 students drawn chiefly from the educationally backward communities.

(ii) *Students' Home:* There were 4 students in the Home, all studying in the local colleges.

*Cultural and Religious:* (i) *The Swami Turiyananda Library* contained 1,407 books, and the Reading-room received 24 periodicals.

(iii) 150 scriptural classes and 30 lectures and discourses, in Hindi and Bengali, were held in and outside the Ashrama.

*Relief Work:* Relief work among the flood-affected people of Mangalgarh, Dt. Darbhanga, Bihar, was conducted by the Ashrama during the year. 2,500 people of 7 villages were given relief for over 7 weeks. The Mission collected for the purpose nearly Rs. 13,788 and spent about Rs. 13,417 till December 1953. More than 500 maunds of foodgrains, 1,082 pieces of new cloth, besides old ones, as also cash were distributed among the suffering people. Medical aid was also given to those who were suffering from dysentery, malaria, etc.

*Installation of the image of Sri Ramakrishna:* The most important function in the Ashrama during the year was the installation of the marble image of Sri Ramakrishna in the Ashrama Temple. The installation ceremony commenced on 15th March 1953 and continued for a week. The image was installed on 16th March 1953 by Swami Sankaranandaji Maharaj, President, Ramakrishna Math and Mission.

#### RAMAKRISHNA MISSION, MANGALORE REPORT FOR 1953

This Centre of the Ramakrishna Mission in Mangalore conducted a Boys' Home (Bālakāshrama) which maintained meritorious boys of indigent circumstances, by providing them with free board, lodging, stationery, etc. It had 31 boarders at the end of the year 1953, studying in different institutions in Mangalore.

The Boys' Home was run on the lines of the Gurukula system, encouraging the boys to live a life of Brahmacharya and to integrate their character by blending the best elements of modern culture with the higher values of spiritual life. The boys, who were trained to manage the internal affairs of the Home, participated in the daily congregational prayers and were taught to chant sacred scriptures like the *Gita* and the *Viṣṇu-sahasranāma*.

*Needs:* Funds are required by the Mission for the following purposes:

- (1) For construction of bath-rooms Rs. 2,000.
- (2) For furniture (shelves, desks, etc. for the boys) Rs. 1,000.

#### THE HOLY MOTHER'S BIRTHDAY

The 102nd Birthday of Sri Sarada Devi—the Holy Mother falls on 16th December 1954