

PRABUDDHA BHARATA

VOL. LIX

APRIL 1954

No. 4



“उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत ।”

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

TO THE HOLY MOTHER

(ON HER BIRTH CENTENARY)

BY S. C. SEN GUPTA

In a country where the vast meets the vast,
Where the sky meets the sea,
The mountain the sky,—
Where the flowers lose their aroma in limitless air,
The birds their wings in the blue,
The stag stares fearless in the woods,—
Where the prince cares less for the throne than his father's word,
Or, the prince throws away the crown of his own accord,
For he must conquer the ills of life,—
Where the soul goes in search, away from the bonds of flesh,
And meets the Oversoul,—

In such a country did once meet Ramachandra,—Sita His consort
divine, of many a sorrow;
Satyavān his Sāvitrī, of immortal fame,—
Unions that taught an erring world
The dignity of a life of duty pure,
And suffering and its ultimate triumph,—

Proved by another Union of recent times,
 Of Sri Ramakrishna and Devi Sārādāmani,
 Two pilgrim souls who had come down
 Amidst lost and wandering mankind
 To hold up the new Vision
 Of man and woman united in a single dedication,
 To thought and love and joy,
 Without their cloud or smoke or din,—

A Vision that caught in its glamour many a soul aspiring,
 Which knows not the magic spell that made the God-man,—
 Swami Vivekananda sprung from the Holy Spirit,
 Who was the soul's very resplendence,—
 Many a home was filled with new breath
 That longed more for the soul's lustre than for gold,
 Or for the fascination of the female form,—
 That came to be exalted in the Holy presence
 To that of the Mother Divine:—
 And the soft old voice went round
 That once had rung loud and deep in India's hallowed air—
Yenāham nāmritā syām kimaham tena kuryām'.

REMINISCENCES OF THE HOLY MOTHER

BY A DEVOTEE

It was in a most unexpected manner that I had the opportunity of visiting the Holy Mother in her village home at Jayrambati. I cannot but be convinced that it all happened only by divine grace. Three or four of us, one evening in August or September 1919, left the Belur Math and went to visit the Kalyaneswar temple, to which shrine Sri Ramakrishna used to go for worship now and then. We all offered worship at Kalyaneswar, and then at the Dakshineswar temple on the other side of the Ganges. We had almost returned to the lane that led back to the precincts of the Math. But lo! Some one of my companions asked where the Grand Trunk Road led and the reply was that it ran up to Banaras and even further. I saw that they

suddenly turned back and walked along the Grand Trunk Road. I thought they were simply joking and followed them. But as a matter of fact, they walked on in earnest and covered more than two miles.

These details I set down here to show that my trip to Jayrambati came about definitely not through my own planning or willing. Hungry and tired, we lay down on the roadside and spent the night that way. Next day we reached Tārakeswar, where the Holy Mother had gone once, during the illness of Sri Ramakrishna, to offer prayers for divine intervention and where she had had a vision. After the usual worship and partaking of the *prasād*, we proceeded towards Jayrambati. To our dismay we found the roads flooded,

We had to wade through waist-deep water, all along, and in some places it was neck-deep also. The difficulties may better be imagined than described. Late at night we reached Chāmpa-dānga. We could not follow the same route which the Holy Mother had taken from Tarakeswar to Arāmbagh. But our difficulties did not end at Champadanga. The distance between it and Arambagh was all a sheet of water, with no sign of any road. Fortunately, again, through divine grace, we met a party going to Arambagh on urgent business. They hired a country-boat. They took pity on us and allowed us to travel with them in the country-boat. It took us from early morning to late in the evening to reach Arambagh. What a joy and relief! Even before we reached the Holy Mother's village, we had a foretaste of her grace and blessings in the form of a most unexpected but warm and cordial welcome from a devotee of the Mother at Arambagh.

Next morning the devotee ferried us across the river and we reached Kamarpukur in time for our midday meal. There was Shivu-dā, a nephew of Sri Ramakrishna, a simple, unostentatious, and kindly soul, who welcomed us warmly and gave us a good meal. After spending the whole day at Kamarpukur, seeing places hallowed by the memory of Sri Ramakrishna, we proceeded to Jayrambati. With what little money one of our party had in his pocket, we bought from a villager some vegetables, including a kind of spinach called *āmruḷ-śāk* which, we heard, the Holy Mother used to like much. Taking these precious offerings, we reached the Mother's house in the village a little late after dusk.

To our grief and disappointment, we heard from the Mother's attendant that she was down with fever. The attendant was not pleased at our unexpected arrival (without previous intimation). But he did one favour. He informed the Mother of our arrival, and perhaps, the story of our wading through floodwaters. The Mother directed that we should be given our supper and allowed to rest for the night. We were told we could have her

darśan next morning. The attendant had somewhat frightened us by telling us that the Mother was displeased at our intrusion. One can hardly imagine the state of our mind on hearing this. All the same, in my heart of hearts I felt that notwithstanding what the attendant had told us, the Mother—who, we had heard, was the embodiment of love, grace, and bliss,—could never be anything but the same loving, kind, and forgiving Mother.

Next morning we were called to the Mother's presence. I could not contain the joy, which filled and overflowed my heart, on finding that my intuitive feeling about Mother's grace and love was more than fulfilled. She was all kindness, no trace of any the least annoyance (as we had feared). She was anxious about our safety, because of the dangerous and flooded route we had to wade through, and kindly and gently warned us not to venture on such rash and risky undertakings in future. To our repeated expression of contrition for our foolhardiness, and begging for her pardon, Mother only expressed her anxiety, again, lest we fall ill due to getting wet by wading through water for hours. We saw nothing but the most tender, loving, and forgiving heart of the Mother. To our request that we may be permitted to stay for some days under her protection and presence, she readily agreed and said, 'Certainly, you cannot go before taking rest for some days. . . .'

No poet or artist can adequately convey the serenity and grace of the Holy Mother's presence, the simplicity of her surroundings, the ease and naturalness of everything about her actions and movements. It was a sight for the gods to see her worshipping in the shrine. It looked as if she actually saw Sri Ramakrishna seated before her, and her offerings of flowers and fruits were just like how a person would behave towards one dear and near to him and is close by in flesh and blood. Nothing of the dry formality of ritual could be seen.

We had heard and read how well she used to serve food to and look after the devotees, attending even to their minutest details and

wants. During our stay, Mother was not doing well. So she could not serve the meal herself. But she would sit and watch, with a benign smile, while we took food and would every time give us her *prasād*.

One day I managed to talk to her when there was none else near-by. When I poured out my heart and told her my difficulties in the way of smoothly pursuing the path of spiritual progress and in being able to renounce the world, I was most pleasantly surprised to hear her speak to me in a gentle and sweet, but firm and assuring, tone. The following words (in Bengali) of Mother are still vividly imprinted in my memory: 'Thākūrer kripāte sab habe, sab habe, sab habe', i.e. 'By the grace of Thakur (Sri Ramakrishna) all is possible' (*repeated thrice*). Even today I can hear these words of encouragement ringing distinctly in my ears. And what a tower of strength, inspiration, and courage these words have been to me!

We have read in the books on the Holy Mother's life that she once undertook and successfully performed the ordeal of Panchatapa.¹ But I can say that I saw the Mother pass through a more severe ordeal during my four days' stay at Jayrambati.

Rādhu (Rādhārāni) was a niece of the Mother, who in fact was a pet, foster-child of hers from the worldly point of view, and was, in a spiritual sense, the link which kept the Mother's soaring spiritual moods in contact with the mundane level of suffering humanity. Radhu had a child in arms and it was ill when we were at Jayrambati. It was crying all the time. The Mother herself had fever. Radhu felt helpless and was often careless in the matter of looking after her child. She was lying down in a corner and showering

¹ 'The austerity of the five fires', i.e. practice of meditation by sitting with fires burning on all the four sides and the scorching sun overhead.

abuses on the Mother. In spite of her fever, Mother got up, put the child into the cradle and gently rocking it, was trying to pacify the child with sweet words. All on a sudden, Pagali Māmi (the mad aunt), the mother of Radhu, came running with a long splinter of burning firewood and threatened to beat the Mother with it. One end of the firewood was burning with a big flame. Perhaps to make the 'fifth fire', some old women of the village were quarrelling and shouting at each other and blaming the Mother for being kind and indulgent to the guilty party. This 'Panchatapa' was really more scorching than five hundred fires. Anyone's patience would have been exhausted. We all were restless, impatient, and even angry. But the gentleness and calmness of the Mother kept us spell-bound so to say. How wonderful was the reaction of the Mother! In the gentlest and sweetest voice, she said to Radhu, (In Bengali), 'Miṣṭi kathā bolo' ('Speak sweet words'). These three words—very ordinary, short and commonplace, but the sweet way in which they were uttered and the background described above constitute the most eloquent testimony of a heart filled and overflowing with peace, grace, and love.

The Divine in human form is actually found manifest in great spiritual personalities. The Holy Mother could truly be described only by such expressions as used by Shankaracharya in describing the Goddess Annapūrṇā: 'Nityānandakari', 'Varābhayakari', 'Pratyakshamāheswari', and 'Mātā kripā-sāgari'. Even though in outward appearance she looked just like an ordinary woman, everyone who had the privilege of meeting her felt that these epithets applied to the Holy Mother were in no sense an exaggeration and only described what they felt in their heart of hearts.

It (realization of God) depends upon the grace of God. He bestows His grace upon anyone He likes. Grace is the important thing.

—The Holy Mother

THE IMMORTAL INSPIRATION OF THE UPANISHADS

BY THE EDITOR

It is now common knowledge that the Vedas, which are the highest authority with the Hindus in matters religious, constitute the most ancient and most wonderful body of literature known to man. It is the Hindu belief that these precious scriptural documents are not mere books as such, not productions of man, but the Voice of God Himself and co-eternal with Him (*apauruṣeya*). For thousands of years, the Hindu, educated or not, has drawn his or her inspiration, in one form or other, from the Vedas. The meaning of the word 'Veda' is 'wisdom' or 'knowledge' and this Supreme Knowledge is eternal, universal, illuminating, and enlightening. The Rishis or other sages, to whom the Vedic wisdom was revealed, were highly advanced spiritual savants. Various dates, of varying antiquity, are assigned by scholars to the origin of the Vedas, as they have come down to us today, though it has been recognized how very difficult it is to say anything in this respect with a degree of certainty. Scholarly conjecture places the date anywhere between 600 B.C. and 5,000 B.C. According to orthodox tradition, however, the Vedas are without beginning (*anādi*) and without end (*ananta*), having been known as intuitively revealed to the Rishis (or Seers) for unnumbered years. It is well to remember in this connection what Swami Vivekananda said at the Chicago Parliament of Religions: 'But by the Vedas no books are meant. They mean the accumulated treasury of spiritual laws discovered by different persons in different times. Just as the law of gravitation existed before its discovery, and would exist if all humanity forgot it, so is it with the laws that govern the spiritual world. The moral, ethical, and spiritual relations between soul and soul and between individual spirits and the Father of all spirits, were there

before their discovery and would remain even if we forgot them'.

The Vedas or Śrutis ('those that are heard'), being a vast record of the total achievements, extending over a long period, of the ancient Indian people, are of necessity characterized by a rich diversity. A rough classification is made of this huge literature, pointing to four fairly distinct collections, viz. Samhitā (collection of verses), Brāhmaṇa (theological treatises, mostly in prose), Āraṇyaka ('forest treatises'), and Upaniṣhad (advanced metaphysical treatises, often attached to the Aranyakas). The Samhitas, which are generally accepted as the early Vedic works, reveal exquisite, yet fruitful, poetry, faith, and devotion in their numerous Mantras (prayers and hymns). The later Vedic works, viz. the Brahmanas and the Aranyakas, deal with action (rules and regulations for sacrifices) and awareness or contemplation (interesting philosophical speculation). The Upanishads, forming mostly the concluding portions of the Aranyakas, meant for the contemplative and self-renouncing truth-seeker, contain the essence of the Vedic wisdom. The knowledge they contain and reveal is also known as 'Vedānta' (the *anta* or 'end' of the Vedas) and is concerned not so much with the elaborate rituals and hymns of the earlier portions of the Vedas as with the direct experience of the ultimate Truth or Reality which alone liberates one from the bondage of the relative world. As such, various philosophical thoughts,—monistic, qualified monistic, dualistic, and even pluralistic,—are to be found in the body of the Upanishads.

But this divergence of philosophical views—often apparently contradictory, does not take away, in the least, from the glory of the spirit and message of the Upanishads.

There is more harmony than conflict in these superficially divergent Upanishadic statements. And, notwithstanding the uninformed criticisms of some Occidental Indologists, the Upanishads are doubtless consistent and expound one ultimate Truth, viz. the reality of the non-dual Brahman and the inseparable identity of the Jīva (or Ātman) and Brahman. They embody the quintessence of the 'knowledge portion' (*jñāna-kāṇḍa*) of the Vedas, constituting for all posterity a definite testimony *śabda-pramāṇa* or means of valid knowledge of the unity and universality of existence. The Upanishads are the basis of Hindu thought and culture and are the most authoritative record of the direct and immediate realizations of the exalted Seers of Truth. The life-giving inspiration of the Upanishadic truths is full of potentialities for a better and happier state of society even today. Apart from their transcendental and trans-social value, as the storehouse of Brahma-vidyā—the Knowledge Supreme, or the 'sovereign science' (*rāja-vidyā*), the Upanishads have always contained important features essential to a dynamic philosophy of individual and collective life. While they addressed themselves to the task of leading man to the highest value (*parama puruṣārtha*), the Upanishadic seers did not forget to take due note of the very material differences that separate individual beings in the phenomenal world. Thus, the Upanishads present a wide and sufficiently adaptable basis even for the active and complex setting of present-day life.

The inspiration of the Upanishadic view and way of life is immortal, activating, and ever ennobling. As distinguished from other religious scriptures of the world, the Upanishads contain a living philosophy of current value, which does not depend, for its authenticity, upon a person or persons whose historicity may be subject to doubt. They were handed down orally through a succession of illumined teachers and qualified pupils and treat of such impersonal and eternal problems as the nature and destiny of the

soul, the nature of the universe, and the Knowledge of Brahman or the Ultimate Reality (in its personal and impersonal aspects). In the Upanishads, one finds that the fundamental verities of spiritual life and experience are stated and substantiated not as dogmatic articles of faith, but as immediate and intuitive realizations (*aparokṣhānubhūti*) untarnished by the predilections of personality or sect. Hence, not only the three well-known Vedantic schools, viz. Dvaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita, and Advaita, but also the other systems of Indian philosophy, and in some instances even the Buddhist philosophers, draw their inspiration and cite their authority from passages in the Upanishads. In the complete development of man's psychic being, the Upanishads play a prominently effective role by giving a definite moulding and formation to the forces that integrally influence the innermost workings of individual and collective consciousness.

Have the Upanishads a message of hope and inspiration for our own times? Definitely they have. And this is what makes a study and understanding of the Upanishads very necessary and important. The watchwords of modern democracy, viz. liberty, equality, and fraternity, find a lasting spiritual basis in the Upanishads. The complete cessation of all dual thralldom to which the flesh and the senses are subject, which is the goal of life itself, is the objective of the Upanishadic quest. The atmosphere of perfect freedom, and with it perfect strength, pervades the entire range of Upanishadic teaching. Says Swami Vivekananda, in one of his now famous Indian lectures: 'Therefore, my friends, as one of your blood, as one that lives and dies with you, let me tell you that we want strength, strength, and every time strength. And the Upanishads are the great mine of strength. Therein lies strength enough to invigorate the whole world; the whole world can be vivified, made strong, energized through them. They will call with trumpet voice upon the weak, the miserable, and the downtrodden of all races, all creeds, and all

sects, to stand on their feet and be free; freedom, physical freedom, mental freedom, and spiritual freedom are the watchwords of the Upanishads'.

Bold in its rationality, potent in its efficacy to transform the apparently limited and bound soul into a Jivanmukta of unrestricted freedom, and wide in its sweep of the vital, mental, and spiritual aspects of life, the teaching of the Upanishads is unique and original in the history of human thought. The daring of the Hindu mind in the field of metaphysical speculation and complete renunciation can hardly be left unnoticed. In the words of Swami Vivekananda, 'If there is one word that you find coming out like a bomb from the Upanishads, bursting like a bomb-shell upon masses of ignorance, it is the word "fearlessness".' The Knowledge of the Self liberates one from finite desires; this freedom from desires brings freedom from fear; and ultimately conquest of fear leads to freedom from the 'great terror' of death. For, the soul is immortal and imperishable, and man, in essence, lives even after somatic death. The *Chhândogya Upanishad* says: 'He who sees this (the Atman, as non-different from Brahman) does not see death or illness or pain; he who sees this sees everything and obtains everything everywhere'. In the *Kaṭha Upanishad*, the soul of man is compared to a rider who rides in the chariot of his body, with his intellect as the charioteer, his mind as the reins, and sense-organs as the horses, in pursuit of sense-objects which are like the roads for the horses. In such expressive and perfectly understandable imageries the Upanishads remind man of his innate exalted essence of being and inform him of the self-imposed illusory spell of sense-bound experience and enjoyment. To his great astonishment, the modern man will find that the Upanishads have insisted long back on the attainment of true liberty, which to the individual could be nothing short of liberation from the inveterate illusion of ego-centric individuality. And even today, when individuals, groups, and nations are struggling

for more and more liberty, this message of the Upanishads,—that we as identical with the Infinite have ever been free, and that bondage has been an illusion which we have to get rid of permanently,—inspires courage and confidence.

Equality of the highest and widest type finds a prominent mention at more than one place throughout the Upanishads. The problems of competition, conflict, and inequality are to a certain extent inevitable in any society based on the primacy of self and power. Any amount of material wealth cannot help solve the difficulties that arise when one group or community seeks to acquire a privileged position in relation to another. Mere external conditioning or propaganda does not succeed in equalizing man with man or in obliterating dissimilar inherent capacities with which men come into the world. Individuals cannot but vary and be unequal in their propensities for doing good and evil actions. And upon this fundamental inequality in the attitude and approach to life itself depends much of the lack of equality seen to exist in society. Faced with this problem, modern social philosophies press various economic and political nostrums into service, but with little success. Where a choice of equal opportunities to a better way of life is offered, men are yet reluctant to renounce their attachment to adventitious adjuncts like race, rank, and colour which they know to be the seed of man-made inequality.

In the Upanishads, the equality preached is neither a rigid uniformity nor a utopian sameness of human conditions, but a harmonious outlook of unity in variety. The individual is called upon to gain perfection in *samatva* (sameness, through the perception of spiritual oneness) and *samadarshitva* (same-sightedness, from a total absence of prejudicial discrimination). A knower of the Highest Knowledge, who sees all beings in his own Self and his own Self in all beings, does not make any essential difference between the high and the low or the rich and the poor. He extends the same degree of love and com-

passion towards all and never finds himself called upon to subscribe to a sense of separation. The *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upaniṣhad* says: 'There is no difference (i.e. separateness or diversity) whatsoever in It (Brahman). He goes from death to death, who sees difference, as it were, in It'. Where fear and suspicion are at play there can be no true equality. So, the same Upaniṣhad metaphorically states: 'He (Virāj or Hiraṇyagarbha) thought, "If there is nothing else but me, what am I afraid of?" From that alone his fear was gone, for what was there to fear? It is from a second entity that fear comes'.

Thus, in the Upaniṣhadic conception of equality, variations in the external world of name and form are legitimately recognized. But in and through these variations unity must be perceived. This unity already exists and has to be discovered for oneself by each aspirant. When this unity of existence is recognized, the exclusive privileges that cut at the root of equality between man and man can no longer be found to remain. Such recognition is possible only when a person realizes his oneness with the Ultimate Reality, realization of the knowledge and bliss of God. For, the Cosmic Person pervades all which in a less absolutistic sense would mean life and includes all beings in Himself; the individual finds his fulfilment in Him.

The *Bhagavad Gita*, therefore, makes the Upaniṣhadic view yet more explicit: 'Thus seeing the same God equally present in all, the man of realization does not injure Self by the Self; so does he reach the highest goal'. 'Even in this life (and world) have they conquered relative existence whose mind is firmly fixed on this Sameness (*sāmya*); for, God is (ever) free from impurity and remains the same towards all,—so such persons are said to be established in God'.

The importance of fraternity and fellow-feeling is emphasized by the Upaniṣhads. It is repeatedly affirmed that, whatever the duality or plurality apparent on the surface, the Supreme Spirit, the Soul of souls, knits

together all beings even as a string passes through and binds together several flowers or pearls. Realizing this common bond of Unity, the one original Source from where all have come and into which all will ultimately return, one feels a spiritual kinship with others. Self-knowledge leads to self-expansion and enjoyment through renunciation of selfishness which has always stood as a barrier between oneself and others. 'Love thy neighbour as thyself' was not a mere figure of speech. And here, in the Upaniṣhads, we find the soundest basis for love and charity. Real and universal love is the core of fraternal coexistence. Such love and compassion is not possible without elimination of the lower, finite urge of self-love and self-regard. Without inner goodness, without the Brahman-regarding sentiment of thought and action, it is hard to think of doing ennobling social and humanitarian service without a tinge of showy generosity or unscrupulous motive.

The Upaniṣhads deal with and touch the entire gamut of life at its various levels. From a close study of them we can get to know not only the harmonious development of Hindu philosophic and religious thought but also the achievements of the Upaniṣhadic age in the fields of social, cultural, and national well-being. What enthuses the present-day reformer is the grand and practical achievement of the Seers of old, which has such points of excellence as to throw into the shade even the most advanced of modern civilizations. The Varnāśrama and the Sanātana Dharmas have received great impetus from the wisdom and inspiration of the Upaniṣhads. The caste system was not looked upon as a 'man-made' classification for the perpetuation of inequalities and differences among members of society. Unfortunately the misconceptions about and the glaring defects in the caste system today have given rise to much prejudice and controversy, so much so that any mention of even the good points of the ancient caste system are likely to be misconstrued. Whatever the modern attitude towards this ancient social institution, the Upaniṣhads at

least (the orthodox commentators' views apart) do not support or suggest any perpetration of injustice by men of a higher caste on those of a lower caste. Rather, they go further and affirm the common divine origin of all the four castes and their interdependence, without considerations of high or low. The castes, created and projected by Brahmā or the Cosmic Person Himself, form but parts of one whole. And, as none is in conflict with his own limbs, the salvation of the social individual lies in recognizing his inalienable relation with others and in discharging the duties that the state and society expect of him. Says the *Bṛihadāranyaka Upaniṣhad*: 'This Brahmin, this Kshatriya, these worlds, these gods, these beings, and this all are the Self'. It was not mere division of men into caste-compartments that the ancient law-givers aimed at. That would have resulted in social stratification and national disruption. It beats one to see the facile manner in which some modern wiseacres accuse the Vedic seers of doing positive harm to the nation through the caste system. On the contrary, the Upanishads emphasize that after creating the castes or classes for the smoother and better running of the vehicle of social life, the Cosmic Person projected Dharma or National Righteousness. And herein lies the strength of the weak or lower-caste man, as well as the weakness of the strong or higher-caste man. Referring to this Dharma, which upholds and sustains the balanced progress of society, the *Bṛihadā-*

ranyaka Upaniṣhad says: 'There is nothing higher than that. So even a weak man hopes to defeat a stronger man through righteousness'.

To the Upanishads the world owes a deep debt of gratitude. To the people of India, this ancient and exalted scripture of theirs has been instrumental in providing an impregnable bulwark against repeated onslaughts on the nation's cultural and spiritual values. The nations of the earth, including India, have tried and are trying to build anew the social and national superstructure each time after a war or alien invasion has done its devastating work. The acceptance of the Upanishadic ideal of unity in diversity, based on the infinite and imperishable strength of Brahma-vidyā, can yet save the world from the ravages of hatred, bigotry, and superstition. India has remained India, taking its stand on its most fundamental ideals of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. And following the inspiration of the Upanishads, Indians will strive to bring peace and plenty not only to their motherland but also to the peoples of all other lands. This is no tall claim, nor is it any individual's personal credit. For, is it not a universal truth, common to all religions and civilizations, which Swami Vivekananda has aptly expressed in the following words?—'This infinite power of the Spirit brought to bear upon matter evolves material development, made to act upon thought evolves intellectuality, and made to act upon itself makes of man a god'.

THE MOTHER'S ROOM

This very room transfigured—
 the joy of the Lord.
 Here peace, bliss, and sweet concord
 Rest secure on those who enter;
 Dynamic silence their sure reward.
 Behold! The door
 Through which the five devils
 Dance no more:
 Earth, regenerate;
 ter, balm;

Heat, conceiving;
 Air, still—calm;
 Space, exalted.
 The tune transmuted loft, secure.
 Spirit's evangels holy, pure,
 Reform the fettered, fritted way
 Of Night's false angels into Day.

—STUART GRAYSON

THE GLORY OF INDIAN WOMANHOOD

BY K. S. RAMASWAMI SASTRI

One naturally wonders why in India, which, according to Western critics has been contemptuous of woman and has been ill-treating her for millennia, the presiding deities of knowledge, wealth, and power are goddesses. The *Gita* exalts among women the goddesses Kirti, Sri, Vāk, Smṛiti, Medhā, Dhṛiti, and Kshamā. These names are suggestive also of certain noble human qualities common to men and women and more prominent (in my humble opinion) in women than in men, viz. fame, auspiciousness, speech, memory, wisdom, endurance, and forgiveness. In the Vedic period women had considerable freedom and were on a footing of equality with men. They had the right of Sandhyā prayers and the story of Maitreyi shows how they became adepts in Brahma-vidyā, while the story of Gārgi Vāchaknavi shows how she held her own in a debate with Yājñavalkya who was the supreme master of divine spiritual lore. In Manu's great *Smṛiti*, it is stated:

'Where women are honoured the gods are pleased. Where they are not honoured, all acts are useless and void of merit. Where they grieve, the family perishes. Where they do not grieve, the family flourishes'. (III. 56, 57).

'For the sake of the creation of generations, the noble-minded women must be treated with respect as the illuminers of the home. There is no difference between woman and Sri (Lakshmi) in the home'. (IX. 26).

It is as against such a background that we must evaluate the significance of the few utterances found in Indian literature which are depreciatory of woman. Similar denunciations are found in Western literature also, side by side with high encomiums. All this only shows that as in all other matters, there are two sides to this shield also. Woman can easily build or shatter homes; she can create or destroy societies; she can be a heavenward

or a hellward force. The encomiums relate to the good woman, whereas the denunciations relate to the bad woman. It is absurd to concentrate on the denunciations alone and attribute misogyny to the Indian national temperament.

The fact is that in the Hindu attitude to womanhood, there is a commingling of realism and idealism, of common sense and sublimation, of knowledge of defects and knowledge of merits, of correct valuation and refined delicacy. There is in it neither the callous immurement of women by some nations or the troubadour spirit of unreal overpraise of women by other nations. In spite of the so-called reverence for womanhood in the West, woman was subjected to numerous disabilities; her rights to properties were not recognized until recently; and she had to struggle hard to get the right to vote. Her condition was certainly far better in India. It is hence quite erroneous to speak about the low status of woman in India. Colonel Tod says well:

'The superficial observer, who applies his own standard to the customs of all nations, laments, with an affected philanthropy, the degraded condition of the Hindu female, in which sentiment he would find her little disposed to join. He particularly laments her want of liberty and calls her seclusion imprisonment. From the knowledge I possess of the freedom, the respect, the happiness which Rajput women enjoy, I am by no means inclined to deplore their state as one of captivity'.

This statement is equally true of woman and her status in all the other parts of India as well.

The Hindus rightly recognized two basic facts in regard to woman. One is that her true sphere is the home and the other is that she is the guardian of the emotional and spiritual elements in human nature. Modern woman, in India as elsewhere, is getting more and more prone to forget and neglect both

these basic truths. It is the woman who has to bear the child and nourish it in her body for ten months and protect it for many years after birth by feeding, clothing, and educating it in the rudiments of knowledge. That is why Manu says that it is her duty to keep the household wealth and expend it wisely, to preserve purity and cleanliness, to see to the preservation of Dharma, to attend to the preparation of food, and to take care of and preserve the family vessels and effects. (IX. 11).

It is often said today that woman should not be made to drudge in the kitchen. If we have a sacramental conception of food and its purity and its place in the building up of a pure mind and the evolution of the soul's high career and destiny, we would not say so. A kitchen on which woman has ceased to have an eye is sure to deteriorate like an unweeded garden. It is difficult to comprehend or accept the glib modern shibboleths on this matter or to approve of the so-called tenderness which would take woman away from the shelter of the home and her proper place as the preparer of food and leave her bewildered amidst the callous, heartless race of life in the crowded thoroughfares.

It is no doubt true that Manu says that woman does not deserve independence (*na strī svātantryam-arhati*) (IX. 3; also V. 147-49). The aim of this direction was not to reduce her to the level of a slave but to ensure to her the protection of her father during her girlhood, and of her husband during her middle life, and of her son during her old age and to shield her from the heartless roughnesses of life.

In her great work *The Web of Indian Life*, Sister Nivedita has drawn pointed attention to the abovesaid realistic view of the place and function of woman in family and social life. She says: 'In India, the cow-house, the dairy, the kitchen, the granary, the chapel, with numerous other offices, divide the day-long attentions of the ladies of the family. In rich old houses, there will be a large cooking-room and verandah for the cooks, and in addition, not one but a series of kitchens

for the use of mother, daughters, and daughters-in-law. And the herb gardens and orchards are accessible only from the zenana. In all these things, nothing is more noticeable than the readiness and spontaneity with which work is sub-divided and the peaceable way in which it is carried out. This is most striking with regard to the preparation of food, a service into which the Indian has been taught from childhood to pour a concentrated sweetness of love and hospitality. Perhaps there is no single institution amongst ourselves by which we can convey an idea of the joy it gives a master of a household to see many mouths fed at his cost, or the mistress to feel that she serves them all'.

Sister Nivedita urges also the importance—now, alas! rapidly lessening—of 'the place of the cow in domestic life'. She says: 'Five thousand years of love and gratitude have been sufficient, on the other hand, to humanize the quadruped; and the soft eyes of the gentle beast, as we see it in this Eastern land, look out on us, with a satisfied conviction of kinship and mutual trust, for which the Western barbarian is but little prepared. . . .

'It is no wonder that the life of the cow has so large a place in that scheme of the national well-being which we call Hinduism. . . . It is only natural that the poetry of the people should find in these animals one of its central motives; for all that domestic affection which we spend on the dog and cat, making of such dumb creatures actual comrades and hearthside friends, is here lavished on them. . . . The occasion of receiving a new cow into a Hindu family is tinged with a like sentiment. The whole household turns out to welcome the incoming member, who is decorated with flowers and fed daintily as soon as she enters the gates of the dwelling, while endearments are lavished on her in the effort to make her accept the strange abode as home'. In fact, the cow is called *go-mātā* and the daughter is called *duhitā* (the cow-milker). Sister Nivedita says further: 'For, throughout a woman's life,

the cow is to be her constant companion. It is important, therefore, that she be duly equipped with the knowledge of its management and treatment'. In towns and cities this is today becoming unusual and we have callous milkmen who will soon be superseded by dairy schemes. But the light of the ideal shines undimmed and the old customs yet persist in villages.

Let us, therefore, not scorn or undervalue the graces and sanctities of the domestic life as the special province of woman's work. Tagore says well that it is in the domestic world that we have real values as apart from mere market values and that 'this domestic world has been the gift of God to woman' and that she is the nourisher of the world of human relationships.

It is often thought and said that Indian culture has overemphasized child-bearing and child-rearing and the domestic life. It is no doubt true that emphasis was specially laid on this aspect and that Kālidāsa speaks in *Raghuvamśha* of marriage being for producing children (*prajāyai grihamedhinām*). But it was always realized and proclaimed here that the joy of marital life is as primary and important as the birth of children (*rati putra phalā nārī, datta bhukta phalam dhanam*). Nay, in his play, *Mālavikāgnimitra*, Kalidasa says that love is the essence of sex-life and that the death of a lover and his beloved who have equal and all-forgetting love, which can never attain fruition in marriage, is far superior to a union in which either party is without passionate love. It will be incorrect to think or to say that ethical or didactic poetry is in abundance in India to the exclusion of poetry glorifying amatory passion. Kalidasa's poems are full of the thrills of the love-passion, and there is a special book on erotics (Vātsyāyana's *Kāma-Shāstra*). I may point out how in *Raghuvamśha* (VIII. 67), Kalidasa points out that the wife is to her husband a true-hearted friend and a loving disciple and a fellow-worshipper at the shrine of beauty and must advise him truly and loyally as a minister would advise and admonish a king.

In the drama *Mālatī-mādhava*, Bhavabhuti says that the wife is her husband's true friend and kinswoman and is his store of joy, wealth, and life.

The above description of the domestic function of womanhood does not in any way militate against the equally true description of woman's high and unique function as the guardian of the emotional and the ethical elements in human nature. Throughout history man has been a destructive agency. 'Man marks the earth with ruin', says Byron. Tagore says with equal truth: 'When male creatures indulge in their fighting propensity to kill one another, Nature connives at it, because, comparatively speaking, females are needful to her purpose, while males are barely necessary. . . . At the present stage of history, civilization is almost exclusively masculine, a civilization of power, in which woman has been thrust aside in the shade. Therefore it has lost its balance and is moving by hopping from war to war'. (*Personality*). But woman has throughout history been a peaceful, peace-desiring, and stabilizing creative power. She casts her force on the side of righteousness, of Dharma, of loveliness, and of protective emotion and against unrighteousness, Adharma, ugliness, and destructive wrath. Lamartine says:

'Women have more heart and imagination than men. Enthusiasm arises from imagination, self-sacrifice springs from the heart. They are, therefore, by nature more heroic than heroes. And when this heroism becomes supernatural, it is from the woman that the wonder must be expected. Men would stop at valour'.

Tagore says: 'Woman is endowed with the passive qualities of chastity, modesty, devotion, and power of self-sacrifice in a greater measure than man is'. He laments that in the West women rush into all sorts of spheres of activity by way of ruthless competition with men and care more for soulless organizations than for human relationships and says that 'the home is every day being crowded out by the office'. Nationalism and militarism should not be allowed to crowd out of existence beauty and beneficence.

The position of women in the family and in the society was high in the Vedic age. The famous hymn in the *Rig-Veda*, saying to the bride that she should be the queen of the household, may have been merely laudatory, but it indicates a social trend of the times. The words *Jāyā* and *Patni* indicate her status and importance. She took part in the sacrifices and uttered the prayers along with her husband though not independently. Both were called by the single word *dampati*. Monogamy was the rule and polygamy was exceptional. Widow marriage was permitted. Some of the *Rig-Vedic* hymns were composed by female Rishis like *Apālā*, *Viśhvavārā*, and *Ghoṣhā*.

Woman has been recognized in Hindu sacred literature as having an even higher function than being the queen of the home, or the preserver of Dharma or the goddess of Art. In the *Bhāgavata*, she is described as being not only man's better half but also as man's ally in the 'eternal war of sense with soul'. There Kashyapa told his wife Diti that even a whole life's devotion could never repay her aid as a spiritual ally. We must bear in mind also how Queen *Madālasā*, after a child was born to her, crooned over her child the lullaby, '*śhuddho'si buddho'si niranjano'si samsāra-māyā parivarjito'si*'—'You are ever pure and full of spiritual illumination, and without taint of ignorance and of the *Māyā* of *Samsāra*'.

When we see in our mind's vision the procession of great women in the course of the centuries, we feel a sense of exultation and exaltation. These heroines have all been great, each in her own way. We have had, in this *Punyabhumi*,—great women of the Vedic age like *Sati*, *Arundhati*, *Maitreyi*,

and *Gārgi*; great women of the epic age like *Savitri*, *Sita*, and *Draupadi*; great women of the later ages like *Kannaki* of *Tamil Nad*, whose passionate loyalty to her lord raised her to the rank of divinity; great women of medieval India like *Samyukta*, *Padmini*, and *Panna*; great women of yet later times like *Mirabai*, *Durgāvati*, and *Ahalyābai*; and great women of today. Let us bow before them all, remembering *Burns'* dictum: 'Women are the blood-royal of life: Let there be slight degrees of precedency among them, but let them be all sacred'.

Sister *Nivedita* has said well about the Holy Mother: 'To me it has always appeared that she is *Sri Ramakrishna's* final word as to the ideals of Indian womanhood'. In her was embodied all the highest qualities of Indian womanhood which I have sought to depict above. Her domestic life was raised to the level of a complete consecration to the cause of the spiritual service to her wedded lord and spiritual Guru. She showed to the whole world how the domestic life can be sublimated into the Life Divine. After *Sri Ramakrishna* attained *Mahāsamādhi*, she continued his spiritual ministration to all his disciples and to others as well. She was always praying for their welfare. She showed to all how the householder's life could be raised by sublimation to the life of a saint and how the spirit of *Tyāga* and *Sannyāsa* can illumine every aspect of life. Let us always remember *Swami Vivekananda's* description of her mission:

'Mother (*Sarada Devi*) has been born to revive that wonderful *Shakti* in India. And making her the nucleus, once more will *Gargis* and *Maitreyis* be born in the world'.

"So shall we bring to the need of India great fearless women—women worthy to continue the traditions of *Sanghamitta*, *Lila*, *Ahalya Bai*, and *Mira Bai*—women fit to be mothers of heroes, because they are pure and selfless, strong with the strength that comes of touching the feet of God".

—*Swami Vivekananda*

SOME THOUGHTS ON INDIAN CULTURE

BY N. C. MEHTA

It may, perhaps, be appropriate to try and summarize the salient features of our Art of which we are rightly very proud and to which not infrequently extend our homage and appreciation, and even patronage to creative work of artists, particularly when they are dead. There is not much danger in this procedure, for the artist is a curious animal who, despite or perhaps because of his privations, cannot help being what he is and creating things for post-mortem glory or edification. We have, therefore, continued for centuries to write gorgeous poetry of love and devotion, to carve and cast extraordinary images of superb form and craftsmanship; we have painted lovely pictures of gods and goddesses who have been only our greater selves, and we have sung and danced magnificent and colourful patterns to their glory.

Art is essentially youthful; it always aims at plucking the stars and aspires to seize beauty in the fitting lights and shadows of the universe. It is not the monopoly of any nation; and yet, it is true that we Indians are undoubtedly among the *élite* who have wrought things of joy and significance in the different realms of Art.

The basic characteristics of our Art are an instinctive understanding of the life of the senses and of the spirit, a genuine perception of the basic underlying unity of the two and, therefore, almost a total absence of inhibition in giving artistic expression to the moods, desires, and frustrations—in short, the blossoming of life in its varied aspects. There has rarely been a feeling of sin; on the contrary, there has been an upsurge of spontaneous joy and exultation when the artist has essayed to depict the life of Love. We have, consequently, written beautiful love poems, created lovely forms of Apsaras, Kinnaris, and Vidyādharas, as also of ravishing women.

Our heroes from the epics, our gods and goddesses, are generally young and passionate, fond of all the things that we desire, and are in fact what we would like to see ourselves under congenial surroundings.

Sex never frightened us. In fact, considering that it is the primal force of creation, we, by our intuitive gift for synthetic thought, conceived of sex as energy and installed it in the pantheon of our worship as Shiva and Shakti, and the combination of the two was plastically precipitated in the extraordinary form of Ardha-Nārishvara—the hermaphrodite image, the integrated man—simultaneously masculine and feminine. The exuberant forms of feminine beauty were not merely the emanations of a heated and youthful imagination; they in fact, by the magic spell of the Divine cast around them, became the dynamic forms of worship. It was His play (*līlā*) which expressed itself in these spell-binding moods and patterns. In essence, to sing of it, to depict in sculpture or to paint it, or to act and interpret it through moods and gestures, were but attempts to understand it and, in due course, to transcend that cosmic phenomenon.

We are infinitely more intimate with our gods and goddesses than almost any other people in the world. In fact, our gods and goddesses are only our higher selves and, consequently, we endow with attributes—sometimes good and sometimes mischievous—these eerie creations of our imagination. No Christian and no Muslim can think of Christ or the Prophet Mohammed in the same manner as a Hindu instinctively feels of Shiva or Krishna. These gods and goddesses are in fact a part of our life and, consequently, whether it be dance, music, song, painting, or sculpture, these gods are always with us. If Shiva and Umā (the daughter of the

Himalayas) are *par excellence* the deities of the Hills, Krishna and the Gopis are the denizens of the pastoral lands on the banks of the Yamuna. There is a subtle awareness and understanding of the identity between ourselves and these divine creations and, consequently, the life with us—whether of the senses or of the hearts or of the spirit—is on the whole singularly integrated. It is indeed true,—what a very discerning and sensitive scholar like Beryl De Zoete has said in her remarkable book *The Other Mind—A Study of Dance in South India*,—that ‘the Indian miniatures of the Rajput and Kangra schools . . . have endless versions of the trysts of Rādhā and Krishna, by moonlight or under a flaming sunset or one of those electric monsoon storms when angry lightning stabs the cumulus clouds and frightened eyes peer from the lurid forest leaves; of Radha waiting, of the lovers meeting, of nights spent together on the flowery grass, surrounded by delicious birds and animals and the foliage of blossoming trees. Krishna always has his flute, and the whole composition is permeated with music, for it is the visual embodiment of a musical mode, the *rāga* proper to the hour and season’. Pārvati, the consort of Shiva, represents the Eternal Feminine, won not through ephemeral and outward beauty, but by austerity, renunciation, and inflexibility of purpose. She is, therefore, supremely confident of her place with her Lord of the Mountains and commands the unswerving homage of the simple and devout folk in the hills and also in the plains; for Shiva, the Natarāja or the Great Dancer, dances with an expression rapt and detached as if the very dance has succeeded in throwing off and escaping from the coils of mundane existence. It is indeed true that He has danced to the summit of *ānanda*—the Bliss. It almost seems as if in this dance of Shiva Nataraja, all that is petty, small, and transitory has disappeared and been transmuted into a single steady flame of purity and detached abstraction.

MODERN TRENDS

The modern generation, perhaps under the puritanical influence of Christian Art, is apt to be squeamish about the overwhelming influence of the Erotic in our poetry, sculpture, painting, and dance and it is therefore sometimes unnecessarily apologetic about the worship of the phallic forms of Shiva and Shakti. The lovely sculptures of Bhuvaneshvar and Khajuraho, the love-poems of Jayadeva and Amaru, all bear out that Love was the sovereign theme of their Muse, for it was the Ultimate.

Reality is something elemental, pure and immortal. And yet, its first experience for most people could only be through the normal course of sensuous life, which becomes only significant when it is consecrated to the Divine. Our polytheism or pantheism is enormously helpful, for it enables us to select and displace at our own levels our gods and goddesses who could understand and feel for us. We wisely provided them with wives, conveyances, and significant symbols, appropriate to their respective stations. Shiva the Yogi is our most domesticated deity and he is rarely to be seen without Uma, whether drinking a potion of hemp, or out for a heavenly ride on his magnificent bull, while Ganesha, the patron-saint of prosperity, has been allowed only a rat for his symbol. Here is imagination with a subtle sense of humour.

It was only to be expected that we should have thought of the vital figures of the Buddha, Shiva, Nataraja, Venū-Gopāla, Kodanda-Rama, Surya, and Hanumān at the same time as the luscious forms of feminine beauty. It was the result of a great and integrated civilization.

We are indeed idolatrous and it is perhaps our greatest contribution to the philosophic understanding of the human mind. To us our gods are in the same position as children to their mothers. Every mother considers her child as something unique and significant in a manner that none else can be. Similarly, to a devotee—to a probationer of spiritual

quest, the image or the idol is but a symbol—a symbol of his own understanding and spiritual evolution. Consequently, the icons and the images are numerous and just as easily discarded, as the understanding that everything is shot through with the Divine deepens and the great Truth begins to be partially perceived and felt. It is indeed true, as Yājñavalkya said in his immortal dialogue with Maitreyi, in the *Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad*, that 'Verily, not for love of all is all dear, but for love of the Soul all is dear'. This was the substance of his message to Maitreyi, the young wife to whom Yajnavalkya sought to give a half share of his property, when she wanted to know if this whole earth filled with wealth were hers she would thereby be immortal.

Let me add, however, that we did not reach the deep insight of the Chinese in appreciating the beauty of running water, trees and flowers, insects and animals. The Chinese could conjure a world of meaning through the superb form of a celadon vase or bowl, or bronze incense-burner, or by painting a spray of flowers. We have not attained the almost spiritual quality of the Dutch—particularly of Rembrandt and Vermeer—in portraying the modest interiors of homes or the members of the local gentry, nor can we boast of the variety and the dynamic quality of the pre-Columbian funerary sculpture of Mexico, nor the elegance, virtuosity, and the grandiose imagination of the Italian artists of the Renaissance. Our contribution has, all the same, been significant particularly in the realm of ideas and understanding of form and integration of the sensuous and the spiritual. Our love of life pervades all our poetry, art, and crafts. We are, perhaps, more earthy and engrossed with material things than the prosaic English or the Swiss. That is why we cherish the illusion of being spiritual as the inevitable psychological escape.

And now, how about our present position in the world of art? Sculpture has been dead for quite a long time except clay-modelling. Modern painting is still struggling to find its

authentic voice. But it is difficult, for there is no patronage and even the artists must exist. Rabindranath, perhaps our only modern international painter according to current parlance, was luckily independent of patronage or local appreciation, and he was therefore able to achieve something of a personal triumph. It is fortunate that the National Library in Calcutta has got a representative collection of his paintings.

A word about dancing. Here, at any rate, we have achieved something more than mere patterns of rhythmic movement. We have made every movement and every gesture significant. A new language of art, where sensitive hands and feet move and the eyes speak, has been created, which is unique in the world. Bharata-Nāṭyam and Kathakali are, within their respective spheres, unsurpassed. The sheer variety and wealth of regional dancing is a standing tribute to our gaiety of spirit. We love Life, for we try to understand it. But we must shed the illusion that we as Indians are *sui generis* and especially significant. We have in fact failed to keep pace with the progress of the world for the last 250 years. Despite the prevailing drabness, our poets and artists are still able to create a magic world where romance blends with religion, where people sing and dance—a world of light and colours. The language of art is or should be universal. There is ample scope for the cultivation of our local dialects and idioms within the framework of the abiding values of aesthetic beauty. Such beauty is not susceptible of precise definition. But like the perfume of a flower it is unmistakable.

Dance as an art serves as a reminder of the unity of mankind and the paramount need for poetry, dance, and music. Besides, it is doubtful whether there are many people in the world who can dance the most passionate turns with such gaiety or an air of innocent abandonment as the Indians. A modern writer has rightly said that 'Beauty is a grave word. It is a force: it is an enravishment. The impact of beauty is to make you

feel greater than you are, so that you seem to walk on air. It is like falling in love; it is falling in love'. Indian Dancing is both love and poetry—a magic art of representing and interpreting a world of dreams and phantasies. The *Madra* is not merely gesture, but as the Tantras would say, it is the symbol, the means for attaining *Khāsāntā*—the supreme Bliss. Despite, therefore, a

good deal of what is depressing and squalid and even superstitious, our basic understanding of Life is something unique and may yet flower into something dynamic, for otherwise it would be impossible to account for the emergence of such extraordinary personalities like Rāmakrishna, Vivekananda, Gandhi, Rabīndranāth or Mahārdi Rāmānā.

“THE HOUND OF HEAVEN”

(AN ESTIMATE)

By C. C. CHATTERJI

INTRODUCTION: THE POET AND THE POEM

Francis Thompson has been called a poet's poet and his poem, 'The Hound of Heaven', one of the greatest religious poems of all times. When it first came out, it took the literary world by storm. General readers and art connoisseurs pronounced the poem a rare gem which has enriched the English language and the poet 'a seer and singer of rare genius'. They found in the ode the beautiful diction of Keats, the musical line of Spenser, the devotional ardour of Christina Rossetti, the intense faith of Coventry Patmore, the flaming heart of Richard Crashaw. For its conception, execution, and imagery, its thought and language, the rhythm and cadence of its verse, it has been declared to have reached the peak of Parmesan. One enthusiastic admirer of the poet went so far as to say, 'In all sobriety do we believe him of all poets to be the most celestial in vision, the most august in faculty'.

Whatever spell these charms and graces of poet and poem might have cast upon the readers, the greatest appeal of the poem is that it records the spiritual experiences of a religious mystic. It is a remarkable poem in

English on the *bhakti-mārga*—the path of devotion—and it shows how a *bhakta* struggles through doubt and suffering to faith and happiness. But after the first reading, when the reader sees the whole picture, the title of the poem gives him a shock. That the love of God should have been called a hound is more than an Indian could quietly brook. However appropriate the metaphor may apparently seem to be, the persistent pursuit of the fugitive from God by divine love to bring him round has few points of comparison with a dog's relentless chase of its game to kill it. The fear and vexation in the mind of the fugitive as he is constantly followed by God may drive him to see a 'dogged' pertinacity in His constancy, yet the conception of God's love as a hound, however original, ignores its solicitous nature to chasten and to save. Though it is a fact, as the poem shows, that the sinner, in his flight from God, is 'hounded' from place to place, it also shows that by the time the hunt is over, his vain struggles have come to an end and he enjoys divine grace as God extends his merciful hand to uplift him.

There is one problem in the mind of the poet which is at the root of these struggles. It is serious in nature and it has influenced the course of his life. He is worried to think that he will have to give up all worldly possessions and their enjoyments, if through the service of God he wishes to be blessed with heavenly riches. His mind is heavy with the thought; he is unhappy. Expressing his uneasiness, he writes—

‘Was I sore adread

Lest, having Him, I must have naught beside’. Renunciation has no appeal for him and he decides he would rather flee from God than forgo the pleasures of life that await him at all times and at all places. The attractions of this world of sight and sound are too much with men, and few are prepared to surrender them even to attain divinity. But the life of the seeker after happiness, as given in the poem, clearly shows that it is wrong to hold the idea that a man cannot have anything else if he wants to have God. Though the poet, like many others having his form of mind, takes to a course which he imagines will bring him all the joys he wants and yet keep God away from him, he ultimately realizes that man cannot do without God. The human soul, as it forms part of the universal Soul, cannot find satisfaction in things unspiritual. Its happiness lies in restoring its unity with the Eternal Being. So the poet, having made bold but futile endeavours to secure love and sympathy in opposition to God, finally returns to Him to find solace in the shade of Heaven’s Grace.

The poem may, therefore, be divided into two parts:—

Part I—consisting of the first three stanzas, ll. I—110. Here the poet describes his struggles as he runs away from God and makes futile searches for happiness. At the end of each stanza there is a refrain: the fugitive is followed by God and he hears His voice dissuading him from the flight. This part may be called ‘The Dark Night of the Soul’ in the mystic’s language, or simply ‘The Revolt’.

Part II—consists of the last three stanzas, ll. 111—182. The poet realizes that his attempts to find happiness without God are vain, is penitent, and surrenders to Him. The refrain is changed: the suppliant hears the voice of God reproaching him for his perversity. This part may be called, in the mystic manner, ‘The Illumination’, or ‘The Resignation’.

PART I. THE DARK NIGHT OF THE SOUL

The first part opens with a summary view of the whole course of events, concerning the flight of the fugitive. But the important point to note is that the course runs down, as the poet says, the labyrinthine ways of his own mind. The incidents, described so picturesquely in rhythmic lines of rapid movement, represent the battle that goes on in his mental field, the field of Kurukshetra situated in every heart. From the very beginning the poem at once catches the imagination, as the poet starts on his flight—

‘I fled Him, down the nights and down the days;
I fled Him, down the arches of the years;
I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways
Of my own mind; and in the mist of tears
I hid from Him, and under running laughter.

Up vistaed hopes, I sped;

And shot, precipitated,

Adown Titanic glooms of chasmed fears,

From these strong Feet that followed,

followed after’.

These lines give a complete idea of the hunt: how the poet frantically tries to escape and how God follows to overtake him. They also reveal the nature of the spiritual struggle that agitates the whole being of the poet, as he endeavours to banish the thought of God from his mind. But the chase is remarkable for its calm and majestic manner—

‘But with unhurrying chase,

And unperturbed pace,

Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,

They beat—and a Voice beat

More instant than the Feet—

“All things betray thee, who betrayest Me”.’

Here are the first words of admonition to bring back the fugitive to his senses. The voice of God always speaks to every man, so

that he may take warning in good time; and if he has ears to hear, he hears it in the deep recess of the Soul exhorting him to leave the wrong path. This is the refrain of the poem. Its recurrence emphasizes the idea that God keeps an eye on man that he may not go astray. Man is divinity in the making; and if he plays false with himself, God gives him light and direction so that he might know himself and attain his destiny. For man must be saved.

Besides this introduction in the first stanza of the strange fugitive from God, in which are given only the flight and the chase, nothing is mentioned about the purpose of the flight. The next stanza makes the object clear. He runs away from God, 'Lest, having Him, I must have naught beside', though, he says, 'I knew His love who followed'. But he does not want to have love even from this God of love, for He is so jealous that He will not suffer him to enjoy any other thing along with His gift. The poet, therefore, decides to appeal to human beings to give him love and affection and sympathy and protect him from the onslaught of God who follows him. He approaches them with faltering steps as he considers himself an outlaw, who tries to escape arrest. He describes his reception by men thus—

'I pleaded, outlaw-wise,
By many a hearted casement, curtained red,
Trellised with intertwining charities;
(For, though I knew His love who followed,
Yet was I sore adread,
Lest, having Him, I must have naught beside);
But, if one little casement parted wide,
The gust of His approach would clash it to'.

A man who does not admit any claim of God, cannot claim any sympathy even from men whose hearts are alive with the warmth of love and charity. Even if one is inclined to show him any pity, one turns away from the God-less man as soon as God appears there. And this man is nonplussed to find that he has been overtaken and all the doors are closed upon him. In despair he cries—

'Fear wist not to evade as Love wist to pursue'.

As he cannot find shelter with human beings, he forsakes this world and ascends the high heavens to be far away from this human habitation and thus give the slip to God, who, he thinks, will now be left behind. First, he 'troubled the gold gateways of the stars, Smiting for shelter on their clanged bars'; then,

'Fretted to dulcet jars
And silvern chatter the pale ports of the moon'.

But he does not wait to see how these heavenly bodies respond to his call. He finds they are unmoved and instantly turns in another direction—

'I said to Dawn: Be sudden; to Eve: Be soon—
With thy young skyey blossoms heap me over
From this tremendous Lover!

Float thy vague veil about me, lest He see!'

But moon and stars, dawn and eve, do not yield to his prayers and give him protection from the tremendous Lover. They cannot lose their fealty to God in order to harbour a rebel against Him. They are but the forms in which the formless Being expresses Himself to bless His children with light and joy. Their manifestation wholly lies with Him. They cannot be beguiled. Having failed to win them over, he makes his complaint in these lines—

'I tempted all His servitors, but to find
My own betrayal in their constancy,
In faith to Him their fickleness to me,
Their traitorous trueness, and their loyal deceit'.

—lines in which the figure, oxymoron, artfully expresses the attitude of the parties, giving a true picture of their antagonism. Perhaps no poet has made such a masterly use of this figure except Tennyson, who paints Sir Lancelot with one stroke of the pen thus—

'His honour rooted in dishonour stood,
And faith unfaithful kept him falsely true'.

The fugitive now turns to agents of speed so that he may be rapidly spirited away to distant lands, which he fondly thinks are not accessible to God. He describes their movement in a passage of subtle imagery and wonderful vision—

desire—shut off from the presence of Arch Fear, he finds himself in the midst of all happiness. He is one with the children in their delicate fellowship. He gets admission into the arcana of Nature. His pulse beats in consonance with the changes in the face of sky and air. With sunset his spirits droop; with sunrise his spirits revive. He sings—

'I was heavy with the even,
When she lit her glimmering tapers
Round the day's dead sanctities;
I laughed in the morning's eyes'.

Unlike Hardy, who found an appalling indifference in all things of Nature, this seeker after pleasure found her in full sympathy with all his sentiments—

'I triumphed and I saddened with all weather,
Heaven and I wept together;
And its sweet tears were salt with mortal mine;
Against the red throb of its sunset heart
I laid down my own to beat,
And share commingling heat'.

Yet this close companionship with loving nature did not give him the joy of heart for which he was hankering. After all Nature is speechless, and without speech, which is the most graceful feature of man, there could be no interchange of tender feelings to which life owes its savour. She appears more like a step-mother whose milk did not 'once bless his thirsting mouth'. His longing, yearning heart is left bewailing as before.

But the fact is that the poet saw only the outside of Nature without turning his eyes to the inside, and missed the joy—the exultation—that men with eyes find in her. He did not see the Divine Spirit that lies behind the outward appearance and is the force that is at work in the display of her beautiful phenomena. But his design was always to avoid it, to keep aloof from it. In doing so he failed to perceive that the Spirit that pervades Nature is the same in which he moves, lives and has his being. It is the common bond between Man and Nature. The contemplative mystic, who is in communion with Nature, becomes conscious of its presence in all things, animate or inanimate. He sees a

beatific vision which reveals its immanence and fills his heart with a quietness, a peace, a rapture.

Wordsworth, who found these in the company of Nature, has recorded how he came to look upon her and what experiences he gained therefrom. In his simple manner, he expresses a deep truth in ever memorable lines, saying,

'I have learned
To look on nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing often times
The still, sad music of humanity,
Nor harsh, nor grating, though of ample power
To chasten and subdue. And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things. Therefore

am I still
A lover of the meadows and the woods,
And mountains; and of all that we behold
From this green earth: Of all the mighty world
Of eye and ear, both what they half create,
And what perceive; well pleased to recognize
In nature and the language of the sense
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and Soul
Of all my moral being'.

He not only feels 'a presence' seated in the heart of things and finds a 'guide' and 'guardian' as he enjoys the world of eye and ear, but even the recollection of mere physical pleasure that he derives from Nature brings 'Sensations sweet with tranquil restoration'. To them, he says,

'I trust,
To them I may have owed.....
that blessed mood,
In which the burthen of the mystery,
In which the heavy and the weary weight
Of all this unintelligible world,
In lightened:—that serene and blessed mood,
In which the affections gently lead us on,—
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
And even the motion of our human blood
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul:

While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things'.

This is the supreme spiritual gain of Wordsworth—the attainment of the state which in the Hindu Yogic System is called *Samadhi*—a state of luminous consciousness with joy and harmony that brings an insight into the life of things.

But the gain of Wordsworth is the loss of Thompson, for the approach of Thompson is the approach of a heretic. He has the perverted idea of finding pleasure in Nature without the corresponding presence of God; yet Nature, in the words of Carlyle, is the outward Garment of God. But Thompson

builds high hopes on his fellowship with Nature: he is sanguine that he would get his heart's desire now that he has been admitted into the 'Secrecies' of Nature. He speaks with great emphasis on *I*. But he did not get it. So his disappointment was doubly great. And now he hears the urgent voice of God echoing in his heart—

'Lo! naught contents thee, who content'st
not Me'.—

as He comes nearer and nearer to overtake the wandering Soul. This was the cruellest cut of all. Disappointed, heart-broken, the rebel surrenders.

(To be continued)

BRIDAL MYSTICISM

BY P. N. SRINIVASACHARI

Mysticism describes poetically and symbolically the way in which the soul freed from the lusts of the flesh seeks the Inner Lord of love and sees Him directly. The bliss of such mystic union is ineffable and is Brahmananda itself. The earthly love between the bride and the bridegroom lends itself as a sound analogy to the spiritual love between the soul and God owing to the intimacy and mutualness of the loving pair. The mystic poets, especially the Vaishnavites, both of the north and the south, have therefore chosen the form and technique of bridal love and called it Bridal Mysticism and illustrated it chiefly by the bridal love of the Alvars and Sri Chaitanya. The mystic soul pants and pines for its Lord of love like a bride and yearns for union. The Vrindavana-līlā is generally held as the soul and goal of bridal love in which the bride merges in her Lord losing her separate being but not being itself.

The view that God is the Bridegroom and the devout soul the bride is an allegorical

expression of the intimacy between the soul and God, dressed in sensible figures and similes. In spiritual marriage, the Lord descends from His almightiness to the human level of lowliness, and longs for the joyous embrace of union. God as Lord is feared; as Father is revered; as Master is honoured and served but as Bridegroom He is loved. Love is not a contract nor a holy sentiment but is its own end and is love for love's sake. Caressing the child as mother is due to affection, but the union of the lover is enticing and transporting and such transport is neither morbid nor mad. The soul is inwardly embraced by the arms of wisdom and it tastes the savour of heavenly sweetness. The presence of the beloved is felt in the interior of the soul. Its will and understanding are the will and understanding of the Lord. Its whole being is immersed in the being of God and His immortal bliss. God loves man in order that He may be loved; love is loved for ever more.

In the divine influx of union, all self-feeling is transformed and divinized.

THE CHRISTIAN THEORY OF SPIRITUAL MARRIAGE

According to Catholic theology, as interpreted by Watkin, sex has a spiritual meaning in spiritual marriage. The male *element* is operative, active, and directive and the female responsive and receptive and the two are complementary. God is pure activity and the soul is responsive and there is infusion of His love into the soul substance. The soul is active in the act of reception. It participates in His glory and is divinized, but it is not God. The beloved soul passes out of itself and is dissolved in divine joy but is not destroyed; absorption in love is not self-annihilation or nothingness. The will is said to co-operate with the Divine Will and contribute to it and there is concurrence of two wills. 'The soul, the enchanted boat, floats on the sweet music of love in the ocean of God who is absolute unity. He is life, light, and love absolute'. This view offers a contrast to the Vedantic view which insists on the ideal of self-resignation, or self-surrender to the Divine Will and thus attuning oneself to who alone is the actor in the universe.

The idea of spiritual marriage in the west was first developed by St. Bernard and later by John Ruysbroeck, St. John of the Cross, St. Teresa and others and it is not true to say that this type of mysticism is peculiar to Catholicism though it has been largely influenced by it.

The virgins or cloistered nuns are the spouses of Christ. In spiritual marriage the two are one in spirit, not one in flesh. He who is joined to God is one in spirit with Him. It is not a contract or commercial transaction, but an embracement, not of two wills, but of two essences. The bride is glued to Love and transported in spirit and ravished.

SUFI MYSTICISM

Bridal mysticism finds a congenial soil in Sufism and it has affinities with the Vaishna-

vite experience of God as the Beautiful and the Beloved. Allah is abiding love and was before creation. He was love in aloneness though love is always two-sided. Creation brings out the soul as a radiation of Divine Love which is all-pervasive. The Sufi soul plunges into love, to vary the metaphor, and gets absorbed in ecstasy like wine in water. The Sufi lady, Rabia of Basra, lost herself in the Beauty of God like St. Teresa and loved Him for the sake of love. When self-feeling is destroyed, love grows into a burning endearment and ripens into God-intoxication. In bridal mysticism heart speaks to heart without any artificial constraint or restraint; and the Lord enters into the self and the self enters into the Lord and the two become one. The Indian Sufis have a mystic instinct and when their philosophy is pervaded by love, Jnana is changed into Prema and feminine love. As the Vaishnavite mystic says, Prema changes mysticism into bridal language or *penpeccu*. There is only one He as the Atman or Sariri and the Jivas are Sarira of the Absolute as the eternally feminine and the organism and the organs are one in function.

THE AESTHETIC MYSTICISM OF INDIA

Though God is the home of the eternal values of truth, goodness, and beauty, aesthetic mysticism gives the highest place to beauty and defines God or Brahman as the beautiful or Sundara. The logical value of truth and the moral value of goodness are united and harmonized in beauty and though God is truth and goodness, He is to the mystic essentially beautiful and loving. Christianity and Islam influenced by Judaism have stressed the ethical element and the quality of the supreme will of God. But Plato, as a true Hellenic mystic, constructs, as it were, an aesthetic ladder from the beauties of nature and life to the perfect Beauty that is supersensuous and eternal. Plotinus also thinks of Reality as essential, eternal beauty and as the One that is yonder, with which the mystic communes in a state of ecstasy. Among the modern philosophers, Schelling is one of the few

idealistic thinkers who treats aesthetics as the organon of philosophy and has faith in the artistic intuition of cosmic beauty. *But it is the Vedanta philosophy of Nammalvar and Ramanuja interpreted as Sri Vaishnavism that defines Brahman the Absolute as Bhuvana Sundara or God the Beautiful and regards the mystic experience of communion with Him as the consummation of the philosophy of love.* Brahman is Beauty beyond with a formless Form of His own; but He descends into humanity with a view to drawing the Jiva rendered ugly by sin, to Himself by His beatific and ravishing beauty and transforming it into His own nature. Beauty cannot be impersonal like truth and the formless form of God is not made of Prakriti and the perishing mode of space-time. It is spiritual and eternal and only the mystics who are free from the lusts of the flesh that can intuit the eternal behind the temporal.

SRI KRISHNA

While mystic experience may be gained by the way of Yoga or Bhoga (ascetic introversion or hedonistic extroversion), the way of Bhoga or aesthetic religion has an irresistible appeal to the mystic who follows the method of Bhagavat-kama. As examples of the two types may be cited the cases of Peyalvar and Tirumangaiavar or Jadabharata and Narada. Tirumangaiavar at first indulged in Vishaya-kama or hedonistic pleasures and later on became a convert to Bhagavat-kama and longed for contacting God as the Bridegroom. But Peyalvar was God-mad from his very birth. When the Jiva is drawn by the beauty of God as the soul enchanter, the philosopher that reflects on the self changes into the bride mad after her Lord or Lover. As Mira, the bridal mystic, observed, every Jiva is eternally feminine. In the fruition and fulfilment of bridal love, it is fecunditive, mutual, and unitive. In organized Christianity, Islam, and theistic Saivism, God is the Holy and devotional mysticism is aroused by the creator-creature feeling and it does not foster affinity. But, in Sri Vaishnavism, especially in the

incarnational mysticism of Sri Krishna, God is Beauty and the bridal mystic is captivated by direct contact with Him. The Rishis of Dandakaranya were so much smitten with the beauty of Rama the Righteous that they were born as Gopis of Vrindaban to relish His beauty and revel in it. Sri Krishna is the Holy of Holies (Yogeshvara) without any touch or taint of sensuality and sin; but He humanizes Himself, as it were, and plays the game of love in the eternal spiritual world of Vrindaban with a view to destroying the Trishnas or thirsts of the flesh and divinizing the human finites.

THE BEAUTY OF VRINDABAN

The Krishna-lila enacted in Vrindaban was so enchanting that the Rishis of old came back and became the God-intoxicated Gopis. Vyasa, the master metaphysician, and Shuka, the born Vedantin, and Uddhava, the Yogi who had subdued the lusts of the flesh, were so much allured by the beauty of Sri Krishna, who is Sarva-rasa and Sarva-gandha, the super-essence of every Rasa, that they preferred Bhakti to Yukti, the logical intellect, and Mukti or freedom from Samsara and became Krishna-mad. To the philosopher, the world is Maya or the riddle of thought; but to the Bhakta it is Krishnamaya or crammed with Krishna-love; Vrindaban is not merely the headquarters of cosmic Beauty and Bliss but is the 'eternal now' in spaceless space in which what is beyond shines as indwelling love in the heart of every Jiva. Every soul is ensouled by Sri Krishna and He is its very life and love. Gopi-love for Gopala is immortalized in the history of mysticism on account of its disinterestedness and divine purity. The Jnani is a Mahatma that dwells in Divine love; but the Gopis lived, moved, and had their being in Krishna-prema and were God-mad; it was their food and drink and without it they were like fish out of water and body without life. The soul-hunger of God is more intense than the God-hunger of the soul and it was satisfied in Rāsa-lila, the supreme bliss of union and communion between

the two which is ever fecunditive and ineffable. Krishna-lila is a spaceless, timeless play between the Lord of Love and His partners who are entirely free from attachment to sense objects here and in Svarga and who are drawn to Krishna as their be-all and end-all and whose only joy is to be a means to His enjoyment. When Shuka, the mystic genius, was blessed with a divine faculty to have a glimpse of it, he immortalized it in the moving verses of the *Bhāgavata* and preferred to revel in the dust of the feet of the Gopis on the banks of the river trod by the Lord to the bliss of Vaikuntha itself. Vrindaban is the holiest spot on earth or even the world beyond and millions of peoples for countless ages have made a pilgrimage to the blessed land by renouncing all worldly ties and longed to be immersed in the eternal bliss of Krishna-prema.

ĀLVĀR MYSTICISM

The Alvars seek God as the soul of their souls and are immersed in the joy of mystic union which is beyond thought and language. But as born poets, they seek to convey their mystic experience through the symbology of Nāyaka-Nāyaki relation. The experience of the mystic is supersensuous though it is clothed in artistic imagery and his symbolism is infinitely suggestive as it suggests Infinite love and is not to be interpreted literally. The Tamils have their technique in portraying the adventures of love which are designed to promote intimacy, fidelity, and mutualness. It develops in five ways known as union (Puṇardal), separation (Piridal), patient suffering (Iruttal), sorrows of separation (Iraṅgal), and the protests of unrequited love (Ūḍal). Each mood is coloured by the environment and conditioned geographically. The lovers are first attracted to each other in Kurunji or jungle land and meet there. The place of separation is Palai or sandy waste or wilderness. The seaside or Neidal is congenial for solitary brooding and contemplative love. The town or Marudam affords scope for the assaults and raids of love. Finally the lovers

meet in Mullai or pasture land and are reunited. These places correspond to Ākāsha (ether), Tejas (fire), Ap (water), Vāyu (wind), and Prithivi (earth). This analogy is employed by the Alvars to express their spiritual quest and conquest. The bride is the soul that yearns for divine union and the Lord who is the Soul of the soul and is one with it and oned with it is the eternal Bridegroom. The joy of the first union or Samslesha is momentary, but it gives a foretaste of the immortal bliss in future and Samslesha is followed by Vislesha or the woes of separation. The forlorn bride is sick-minded and desolate and suffers from the agonies of separation; her beauty fades away and her spirits are depressed. This state of suffering is aptly called by the Christian mystics the 'dark night of the soul' and it expresses the infinite 'hazards and hardships' of the divided life. In her helpless state the bride sends messages of unrequited love to the Lord through the herons, the bees, the birds, and the cloud and His love is stirred by their moving power. The Lord is then moved by love and at long last the lovers are united and the spiritual wedding takes place in the presence of Agni or fire, the symbol of self-purification. The lover and the Beloved are two in one and one in two like the sun and its light or the word and its meaning and the story of their separation and union is brought out in the mystic experience of Rama-Sita or the Divine pair as Pati-Patni. The body may be compared to the island of Lankā¹ surrounded by the sea of Samsāra and Sita who is inseparable from Sri Rama as the light from the sun is carried away by Ravana, the ten-faced Rakshasa with ten sense-organs and confined in the body. Hanuman mediates and conveys the agony of Sri Rama's Vislesha and the assurance of reunion and finally the Rakshasa is destroyed and the Divine Pair are reunited. Love is a two-sided relation and not a self-identity. If by brooding on Sri Rama, Sita became Rama, by brooding on Sita, Rama became Sita and

¹ *Sankalpa Suryodaya* by Vedanta Desika, I. 72, cf. *Ātma-vivāha* by Nanjiyar.

even then love is a relation of unity in duality. Krishna-prema, the quintessence of mystic love in its purity and perfection as enshrined in the *Bhāgavata*, attracts the Alvars, especially Nammalvar, Tirumangaiavar, and Andal and their outpourings are unmatched in mystic literature for their moving power. The symbology of spiritual marriage is different from the metaphysical language of deification by which the self is divinized by the alchemy of love.

NAMMĀLVĀR

Nammalvar, the super-mystic of Sri Vaishnavism, was a born philosopher-saint. He was, however, so much enchanted by the bewitching Beauty of Sri Krishna that he became a bridal mystic. It was a change in spite of himself from the contemplation on the Transcendental Bliss beyond and the immanence of the Indwelling Self, the super-essence or Brahma-svarupa to the love of the Incarnational Beauty and the Gopi-like God-intoxication of Krishna-prema. From Brahma-jnana of the philosopher to Atmamohana or Prema of the feminine mystic is a transition from introspection to intense emotional expression without giving up the philosophic background. The Alvar Nayika, drawn by the personal Beauty of the Avatara and Archa, longs for the embrace of Divine love (Bāhyasamslesha) and her Prema in its intensity becomes an infatuation or Bhrama. Aesthetic mysticism has its own charm owing to the artistic blending of spirituality and sensuousness or the soul and form of love.

Bhagavat-kāma as bridal love is different in kind from Vishaya-kama as Kama is really no middle term between the two. Śringāra-rasa or erotic joy is contrasted with Brahma-rasa or the bliss of Brahman. The Alvar Nayika is free from the taint of Kama and carnality. But owing to her aesthetic bent of mind as a poet-mystic, she is specially susceptible even to the physical attractions of the Divine Enchanter, Sri Krishna, whose sole artful design is to ravish the soul out of every trace of fleshly feeling. As 'Manmatha Manmatha', He out-eros Eros himself by His

Beauty and does not merely suppress him physically as the ascetic Madana-dahana. It is in this context of poetic philosophy that the bridal mysticism of Nammalvar, with his mystic instinct for the receptivity, responsiveness, and mutualness of feminine love, is to be understood and it is distinguishable from the merely poetic or philosophic experiences of other mystics.

Tiruvaimoli is the spiritual outpouring of Nammalvar and is a song of songs, as it is, as the Alvar himself says, sung by God Himself through His mode or Amsha as both the poet and poetry (VII. 9), endeavour and end. Supersensuous beauty is invested with a name and form which appeal to the heart and give it more delight than dialectic thinking on the nameless and formless One or Brahman Beyond. With his Jnana as Divine Wisdom and Prema or Bhakti transformed into God-intoxication, he is seized with a desire to contact Him even physically as Love concretized in Archa as the reservoir of Divinity.

ĀNDĀL

From the point of view of bridal mysticism, the spiritual outpourings of Andal's irrepressible love-longing to contact Sri Krishna, the Divine Enchanter of souls, and be oned with Him in eternal wedlock are unmatched in the history of mysticism for their freedom from morbidity and for their mystic suggestiveness. *Tiruppāvai*, the song divine, and *Tirumoli*, the sacred utterance, are inspired lyrical rhapsodies and are the quintessence of mystic love poured out spontaneously with unpremeditated but self-concealed art. Her mystic experiences are not visionary or hallucinatory but are historic and their moral and spiritual tone are socially inspiring as they enter into the ideal of Vaishnavism. They are esteemed as Godā Upanishad.

Āndāl or Godā was like the Gopi, born for Gopala, the Divine Dark, but in an unearthly way, and she vowed to wed Him alone and none else and her love to Gopala was true to type. Reference has already been made to

her unique poetic or dramatic gift of portraying with consummate feminine art, the procession of virgin love with Gopi-like maidens, with praise in her lips and Prema in her heart to the Mansion of the Māyan, the soul seducer, enthroned in their hearts, wake Him up from His Yoḡic waking sleep and pray to Him for the boon of the unitive life. Gopala is Godamad though He plays 'hide and seek' with her to intensify her Prema. The transcendental Beauty beyond descends into the Infinite Beauty reposing in the Ocean of Peace and the incarnational Love in Vrindaban or Srivilliputtur to captivate and capture the bridal mystic.

While the song on the chariot appeals to the head, the music of the Venu enchants the heart.

Bridal mysticism is spiritually fruitful and not morbid or quietistic. It is morbid and erotic only when divine love is humanized and brutalized; but when human love, especially the feminine instinct of love, is spiritualized and divinized, it is a miracle of mystic love. It is not quietistic passivity reared in privacy by the cloistered nuns as in some aspects of Western mysticism nor is it an individualistic desire for one's own salvation or Mukti but is companionate quest for Gopala. Andal invites others to form a congregation of mystics to meet the Beloved and enjoy the bliss of Divine union in corporate or community life; it is the orison of union and not quiet. Her life of love is idealized and idolized in Sri Vaishnavite shrines and homes and millions of Sri Vaishnavites through the ages have worshipped her as the embodiment of the fidelity of feminine love being raised to the Divine level as His eternal 'other'.

Tiruppāvai is said to be an allegorical interpretation of the mystic longing of the finite self for the Infinite and union with It. It is Atma-vivāha in terms of Svāpadesha applicable to each person. *Kāma-Śāstra* is the science of the Pati-Patni relation on the model of Rama-Sita and serves as a symbolic expression of the mystic union between man and God. Dressed in utter humility and

decked with devotional fervour, the soul yearns for Divine contact and it has its consummation in spiritual union or *unio-mystico*. When the self-feeling is lost in submission to the Divine embrace, Śringāra-rasa is as nothing compared to the bliss of Brahmānubhava. Andal's life furnishes a rare example of bridal mysticism inseparable from the philosophic, as the physical and the metaphysical are intertwined in *Tiruppāvai*, freed from fleshly feeling and empty illusions or dreams.

MĀNIKKAVĀCHAGAR'S *Tiruvembāvai*

Tiruvembāvai or the maidenly song sung by Saint Mānikkavachagar in praise of the Lord of Arunachalam resembles in many respects *Tiruppāvai*, the song of Andal. Both describe in a mystic way the procession of a number of maidens rising before dawn in the month of Mārgaḷi, going from house to house to wake up the Sleeping Lover in His mansion. As the *Pāvai* says, the maidens, with their tinkling bracelets and rattling jewels, sleep when the Supreme Light (Param-joyti), the balm of Heaven, comes down to the earth to bestow His mercy on those that merit it. The comrades are rebuked for their sleep of ignorance and are asked to awake, arise, go to the sacred tank of Shiva-Shakti and praise Him as the giver of all gifts, for His easy accessibility. Shiva freely pours down His grace like the cloud that pours down rain. The time for His advent is auspicious as it is dawn. Darkness disappears; the cocks crow; the birds sing; the trumpets sound and the bee gathers honey from flowers and the Vedas are chanted. The maidens reach the tank, bathe in its refreshing waters of grace and are cleansed from the sins of Samsara. They sport with Him who sports with all in His Cosmic dance. Their spiritual union is only with His devotees as they serve Shiva and His servants. Their hearts melt with love and swell with joy and they are immersed in the rapturous praise of Shiva's flowery feet which is the only solace of life as it bestows joy on all. The resemblances between the two lyrics are striking as regards the procession, invoca-

tion to the rain god, and the insistence on service. But *Tiruvembāvai* belong to devotional mysticism and *Tiruppāvai* to the bridal type.

Gīta-Govinda OF JAYADEVA

In the immortal lyric known as *Gīta-Govinda*, composed by the mystic Jayadeva in the twelfth century A.D., the nature and value of the art of Divine Love or Bhakti-rasa and the Prema of Radha-Krishna are wonderfully dramatized in the allegoric language of bridal mysticism and it is only the mystic freed from the stain of sexuality and sin that can enter by empathy into the spirit of the poem. It portrays the Lila of love between the Divine Artist or Charmer of souls and His beloved Radha in which the joys, of Samslesha alternate with the sorrows of Vislesha in the game of 'hide and seek', till there is final union. Radha is the very pattern of Krishna-prema and Sri Krishna, the ravisher of souls, felt her love in spring-time which is the season for the budding and blossoming of Prema. The plot begins with the sports of Sri Krishna with the other Gopis, designed to arouse the jealousy of Radha or Vipralambha and put down her conceit that by her heavenly beauty she possessed the Lord and made Him captive by her attractiveness. Sri Krishna is a jealous God, a searcher of hearts, who does not brook egoistic exclusiveness and He teaches her humility by sudden disappearance. The forsaken lonely bride, overladen with love, is seized with remorse and repentance, realizes her littleness and unworthiness, and pines away in desperate grief. Humility is taught by humiliation. Sri Krishna, unable to brook the sorrow of loneliness, waits with 'Divinest Love' and longs for reunion with her. The pining of Radha is answered by the penitence

of Sri Krishna and the God of mercy could not long resist the flame of love of a spotless soul and be *ekānti* or lonely. He likewise becomes melancholy and fades away in sadness. Feminine love is not always passive and penitent and it is now Radha's turn to take the offensive, chide and rebuke Sri Krishna for His cruelty and faithlessness. Like one stricken by arrows, the victim lies with a bleeding heart. Sri Krishna is smitten with remorse, pleads for the pardoning grace of Radha and entreats her 'to place her lovely and gentle feet on His head and forgive Him for His cruelty'. Day and night He cried 'Radha, Radha', stricken with sorrow. It is said that the poet deeply regretted the irreverent turn of the line and erased it, but he found that in his absence the line was restored. Krishnatva consists in giving up Divine glory or Isvaratva and becoming easily accessible to the lowest of the low and the willing slave of the devotee. Radha is His very being and breath and the finest flower of stainless feminine love and Sri Krishna is the very cream of Nayaka-love and it is the happy end of the poem that each rushes into the arms of the other and the twain, Radha and Krishna, melt into one and are united together or oned as Radhakrishna and are lost in the bliss of immortal union, which is the bliss of all bliss or Rasatamah. Every Jiva is a Radha in reality and she can by self-giving become Krishna-like. Krishna-prema grows into infinity when Trishna (sense desire) disappears and the soul is deified. Tradition has it that Krishna could not be Radha, His eternal other, and therefore incarnated as Chaitanya to taste Radha-love.²

² The idea of Radha-Krishna is developed in Northern India, and it is not expounded in the *Bhāgavata* though it is hinted at.

'... here (in the Rasalila) is the madness of enjoyment, the drunkenness of love, where disciples and teachers and teachings and books and all these things have become one ... Everything has been thrown away. What remains is the madness of love. ... the lover sees nothing in the world except that Krishna, and Krishna alone, when the face of every being becomes a Krishna, when his own face looks like Krishna, when his own soul has become tinged with the Krishna colour'.

—Swami Vivekananda

BRAHMAN OR THE ULTIMATE REALITY ACCORDING TO SHANKARA AND RAMANUJA

BY DR. ROMA CHAUDHURI

In the Upanishads themselves, two distinct trends of thoughts may be noticed: Monistic and Monotheistic. In the later Vedānta systems, too, these two schools of monism and monotheism, represented most ably by Shankara and Ramanuja respectively, are found. In his celebrated *Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya*, called *Śrī Bhāṣya*, Ramanuja attempts a detailed exposition and examination of the Advaita Vedānta tenets of the school of Shankara. In his 'Laghu Purvapaksha' and 'Laghu Siddhānta', Ramanuja first gives an account of the Advaita Vedānta view regarding the question as to whether Dharma-jijnāsā is an essential prerequisite to Brahma-jijnāsā, and then criticizes it. According to the Advaita doctrine, it is not at all necessary for a person to study the Purva or Karma Mimāṃsā and know about Karmas first, before he can undertake to study the Uttara or Brahma Mimāṃsā and come to know about Brahman,—for Karmas, involving infinite differences (Bhedas) between the subjects of activities, their objects, their means and the rest, are by nature incapable of leading us to Brahman who is one only without a second, free from all kinds of Visheshas or Bhedas whatsoever. Hence, according to the Advaitavādins, if a person properly performs the 'Sādhana-chatushtaya' or fourfold ethical duties, he is fit to study Vedānta at once. That is, it is not at all essential for him to make a detailed study of the Karmas before attempting a study of Brahman. All that is necessary for him is to acquire the fitness of the mind for receiving knowledge of Brahman. That is, (1) if he be not merged in the love of the worldly objects, but knows them to be what they really are, viz. worthless and transitory; (2) if he be calm, self-restrained, abstentious,

patient, and respectful; (3) if he be completely indifferent to enjoyment, here or hereafter; and (4) if he be possessed of a strong desire for salvation—then and then alone is he fit to study the *Brahma Sūtra*. Any and every one can read the Karma Mimāṃsā, either by himself or through the help of scholars. But that does not by itself make him a fit recipient of the knowledge of Brahman. Mere external study of books does not by any means prepare the mind for a higher, deeper study. It is the inner spirit that counts; so it is the mind that must be cultivated and made fit for receiving profound philosophical truths. Here Shankara rightly insists on some initial preparations on the part of a prospective reader of Vedānta, some training of his mind,—for, his mind being so long concerned with worldly affairs may not all at once be in a position to grasp the profound truths taught in Vedānta.

Ramanuja, too, insists on such a preliminary fitness on the part of one who intends to study about Brahman. But according to him such a fitness can be acquired only through the proper performance of the Nishkāma Karmas as enjoined in the scriptures. Even the above Sādhana-chatushtaya are impossible without these Karmas. Hence, according to Ramanuja, the study of the Karma Mimāṃsā is an essential prerequisite to that of Brahma Mimāṃsā.

Next, Ramanuja, in his famous 'Mahā Purvapaksha' and 'Mahā Siddhānta' states and criticizes other Advaita tenets regarding the nature of Brahman, soul, and the world. Here we give in brief his statement and criticism of the very important Vedāntic question as to whether Brahman is only Jñāna-svarupa or Jñātā, i.e. whether Jñāna or

Consciousness is only the essence of Brahman or both His essence and attribute.

Ramanuja, in his *Śrī Bhāṣhya*, first puts the case for Shankara thus: According to Shankara,

(a) *Sat Anubhūtiṛeva*. The Absolute Being is identical with Consciousness. Such Consciousness is self-luminous (*sva-prakāśa*), eternal, and incapable of change and plurality. (1) It is Self-luminous, because it alone manifests all objects, as jars etc. and if it also requires another consciousness to reveal it, that will ultimately lead to an infinite regress. (2) Again, Consciousness is eternal, as it can have no prior non-existence. We must appeal to Consciousness itself, but is it not absurd to appeal to Consciousness to prove its own non-existence? (*Anubhūtiḥ svayamasati katham svābhāve pramāṇam bhavet?*) Therefore, Consciousness having no prior non-existence, must be existent from all eternity. (3) Finally, Consciousness is incapable of change and plurality as it is eternal. Everything on earth has to undergo six different states (*Vikāra*)—birth (*Janma*), existence (*Sattā*), growth (*Vridhhi*), modification (*Viparināma*), decay (*Kshaya*), and death (*Vināsha*). Now, as Consciousness is proved to be without birth, it cannot possibly have the other states as change, etc.

(b) It may be urged against the view that Atman is Pure Consciousness that, (1) we always feel that 'I know' and not that 'I am knowledge', which goes to prove that the Atman must be a conscious subject. But this apparent distinction between Consciousness, the conscious subject, and the object of consciousness is nothing but due to the unreal principle of *Ahamkāra*. Just as in the case of an illusion the illusory snake is for the time being superimposed on the real rope, so through the illusory superimposition (*Adhyāsa*) of the qualities of the object (*Anātman*) on the Atman such perceptions as 'I am a man', 'I am fat', 'I know', etc. arise. So, it follows that the state of being a conscious subject (*Jnātritva*) is nothing real—the real is Pure Consciousness (*Jnāna*).

(2) Besides, what is meant precisely by *Jnātritva*? It is nothing but to be the agent of the action of knowing (*Jñātrtvam hi jñānakriyā kartṛtvam*). It implies, thus, (i) sense of egoity and (ii) activity, both of which are impossible on the part of the Atman which is devoid of all change and modification (*Vikāra*).

(c) It inevitably follows, therefore, that the conscious subject, the *Jnātā*, is not the Atman itself, but the Atman as manifested by the non-intelligent and unreal *Ahamkāra*. This non-intelligent principle of *Ahamkāra* serves to show the nature of the non-changing Atman as reflected on itself, just as a mirror shows a face as reflected on itself, and hence is the error 'I know' etc. Thus the conscious subject, the *Jnātā*, is no more real than the face in the mirror.

(d) It is objected that the Atman or Consciousness (*Anubhuti*) is always self-luminous (*sva-prakāśa*) and manifests all things, including *Ahamkāra* itself, and so it cannot again be manifested by *Ahamkāra* which is non-intelligent (*Jada*). The answer is, that the rays of the sun are self-luminous and, therefore, manifest the hand thrust forward towards the window through which they are pouring in into the room. Yet, the fact also cannot be denied that the very same self-luminous and all-manifesting rays are themselves made more vivid and brighter by the hand itself. The same is the case here.

(e) Finally, the truth that *Jnātritva*, the sense of being a conscious subject as embodied in the feeling or perception, 'I know' etc., does not really constitute the essence of the Pure Consciousness or Atman, is proved by the fact that during (1) deep dreamless sleep (*Sushupti*) and (2) final liberation (*Mukti*) there is no sense of egoity (*aham-pratyaya*) and self-consciousness, but there is only pure, non-differentiated Consciousness which constitutes the very essence of the Atman. Hence a man when he wakes up from a state of *Sushupti*, has a feeling that during that state he did not know even himself, as there was no 'himself' (*aham-padārtha*) to know then.

(f) The sum and substance of all these arguments, thus, is that the Atman, devoid of all kinds of change and modification whatsoever, eternally real (Kutastha-nitya), and one without a second, is nothing but Pure Consciousness (Jnāna or Samvit) and hence all the differentiations of Consciousness into a subject which knows (Jnātā), an object which is known (Jneya), and the process through which the former comes to know the latter (Jnāna)—are all false and erroneous through and through. The study of Vedānta which leads to the real knowledge of Brahman is alone capable of destroying this error innate in us from all eternity (Avidyā) and thereby releasing us from the endless cycle of birth, death, and rebirth.

Having thus put forward the case of his opponents (Purvapaksha), Ramanuja next proceeds to refute the arguments one by one and thereby establish his own view. He argues thus:

(a) Sat and Anubhuti cannot be identical, because our direct perception reveals the difference between Consciousness (Anubhuti) and its object (Vishaya). The one is the subject which knows (Jnātā), the other the object which is known (Jneya); so, how can the two possibly be identical? Hence the conclusion that Anubhuti alone is real is also refuted.

(1) It has been said that Consciousness is self-luminous. Now, this is true only when a particular knowing subject becomes conscious of a particular object; for, then alone can it be said that the object in question, which was before unknown to the subject in question, becomes known to him by the light of Consciousness. But how do we come to know of the presence of Consciousness in others? Here we have no direct way of perceiving Consciousness, but all that we can do is to *infer* it from the actions and behaviour of others. Not to speak of the Consciousness of others, even in our own case, when being conscious of something, we afterwards think 'I was conscious of such and such objects', Consciousness becomes an

object of memory. Thus, we find that to say that Consciousness is always self-luminous and can never be an object capable of being revealed by something else, is not always true, as it is often an object of inference and memory.

To say, again, that if Anubhuti be Anubhāvya or an object of knowledge, then it will cease to be Consciousness in essence and become non-conscious (Ananubhuti) like jars, etc. (which are always objects of knowledge—Anubhāvya) is not correct. For, in that case, we have to say that all our past consciousnesses (which are not merely objects of memory) and all consciousnesses in others (which can only be inferred) must cease to be states of Consciousness.

Also, it is absurd to hold that Consciousness must lose its essential nature simply because it is an object of another Consciousness. What, in fact, constitutes the essence of Anubhuti? The essential nature of Consciousness or knowledge is that it manifests itself through its own being to its own substratum at the present moment, or that it is instrumental in proving its own object by its own being. Now, these two characteristics do not vanish when a state of consciousness becomes the object of another state of consciousness, because they are irrevocably established by a person's own personal experience (Svānubhava-siddha). Suppose, A infers that B is a conscious being from the fact that he (B) is walking and talking. Here B's consciousness is an object of A's consciousness. But this fact in no way destroys the essence of B's consciousness, as B's personal experience testifies to the fact that his states of consciousness are always states of consciousness, possessing the above-mentioned characteristics—whether or not they are the objects of other states of consciousness.

The analogy of jars, etc. is also not to the point. To argue thus is illogical.

Whatever is an object of Consciousness does not possess Consciousness (i.e. is Jada), like jars etc.

A state of Consciousness (which is not Jada).

Therefore, a state of Consciousness can never be an object of Consciousness.

Here, the major premise upon which the whole argument is based is itself wrong, for jars, etc. do not possess Consciousness (that is, they are Jada), not because they are objects of Consciousness, but only because they lack the characteristics of Consciousness mentioned above, i.e. they are incapable of revealing themselves through their own being to their own substrata.

If we insist on holding that the essence of Consciousness consists in its not being an object of consciousness, we should arrive at the absurd conclusion that unreal objects like sky-flower etc., which are never objects of Consciousness, must be in essence Consciousness.

Thus we conclude that the self-luminosity of Consciousness does not bar it from being an object of another state of consciousness. Consciousness is self-luminous only with regard to *our own present* state of consciousness, whereby an infinite regress, as objected to, is avoided. But with regard to our *past* states of consciousness, or the conscious states of others, Consciousness ceases to be self-luminous, though without losing its own character.

(2) Secondly, Anubhuti is not eternal. It has been said that Anubhuti is eternal because the existence of its prior non-existence (Prāg-abhāva) is incapable of being established, since to do so we must appeal to Consciousness itself. But the question is: How can we assert the non-existence of Prāg-abhāva even, consistently with our hypothesis? Consciousness is the only means of knowing whether a thing *is* or *is not*. But our hypothesis is that Prāg-abhāva is incapable of being established by Consciousness and so we can neither assert that *it is*, nor that *it is not*, both statements being equally dogmatic. We can, in fact, assert nothing whatsoever about it.

Also, it is absurd to say that because

knowledge and its non-existence (Prāg-abhāva) cannot exist together, it is impossible to know such non-existence. It is undoubtedly true that the existence and non-existence of one and the same thing cannot exist simultaneously. But there is no rule whatsoever that knowledge and its object must always be simultaneous. This is the case only with perceptual knowledge. But there may be knowledge of past and future objects. In inferential knowledge also there is no simultaneity of knowledge.

It may be objected that Prāg-abhāva cannot be established by any of the recognized Pramānas or sources of valid knowledge and so it cannot exist. It cannot be established by perceptual knowledge, for that always requires the simultaneity of knowledge and its object, nor can it be established by inference, for there is no valid ground of inference here (Linga, Hetu), nor is it established by the Shabda Pramāna. The answer is, that formerly it was asserted that Anubhuti is self-validated and as such the eternity of Consciousness requires no other proof. But now, if it is sought to be established on the ground of Pramānas, we point out that the Pramāna 'appropriate non-cognition' very well establishes it.

Moreover, if Consciousness were eternal, then we should have felt it as such. But the fact is that we never find Consciousness or knowledge to be eternal. For example, perceptual knowledge is not eternal, but persists only so long as its object persists. The consciousness of a jar can never be said to be eternal and everlasting, for we are undeniably not conscious of a jar always. So, if knowledge is to be eternal, its object must of necessity be also so—this is an impossibility. For the same reason, inferential knowledge cannot be eternal, as its object can never be so.

Thus we conclude that Consciousness or Anubhuti is not eternal, i.e. not incapable of having a Prāg-abhāva.

(3) Finally, Consciousness is very well capable of change and plurality. It has been argued that as Consciousness has no origin

(having no-Prāg-abhāva), it can have no change and destruction. But this is not ways true. For example, Prāg-abhāva has origin, yet it has an end—for it comes to end as soon as the thing in question comes to exist.

If it is argued that the rule that anything having no origin has no change (Vikāra) and destruction (Vināsha) holds good only with regard to a thing or an entity (Bhāva-padārtha), while Prāg-abhāva is not an entity, so that the former example of Prāg-abhāva as having an end, though not an origin, does not prove the case to be contrary,—it may be pointed out that Avidyā, according to the Advaita school, is a Bhāva-padārtha, yet it is modified into various changes (Vikāra) seen in the world of names and forms and comes

to an end (Vināsha) on the rise of true knowledge.

Again, it cannot be said that as Anubhuti is without origin (Aja), it is incapable of division and plurality. For in the first place, it has already been shown that Consciousness is not without origin; and in the second place, even if, for the sake of argument, it is admitted that Consciousness is without origin, even that does not prove the case. The Atman is admitted by all to be without origin, yet it always stands differentiated from the body and the sense-organs as well as from the beginningless (Anādi) Avidyā. Thus, we conclude that Consciousness is not incapable of change (Vikāra), division (Vibhāga), and plurality (Nānātva).

(To be continued)

NOTES AND COMMENTS

TO OUR READERS

Sri K. S. Ramaswami Sastri, Retired District and Sessions Judge, Madras, is a well-known scholar, writer, and author, deeply learned in ancient as well as modern thought. . . .

Sri N. C. Mehta, who has retired from the Indian Civil Service after a long and distinguished career, is a noted author and art-critic. . . .

Francis Thompson's well-known poem 'The Hound of Heaven' is critically surveyed and commented upon by Prof. C. C. Chatterji, who is a distinguished scholar and author in the field of English literature. It will be concluded in our next. . . .

Sri P. N. Srinivasachari, M.A., who was a former Principal of Pachaiyappa's College, Madras, is a philosopher of extraordinary insight and understanding. His lucid exposition of the Viśhiṣṭādvaita Vedānta of Ramanuja is known to be one of the most authorita-

tive and dependable treatises on the subject. He is the author of several minor and major works in his special field of philosophical study. . . .

Dr. (Mrs.) Roma Chaudhuri, M.A., D.Phil. (Oxon.), Principal of a Women's College in Calcutta, is a scholar and author of great repute. She has many learned philosophical treatises to her credit and has made a special study of the theistic schools of Vedānta.

THE PLACE OF SRI RAMAKRISHNA AND SWAMI VIVEKANANDA IN THE SPIRITUAL HISTORY OF HUMANITY

The 'Religion is one, though religious traditions are many' and that each religious tradition is capable of taking its followers to the one goal of Religion was recognized very early in the religious history of India. Similarly, the ideal of service as an integral part of practical religion, as a spiritual discipline, is quite ancient in Indian thought. The R̥g-Vedic declaration—'Ekam Sat,

viprāḥ bahudhā vadanti' has been the keynote of all religious development in India. The idea of service, especially institutional or organized forms of philanthropy as we know them today, may not have been so evident in the extant Hindu religious scriptures of old. However, the 'Five Great Sacrifices' (*pañcha mahā-yajña*), proscribed as an imperative duty of every householder, constitute beneficent service to all beings—from the gods to the lowest animals. Again, works of public welfare and charity, like *iṣṭa* and *pūrta*, were enjoined on all who could afford them. All action, meant for either individual or collective betterment, was expected to be conducted on a spiritual level. Sri Krishna, in the *Gita*, has taught the Yoga of work in such clear and forceful language as no other world teacher has done. Buddha emphasized love and service to fellow-men (*manuṣhya-yajña*) and also to all animals (*bhūta-yajña*), with the added force of his command to his followers to strive for the good of all (*bahujana-hita* and *bahujana-sukha*).

In our own times the doctrine of service has been preached afresh by Swami Vivekananda, with a new and socially uplifting orientation, imbued with the inspiration of the spiritual realizations of his great Master Sri Ramakrishna and also drawing upon the achievements of the Seers of the past. With the advent of Swami Vivekananda, the ideal of service has been truly interpreted and illustrated as a worthy and potent means of God-realization. Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda have, in their life and teachings, given concrete shape to the ideals of the unity of religion and the utility of service.

Sri Ramakrishna, starting with the worship of Kālī, the Divine Mother, and practising various forms of Sādhanā, for a number of years, testified, through his personal realizations, to the existence of God, the reality of the life of the Spirit, and the fact of man's realization of his identity with the Absolute. Sri Ramakrishna also traversed the paths to perfection laid down by Christianity and Islam, the two great religions of the world

beside Hinduism and Buddhism, and realized before long that they too finally led to the same goal of ultimate Reality as other religions.

Writing on 'The Significance of the Avatar,' in *Vedanta and the West*, the bimonthly issued from the Vedanta Society of Southern California, Dr. C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar, Vice-Chancellor of the Annamalai University, and presently a distinguished member of the Press Commission in India, observes that Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda 'might and should be regarded as Avatars'. 'And why?' he asks, and briefly summarizing his learned views, writes:

'Ramakrishna was born at a time when material success and the pursuit of and reverence for gadgets and little short cuts to outer happiness were enthroned and exalted. India was sunk in passivity, ignorance, and inertia and was prey to foreign ideas which were not suited to the past and were not commensurate with the future of the country. I do not mean to convey the impression that the acquisition of scientific knowledge or the utilization of that scientific knowledge in the pursuit of human happiness by mechanical inventions are to be despised. These are essential in the progress of the human mind, but when you would enthrone the machine and dethrone personality, and would acquire what may be called a slave mentality—whether that slavishness is to ideas or to instruments or to machines—then you commit a cardinal sin against yourself. That was the situation in which India was living, and moreover, India had forgotten true mysticism and was studying naturalistic philosophy, thus strenuously denying its heritage and ancient prerogatives.

'So Ramakrishna came, a humble individual who did not assert any particular claim to saviourship. Indeed, in India we do not believe very much in saviours or intercessors—yes, in the Guru, perhaps—but the ultimate responsibility is in oneself. Ramakrishna came and to his mind the first thing that appeared to be indispensably necessary was a reconciliation of seeming opposites. He knew the Christian life; he knew the Moslem life; he knew the Tantra life; and he came to the conclusion, and preached this conclusion, that all these are reconcilable—that truth embraces and transcends the inner intrinsic, fundamental tenets of Christianity, Islam, and Tantra. Fraternization of faiths and ideas, as apart from exploitation, was the gospel which Ramakrishna initiated and which Vivekananda popularized and spread throughout the world'.

ART AND EDUCATION

The most creative periods in the life of a civilization have been those when religion and the fine arts were able to maintain a common bond of unity, thus contributing to the growth of a truly spiritual culture. 'In the masterpieces of art', says Romain Rolland, 'we see beauty wedded to science or to religion, for the harvest of the intensely lived life is invariably garnered from the intermingling of many different seeds'. All forms of art, be it music or the other visual arts, have always been considered in India as channels for creative expression, indirectly assisting man in uniting himself with the eternal Godhead back of Nature.

The legacy of art which India has inherited from very ancient times needs to be utilized today in the modern context. It will not be incorrect to say that the technological age in which we are living is singularly devoid of true artistic expression either in the domestic or in the social spheres of life. The effect of this has naturally been adverse on the deeper aspects of personality, for, while people master the techniques of industry and science, they fail to imbibe that loftiness of vision and breadth of outlook which result from enlightened contemplation of the abiding beauties of Nature. Even education, especially at the school stage when art can play a helpful role, has tended to become mechanical and unrealistic.

The modern view of the function of art in education confirms what the seers of India had discovered long back, viz. the spirit of art, properly imbued, not only chastens the creative energies of the pupil but also acts as a powerful means of manifestation of the perfection already in him. This is more true with regard to the child, the creative energies

of which are in the formative stage. It is a happy sign of the times that a world organization like the UNESCO is giving attention to this subject of art in children's education. Writing editorially, in a recent issue devoted to 'Art and Education', the UNESCO *Courier* observes:

'Young children are endowed with the gift of seeing the world about them intuitively, with an innocent freshness as yet unaffected by the rational dictates of experience. One of the chief concerns of any mode of education must therefore be to retain as much as possible this natural awareness in the child and yet provide a method of training that will truly educate.

'The purpose of education is not only, in the famous words of Franz Cizek, "to let the children grow, develop, and mature". It has also to be a mode of initiation so that each person may be as well equipped as possible for living his own life and for contributing to the good life of others and of the community.

'It is in this respect that education by means of the arts is so valuable because it fosters the whole development of the personality, uniting intellectual activity with physical skills, but fusing them in a creative process that is in itself among the most precious attributes of man'.

A work of art is the climax of a long work of preparation. The artist takes from his surroundings everything that can nourish his inner vision. Trevor Thomas, writing in the same issue, on 'Art for the Enjoyment of it', says:

'In those countries where the standards of education are low, where new programmes of basic education are being promoted, . . . there is a sheer necessity to encourage the people themselves to retain and develop their natural, intuitive modes of artistic expression. The right to enjoy the arts is an abstraction unless people themselves can claim it and give it a tangible reality'.

It is a wise rule of thumb to remember that art has to be actively lived and practised, art not merely for art's sake but for the sake of life itself.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

THE LIFE OF MAHATMA GANDHI (PARTS I AND II). BY LOUIS FISCHER. *Published by Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Chaupatty, Bombay 7. Pages: I—330; II—336. Price: Each Part Re. 1-12.*

The book under review, in two parts, is the reprint of the original published in London in 1951. Louis Fischer, well-known American journalist and author, has presented an intimate, vivid, and personal portraiture of the life and personality of Mahatma Gandhi. The work of Mr. Fischer possesses an originality and freshness of its own, partly due to the thoroughness with which the study of the subject-matter is made and partly to the sympathy and understanding with which it is presented. As a journalist of repute, the author is at his best when he analyses and describes Gandhiji's philosophy of life in and through the actual realities of everyday occurrence. And he has had the advantage of coming into personal contact with Gandhiji and other Indian patriots at Wardha, in 1942, during the thick of the nation's struggle. The book abounds in passages that highlight Gandhiji's great and charming personality, e.g. 'Gandhi was a strong individual, and his strength lay in the richness of his personality, not in the multitude of his possessions. His goal was To be, not To have'. The biographer's estimate of Gandhiji's contribution to peace and civilization is also aptly summed up at places, in such passages as the following: 'Gandhi enriched politics with ethics. He faced each morning's issues in the light of eternal and universal values. He always distilled a permanent element out of the ephemeral. . . . Unconfined by considerations of personal success or comfort, he split the social atom and found a new source of energy'.

Part I, consisting of twenty-nine chapters, very touchingly commences with Gandhiji's assassination and proceeds to cover his life from the early years up to 1930. Part II, consisting of twenty-one chapters, takes up the thread of the narrative and concludes the life-story.

A PRIMER OF TAMIL LITERATURE. BY K. S. RAMASWAMI SASTRI. *To be had of the Author, 45, Lloyds Road, Royapettah, Madras. Pages 168. Price Rs. 2-8.*

The main aim of the learned author is 'to present briefly a picture of Tamilnad and its gifted and enterprising people as seen in the Tamil literature'. Within the pages of this interesting and informative book the author has compressed a wealth of literary and historical detail on the secular and spiritual literature of the Tamil

language. The work is divided into five 'Books'. Book I, which is of an introductory nature, gives a brief survey of 'Tamil Nad: Its People, Culture, Language, and Literature'. Book II is devoted to 'Ancient Tamil Literature (1000 B.C.—200 A.D.)'. Book III, dealing with 'Medieval Tamil Literature (200—1800 A.D.)', includes an illuminating study of Shaiva and Vaishnava mystical poetry. Book IV covers 'Modern Tamil Literature', and Book V, entitled 'The Future of Tamil Literature, embodies the author's appreciative comments and critical observations on the current trends in Tamil literature.

THE GOOD LIFE. BY E. JORDAN. *Published by The University of Chicago Press, 5750, Ellis Avenue, Chicago 37, U.S.A. Pages 460. Price \$ 5.00.*

The author has been a teacher of philosophy and ethics for more than a quarter of a century and the work is appraised as 'a thorough and skilful reconstruction of ethical theory'. The writer's distinctive attitude is thus outlined: 'Thought and act are one. It is the end because there is nothing beyond. It is thus perfect satisfaction, complete fulness, life as thought made real in itself as act, as end' (p. 263). It is also said: 'Man's actions are the materials of ethics. It is through action that man controls and changes his relations to his fellows and to the natural and cultural world in which he has his being. The individual cannot be perfected or indeed exist at all, outside the institutional relations—family, industry, education, religion, art, and politics. Immorality is the destruction of or failure to attain corporate personality'.

The setting of the good life upon this view is inevitably political. 'The moralization of the world is the task of politics. If the institution of religion is to take its natural place in the good life, it will have to come to terms with politics. It is the function of politics to supply the wholeness of the good life' (p. 356).

Action is made the sole criterion of moral quality. 'The act does not get its intelligibility from its reference to the person—the person rather gets its meaning from the act, is a logical derivative from the fact of action' (p. 26).

Ethical idealism and subjectivism are alike denied. 'The same act may be adjudged good when regarded as the consequence of very different states of mind. Saving a man from drowning is a good act even though done in malice and it is not made good by being done from love or pity'. Not the man of virtues but the good life marked with

acts thus patterned is the study and concern of this ethical approach. And following are some of the consequent deductions: 'There is no consistent or rational meaning that can be given to benevolence. When we undertake to treat it as a virtue, it contradicts itself at every point. The really objectionable feature about it is the assumption that because somebody has given liberally or established some spectacular nuisance, these results must be good' (p. 214).

On cosmopolitanism or humanitarianism, the writer says: 'It is clear that by the time one's ideas are extended and expanded in meaning to the point where they embrace such universality, the mere attitudes of well-wishing are far surpassed. And also their objects have become so abstract as to negate any act which might be supposed to involve them' (p. 210). 'Liberalism thus seems a virtue for philosophers and prophets but out of the reach of ordinary people' (p. 211). But these cults have produced some outstanding exemplars, and concrete undertakings in history. And the characteristic modern note in man's life is Internationalism.

The writer's comment on friendship is,—'Its failure to qualify as virtue is demonstrated when it undertakes to universalize itself—in political, international, and religious universalism' (p. 231). From this standpoint the passive virtues—such as tolerance, self-control, non-resistance, and self-sacrifice—naturally come to be discounted. 'I do not see', says the author, 'that the vision of myself as sensually happy differs in principle from my notion of myself as some austere model of perfection' (p. 63). 'Self-control is of relatively little consequence as a constructive force in the good life. Self-control does not mean control of the individual self by the individual self; in this sense it is merely contradictory and denies all meaning to spontaneity' (p. 405).

'The assumption of a moral will is a remnant of an old superstition, if we mean by it that there is a thing there which exerts force' (p. 401). 'If it be argued that sacrifice is the lot of mankind here below, the answer is that it is such so far as life is not yet moral. But there is no moral quality in mere sacrifice' (p. 366). And yet self-sacrifice alone may ensure the principle of 'Live and let live' as the basis of One World.

The reader of this ethical treatise, which is argued with force and cogency and is sure to stir thought, is, however, constantly made aware that here is a profile but not the whole view and much on the other side is tacitly ignored or remains unexplained. 'The life we judge to be truly good must be all-inclusive and must be ever going out of itself; on the other hand, it must bring its

powers and possessions into harmonious relation with one another and be at home with itself' (*Encyclopaedia of Ethics*, etc.). Again, in the words of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, 'The opposite of outward action is not inaction but inward action. The emphasis on negative virtues, e. g. gentleness and love, passivism and lack of aggressiveness, which makes one surrender one's rights rather than fight for them, appears to be weakness or cowardice to those engaged in the busy life of politics or sport. But there is no reason why self-perfecting should be regarded as a species of inactivity. To harness the restless steeds of the senses, to subdue the passions and evil impulses which lead us away from our real nature, is an essential part of our ethics' (*Eastern Religions and Western Thought*). Here are the two lobes of the human brain making for self-fulfilment and self-effacement irrespective of the points of the compass.

Philosophy in general may be said to be a rationalization or systematization of experience in terms of habitual conduct or chosen mode of life. As says a Sanskrit adage—'By Action is Intelligence controlled'. And Prof. E. Jordan's central thesis of action as the test and hinge of the good life is impressive as the outcome of the dynamic activism which marks the contemporary or American phase of human civilization.

BATUKNATH BHATTACHARYA

RELATED MULTIPLICITY. By B. K. MALLIK. Published by Hall the Publisher Ltd., 6, Brewer Street, Oxford. U.K. Pages 270. Price 30s.

This is a challenging, ambitious work, professing to be a 'philosophy of philosophies' and taking in its large sweep of critical survey the classical, medieval, and modern philosophic thought of the West, as also the Upanishadic and Buddhist thought of the East. The author's thesis is a thesis of standpoint, with an axiomatic system of its own, e.g. The impossible cannot exist: conversely, whatever is conceivable automatically earns the right to exist (p. 141); again, the Existent, whatever its type or form, is unique and complete: even statements about unique and complete existence are in their turn unique and complete (p. 109). The situation which is Reality is, according to the author, dialectical, not of course in the Hegelian sense of the categories of Being and Non-Being operating as functions of the Absolute but in the sense that the sceptical claim must be negated, so that the case for Reality may legitimately be made. Starting with the categories of the Absolute and the Relative, he comes to the conclusion that 'the universe is either the Beginningless Absolute or the Relative or the

Endless Absolute and never all together' (p. 12). In so far as the 'Relative must follow the Primal Absolute and precede the final Absolute, Reality may be pictured as 'almost composite of the bounded and the boundless or the Discontinuous and the Continuous' (p. 15). The structural form of the Continuous must be the non-relational form of Existence (Being and Non-Being existing and functioning apart), while the structural form of the Discontinuous is the relational form of Existence, Being and Non-Being existing and functioning both simultaneously and successively, giving rise to the issue of organization or the universe with its two phases of conflict and harmony, located respectively in the negative and the positive stages (p. 35).

After thus formulating his metaphysical position in the first part, the author launches, in the second part, into the question of evidence or 'confirmation' of his view of Reality. It is the contention of the author that 'Reality should mean the concrete as distinguished from Truth which by its nature is categorical' (p. 46). Truth or categorical structure, according to the author, belongs to the Discontinuous Universe and is a historical phenomenon referring to the historical concrete, where the sensations and images of our Experience appear (p. 47). But the two moments in human experience—the moment of sensuous and image Existence, and the moment of thought or Categorical Experience—do not meet. It is when doubt, with a set of alternatives, brings concrete Existence to a dead end—to a state of 'tension'—that the Categorical Experience begins. Hence according to the author 'the category with which thought begins its career is the Negative as a matter of human experience'. He then goes on to review the sceptical position with its claim that 'Non-Being is and Being is not'. He is led to the conclusion that Truth is constituted by both Being and Non-Being, specifically in terms of his two notions of the Continuous and Discontinuous. This implies Negation or contradiction of the sceptical claim and establishment of Truth, i.e. 'Being is and Non-Being is not'. The positive phase the author calls 'metaphysic' and the negative phase 'logic'. This exhausts the primary features of all Experience. The two phases or processes are distinct and 'their functions though intimately close and allied, never coincide' (p. 59). Generally deduction and induction are given the name of logic, but these are, the author argues (p. 60f.), 'processes of construction' and should not have been given the name of logic.

He next approaches the crucial question—How is pure thought related to concrete 'experience'? What form or shape affirmation and negation take as they appear in the concrete realm? The answer

follows that while the two realms—pure thought and the concrete—neither exist together nor have the same objective to realize, they must both belong to the same multiple entities which form the matrix of the universe. The fact is that the same multiple entities appear in them alternately,—and that in two distinct phases which even in their mutual implication remain exclusive and independent of one another (p. 67). The author next comes to characterize this something multiple in its identity of individuality and relationship. Since it is impossible that the multiple should exist as absolute different, the entities constituting it must be organized, giving rise to the notion of 'related multiplicity', implying the two factors of unity and individuality,—not on an equal valuation, for, that would mean a 'tension' with the inevitable fate of absolute extinction. Since the universe shows otherwise, we must of necessity accept the organization of the multiple entities on an unequal valuation of unity or individuality (pp. 72, 73).

Having thus been able to gain some insight into what 'Related Multiplicity' connotes with our author this short review may be brought to a close, although in so doing we have to leave out of account the alluring prospect of other chapters. Since the author deliberately cuts himself adrift from the philosophic tradition of the East and the West, it is no wonder that his philosophy refuses to be summed up in the current terms of philosophic discourse. This has necessitated a representation of his point of view by remaining faithful to his language so that the originality of his intention may not escape us. The crowning difficulty for an original thinker is the difficulty of exposition. He remains always taut in fear that he has not been able to communicate the exact shade of his meaning. The same seems to be the case with the present author, whose exposition, as it is, is a tangled skein of references to topics before and after, the result of which is disconcerting to a degree. Yet his remorseless, analytic scalpel, meticulously dissecting system after system of divergent philosophic traditions, holds its own in spite of everything and that because it is done with an easy command of a vibrant style that clearly reveals the man in our philosopher whose method of *reductio ad absurdum* is often enlivened by Socratic taunts and ironies. His critiques of Cartesian doubt and of logical positivism are instances to the point. However, when called upon to make an appraisal of the author's work as a whole, one somehow feels that there must be something somewhere in his standpoint which must intercalate the relative, the universe, between two Absolutes, one dead and the other powerless to be born.

ON UNDERSTANDING SCIENCE. BY JAMES B. CONANT. *Published by The New American Library, 501 Madison Avenue, New York 22, N.Y., U.S.A. Pages 144. Price 35 cents.*

The assimilation of scientific knowledge into Western culture is a problem of modern growth which is facing society.

The scientist-author of the book has discussed how we can, in our colleges, give a better understanding of science to those of our graduates who do not go in for advanced courses in science and who are to be lawyers, writers, politicians, public servants, and business men. The author does this by taking the layman through a few simple case-histories of science. The method is admirable and it will lead to a wide-spread understanding of science in the U.S.A. and other advanced countries.

But the conditions in India are very different. We have a lot of leeway to make up in this direction. The knowledge of elementary science which is imparted in American schools before the university stage is certainly much higher than in India. The undergraduate, when he joins an American university, has a much higher basic fund of scientific knowledge than his Indian counterpart. In many cases the Indian undergraduate has had no grounding in science when he comes to the university and he passes out without learning even the ABC of science. Whatever he knows of science is picked up as a result of his reading done at his own pleasure. This never happens to be considerable. He is astounded later in life when he is told that the soda-bicarb, so common an ingredient of the recipes of the allopath, is the household soda which the housewife adds to gram to hasten the cooking process. From the point of view of this desideratum, a book which may be useful in America may not be found equally useful in India.

DR. M. L. SETHI.

ENGLISH-HINDI

SRIMAD-BHAGAVAD-GITA. TRANSLATED BY SWAMI SAMBUDDHANANDA. *Published by Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, Khar, Bombay 21. Pages 396. Price Rs. 3-8. (Foreign \$ 1.50 or 8 s.)*

The *Bhagavad Gita* is such an outstanding, ennobling, and popular work that any number of fresh annotations and translations are always welcome, as these add to the richness and variety of the means of understanding the great wisdom contained in it. The book under review,—a well got-up pocket edition of the *Gita*,—presents the original text in clear and bold Nāgari types, along with lucid and accurate running translations in English and Hindi prose by Swami Sambuddhananda, President, Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, Bombay. Each verse is followed by the Hindi and

then the English rendering. The translation is made textually literal and at the same time free and easy for the general reader. The book carries a short but informative Introduction in English and Hindi, and contains the texts of 'Gita-dhyāna' ('Meditation on the *Gita*') and 'Gita-māhātmya' ('Greatness of the *Gita*'). This edition of the *Gita* has also a special purpose in view, viz. the translation in two languages, presented side by side, affords an opportunity to English-knowing persons to pick up Hindi and *vice versa*.

BENGALI

KAILAS-O-MANASTIRTHA. BY SWAMI APURVANANDA. *Published by Udbodhan Office, 1, Udbodhan Lane, Baghbazar, Calcutta 3. Pages 226. Price Rs. 2-8.*

This book is really a unique contribution to Bengali literature. It contains a graphic description of the author's pilgrimage to Kailas and Mānasa Sarovar and abounds with historical facts, legends, local traditions and manners, and social customs of the Himalayan regions and also of the Tibetan people. Details regarding the Lamas of the different Buddhist monasteries through which the Swami passed, are also to be found here. In going through the pages of this book, the reader cannot but feel thrilled and astounded at the vivid accounts of perhaps the most hazardous and difficult of Himalayan pilgrimages, nay, adventures, where one has to cover scores of miles in a vast dreary region and negotiate snowy tracks at places where there is no human habitation. Besides there is constant fear of attacks from armed gangs of marauders roving in quest of plunder, their victims being the travellers and pilgrims. Numerous pilgrims and large bands of merchants pass each year between India and Tibet through this dreary snow-covered rocky path, having continuous ascents and descents.

The reader is bound to feel a thrill of excitement when he sees the vivid description of the account where the author, leaving his party, proceeded alone, with a faithful Tibetan hill-guide towards the very foot of the Kailas peak, crossing a hazardous snow-covered river and ascending a steep hill by scaling its wall, in the face of big boulders rolling down headlong with a thunderous noise. Undaunted by such perils, the author, in spite of the biting chill of the blizzards and the slippery foot-steps on the ice-covered path, moved towards the goal, viz. to touch the feet of holy Kailas. Finally, with strenuous effort and determination, he reached his destination. The hair-raising descriptions are full of thrills, scenic beauty, and poetic grandeur. Readers who are particularly interested in the author's commendable literary achievements are referred to pages 131 to 138.

The author's style is simple, lucid, and elegant. The descriptions are vivid, interesting, and almost always elevating, being full of sublime thoughts and inspiring observations. Not only the traveller interested in the higher Himalayas, but also the man

of literary tastes and the devout pilgrim, will benefit by a perusal of this book. We gladly recommend the book to the Bengali-reading public of all classes, both young and old.

KUMUD BANDHU SEN

NEWS AND REPORTS

RAMAKRISHNA-VIVEKANANDA CENTRE, NEW YORK

HOLY MOTHER CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS

A series of celebrations in connection with the hundredth anniversary of the birth of the Holy Mother, Sri Sarada Devi, commenced at the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Centre on the 23rd December 1953, with a special Puja and Homa performed by Swami Akhilananda, of the Ramakrishna Vedanta Society of Boston, assisted by Swami Pavitrananda, of the Vedanta Society of New York, and Swami Nikhilananda, of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Centre, and attended by a large number of devotees of the two New York branches of the Mission. The Puja and Homa ceremonies occupied the entire morning, after which a luncheon was served to the Swamis and the assembled guests.

On the 27th December 1953, a special public service was held in the chapel of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Centre. A large gathering was present for the occasion. Swami Nikhilananda spoke on: 'The Holy Mother: The Ideal of Indian Womanhood'. In his talk he showed how, by her life of utter simplicity, purity, self-sacrifice, and love, the Holy Mother had set an example for all women to follow, and declared that if Western women could put into practice a fraction of what she had achieved, the future of the West would be secure.

In further celebration of the Holy Mother's centenary, a public meeting was held in the chapel of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Centre on the 19th February 1954. The principal guest-speaker was Srimati Saudamini Mehta, wife of Sri G. L. Mehta, Ambassador of India to the United States of America. Swami Akhilananda and Swami Pavitrananda were also guest-speakers on this occasion. Swami Nikhilananda officiated. At the gathering were prominent personages of both East and West. Among the distinguished Indians present were Sri Rajeswar Dayal, Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations, Sri G. L. Mehta and Srimati Mehta, Mr. Arthur S. Lall, Consul-General of India in New York City, and Mrs. Lall. A capacity audience filled the chapel.

Swami Nikhilananda, after opening the meeting with a prayer from the Vedas, gave a short sketch of the life of Sri Sarada Devi. He told how this simple woman, born in a small village of rural

Bengal, had served at the feet of Sri Ramakrishna, and how, after his passing away, she had become the guiding star of the whole Ramakrishna Mission and a mother to countless followers of her illustrious husband's message. The Swami concluded by saying that the Holy Mother was Sri Ramakrishna's last word on the ideal of womanly perfection and that through her life Indian womanhood and the womanhood of the entire world had become blest.

Srimati Mehta, after paying a moving tribute to Sri Sarada Devi, turned to her subject for the evening's lecture, 'The Ideal of Indian Womanhood'. In the course of her interesting remarks, she first discussed in some detail the idea of Stri-dharma, which was in the past and still remains today the foundation of every true Hindu woman's life. She explained that though the Hindu woman's lot might appear less free than that of the Western woman, this did not indicate that it was a less happy or less meaningful lot. She then proceeded to give an illuminating account of the progress that Hindu women had made in the last few decades through the influence of Mahatma Gandhi's call and inspiration. As a result of Gandhiji's leadership, Srimati Mehta said, a profound change had come over the women of India, enabling them to take part in public life as they never had for many centuries. But she pointed out that what has occurred is not in any way a repudiation of the Stri-dharma of the past, but rather a reinterpretation of that Dharma, in the spirit of modern times, giving a new significance to active participation in the nation's life as a form of self-sacrifice.

Swami Akhilananda and Swami Pavitrananda also contributed greatly to the occasion by their reminiscences of the Holy Mother's gentleness, simplicity, purity, forgiveness, and motherly love. In his talk, Swami Akhilananda called attention to the fact that no one could fathom the Holy Mother's character, so clever was she in concealing from all the depth of her spiritual experiences. She inaugurated, the Swami said, a new age in the world's history, in which women, by assuming greater influence, would become a real force for good. Swami Pavitrananda alluded to the Holy Mother's overflowing compassion, which extended itself to all, irrespective of creed or race or caste or public opinion. He told several touching incidents from her life to illustrate this aspect of her personality.