

PRABUDDHA BHARATA

Vol. LXV

FEBRUARY 1960

No. 2



उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत ।

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

SPIRITUAL TALKS OF SWAMI SHIVANANDA

Madhupur, November 1927 (Continued)

When somebody remarked that the photograph of the Master that was in his room was excellent, he (Mahapurush Maharaj) said: 'Someone had a few of these photographs finished in Germany, each costing ten rupees. One of these is being worshipped at the Belur Math. When these came to India, Purna Babu's father-in-law, who was a devotee, took one of them. That copy is here now.'

'The photograph of the Master in sitting posture has gained popularity', said I.

Mahapurush Maharaj: 'Quite so. The photograph in which the Master stands leaning on a pillar was taken when he went to Jaigopal Sen's garden at Belgharia to see Keshab Chandra Sen. And the one in which he stands with his hand raised upward was taken during a *kirtana* recital at Lily Cottage, the house of Keshab Chandra Sen.'

'Does the photograph', I asked, 'in which the Master stands leaning on a pillar also represent his state of *samādhi*?'

Mahapurush Maharaj: 'What else could it be but *samādhi*? He would not allow himself

to be photographed at any other time.'

I said: 'But it does not appear to be of the *samādhi* state.'

Mahapurush Maharaj: 'How can you decide from a mere look whether it was *samādhi* or not? Had he any fixed time for *samādhi*? Be it during sleep, dream, or rest in bed, he seemed to be ever in *samādhi*. An up-country monk once lived near Ram Babu's garden (Yogodyana) at Kankurgachi (Calcutta). He was of a very quiet nature, and seldom talked. He sat under a tree by the road leading to Ram Babu's garden. Ram Babu perhaps supplied his food. Once, Ram Babu told the Master about him; and he said, "Very well, bring him here one day". Then, one day, Ram Babu took the monk to Dakshineswar in a carriage. The Master seated him with honour on the small cot, while he himself sat at one side of it. They started talking of God and gradually began discussing *samādhi*, both with ideation and without ideation (*savikalpa* and *nirvikalpa*). When talking of *nirvikalpa samādhi*, the Master completely lost himself in it—he sat without any motion or any sign of life, with one leg on the

cot and the other hanging down. The monk thought that the Master wanted to practise a little meditation. But noticing that he sat carelessly, he began to tell him to sit in the proper way for his meditation. He said, "Sit in a proper posture (*āsana*), sit methodically", and so on; and he repeated these words several times. But who would hear him? The Master's mind was then no longer in the body. So how can you understand under what conditions he would have his *samādhi*?"

Mahapurush Maharaj uttered the words 'sit in a proper posture, sit methodically' in such a humorous tone that we all started laughing, and he too joined in.

When I enquired about his health, he said: 'I am much better than before. When I was at the Belur Math, I could hardly walk out of my room; it was even difficult to stand up. I had no sleep at night; and how hard the boys worked. They fanned me the whole night by turns.' He now went on talking only about the hard work the boys had to do, forgetting that he had any suffering.

Then he took a little *sandēs* and went out for a walk. In the evening, when he returned from the walk and sat in his room, we went in to take leave. Su— said, 'Kindly have mercy on us'.

Mahapurush Maharaj: 'The mercy is always there. Do but meditate on the *guru* and try to realize the truth in your heart; then along with it you will also feel the grace of the *guru*. It will not do to cling to the body of the *guru*; hold on rather to the spirit. Fools think that, when the *guru's* body is gone, the *guru* also is gone; and they start lamenting thus: "Alas, my *guru* is gone!" and they become overwhelmed. Where can the *guru* go? He is there to be sure for evermore. If the death of the body meant the passing away of the *guru* as well, could we ourselves have survived after the Master left his body? That is why I say, "Hold on to the spirit, and try to realize that". And he encouraged Su— in various ways. We saluted him and left with a happy mind, thinking of those sweet words.

Belur Math, July 7, 1928

When a devotee asked about his health, Mahapurush Maharaj replied: 'You ask about the body? There is not much to speak about it; the Master is somehow keeping it going by patchworks. Being old, the body has one ailment or the other. We have no duty in the world; no, not even any work; nor any hankering for food, dress, honour, or desire for accumulation of wealth. He is the Master, and he knows how long he will keep this body for his own purpose.'

About Keshab Chandra Sen, he said: 'The Master told Keshab Babu one day, "Why do you remain surrounded by your wife, children, and others?" Keshab Babu replied, "I do not want my personal salvation alone; I want that all of them should also be saved". This delighted the Master very much, and he praised Keshab Babu's large-heartedness. Hence it is your duty to see that your wives, children, sisters, brothers, and all other relatives acquire love for God.'

August 19, 1928

When I saluted him, offering two rupees, he said: 'What need have you to offer money? Your income is small, your salary is low, while your family expenses are high with all your children and others. It pains me to accept any offer from you. It is our duty to see that you have a little comfort in life. It will be quite enough if you just visit us now and then. Of course, those who have money should make some offering, for the expenses at the Master's place (i.e. Belur monastery) are quite high. You also can contribute when your income rises higher. As for myself, I hardly need any money. The Master provides me with food, and he has also granted a place to live in. But it is true that one has to offer something to one's *guru*. As to that, yours is a monk; so why should you offer money? Here is no professional *guru*. But then one should not, of course, come to visit a monk with empty hands. Even that we did not know. The Master him-

self told us, "My boy, one should not come to a holy man with empty hands; bring something, at least a pice worth of betel leaves". So we took a pice worth of betel leaves. Just so, you too can bring some fruits. I accept your present gift, to be sure; but I again give it to you. You take these two rupees, purchase something on the way, and spend it for your family.'

Addressing a devotee, he said: 'Bring the women also of your family here, as you find an opportunity. Should they remain engrossed in their family affairs for ever? They too have to be religious. They have the same right as yourselves. Know them to be but fractions of the Primal Energy (of God).

September 16, 1928

When asked about his body, Mahapurush Maharaj said: 'Not quite well. As to that, my son, the body is old; the Master is somehow managing it with patchworks. What more need to worry about the body? It has to go some day; there is nothing to be anxious about. And what trifle you remind me of! The Master wiped off all worries almost from my boyhood. It is now nearly fifty years that I have been a monk. But the little health that I require for praying to, and meditating on, him, he is managing somehow for me; I have no difficulty on that score. Apart from that, I little think of the body. A monk that is busy with his body, and is afraid to die, is no monk at all. He is a novitiate undergoing a course of preparation; he is still to be a monk. It is quite enough if the body goes on like this so long as he wants to keep it; it will last so long as he has anything to be done through it; else I am ready always at his call. Why so much anxiety about the body? There is no need even for a fine appearance. An athlete with a strong physique—what is the need of even that? What need is there of moving about too much? It is enough if one has a body fit for calling on him.'

Belur Math, October 23, 1928

Today is Mahānavamī (the third day of the worship of Durgā). When a monk raised the

question of Vijayā, the fourth day of the worship, when the image of the goddess is immersed (in the sacred Gaṅgā), Mahapurush Maharaj replied: 'There is no such thing (in this monastery) as Vijayā or bidding farewell to the goddess for a year. The Mother has Her parlour set here for ever, though it is true that She reveals Herself specially on certain occasions.'

November 11, 1928

This is the day of annual worship of Mother Kālī. When Mahapurush Maharaj was told of a bitch that had removed her puppies to a safe place, he remarked, 'That is the power of protection of Mahāmāyā'. Raising the topic of the worship of the Mother, as it is performed at the monastery without any selfish motive, he mentioned that he himself prayed for India for strength, vigour, valour, knowledge, love, discrimination, and all such virtues. . . .

A gentleman from Nimta asked, 'How many children have you?'

Without the least hesitation, Mahapurush Maharaj replied, 'Ramakrishna is my son, he is my father, my mother, and my all'. And he continued: 'In this age the Mother is more pleased when one takes the name of Ramakrishna; anyone who calls on Ramakrishna will be blessed. If one takes his name and waits at his door, he will be gracious some day or other. He has to come down (as an incarnation) to demonstrate his greatness to ordinary mortals.'

February 1, 1929

While on the topic of meditation, he said: 'It is difficult to meditate on the abstract. So it is better to think on some form. When you meditate, think of the Master. He is your real *guru*, sitting on the thousand-petalled lotus in your head. As for this one (pointing to his own body), it is only a starting point for that thought. Gradually, you will feel his stirrings in your heart.'

February 4, 1929

A monk, starting for some other place from

the monastery, came to take leave and said, 'Maharaj, we are engaged in the service of others. Is that enough for our spiritual fulfilment?'

Mahapurushji: 'Yes, it is; it will certainly bring success. You are doing the Master's work, and you have no selfish motive whatever. You are neither in anybody's employ, nor do you draw any salary. All that there is belongs to the Master.'

The monk: 'It is the nature of work to create disturbance; at times, one gets so much engrossed in it that one does not even remember the Master.'

Mahapurushji: 'Work does, as a matter of course, involve disturbances and complications; but happen what may, there is no doubt that it is the Master's work. Can one really remember the Master all the while that one is engaged in work? But what of that? It is all Master's work. Does he not keep an eye on all this?'

The monk: 'The fear crosses the mind at times, "Who knows, we may not achieve any success at all".'

Mahapurushji: 'Fear of what? There can be no fear—no fear whatsoever. Why should you not get success? You have dedicated everything to the Master; there is no doubt as to that. You have not the least selfishness in this. You are not accepting any remuneration. If you are building houses and other things, it is for him alone.'

The monk: 'Then this is our true path of success?'

Mahapurushji: 'It is so; I say it is. Were it not so, we would not have sent you out for work. Do we not strive for your good? We would not have done what is not good for you.'

The monk: 'The thought crosses the mind at times that perhaps it would have been much better to have undertaken *japa*, meditation, etc.

It happens sometimes that, owing to pressure of work, I cannot do any *japa* or meditation at all.'

Mahapurushji: 'We know what will help you on. When duty is extremely pressing, you may have to forgo your *japa* and meditation for the time being. But when the pressure is off, you can devote more time to these, and that to your heart's content. Have no fear whatsoever; the Master is keeping a watch for ever on you all.' ...

To a devotee, Mahapurush Maharaj said: 'It was very nice; you enjoyed a whole day at Dakshineswar and got the *prasāda* (consecrated food) of the Divine Mother (Kālī). May Mother grant you devotion, knowledge, and detachment. May Mother grant you full enlightenment.'

April 13, 1929

A certain gentleman enquired about his health. 'The body is not well,' said he, 'it is moving to its end. The body is old—it has completed seventy-six years or more—what more to expect? It will go some day in any case—"Today or a hundred years after"—so what is there to worry about? And I have no fear of death, as I have no wife or child, nor any trash of a worldly life to call my own—husking-machine or a winnowing fan, for instance. Only those who have wives and children, and are worried with the thoughts "O dear, what will happen to my family; how will these fare?"', and have many unfulfilled desires for enjoyment, will alone have fear and apprehension about death. But the Master has granted us the knowledge "Whatever may happen to the body, I (the Self) am all right to be sure". It is enough if nothing happens to my Self. If one has this knowledge, one needs nothing more—everything then goes well. May the Master keep this knowledge ever shining in me.'

SRI RAMAKRISHNA AND THE TIMES WE LIVE IN

The life of Sri Ramakrishna was an extraordinary searchlight, under whose illumination one is able to really understand the whole scope of Hindu religion. . . . He showed by his life what the *ṛsis* and *avatāras* really wanted to teach. The books were theories, he was the realization. This man had in fifty-one years lived the five thousand years of national spiritual life, and so raised himself to be an object-lesson for future generations.

—SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

I

It is a recurrent phenomenon in the religious history of nations that whenever they are caught up in the voyage of life by storms of materialistic forces, and are forced to drift aimlessly along having lost their track, a pathfinder appears on the scene, rescues them from imminent danger, and serves as their beacon light, showing them the right course and directing them along the path of progress and perfection in tune with their cultural and spiritual heritage.

In the case of India, this phenomenon has become so characteristic that her national mind unquestionably believes in its recurrence whenever and wherever there is need for such a one. Through countless centuries of her colourful history, time and again, such beacon lights, men of God, have appeared on her sacred soil to lead the nation on the path of godliness and righteousness. The belief has become so deep-rooted in the consciousness of her people that whenever a morbid and despondent situation arises, seriously affecting the spiritual life of the nation, they look up to the divine Dispenser, recalling His unfailing promise, and look forward in all earnestness to the advent of a deliverer, who will lift them out of the morass into which they have fallen. And such divine help has always come in the past, and will always come in the future.

India, in the mid-nineteenth century, stood in need of a thorough spiritual renaissance. It was a dire need. The nation was adrift. The glare of the materialistic way of life was becoming too strong to resist. The spiritual conscience of the nation became dormant and torpid, and agnosticism and scepticism began to spread their dreadful tentacles on the national

mind like an octopus. The precious spiritual heritage of the nation was being lost sight of, and a blind imitation of the ways quite alien to Indian spirit and culture was noticeable all over the land. In such a situation, there was the urgent necessity, a national desideratum, of one who would embody the highest and the best in the spiritual traditions of the country and lead her along the path of divine life and spiritual awareness.

That historic need was fulfilled in the personality of Sri Ramakrishna, who directed the course of our national life into healthy channels and restored the soul of India in its pristine purity to its proper place and position. In his own life of strenuous spiritual struggles and rare and extraordinary realizations, he rediscovered the ancient values of our hoary heritage and reinstated them in the heart of India. Gathering up in himself the spiritual forces of the land accumulated for centuries in a vast sweep, and living an uncommon life in unbroken divine consciousness, Sri Ramakrishna appeared on the crest of a mighty wave that swept over this extensive country, carrying away all the dirt and squalor and watering her fertile soil with fresh waters of spirituality, so that a healthy and bounteous crop of men and women of character, deeply spiritual and divinely inspired, may grow on this sacred land of ours.

Referring to the advent of Sri Ramakrishna on the Indian scene and its appropriateness to the demands of the time, Swami Vivekananda, his foremost disciple who carried his message to the different parts of the world, says: 'The time was ripe for one to be born, the embodiment of both this head and heart; the time was ripe for one to be born, who in one body would have the brilliant intellect of Śaṅkara and the won-

derfully expansive, infinite heart of Caitanya; one who would see in every sect the same spirit working, the same God; one who would see God in every being, one whose heart would weep for the poor, for the weak, for the outcast, for the downtrodden, for every one in this world, inside India or outside India; and at the same time whose grand, brilliant intellect would conceive of such noble thoughts as would harmonize all conflicting sects, not only in India, but outside of India, and bring a marvellous harmony, the universal religion of head and heart into existence. Such a man was born. . . . The time was ripe; it was necessary that such a man should be born, and he came.'

In these words of Swami Vivekananda, we get a clear idea of the significance of the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna in relation not only to the new awakening that has dawned on the national consciousness of India, but also to the new spirit of fellowship, amity, and understanding that is growing among the different sections of humanity on the basis of their spiritual oneness.

During the past seventy odd years, the message of Sri Ramakrishna has made its way to the different corners of the globe, silently in the typically Indian way, and the aura of his divine personality has attracted the minds of hundreds and thousands of men and women not only in India, but in other countries as well, bringing about a thorough spiritual transformation in their individual lives. Sri Ramakrishna is being literally worshipped by them today as a God-man, as the goal of their spiritual aspirations.

II

Christopher Isherwood, in his new biography of Sri Ramakrishna, on which he is currently at work and the second chapter of which appears elsewhere in this issue, calls him a 'phenomenon', and adds further: 'A phenomenon is often something *extraordinary* and *mysterious*. Ramakrishna was extraordinary and mysterious; most of all to those who were best fitted to understand him. A phenomenon is always a fact, an object of experience.'

Yes, Sri Ramakrishna was *extraordinary* and *mysterious*—extraordinary in the sense that his life throughout presents characteristics, moods, and attitudes quite out of the ordinary, and mysterious in the sense that his whole life was profoundly spiritual and divinely inspired. Not merely in his day-to-day activities was he extraordinary, but even as a spiritual *sādhaka*, when he undertook diverse forms of spiritual disciplines, and later as a teacher of men, he was unique. There is the touch of this extraordinary character even in his message, for as Swami Vivekananda says: 'Other teachers taught special religions which bear their names, but this great teacher of the nineteenth century made no claim for himself. He left every religion undisturbed, because he had realized that, in reality, they are all part and parcel of the One Eternal Religion.'

That Sri Ramakrishna was marked out for a divine mission on earth was discernible even from his early life. In the many incidents of his life both in infancy and boyhood at his village home, as well as in his life at Dakshineswar, where he was God-intoxicated, we notice an uncommon characteristic throughout. As a mere boy, while his friends were busy with the normal playthings of life appropriate to their age, he was found to be busy making images of gods and goddesses and practising meditation and worship, or reading to the simple-hearted villagers devotional stories from the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the *Mahābhārata*, and similar books. While his young friends went to school to learn the three Rs, which are the accepted means to earn a livelihood in our workaday world, this precocious youth saw through the hollowness of this pursuit, and fought shy of that 'bread-winning education'. Even in that tender age, he became convinced that the aim of all secular education was only the advancement of the material aspects of life. His mental constitution and spiritual aspiration revolted against that kind of learning, and he finally resolved to give up such a pursuit altogether and devote himself entirely to the quest of spiritual truth.

We would refer here to a few events in young

Gadadhar's (that was the name given to him by his parents) life at his native village, which indicate his sensitiveness to things spiritual and the highly advanced state of his mind. At the tender age of six, Gadadhar had an extraordinary spiritual experience. We shall describe it in his own words: 'One morning, I took parched rice in a small basket, and was eating it while walking on the narrow ridges of corn fields. It was the month of Jyaiṣṭha or Āṣāḍha. There appeared in one part of the sky a beautiful black cloud charged with rain. I was looking at it and eating the rice. Very soon, the cloud covered almost the whole sky, when a flock of milk-white cranes flew against that black cloud. It looked so beautiful that I became very soon absorbed in an extraordinary mood. Such a state came on me that my external consciousness was lost. I fell down, and the rice got scattered near the ridge. People saw it and carried me home. This was the first time that I lost external consciousness in *bhāva-samādhi*.'

The second time he had a similar spiritual experience was when he was eight years old, and the occasion was a visit to the shrine of Viśālākṣī at Anur, a village two miles north of Kamarpukur. He had accompanied a group of women devotees from his village, who were going there to offer worship to Mother Viśālākṣī. There on the way, as he was singing the glory of the goddess, he 'stopped singing suddenly; his body and limbs became stiff and numb. Floods of tears flowed incessantly from his eyes'. A short time passed this way. One of the ladies in the group, Prasanna, who was a person of exceptional insight, correctly guessed that an ecstatic influence of the goddess had come over this extraordinary boy, and suggested that her companions take the sacred name of the goddess in all earnestness and concentration of mind. No sooner had they uttered the name of the goddess a few times, than the face of Gadadhar brightened, a sweet smile playing on it, and he regained external consciousness and gradually returned to the normal state.

Yet on another occasion, in his boyhood, he had an exalted spiritual experience. That was

on the sacred night of Śivarātri, when he was requested to play the role of Śiva in a religious drama. Originally, he was not to take part in the drama. But as the boy who was to play Śiva became sick, Gadadhar was persuaded to become his substitute. He would have preferred to stay and worship Śiva that night at his own home. But he yielded to the importunities of his friends and accepted to play the role of Śiva. So they helped him to put on the make-up of Śiva. 'His hair was matted, his body sprinkled with ashes, the monk's rosary hung round his neck. He mounted the stage with slow, sedate steps and stood there motionless. At the sight of him, the audience was strangely moved and awed; for the boy's face wore a smile of extraordinary beauty, and his gaze was fixed as if in profound meditation. . . . Gadadhar continued to stand there without moving, and now it was seen that tears were streaming from his eyes.' He appeared to have lost all external consciousness. The drama, of course, came to a stop, the audience dispersed. Gadadhar was carried home, and he returned to the normal state only the following morning.

We have referred to these three notable events in Sri Ramakrishna's early life, in some detail, only to show the peculiar characteristic of his mental and spiritual make-up, which flowered into full bloom when he came to the Kālī temple at Dakshineswar, where he spent practically the rest of his life giving his spiritual message to this grief-stricken and distracted world.

III

At Dakshineswar, we see him first as a priest at the Kālī temple. What an extraordinary priest! From the way Sri Ramakrishna conducted the worship of the Divine Mother, priesthood itself got a new significance. To Sri Ramakrishna, whose spirit was ever in quest of truth, the one idea that was uppermost, while doing the worship, was: Is there anything behind this image? Is it true that there is a Mother of Bliss in the universe? Is it true that She lives and guides the universe? Or is it all

a dream? Is there any reality in religion?

This idea to have the vision of the Divine Mother possessed his mind so completely that, day after day, he would weep and say: 'Mother, is it true that Thou existest, or is it all poetry?' As the urge for God-realization became more and more intense, he lost all other interests in life. His mind was concentrated on the one idea of the vision of the Divine Mother. Nothing else mattered; even life itself became void of any meaning without the vision of the Blissful Mother. He would rather put an end to this miserable existence, if it were to continue without the vision of God. So, one day, feeling most miserable for not having had the vision of the Mother, he rushed towards the sword that was in the shrine of Kālī with the idea of putting an end to his life with it. And what happened then is best described in his own words: 'It was as if houses, doors, temples, and all other things vanished altogether, as if there was nothing anywhere! And what I saw was a boundless, infinite, conscious sea of light! However far and in whatever direction I looked, I found a continuous succession of effulgent waves coming forward, raging and storming from all sides with a great speed. Very soon, they fell on me and made me sink to the unknown bottom. I panted, struggled, and fell unconscious.' 'But in my heart of hearts, there was a flowing current of intense bliss, never experienced before, and I had the immediate knowledge of the light that was the Mother.'

This vision of the Divine Mother opened the flood-gates of Sri Ramakrishna's spiritual reservoir, and thenceforth, his life was ever tuned to a divine presence which worked and spoke through his deeds and words. After this, a series of diverse *sādhana*s followed—an extraordinary phenomenon, again, in the life of Sri Ramakrishna, into the details of which we are not entering here. Suffice it to say that the Śākta, Vaiṣṇava, and several other forms of *sādhana*s, which are found in the fold of Hinduism itself, were undertaken one after another, and through each of the paths, he reached the goal in an extraordinarily short time. Not mere-

ly the various paths of the religion in which he was born, but even the religions that came to India from outside, like Christianity and Islam, he practised in all the earnestness of a seeker. The perfect *sādhaka* that he was, his progress was quick and the results were achieved in a remarkably short time. In all of them, he discovered that the selfsame Godhead was at the journey's end and that all religions were basically one. We also notice the extraordinary character of his spiritual life in another way. To begin with, he started as a *bhakta* of the Divine Mother, a simple-hearted child on the lap of the Mother, and reached his spiritual consummation when he attained *nirvikalpa samādhi* under the tutelage of Tota Puri. The range was vast, and in between he practised the various *bhāvas* and *mārgas* that are enumerated in our sacred scriptures. Thus throughout his life, at all stages, in all moments, and in various moods and attitudes, his mind was ever attuned to God, and he was constantly enjoying the bliss of divine presence.

IV

Having pointed out in the foregoing paragraphs the extraordinary character of Sri Ramakrishna's life and spiritual realizations, we now turn to his message which has a direct bearing on the times we live in—we mean its implications not only in the lives of individuals and groups of men in a society, but even in the wider sphere of interrelationship and coexistence among different communities and nations.

In the vast landscape of his lofty teachings, all of which aim at bringing man nearer to God, there are three points which stand out most prominently. The first of these concerns man's personal life and urges him to discover the divine essence that is latent in every being. The second relates to mutual relationship between man and man in his daily life. And, thirdly, there is a message which has a direct application in the international sphere.

To consider the last first. By practising the various religions and experiencing the truth un-

derlying them all, Sri Ramakrishna proclaimed the fundamental unity of all religions. This is his grand message to the world at large, torn by conflicts and dissensions and separated by high walls of sectarian dogmas. Its implications are far-reaching, and touch not only the religious realm, but other spheres as well. That is, that not only all religions, in essence, are one, but mankind, too, all over is essentially one, whatever differences there may be in the outer forms of life of different groups of people, in the language they speak, or in the mode of socio-political structure of their respective societies. In other words, whatever nationality one may profess, whatever political ideology one may uphold, whatever may be the colour of one's skin, whether men belong to the so-called advanced countries or live in the so-called backward and under-developed countries, in its essence, humanity is one, as it has the same divine basis all over. As all religions are basically one, all men, through whom those religions find expression, are basically one, too. As it is foolish and unwise to fight in the name of one religion against another, so, too, is it foolish and unwise for one section of people to fight against another section in the name of race, nationality, or a particular social or political ideology.

Diversity is the plan of nature. Nature wants to enjoy manifoldness, and so she has done away with monotonous uniformity. Even this variety springs from unity, which is one and universal. While diversity is in a state of flux, unity remains unchanged, like the unchanging screen on which an ever-changing motion picture depicts diverse emotions and characters in multi-coloured forms and many situations. This is the profound significance of Sri Ramakrishna's message of the synthesis of all religions. This synthesis is to extend to all the spheres of human activity, and not simply restricted to the religious. From such a synthetic outlook will flow mutual appreciation of social, cultural, and spiritual values between different sections of humanity, ushering in an era of respect, trust, fellowship, and co-operation in their struggle not only to achieve a happy life on the socio-

economic plane, but also to achieve success in their spiritual life.

The second legacy that Sri Ramakrishna has left us is an immense spiritual force on the social plane: his message of service to man, seeing God in him. 'If you wish to find God,' he said, 'serve man, knowing him to be the veritable manifestation of God.' By his Advaitic realization of the unity of all existence, Sri Ramakrishna had come to feel the presence of the Divine in all beings. Nay, everything was divine in itself, was of the form of Saccidānanda. To him there was nothing that was not worthy of adoration. So, one day, at Dakshineswar, when some people were talking of 'compassion to all creatures', he at once fell into a deep spiritual mood. Coming back to a semi-conscious state afterwards, he said to himself: 'Compassion to creatures! Compassion to creatures! Thou fool, thou to show compassion to others? Who art thou to show compassion? No. It cannot be. It is not compassion for others, but rather service to man, recognizing him to be the veritable manifestation of God—*Jive Śivajñāne sevā.*'

Significant words are these. Referring to these words of Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda, who was present there on the occasion, said: 'What a strange light have I discovered in those words of the Master! They throw an altogether new light upon the path of devotion. By realizing Him in and through all beings and serving Him through humanity, the devotee acquires real devotion. The embodied being cannot remain even for a minute without doing any work. All his activities should be directed to the service of man, the manifestation of God upon earth, and this will accelerate his progress towards the goal. However, if it will be the will of God, the day will soon come when I shall proclaim this grand truth before the world at large. I shall make it the common property of all, the wise and the fool, the rich and the poor, the Brahmin and the Pariah.' Ever since these words were uttered, we know how that power of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda has been directly and in-

directly influencing our national life, leading our country by a new path of self-realization and setting before the world an ideal as to how all the activities of a nation, of a society, of a family, or of an individual can be completely spiritualized.

Finally, what is Sri Ramakrishna's message concerning man's personal spiritual life? In this respect, his own life and realizations, and his attitude to life in general, are the unfailing inspiration to every man struggling to achieve spiritual success. Sri Ramakrishna's life was the complete antithesis of the modern materialistic attitude to life. To him God alone was real. Only on the background of God, everything else had value or meaning. Otherwise, it was of no consequence. In his own characteristic way, he would say that any number of zeros put side by side have no value, but if the numeral 1 precedes the zeros, they get their value. Similarly, everything in this world is like a zero, and God is the numeral 1. If that 1 is not there, the zeros are of no consequence.

The purpose of human life, according to Sri Ramakrishna, is God-realization. Throughout the period of his spiritual ministration, this was the burden of his teaching to all those that flocked to him seeking spiritual light and guidance. He would say: 'Live in the world like a maidservant in a rich man's house. She performs all the household duties, brings up her master's child, and speaks of him as "my Hari". But in her heart, she knows quite well that neither the house nor the child belongs to her. She performs all her duties, but just the same her mind dwells on her native place. Likewise, do your worldly duties, but fix your mind on God. And know that house, family, and son do not belong to you; they are God's. You are only His servant.'

To develop this detached attitude of mind, turning it away from the temptations of the world like lust and gold, and overcoming all the impediments, both internal and external, that confront us on our spiritual path, we have to struggle hard by cultivating real devotion to God in all earnestness. Sri Ramakrishna would say that if we proceed one step towards God in all sincerity, God will come towards us sixteen steps. He demonstrated this truth in his own life; and all through his life, his one endeavour was not merely to take men nearer to God, but to bring God also nearer to man. To lift man to God-consciousness was, then, the mission of the life of Sri Ramakrishna, whether it was in the individual's own personal life or in the wider spheres of communities or nations. God is the fundamental truth behind the world, and the goal of man is to realize this God.

The malaise of the times we live in is of the spirit. If humanity is to survive the danger that it has brought about by following a purely materialistic way of life, there should be an immediate readjustment on the spiritual plane. The modern mood and temper must undergo a thorough transformation, and man must begin to appreciate spiritual values and try to live up to them. To those who do seek them, Sri Ramakrishna's extraordinary life of unbroken divine communion will be a shining example, and his words coming from his deep spiritual realizations will be their constant inspiration.

If the life of Sri Ramakrishna has any message to give to the times we live in, it is this that man should turn away from his material pursuits and should set out on the spiritual path and seek God, who is the source of all happiness, joy, and peace.



It seems to me, my child, that the special feature of the Master's life is his renunciation. Has any one ever seen such a natural renunciation? Renunciation was his ornament.

THE HOLY MOTHER

THE BIRTH OF RAMAKRISHNA

BY MR. CHRISTOPHER ISHERWOOD

Soon after the move to Kamarpukur, Khudiram had the first of a series of spiritual experiences which were to be granted to him and to his wife Chandra during the years that followed. Since such experiences, in all their variety, are to be a recurring theme in this story, I will make some general remarks about them now.

When we use the word 'experience' in its primary sense, we mean—to quote the dictionary—'the process or fact of personally observing, encountering, or undergoing something'. That is to say, experience is valued because it is personal; being contrasted favourably with hearsay or the information got from newspapers and books. Experiences are held to be more or less important according to the intensity of their effect on the experiencer.

These two factors—the personal nature of experience and its measurement by intensity—are most significant when we come to consider the kind of experience called spiritual.

If someone tells me about an experience he has had in the world of ordinary sense-perception, I shall usually be able to decide whether he is speaking the truth or lying. I can do this, because I can almost always relate the experience he describes to similar experiences of my own. And so his experience is of value to me. But if someone tells me about an experience in the spiritual world, I shall probably be in doubt, because I have no similar experiences to which I can relate his. Unless, for other reasons, I have become convinced that this person will never lie to me, his experience will therefore be of no value to me. Many of my readers will know that sense of sad frustration with which one listens to some spiritual testimony one longs to believe in but can't, because the witness is so obviously dishonest. It is human nature to pretend to know a little more than you really do. But, alas, how many pupils have lost faith, because they caught their teacher exaggerating!

So, a little spiritual experience of your own

is of more value to you than all the recorded experiences of the greatest saints. And, indeed, without that minimum of personal experience, you cannot possibly begin to guess at the magnitude of theirs.

A spiritual experience can only be properly judged by its intensity; the intensity, that is, of its aftereffect on the experiencer. It is no use trying to decide whether or not a certain experience was spiritual by analysing its circumstances; these may have been produced by some quite other kind of cause, such as sickness or the use of certain drugs. One should not ask oneself, 'Was my experience an hallucination or not?' but rather, 'What has my experience left with me, now that it is over?' A true spiritual experience, even one of lesser intensity, must at least slightly affect the experiencer for the rest of his life.

But now I must try to answer the question: What is a spiritual experience?

The difficulty here is that the average reader's mind is apt to be confused by various ill-defined terms he has met with in books—such as vision, trance, psychic phenomenon, revelation, spirit-message, etc. (Even such an authority as *Roget's Thesaurus* gives 'vision' as a synonym for 'hallucination'!) As the result of these vague definitions, the reader gradually comes to rely on Matter as the only reality and to think of Spirit as a shadowy and dangerous hinterland of deceptions and illusions. True, the modern physicist keeps telling him that Matter itself is a deception; the table is utterly unlike the thing we think we see and feel. But even this warning does nothing to alter his concept of Spirit. For, according to his mental filing system, what the physicist tells him about Matter is 'science', but what the clergyman tells him about Spirit is 'religion'; and the findings of science and religion can never, he thinks, be related to each other.

But the Hindu religious philosophers of thou-

sands of years ago were much more truly scientific in their outlook than most of us are today; and they drew no such crude dividing-line between Matter and Spirit. They explained the evolution of the universe as a projection of a series of coverings around the Reality which is Brahman. Brahman itself is pure undifferentiated consciousness; but each of these coverings represents a stage in progressive differentiation, by which the One becomes seemingly many.

This evolutionary process is said to be motivated by Īśvara. Īśvara is what most of us mean when we say 'God'—that is, God with attributes; loving, merciful, and just. Brahman, being the Absolute, is beyond all attributes and all action. It is Īśvara, Brahman united with its power, who creates a universe, sustains it, and in due course dissolves it again—for the process of evolution and involution is said to operate in an eternal cycle. To say that Īśvara is the creator is not to imply a dualism. For the power of Brahman can no more be separated from Brahman than the heat of fire can be separated from fire itself.

The power of Brahman is the basis of all mind and matter. It is called Prakṛti or Māyā; the terms are interchangeable. (Māyā is popularly supposed to mean 'illusion', but this is a loose and misleading translation. Māyā (or Prakṛti) can only be called illusory in a relative sense, namely, that the universe which is made of it is impermanent and other than Brahman, the Reality.)

According to Hindu philosophy, the evolutionary sequence is as follows. Prakṛti projects *mahat*, the basis of the individual intelligence. *Mahat* projects *buddhi*, the faculty by which the nature of objects is distinguished and their functions are classified. *Buddhi* projects *ahaṅkāra*, the ego-sense. *Ahaṅkāra* projects the powers of perception and also the objects of perception—the subtle and gross elements, and the subtle and gross faculties with which we perceive them.

These coverings are therefore coverings of ignorance; they hide Brahman from us. The

material universe, which is known to our physical senses, is the grossest manifestation of this ignorance, since it is the most outward covering, farthest from Brahman.

Matter and Spirit are not divided; they are interrelated. The former is evolved from the latter, and the difference between them is only one of degree. When the meditative mind turns in upon itself, following a line of *involution* in its attempt to reach Brahman, it becomes aware of this truth. Beneath the gross elements of the material world, it encounters the subtle elements which are their essences. This is what is called the psychic world. Within the psychic world, we possess subtle bodies which are the essences of our gross bodies and exercise subtle senses which are the essences of our gross senses. The psychic world exists superimposed upon the material world; but it does not normally make itself apparent to us or concern itself with our doings. It is, as you might say in the jargon of nowadays, on a different wave length.

Our experience of the material world is obtained only while we are awake. Our experience of the psychic world may be obtained while we are awake or dreaming, and it may be produced by means of concentration or austerities or drugs. Beyond the material and the psychic worlds, the mind enters the world of spiritual experience. Such experience differs altogether from psychic experience. It can be recognized by its lasting effect upon the experiencer; psychic visions cannot transform a man's nature, no matter how startling and vivid they may be. Unlike psychic visions, spiritual visions are not generally variable. If you have a vision of Jesus, for example, he will appear to you just as he has appeared to other devotees; he will not necessarily resemble any picture of him you have made for yourself in your imagination. A psychic experience may cause you no particular emotion, or it may depress or terrify you; a spiritual experience will always be accompanied by great joy. During a spiritual vision, the experiencer loses awareness of his material surroundings; they become merged in light. Dur-

ing a psychic vision, the experiencer often remains fully aware of his material surroundings; and, indeed, the apparition itself is apt to appear in such a natural manner that it is at first mistaken for an ordinary human being or animal.

The highest spiritual experiences can only be known in that state of consciousness which in Sanskrit is called *nirvikalpa samādhi*. *Samādhi* is a state quite other than that of waking, dreaming, or dreamless sleep; it has been described as superconsciousness. In *samādhi*, a man knows his absolute identity with the Ātman, which is his real nature.

* * *

The first of Khudiram's visions took place in the following manner.

One day, Khudiram had to go to a neighbouring village. On the way home, he felt tired and stopped to rest in the shade of a tree. It was a quiet place, and a soft breeze was blowing; he became relaxed in body and mind, lay down, and fell asleep.

Spiritual visions which come to us in sleep are not like ordinary dreams; they can be better described as visitations, for they are much more vivid and memorable than the encounters of our waking life. In this vision, Khudiram saw Śrī Rāma, his chosen deity, in the form of a celestial boy whose body was green like a blade of young grass. 'I've been there a long time', the boy said, pointing to a particular spot in the middle distance. 'I had nothing to eat and no one to look after me. Take me back to your house. I want very much to be served by you.' At this, Khudiram was greatly moved; he prostrated again and again before the boy. 'Oh, my Lord,' he said, 'I am a poor man, and my devotion is weak. How could I possibly serve you in my hut? And if my service is unworthy of you, I shall lose your grace. Why do you make such a hard demand of me?' But the boy reassured Khudiram, saying graciously: 'Don't be afraid. I shan't blame you for anything that's lacking. Take me with you.' Khudiram burst into tears of joy, and woke.

Looking around him, he now recognized the very spot which Śrī Rāma had indicated in the

vision. And there he saw a stone lying, which he knew to be a sacred *śālagrāma* stone. Beside this stone, as if guarding it, a cobra was reared on its coils with hood expanded threateningly.

(The *śālagrāma* is a kind of stone, often about the size and shape of a plum; it has one or more holes in it and bears certain markings. *Śālagrāmas* are natural formations, and most of them are found in the River Gaṇḍakī, a tributary of the Ganges. It was not, however, so very surprising that Khudiram found this one in a paddy-field in Bengal; for the stones are regarded as emblems of Viṣṇu, and a wandering holy man might well carry one around with him to worship.)

Khudiram was still in the exalted mood of his vision. He hurried over to the stone without a thought of physical fear; and, indeed, by the time he had reached it, the cobra had disappeared into its hole. Khudiram brought the stone back home with him, performed the prescribed ritual of dedication, and set it up in the household shrine to be worshipped daily. It was thus that he received the boy of his vision as an honoured family guest.

Khudiram had not exaggerated when he warned the boy that he would be poorly entertained. There were days when the household had nothing to eat. But, when this happened, Khudiram would comfort his wife Chandra, saying, 'Never mind—if Lord Rāma chooses to fast, why shouldn't we?' And it was not long before their situation improved, thanks to the richness of the land Sukhlal had given them. It throve, despite Khudiram's unworldliness and his preoccupation with ritual worship. When Khudiram went to bathe in the tank, the villagers stayed out of the water, as a sign of their respect. And while Khudiram was admired, Chandra was loved, because she was so generous and so ready with her sympathy for all who were in trouble.

Years later, Ramakrishna said of his parents: 'My mother was the soul of honesty and sincerity. She didn't know much about the ways of the world, and was incapable of concealment; she said whatever was in her mind. My

father . . . spent most of his time in worship and meditation, and telling his beads. Every day, while he was praying . . . his chest swelled and shone with a divine radiance, and tears rolled down his cheeks. In his spare time, when he wasn't engaged in worship, he would make garlands for Śrī Rāma. . . . The villagers respected him as a sage.'

It has been already mentioned that when Khudiram and Chandra moved to Kamarpukur they had two children. These were a son, Ramkumar, born in 1805, and a daughter, Katyayani, born in 1810. Twelve years after the arrival of the family in Kamarpukur, a second son, Rameswar, was born. These, with a second daughter, Sarvamangala, born in 1839, were to be Ramakrishna's brothers and sisters. But, for the benefit of those readers who find it difficult to keep many names distinct in their minds, I will say at once that only one, the elder brother Ramkumar, was to play any considerable part in Ramakrishna's adult life.

No close relative of such a figure as Ramakrishna can be without spiritual greatness. But, even in this family, Ramkumar was outstanding. He combined his father's deep faith with practical ability in worldly affairs; and as he grew to manhood, he became their bread-winner. He was an excellent Sanskrit scholar, and had mastered the scriptures so thoroughly that he was able to earn a living by giving advice to those who wanted some doctrinal point settled for them. He had also learned how to perform certain rites which are designed to ward off sickness and other misfortunes. In the course of his spiritual disciplines, he had suddenly developed psychic powers; he was able to foresee coming events and detect latent diseases in apparently healthy people. These powers he demonstrated most dramatically on many occasions.

Once, for example, when Ramkumar was visiting Calcutta on some business, he went to bathe in the Ganges. While he was doing so, a rich man arrived with his family at the bathing-ghat. Since bathing in the Ganges is a religious rite rather than a mere act of hygiene,

it is performed even by those who could wash much more comfortably in their own homes. And, in fact, the wife of this rich man was trying to preserve some of her domestic privacy; for she was sitting in a curtained palanquin which her servants carried right down into the water, so that she could take her bath inside it. Being a country boy accustomed to the open unashamed ways of village life, Ramkumar had never seen anyone bathing in this manner. As he looked in astonishment at the palanquin, he caught a glimpse of the lady's beautiful face between the curtains. Instantly, in a flash of his psychic insight, he knew that she would be dead by the next day. The knowledge overwhelmed him with sadness—so much so that he involuntarily murmured to himself: 'Such precautions about washing this body in private, today—and tomorrow they'll be bringing it back to the river, a corpse, for everyone to see!'

Most unfortunately, the lady's husband overheard Ramkumar's words. Terribly shocked and angry, he resolved to punish this young prophet of evil just as soon as his prophecy had been proved false. So, with outward politeness he insisted that Ramkumar should come to their home with them. But that night the seemingly healthy wife fell suddenly sick and died.

Ramkumar also made a prophecy about his own wife, namely, that she would die in her first childbirth. To his great relief, his wife remained childless for many years. But she did die, at the age of thirty-five, in 1849, in giving birth to a son named Akshay, who will appear later in this story.

Like all pious Hindus, Khudiram loved to go on pilgrimages. In 1824, he travelled on foot all the way to the shrines of Southern India, a journey which took a whole year. Again, in 1835, he set out for Gaya, in Bihar. At this time, Khudiram was sixty years old; but he was still slender and strong, and the hardships of the road meant nothing to him.

Gaya is doubly holy. The city itself is sacred to Viṣṇu, the preserver of the universe and the second deity in the Hindu trinity, with Brahmā the creator and Śiva the dissolver. (Actually,

this trinity personifies the three functions of Īśvara: creation, preservation, dissolution.) And a few miles outside Gaya is the traditional site of the pipal tree beneath which the Buddha meditated and attained enlightenment.

Khudiram stayed about a month at Gaya, worshipping at the many shrines in the surrounding hills and plains. He reserved for the last the most sacred shrine of all; the main temple which contains the footprint of Viṣṇu. Here he made the offerings of boiled rice balls and powdered wheat or barley, which are called *piṇḍas*. Such offerings are regarded as tokens of reverence for one's ancestors.

That night, in sleep, he had another spiritual vision. He saw himself back in the Viṣṇu temple, making the offering, just as he had done that day. All around him were his ancestors, accepting his offering and blessing him. Then he became aware that these ancestors were themselves worshipping the Lord, who was enthroned in their midst. The Lord looked affectionately at Khudiram, beckoned to him to approach, and said: 'Khudiram, your great devotion has made me very happy. The time has come for me to be born once again on earth. I shall be born as your son.'

Again, as in his earlier vision, Khudiram protested. The honour was too great. He was poor and unworthy. He begged to be excused from accepting it. But the Lord refused to accept his excuses. 'Don't be afraid, Khudiram', he said. 'Whatever you give me to eat, I shall enjoy.'

When Khudiram awoke, he felt certain that this was a divine revelation, and that the Lord of the Universe was actually about to be born into his household. He said nothing about his vision to anyone, left Gaya a few days later, and was back in Kamarpukur before the end of April.

On his return, he found Chandra in a strange radiant mood of love. Her concern for her neighbours was such that she could not take her meal until she was sure that all of them had eaten. If anyone had not, she wanted to share her own portion of food with him. She

had the same guileless, trustful attitude toward all. It seemed that she could no longer think of anybody as being a stranger to her.

With the simplicity of a child, Chandra told Khudiram about the amazing experiences she had had, during his absence. 'One night, I dreamed that you had come home. The first thing I knew, you were holding me in your arms. I felt so glad! But then I saw your face—and it wasn't you. It wasn't a human face. It shone, like the face of a god. I screamed and struggled to get free; and then I woke up with a great start, and I was alone in bed, shivering all over with fright! So then, after a moment, I asked myself: "Does a god ever appear to a human being in this way?" So I decided it couldn't have been a god, but some wicked man who'd come into the room for an evil purpose. So I got up and lighted the lamp, but there was nobody there, and the door was still bolted from the inside. All the rest of that night, I was afraid to go back to sleep. As soon as it was morning, I sent for Dhani and Prasanna and told them everything; and I asked them: "Do you think a man really came into my room? I have no quarrel with anyone in the village." But both of them laughed at me and scolded me. "You silly woman!" they said. "Has old age softened your brain? Better not tell anyone else about that dream of yours, or you'll start a scandal." So then I decided that it was only just a dream, and that I wouldn't speak of it again except to you, my husband.'

Chandra had another experience to describe to Khudiram, which was even more extraordinary. A few days after the night of her dream—in broad daylight—she had been gossiping with this same friend Dhani, who was the daughter of a neighbouring blacksmith. The two women were standing before a temple of Śiva—it is actually a small domed shrine, only large enough to contain half a dozen worshippers—right opposite Khudiram's home. The temple is still there, today.

'All of a sudden,' Chandra told Khudiram, 'I saw that the holy image of Lord Śiva inside the shrine was alive! It began to send forth

waves of the most beautiful light. Slowly at first, then quicker and quicker. They filled up the inside of the temple, and then they came pouring out—it was like one of those huge flood-waves in the river—right toward me! I was going to tell Dhani; but then the waves washed over me and swallowed me up, and I felt that marvellous light enter into my body. I fell down on the ground, unconscious. When I came to myself, I told Dhani what had happened. But she didn't believe me; she said I'd had an epileptic fit. That can't be so, because, since then, I've been full of joy, and my health is better than ever. Only—I feel that light is still inside me; and I believe that I'm with child.'

Khudiram now told his wife about his vision at Gaya, and assured her that her own visions were no fancies, but revelations of the great grace which they were soon to receive. So the two rejoiced together. And, as the months passed, it became known to everyone in Kamar-pukur that Chandra was indeed pregnant, at the age of forty-five. It was noticed that this pregnancy made her remarkably beautiful; and the neighbours shook their heads, taking this beauty for a sign that she was fated to die in giving birth to her child.

Meanwhile, Chandra continued to have visions, with increasing frequency. Almost daily, the gods and goddesses appeared to her, or she heard their voices around her, and the tinkle of their anklets, or smelled their subtle perfumes. A great change had come over Chandra since her visions began. She no longer felt any awe of the gods. She loved them so much that they seemed closer to her than her own sons and daughter, and her attitude to them was now that of a mother. This was the tone in which she used to talk about them to Khudiram: 'Today, I saw a god riding on the back of a swan. I was startled, at first; then I felt sorry for him, because his face was quite red from sun-burn. So I called to him and I said: "Dear little god, riding on your swan, your face looks burned by the sun. There's some cool rice in the house; I cooked it yesterday. Do come and

eat a little, and refresh yourself before you go on." He heard me and he smiled. But then he faded away, and I didn't see him any more.'

* * *

These visions have been received with disbelief even by some of Ramakrishna's greatest admirers in the West. Romain Rolland dismisses them with an indulgent smile as charming fables. Max Müller regards them as products of what he calls the Dialogic Process: 'the irrepressible miraculizing tendencies of devoted disciples.'

Now, the creation of legends is a natural mark of human reverence for what one feels to be greater than oneself. No reasonable person reveres the Buddha any less, because his biography has been overdecorated with marvels. But the case of Khudiram and Chandra is totally different; and I think it only fair to point this out.

Legends may, and perhaps must, accumulate with the passing of generations, as one well-intentioned historian after another repeats a story with his own additions. But legends require time to grow. We are not dealing with legends here. We are dealing either with the truth—or with lies. It is important not to mince words, out of politeness. In this case, if a lie was told, it was told by those directly concerned in the situation at issue. It was told with deliberate intent. It was told by individuals who believed, or said they believed, that lying is the filthiest kind of impurity and the grossest obstacle to one's spiritual progress. This is the most serious accusation we can make against them. Very well, let us make it.

Max Müller is too tactful to speak bluntly, but he implies that Ramakrishna's disciples—including their chief spokesman, Vivekananda, whom Max Müller knew personally—were responsible for thus falsifying the record fifty years later, after Ramakrishna's death. Their motive for doing this would presumably have been to prove that Ramakrishna was conceived in a supernatural manner and was therefore a divine incarnation, like Jesus of Nazareth. When we meet Vivekananda in the latter part

of this story, we shall find him a highly sceptical young man with a western-agnostic education in Calcutta, who refused utterly to believe in the supernatural until he had, so to speak, banged his head against it. And even when Vivekananda's disbelief had been modified by personal experience, even when he had become one of Ramakrishna's most passionate devotees, he still discouraged blind faith in others, still urged everyone to find out the truth for himself. And, over and over again, he asserted that it really did not matter whether you believed that Ramakrishna was a divine incarnation or not! How can we accuse such men of lying?

Was Chandra lying? It seems impossible to doubt that she at least believed she saw the visions. At the time Saradananda wrote his book, he talked to villagers of Kamarpukur who had heard the story of the visions from Chandra herself. And these witnesses are reliable, just because, as they admitted, they did not take her seriously. Bengal country-people of those days were, in fact, not nearly so credulous as they are popularly supposed to have been! Were Chandra and Khudiram insane, then? If there is one general characteristic of the many kinds of mental disease, it would seem to be an intense preoccupation with oneself, to the exclusion of the outside world. An odd sort of insanity, this, which fills its victims with love for everybody and makes them beloved by all who know them!

When all has been said, those who are determined not to believe will find excuses for their disbelief. They will point to the fact that reproduction without fertilization does occasionally take place in nature, even among mammals. They will show that visions may arise from all sorts of physiological and psychological causes. But this is merely to evade the important question: Did Khudiram and Chandra have what we may describe as true spiritual experience? I have already suggested, at the beginning of this chapter, that the only proper test of such experience is to study its aftereffects upon the experiencer. This, in the case of Khudiram and Chandra, we have just done. And

now I can only leave each of my readers to answer the question for himself.

* * *

According to Hindu religious custom, the room in which a delivery takes place becomes ritually unclean for ten days thereafter; anyone who enters it during this period must wash himself after leaving. The practical value of this restriction is to discourage outsiders from coming in and fussing around the baby at a time when it is very liable to infection.

Most families build a special lying-in hut, or set aside a room for this purpose which is apart from the main building. Khudiram's home consisted of four rooms only: the shrine-room dedicated to Śrī Rāma, Khudiram's bedroom, Ramakumar's bedroom, and a living room. In the yard opposite the main hut, there was a roughly-made shed of bamboo and thatch which was the kitchen. At right angles to this was another thatched shed. It was here that Chandra was to bear her child.

(The sheds have gone, now; and a memorial shrine has been built on the site of the second shed. Khudiram's hut still stands.)

Inside the second shed were a fire-place for boiling paddy and a husking-machine, a primitive apparatus for pounding the boiled paddy until the rice is disengaged from its husk. Two people are needed to work this machine; one of them makes the husking-hammer rise and fall by moving with his foot a lever to which the hammer is attached, the other keeps feeding fresh paddy into the hole beneath the hammer. In later years, Ramakrishna was to take the husking-machine as one of the many homely illustrations he used in his teaching: 'How are you to live in the world and yet be mindful of God? Take an example from the housewife. She's busy in so many ways at once! With one hand she pushes the paddy into the mortar of the husking-machine, with the other she suckles her child; and meanwhile she's bargaining with a neighbour. But, all the time, her mind is fixed on a single idea—not to let the hammer of the husking-machine fall on her hand and bruise it. So, no matter what your worldly duties are, keep

your mind fixed on Him.'

Chandra's labour pains began shortly before dawn, on February 18, 1836. The delivery was easy. Chandra had barely time to reach the shed, with Dhani's assistance, before the child was born.

Dhani later described a strange circumstance of the birth. Having done what was needful for Chandra, she turned to the baby and found that he had somehow rolled across the floor. He was lying among the ashes of the fire-place, still bloody and unwashed, without uttering a

sound. As Dhani took him up and washed him, she marvelled at his beauty and size; he might well, she said, have been a child six months old.

Mindful of his vision after visiting the Viṣṇu temple at Gaya, Khudiram decided to call this third son of his Gadadhar—for Gadadhar, meaning 'Bearer of the Mace', is one of the epithets applied to Śrī Viṣṇu. It was as Gadadhar that the boy grew into adolescence. Not until he was a young man at Dakshineswar was he first given the name by which the world was later to know him: Ramakrishna.

VEDĀNTA AS A SCIENTIFIC PHILOSOPHY—1

BY DR. PRAVAS JIVAN CHAUDHURY

1. INTRODUCTION

(i) *Objectives and Preliminary Definitions*

There is one kind of scientific philosophy that enquires into the philosophical presuppositions of science, and so it identifies itself with the system of ideas embedded in the methods and results of science. There is another kind of scientific philosophy that arises out of critical and constructive reflection, in the spirit of science, upon the first kind of scientific philosophy which may be equated with the philosophical creed of science. The object of this essay is to present a scientific philosophy of the second kind. This has three stages, corresponding to the three stages of reflection carried on in the philosophical creed of science. We have, first, to draw out of the present-day scientific practice and achievement of science the outline of the philosophical creed that science implies and, secondly, to explicate the scientific spirit or attitude which it expresses and which works upon its tacit philosophical creed to lead up to the various grades of scientific philosophy. We shall also see how far the final stage of scientific philosophy is essentially Vedānta

philosophy.

(ii) *Some Clarifications*

(a) By 'scientific philosophy', one is led to think of a complete and incorrigible kind of philosophy, but we hasten to observe that our philosophy, as will be presented here, is far from this kind. We call it scientific, for it raises itself upon the methodological presuppositions and general spirit of modern science as well as on its results so far as the latter reacts on the former; and since all these factors change with time—science being an open system with no claim to absolute objectivity and finality—our scientific philosophy is offered as a possible outlook for the consideration of our readers.

(b) By 'science' and 'scientific practice', we mean the essential aspects of the various processes and products designated by these expressions. We are concerned chiefly with the basic ideas such as are related to the theory of knowledge and cosmology, and these are mostly found in physics. For the methodology of science, too, we enquire into physics, which is the most advanced branch of science and the ideal of all other sciences.

(iii) *Possibility of a Scientific Philosophy*

A scientist is primarily concerned with such concepts as are directly instrumental in his task of correlating experience. Yet, he cannot rest content with these scientific concepts, and must sooner or later ask questions regarding the basic tenets of his conceptual system or the world-picture. His scientific enterprise teaches him to enquire into the basis of every idea and to develop a new vocabulary and logical grammar to make room for new ideas which bear only a very distant analogy with our ordinary ones. Einstein's criticism of simultaneity of spatially separated events and Heisenberg's denial of simultaneous occupation of a precise position and a velocity by an electron are cases to cite in favour of this statement. The Relativity and Quantum theories have given a number of very abstract concepts which represent no ordinarily perceptible objects, but only very partial analogues of familiar experience. They are indirectly, conditionally, and partially verifiable, their consequences, under certain empirical hypotheses and test-conditions, being verifiable by observation. So that a scientist cannot fight shy of examining the basic ideas of science and of reconstructing them in order to effect a better comprehension of his experience. His philosophical enterprise, in this manner, is an extension of, and not a break with, his scientific work. This work today is not just observation and generalization, as it was at the infancy of science, when it was but natural history, but it is one involving very bold and abstract theorizing, requiring much imagination and openness of the mind. The modern physicist is acquainted with a metaphorical mode of understanding; his wave-function, four-dimensional continuum, and curved space are concepts which could not be arrived at, and cannot be intelligently applied in scientific practice, without a critical reflection on the basic ideas of space, time, causality, and the rest. So that a conscientious scientist must naturally proceed to a logical analysis of his subject to find out its tacit presuppositions or creed and take systematic thought on the latter. This will lead him to the elements of a scientific philoso-

phy. Modern science tends to burst its own confines and close up with scientific philosophy.

(iv) *Scientific Philosophy and Vedānta*

The conclusions of our scientific philosophy will be found to be not essentially different from those of Vedānta. So that our present construction of scientific philosophy will indirectly be a vindication of the Vedānta philosophy on the basis of modern science. And so far as the Vedānta philosophy is regarded as a rational rendering of the teachings of the Upaniṣads, our present efforts may be described as a scientific rationalization of these teachings. This general agreement between our scientific philosophy and Vedānta, by virtue of the fact that we find the model of a cosmic mind-working from behind our individual minds, which are its dream-modes, so to say, is most simple and adequate to explain the pervasive features of our experience. The urge for such a theoretic explanation of our total experience is provided by the prevailing spirit of science that, as we shall see in the sequel, seeks after comprehension of the widest possible field of experience by means of abstract constructs which represent some objective entities bearing but faint analogy with our familiar experience. Of course, the Vedāntins treated the cosmic mind not merely as a suitable hypothesis, but believed it to be a fact capable of direct verification in some extraordinary kind of experience. And they stressed the necessity of such a verification, for a firm faith in the explanatory principle of the world of our ordinary experience will help us to achieve not only understanding, but also peace that surpasses understanding. They, therefore, held the testimony of the Vedic seers to be so very important for us; it is a kind of proof of the theory of the cosmic mind, which is thus not just a theory, but a reality for them, and which must at least be given some initial faith (*śraddhā*) when one hears of it from one's teacher. This hearing (*śravaṇa*) is followed by contemplation (*manana*), which makes it intelligible and plausible to one, and then by meditative search (*nididhyāsana*) that leads to a

direct experiential verification of it. So there seems to be a difference in the attitude of the Vedāntin and that of a modern scientific philosopher with regard to epistemological status of the ultimate explanatory principle behind the world.

Now, we believe that the Vedāntin could not have laid much store only on the testimony of the Vedic seers and on their own personal experience, for these could not convince his opponents who would want more solid arguments in favour of the Vedānta theory. The Vedāntin had to be an intellectualist in his arguments with his opponent schools. So, he had to be a scientific philosopher in his aims and methods. The Vedānta that he offers in such circumstances must essentially be proposed as a most simple and comprehensive hypothesis and not either as a proved fact or a dogma. We are concerned here with this aspect of Vedānta, and we believe this to be the more important aspect from the philosophical point of view. The question of accepting and living by a particular philosophical theory is external to it, though it is a very important question in itself. It is more or less a psychological question involving taste, temperament, and cultural background, and, as Śaṅkara himself admits, not one of reason (*tarka*), but of actual experience of an extraordinary kind.

We may also note that only the Brāhmaṇas, who imbibed from childhood certain mental attitudes—particularly those of resignation towards the worldly life and a love of ideal peace and freedom to be had only when the soul is beyond the bondage of the flesh—were considered qualified for the study and practice of the Vedic teachings. Thus Vedānta, as well as the Vedic teachings that constitute its foundation, may be approached as a scientific philosophy proposing to us certain theoretical ideas for the comprehension of our experience and claiming for them not absolute truth or reality, but only provisional acceptability by virtue of their simplicity and adequacy. Unless we take Vedānta in this undogmatic and deontological

manner, we cannot do justice to it as a philosophical system. We believe we have ample evidence in the history of Indian philosophy for our view that Vedānta was posed not solely as verified truth, but also as a very indirectly and partially confirmed abstract theory to be judged on the merit of its being so far the best possible theory.

If we do not treat it thus, then we cannot make sense of the chief Vedānta principle that the world is unreal. For how can we speak of the world as unreal, when it is the standard of reality? To say that what cannot be cancelled in experience is real and Brahman is not so cancelled, while the world is, in the experience of the Vedic seers will not do. For, first, we have so far so very little authentic testimony of these seers that it cannot outweigh the testimony of the common people; and, secondly, what is actually once cancelled is only a contingent fact, and does not imply any logical necessity, and, so, may as well be reinstated, the appearance of necessity being only psychological. So that Vedānta cannot assert that the world is unreal, but can only propose that it may be imagined, after our dream-objects, to be but illusorily appearing, while some cosmic spirit be imagined, after our self that works our dreams from behind, to be the ground of these appearances and so real.

Thus Vedānta, in its scientific aspect, does not speak of ultimate being or reality of anything, for this is a matter of one's personal conviction, but only of what may be more fruitful or adequate as an explanatory theory. Since fruitfulness or adequacy is a matter of degree, the theoretical constructs of Vedānta cannot be asserted as ultimate beings. Something either exists or it does not; there is no question of degree there. Vedānta, conceived scientifically for philosophical purposes, cannot be ontological.

In saying this, we deny neither that the Vedic seers and Vedānta philosophers might well have meant it to be ontological stressing realization of the ultimate being more than a mere theoretic speculation over the highest explanatory principle of the world, nor the possibility of our

having in future a common experience of the cosmic mind so far held as an abstract theory. But we propose that, so long as such a realization is not proving to be widely practicable, we may as well treat Vedānta as a scientific philosophy, emphasizing the aspect of it revealed in the arguments offered for it by the Vedānta philosophers in their discussions with their opponents. We maintain not that we should stop individual efforts at realization of the Vedānta theory, but rather this that such questions are more personal than intellectual and that, even if we have a direct verification of the theory by a wide circle of meditative persons, we cannot logically assert the existence of the entity represented by it. For the gulf between our experience and being or reality is in principle unbridgeable; the difference between the two is qualitative and not quantitative.

What is more inter-personally acceptable may be inferred to be more pervasive a feature of reality, and may for all practical purposes be treated as reality, but, strictly considered, such constructs are only more believed than others, their statements being more pinned down than others, and as such they are marked by degree and fluctuation, while being or reality must be free from these. Intellectual philosophy, thus, cannot achieve the objective of metaphysics, namely, a knowledge of ultimate reality; it can only find more and more adequate conceptual constructs to serve as our explanatory device, and can only hope that the most successful construct so far found may perchance represent the ultimate reality, if there be any. But it cannot be sure, for what is instrumental in the comprehension of the world of our experiences, and fulfils the conditions of simplicity and comprehensiveness, may not be what is really there, unless one arbitrarily defines reality in terms of success in theoretic comprehension.

2. THE PHILOSOPHICAL CREED OF SCIENCE

(i) *Introductory*

We shall now determine the creed of science by analysing the actual practice of the scientists, instead of looking for their expressed opinions,

which widely differ amongst themselves. We should note in this connection that many things they hold to be obvious truths are but postulates. Goethe remarked: 'The greatest achievement would be to grasp that whatever we call "fact" is already "theory".'

Now, looking at a typical piece of scientific research, like the study of the reaction of water on sodium, we find that a scientist believes in certain substances like sodium and water, which possess uniformly, and are identified by, certain characters and dispositions. The former are patent, independent of one's perceiving them; the latter, too, are independent, but are latent capacities to be defined in terms of certain reactions that a substance produces on being treated with other substances. Thus the capacity of sodium to produce hydrogen, when placed in water, is a disposition of the substance, which is known by the sum total of its characters and dispositions. The scientist believes in the objective being and systematic relationships or regular coexistence and succession of sensible characters according to rules which he seeks to discover. On the uniformity of the behaviour of observable characters, then, rests the possibility of science.

Such rules of behaviour of observable characters defining substances and their dispositions were sought to be further explained in terms of certain hypothetical entities which bear some analogy with some observable objects and which are logically observable, that is, which could be observed had there not been any empirical law and technical difficulties standing in the way. Thus the theoretical constructs like molecules, atoms, electrons, and waves of classical physics proved extremely successful in explaining large areas of observational data. They may be said to be indirectly observed 'through causality', as one may be said to touch a table by a stick. In fact, such an indirect observation through an interpretation of a connected series of observations, such as of pointer-readings, photographs of condensation tracks, clicks in the electronic counter (as in the case of an electron), and through established hypotheses employed in the

working of these instruments, is held to be more reliable than a direct observation, just as a verdict based on a thorough circumstantial evidence is treated as more dependable than a few eye-witness accounts.

(ii) *Abstract Theories versus Formal Ones*

Now, so far as classical physics is considered, and even what is known as classical Quantum theory, one could at least imagine the postulated entities after certain familiar objects and so consider the explanation in terms of these postulates to be causal or mechanical. But difficulties arose when, with the advent of what is known as new quantum mechanics or wave mechanics of Schroedinger, Heisenberg, and Dirac, and of the General Theory of Relativity of Einstein, we could not thus imagine the postulated entities after any familiar thing. It is impossible to picture an electron that, according to one wave-mechanical interpretation of it, extends all over the universe and can be located at no particular position; and according to another, the probability of its being found reaches a maximum at one place and speedily decreases as we go further. Such an electron cannot be said to have a continuous path and to possess simultaneously both precise velocity and position. So that we cannot now speak of an electron as a possibly verifiable entity, as we did in the case of an electron of classical physics. Similarly, we cannot have any denotation or direct physical interpretation of such terms as Dirac's phase-waves or Schroedinger's wave-function or Einstein's gravitational potentials. These are only indirectly, partially, and conditionally defined in terms of observable data.

Some people seem to be very much dissatisfied with this state of affairs in advanced physics, and believe that more sensible causal explanations must be sought to replace these very abstract ones that fail to serve as explanatory principles, as they cannot be thought to be existent behind the observable phenomena like the entities of classical physics. Others interpret these theoretical terms in new physics as bare symbols or uninterpreted inscriptions that are

instrumental, like mathematical symbols, in correlating our experience, so that they do not serve to explain this experience. This formalistic interpretation of science reduces science to a descriptive and instrumental device, and so to a craft, while we still believe that it is and ought to be something more, offering us some explanatory knowledge of the observational data over and above a correlation of them.

We think that the working faith of the scientists or the creed that underlies their actual practice supports our view that science explains with theoretical constructs that represent some things, though the latter cannot be pictured and translated into ordinary observable terms. It is useless to complain that we cannot have more sensible constructs to explain the very rich and complex experiences dealt with by these more abstract constructs, and it seems too much to interpret these constructs as representing nothing, serving only as bare symbols. Most of modern methodologists, such as Carnap, Hempel, and Braithwaite, consider them to be partially, indirectly, and conditionally defined or interpreted constructs. As such, we think they must be regarded as standing for some objects and, so far as the former succeed as explanatory tools in wider areas of experience, the latter gain in empirical confirmation and in the possibility of existence. This existence, however, is not ontological or absolute, but only ordinary, like the existence of the inter-subjective world, which means inter-personal acceptability as a more or less valid postulate.

(iii) *Disappearance of Substance and Causality*

Science, as it advances to meet the challenge of an ever-growing range of experience, has to abandon its earlier ideas of substance and causality. Substance, in the sense of some primary material stuff, cannot be retained, for we cannot explain how it is related to the secondary (or formed or structured) matter that we actually come across in experience. Plato's vague notion of participation of matter in forms or reflection in matter of forms cannot help. To think of a formless, dead, or static world-stuff

coming to life by the magic touch of structure and motion seems difficult. Modern science starts from the concrete objects, the physical things, treating them as complexes of observable characters and not as substances overlaid with the latter. The properties do not belong to some substratum, but are self-subsistent objects showing much uniformity in their coexistence and succession. In Relativity physics, we have now a unitary concept of space-time-matter or matter-motion and also the law of equivalence of matter and energy, by which we can quantitatively describe the transformation of matter into energy or motion and of the latter into the former. We have to abolish the idea of an indestructible substance. To retain substance in the form of some very elementary physical objects like atoms or electrons, or some continuous medium like ether, is also not very helpful, for, though they allow us to explain in their terms many of the observed characters or phenomena, they must be admitted to be but secondary matter; and then there is the question, Why must electron or ether with such and such characters defining it be ultimate? Why must we stop our enquiry at the bounds of an electron?

So we must now speak in science of constant coexistences and successions of sensible characters, instead of substances possessing certain fixed natures by virtue of which they own and display these characters. We must also speak of causality neither in the sense of efficient effectuation nor of necessary connection. Causality in the animistic sense of purposive productivity was eliminated by Copernicus, Kepler, and Galileo, who built up a mechanical science in place of a teleological one; but they retained the idea of efficiency or activity as associated with causality. Newton introduced 'the mathematical way' in scientific research and eliminated this animistic notion of efficiency from causality, while Hume and Mill did away with the idea of necessary connection that seemed to define causality.

In recent physics, we are brought to admit that we can but speak of probabilities of observable events on the basis of our past observa-

tions. There is a limit to our precision about any report and to the degree of rational expectation of uniformity of the behaviour so far observed. For every process occurs under a set of conditions of which some only are specifically known to us, and we are not sure whether the others so far unknown are going to be obtained in future, so that we can never justly speak of a law in a categorical manner. In quantum physics, we have to speak in terms of probabilities or averages. We cannot speak of an electron to be found at a place, but only of a probability of its being so found. If the probability be very high, and still we do not find it on several occasions, there will be no falsification of the law concerned, for we may find it on later occasions. Some, for instance Einstein, resented this kind of science and the version of causality that it prescribes to us; but the majority of scientists and methodologists are reconciled to this circumstance, and they hope that common sense and our ordinary language will gradually admit it, just as it has admitted the Copernican theory and other notions first declared to be absurd.

The notion that strict causality must be presupposed by science is unwarranted, for what science logically needs for its work to go on is that there be *some* regular features in the world, which may very well have many uncaused and irregular events and much loose-jointedness. The principle of causality need not be the ultimate major premise of all inductions, despite Mill who held it to be so. No metaphysical conclusion can be logically derived from science; only a few heuristic or methodological rules are so derived. One may *use* this latter rule analogically and universally to build up a metaphysical system and so to describe *all* events. But this metaphysical use of science must not be confused with the metaphysical implication of science and employed to exercise a logical check on science against its revision of the original working ideas.

Thus we see that modern science does not speak in terms of efficient and necessary causes, but in those of certain abstract constructs repre-

senting certain non-intuitable physical objects, which seem to be regularly and indirectly associated with the phenomena they help to comprehend. (This, of course, does not apply in the case of introspective psychology, where the mind actively and purposefully causes certain actions.)

(iv) *Space, Time, and Matter of New Science*

Just as the ideas of substance and causality have undergone a sea change, so have those of space, time, and matter. The classical concept of space, first formulated by Newton in terms of an infinite, homogeneous, continuous, and intuitable public entity, is really a conceptual construct, by means of which science harmonizes the individual perceptual spaces which are finite, non-homogeneous, and discontinuous. In fact, science takes this concept of space from common sense, which, as well as science, is not aware of the element of construction or hypothesis involved in this matter.

Now, Newton's proofs for this absolute space do not hold water, and this is abandoned in new physics which offers a finite (or closed) and curved space welded with time and matter. This space-time-matter is surely very remote from any familiar object, and has to be admitted only because of its greater theoretical import or explanatory power. The ideas of time and matter are similarly drastically revised. This has certainly shocked our common sense, but helped us to get over some of the perplexing questions regarding the relationship amongst space, time, and matter and their infinity. The finite but boundless space may be imagined after its two-dimensional analogue, the surface of a sphere. Just as we cannot go out of the latter surface which bends inwards, so we cannot go beyond our spherical space which represents all matter and forces of the universe. The problem of the beginning and the end of time can be resolved by seeing that passage of time ceases to be meaningful when there is no change or succession of events; there cannot be any lapse of time before the beginning and after the end of the universe. The philosophical

paradoxes of space and time are thus shown to be the result of our taking certain inadequate and partial constructs for independent realities. New science thus seeks to revise our older conceptual framework and language of science in the light of a vaster range and complexity of experience to be comprehended with greater simplicity and internal consistency. The new set of concepts are clearer and less riddled with puzzles than the older ones.

(v) *Concepts of Knowledge, Reality, and Truth in Modern Science*

We may as well note the revision of the concepts of knowledge, reality, and truth in new science. Knowledge, in a certain sector of scientific enquiry, now means a correlation of the observable data in the sector in terms ultimately of some very indefinitely describable objects and proximately of other less indefinite ones, and some hypotheses by means of which we can connect the objects at the top with the observations at the bottom. In other words, we so define these top-level objects, like quanta, electrons, waves, etc., partially and conditionally, ultimately in terms of the observational data that they may be said to be explanatory of, and confirmed by, these data. What these objects themselves are is not known, though, as we noted before, they cannot be said to be non-existent for that reason, and the terms representing them, to be mere symbols without anything to symbolize.

Now these objects are very indefinite, empirically unverifiable—only their remote consequences being verifiable—and they cause the observable events neither in the sense of efficiency nor in that of necessary connection. So, then, knowledge means a tentative guess about a regular feature or structure of events in a field which may be associated with some one or more basic or primitive sorts of objects, like electrons or waves, which serve as explanatory principles. These objects are not causal agents, nor are they necessarily related to the events they correlate and explain, but are regular associates at the background of these events. Their

association helps us to connect and explain certain otherwise loose events.

By 'reality', science means whatever is fruitful in systematizing and explaining, in the above sense, a certain section of our experience. Since this fruitfulness or adequacy is a matter of degree, and the acceptance of any theoretical framework cannot logically prove the absolute existence of the corresponding objects of the theory, science has no ontological commitment. Thus atoms, electrons, and other entities of science are not real in any ontological sense. They are real in the sense that they are useful as devices in comprehending the data they are said to explain. In this sense, ether or phlogiston is unreal. The other kinds of entities used in science, such as the logical and the mathematical ones, are similarly real or unreal in so far as they are accepted and are useful tools in scientific enquiry and so parts of the scientific vocabulary. Again, as we noted before, and as Carnap has pointed out, the acceptance of a certain concept is a matter of choice and characterized by greater or less expediency; it does not imply any assertion, and is neither true nor false; so it cannot tell whether the entity accepted is real or not in the metaphysical sense.

'Truth' of a scientific theory does not mean any correspondence to some given state of affairs, though we do believe that there is something that the theory stands for. Truth means coherence with, first, the observable data which can be related with the theory through a chain of secondary theories and hypotheses, and sec-

ond, with other theories in the field. The theory that gains in scope, theoretical import, and empirical confirmation is considered to represent some more pervasive and basic entity than the obvious sensible data it comprehends under it. But such entities are not describable in ordinary language nor picturable in imagination. We do not know what exactly they are, though we are led to posit them as existing objects at the back of the observable data. We know that they are, and we can very indirectly and partially define them in observable terms, but we do not know what they are in themselves. We know them through their consequences, but not in themselves. But, as we have already maintained before, this partial and indirect description of them cannot be taken for their whole description. We have a notion of an indescribable yet existing stuff, though we do not at the same time believe in a substance which is devoid of any character to be described. The entities signified by the abstract theoretical terms of science are not devoid of descriptive predicates, only we do not know the latter properly and those we seem to guess appear to be mutually conflicting. So they are an extraordinary sort of entities. We cannot consider them to be mythical, and the names for them bare inscriptions, for they have an elaborate, though partial, physical interpretation or observable consequences in conjunction with other hypotheses; and a mere myth or ghost cannot have all this.

(To be continued)

Man is man, so long as he is struggling to rise above nature, and the nature is both internal and external. . . . It is good and very grand to conquer external nature, but grander still to conquer our internal nature. It is grand and good to know the laws that govern the stars and planets; it is infinitely grander and better to know the laws that govern the passions, the feelings, the will of mankind. This conquering of the inner man, understanding the secrets of the subtle working that are within the human mind, and knowing its wonderful secrets belong entirely to religion.

— SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

MYSTICISM: ITS VERITIES AND VARIETIES

BY SRI S. SUBHASH CHANDRA

Mysticism embodies the eternal urge of man to attain that which lies beyond the ephemeral flux of transient things, to apprehend and assimilate the inalienable unit which sustains the discordant diversity, to release his consciousness from the fetters of finitude and regain the plenitude of the universal consciousness, and to imbibe the supreme Bliss wherein the imperfections and inadequacies of life find a meaningful transmutation. Mysticism denotes the yearning for immortality and the quest for perfection. It constitutes the kernel of all religions, and is the source of many philosophies. It has shaped history, though the historical process is alien to it. It has engendered numerous trends and traditions, though its own expressions are never the stale stereotypes of these traditions. It has occasioned many dogmas, though dogmatism in all its forms is repugnant to it. In a word, the sublime verities of mysticism form the apogee of human knowledge.

The core of any mystical experience appears to be an indelible awareness of an integral and assimilative unity underlying the manifold variety of the world. In a mystical experience, the mystic is seized, suddenly and spontaneously, by an overwhelming and all-embracing unity in which all distinctions are transmuted, all forms transformed, and all values transvalued. The mystical experience, in the words of Dr. Radhakrishnan, is 'a condition of consciousness in which feelings are fused, ideas melt into one another, boundaries broken, and ordinary distinctions transcended. In this fullness of felt life and freedom, the distinction of the knower and the known disappears. The privacy of the individual self is broken into and invaded by a universal self which the individual self feels as his own'.¹ The experience of the mystic, avers Cardinal Nicholes of Cusa, consists of 'a percep-

tion of God as the highest unity of all contrariety'.² In the light of the mystical experience, the truth of the many is seen in the immanence of the One. The high and the low, the sublime and the trivial, the noble and the mean, and the immense and the minute are all permeated by this fundamental unity. Within the mystical framework, there is no room for any variety of duality or multiplicity. 'Ekam advaitam' (One without a second) is the watchword of the mystics. 'Where Rāma is, there I am not,' avows Dādū, the Rajasthani mystic, 'where I am, there Rāma is not; the mansion is delicate; it has no place for two.'³

A mystical experience is a personal experience, but has an impersonal content. It is not a shared experience, but is peculiarly unique to the mystic himself. It is rooted in a hallowed and sanctified privacy. The mystic cannot share his experience with anybody, though its content may, and often does, coincide with that of other mystical experiences.

In spite of this subjectivity, a mystical experience is accompanied by a more compelling sense of authenticity and certitude than that borne by any objective experience. The experience brooks no denial. It evokes faith and conviction. It is untrammelled by any irreverent scepticism. It is so intimate and so overwhelming, suffusing and saturating the entire personality, that the mystic cannot entertain any doubts concerning the experience itself. A mystical experience, even if it does not recur, leaves a lasting and indelible impression behind itself. 'God establishes Himself in the interior of this soul in such a way', declares Saint Teresa, 'that when she returns to herself, it is wholly impossible to doubt that she has been

² Cited by Rudolph Steiner, *Mysticism and Modern Thought*, p. 122.

³ W. G. Orr, *A Sixteenth-century Mystic*, p.98.

¹ S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life*, pp.91-92.

in God and God in her. This truth remains so strongly impressed upon her that, even though many years should pass without the condition returning, she can neither forget the favour she received, nor doubt of its reality.⁴

The mystical experience is immediate to the seer. It is attained neither through the agency of the senses nor through intellectual speculation. It transcends the limitations of the senses and the inadequacies of the intellect. In the words of the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*: 'The Self cannot be reached by speech, by mind, or by the eye. How can it be realized otherwise than from those who say, "He is"?'⁵ The mystical experience is far too intimate, far too ontologically proximate, to be attained through the avenue of the senses or through the discursive and analytical inclines of the intellect. 'Rightly has Professor H. J. Paton in his Gifford Lectures observed: 'The one thing which appears certain is that in the most intense mystic experience there is no conscious reasoning or inference.'⁶ Our senses and our intellect operate within the inevitable framework of time and space. Thoughts and sensations are rooted in time and space, which constitute the *a priori* conditions of all empirical experience. The mystical experience, on the other hand, is basically trans-empirical. It is independent of the categories of time and space. It surpasses both the momentariness of time and the frozen coexistence of space. In truth, the insight of the mystic is beyond time and space.

Further, the intellect, as the great French philosopher Bergson has rightly pointed out, is essentially analytical. It tends to divide things and deal with them in a piecemeal manner. It is incapable of synthesis. The experience of the mystic, however, embodies a supreme synthesis. It represents, as we have seen, a consciousness of a perennial unity underlying the seemingly discrepant diversity. Hence

⁴ William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, p.408.

Kaṭha Upaniṣad, II.3.12.

H. J. Paton, *The Modern Predicament*, p.154.

the intellect is incapable of being the source of the mystical intuition. The senses, too, aside from being vitiated by their indissoluble connection with the intellect and its infirmities, provide us with bits and fragments of experience. Consequently, the mystical experience is derived neither through the senses nor through the intellect.

Spontaneity is another hallmark of the mystical experience. The intuition of the mystic is not gradual and progressive, but spontaneous and sudden. The vision of the seer enters unannounced and unheralded. Thus Tennyson begins an account of one of his mystical experiences in the following words: 'All at once, as it were, out of the intensity of the consciousness of individuality, the individuality itself seemed to dissolve and fade away into boundless being.' Tagore's first mystical experience, which revealed to him 'an inner radiance of joy' on the face of the world, was also sudden and unanticipated.⁷ The vision of Jean Christophe, the hero of Romain Rolland's masterpiece, was also marked by the element of spontaneity. 'Suddenly, like an opened sluice, in the yard behind him, a deluge of water, a heavy rain, large drops, downpouring, fell. The still air quivered. Christophe, under illusion, at fullest stretch, shook. He was blinded. By a flash of lightning, he saw, in the depths of the night, he saw—he was God. God was in himself; He burst the ceiling of the room, the walls of the house; He cracked the very bounds of existence. He filled the sky, the universe, space. The world coursed through Him, like a cataract.'⁸ Larry Darrell, the hero of Somerset Maugham's *Razor's Edge*, too, was, so to speak, taken unawares by his mystical vision.⁹

Apart from these peculiarities, there are, according to William James, four other hallmarks of the mystical experience, viz. ineffabil-

⁷ Rabindranath Tagore, *The Religion of Man*, pp.93-94.

⁸ Romain Rolland, *Jean Christophe* (New York: The Modern Library), Vol.I. p.252.

⁹ Somerset Maugham, *The Razor's Edge* (Vanguard Library), p.246.

ity, neotic quality, transiency, and passivity. Of these, James maintains, the first two are invariably prominent in any mystical experience, though the last two are also usually present.¹⁰

Mystical experiences are ineffable, because they outstrip all descriptions, elude all definitions, and render any account of them pitifully inadequate. Thus the *Kena Upaniṣad* declares: 'The eye does not go there, nor speech, nor the mind. We do not therefore know how to instruct one about it. It is different from what is known, and it is beyond what is unknown.'¹¹ This ineffability stems from the fact that during a mystical vision we are in touch with the Infinite and the Universal, and our languages are efficacious only when invoked to express the finite and the relative. Consequently, a mystic finds himself completely at a loss to communicate or articulate his experience. Words fail him; he feels choked and stifled. The empirical modes of expression seem to him woefully restrictive and circumscribed. He often advocates the language of *silence* as the only proper mode of expression. Mystics often resort to a negative manner of description. They find it easier to say what the content of their vision *was not* than to describe what it *was*. The celebrated Vedāntic device of '*neti, neti*' is founded upon a recognition of the essential ineffability of all varieties of mystical experience.

Some writers, for instance, B. Croce, the outstanding Italian philosopher of the present century, contend that this element of ineffability divests the mystical experience of all philosophical significance. It is maintained, if the vision is incapable of a linguistic expression, then the mystic must perforce remain mute and dumb! The criticism is patently invalid. Even in the realm of relativity, there are experiences (e.g. the experience of love at first sight) which are imbued with this quality of ineffability. But we do not envisage them as bereft of all importance for philosophy. Further, it ought to be

borne in mind that there are degrees or scales of ineffability. Every intuition is not wholly ineffable. Some visions are less difficult to express than others. Only the absolute unity with the supreme Being is entirely ineffable. But such a merger is usually preceded by other experiences, which permit a measure of verbal formulation. Rightly has Sri Aurobindo observed: 'Before that unspeakable experience of the ultimate or disappearance into it, there is possible a descent of at least some power or presence of the Reality into the substance of mind along with a modification of mind-substance, an illumination of it; and of this experience, an expression of some kind, a rendering into thought ought to be possible.'¹²

The neotic quality of a mystical experience resides in the fact that, though akin to states of deep feeling and stirring emotions, it, unlike feelings and emotions, provides an insight into deep truths inaccessible to the discursive and analytical mind. The vision of the mystic is at once an experience and a message. It is not merely a linkage of feelings or an aggregate of emotions. It affords us an insight into the Ultimate and the Infinite. It enables us to know that by knowing which all things are known. This neotic quality embodies a standing repudiation of Bertrand Russell who holds, 'Mysticism is, in essence, little more than a certain intensity and depth of feeling in regard to what is believed about the universe'.¹³ Mysticism represents an approach to Reality. In its stress upon actual experience, and not just verbal enquiry, it underlines the empirical method of enquiry. Indeed, mysticism, as Josiah Royce has pointed out, is the only consistent form of empiricism. The ontological content of the experience of the mystic is not an emotional offshoot of what is already believed about the universe, but is the result of experience itself. The intuition is not necessarily related to what is believed (it may go counter to one's previous beliefs), but it enables us to decide as to what

¹⁰ William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, pp.380-82.

¹¹ *Kena Upaniṣad*, I.3,4.

¹² *Letters of Sri Aurobindo*, Vol.IV. p.103.

¹³ Bertrand Russell, *Mysticism and Logic*, p.3.

is to be believed. In other words, a mystical experience may provide us a *Weltanschauung*, but 'a certain intensity and depth of feeling' concerning a *Weltanschauung* cannot obtain for us a mystical experience.

Transiency and passivity, according to William James, are the third and the fourth distinctive features respectively of a mystical vision. The experience of the mystic is transient, because it cannot be sustained for long. Except in the state of the *nirvikalpa samādhi*, the mystic cannot for ever remain absorbed in his trance. The usual duration of a mystical experience ranges from minutes to a few hours, and in some very rare cases lasts for a few days. However, though the experience itself endures for a brief period, it, as we have seen, leaves a lasting and indelible impression behind itself. Passivity is attendant upon a mystical experience, because in it the will of the individual is in abeyance, since the individual, for the time being, is lost in the universal.

It is a matter of controversy whether the capacity for performing miracles may be envisaged as a fundamental concomitant of the vision of the mystic. It is indisputable that most mystics are endowed with miraculous powers. It is also true that a mystic is popularly regarded as possessing miraculous powers, and that some religious traditions, e.g. the Roman Catholic Church, envision the capacity for performing miracles as an essential component of saintliness. On the other hand, it is also a fact that most mystics show scarcely any enthusiasm for miracles. The Indian mystical tradition has been specially antagonistic to miracles. From Patañjali to Sri Ramakrishna, the great mystics of India have expressed themselves in no uncertain terms against the performance of miracles by spiritual aspirants. The mystics of India regard these miraculous powers as hindrances and obstructions to spiritual progress. The Indian attitude to miracles is admirably embodied in the following episode from the life of Sri Ramakrishna: 'A youthful disciple of Sri Ramakrishna once acquired the power of reading the heart of

another. When he related this experience to the Master, he rebuked him and said, "Shame on thee, child, do not waste thy energies on these petty things".¹⁴ Taking into account both the standpoints, we may conclude that miraculous powers, though almost universally present among the mystics, are merely incidental offshoots and not essential ingredients of the experience of mystics.

A noteworthy feature of mysticism is that the accounts of various mystics of their experiences are fundamentally alike. Swami Vivekananda, as we know, has vigorously elucidated this aspect of mysticism in his numerous lectures and addresses. Mysticism is free from any narrowness of outlook. Its approach is universal and not sectarian. It eschews all exclusiveness and dogmatism. It is bereft of parochialism and doctrinal rigidity. That this unity is basic to mysticism no one (not even Bertrand Russell¹⁵) will deny. But it is also a fact that, aside from this underlying unity of message, a certain variation of emphasis is palpable in the writings of various mystics. The history of mysticism is not a monotonous monologue. Its unity does not coincide with a dull homogeneity. There are varieties of mystical experience. That the mystical tradition of India postulates varieties of mysticism is testified by such distinctions of *samādhi* as *samprajñāta* and *asamprajñāta*, *savikalpaka* and *nirvikalpaka*. But it is important to note that the differences among mystics are not occasioned by their religious affiliations. For we often find mystics of different faiths in consilience with one another, but diverging from mystics of their own religion. A Hindu mystic may agree with a Christian mystic, but may differ from another Hindu mystic; and a Christian mystic may concur with a Sufi, but may not agree with another Christian mystic. The differences of mystics are grounded upon the different levels of mystical experience. The primary hallmark of mysticism, as we have

¹⁴ F. Max Müller, *Ramakrishna: His Life and Sayings*, p. 154.

¹⁵ See the chapters on 'Mysticism' in his *Mysticism and Logic and Science and Religion*.

seen, is its stress upon a higher Unity in which the differences and discrepancies cease to clash. 'He goes from death to death who sees any difference here.'¹⁶ And the various levels of mystical experience are determined by the extent to which they approach this Unity. The more proximate they are to this Unity, the higher is the level to which they belong. Broadly speaking, we may ramify the mystical experience into three stages. Before we delineate these stages, we would like to observe that the classification is not rigid and watertight, and that some of the experiences challenge accommodation in any particular stage and fall on the borderland of the two stages.

The first stage embodies an awareness of the unity of things around us. The awareness is sudden and often takes us unawares. It is psychological in character, and has scarcely any ontological foundation. Psychological participation, and not metaphysical union, is the conspicuous factor here. This participation is vividly present in the phenomenon known as love at first sight. It is also palpable in the moods of poets and artists. Thus Shelley could see the eternal breath of Nature in 'the lightest leaf that quivers to the passing breeze' and 'the meanest worm that lurks in graves and fattens on the dead'.¹⁷ Byron fervently asks: 'Are not the mountains, waves, and skies a part of me and of my soul, as I of them?'¹⁸ Wordsworth writes: 'I was often unable to think of external things as having external existence, and I communed with all that I saw as something not apart from but inherent in my immaterial nature.' 'If a sparrow came before my window,' avers Keats, 'I take part in its existence and pick about the gravel.' Not only in poetry, but in art as well is this mystic awareness of participation and communion present. For, as Oscar Wilde has put it: 'Truth in art is the unity of a thing with itself: the outward rendered expressive of the inward; the soul made incarnate;

the body instinct with spirit.'¹⁹ No wonder, then, that Leonardo da Vinci used to wait patiently for his 'moment of invention'. Thoreau, the sage of the Walden pond, observes: 'In the midst of a gentle rain, . . . I was suddenly sensible of such sweet and beneficent society in Nature, in the very pattering of drops, and in every sound and sight around my house, an infinite and unaccountable friendliness all at once like an atmosphere sustaining me. . . . Every little pine needle expanded and swelled with sympathy and befriended me.'²⁰ This psychological awareness of unity, however, is not exclusive to the poet, the artist, or the eremite; almost every one, at some time or other, encounters it.

In the second stage, the union is more deep and more revealing. Here the awareness centres, not around a landscape or the stillness of the infinite space which used to frighten Pascal, but around God. The union is not of a Keats and a sparrow, but of a mystic and God. This state is the Night of Spirit of St. John of the Cross: 'This dark night is an overflowing of God into the soul, which it purges of its ignorance and imperfections.' 'Herein He absorbs the soul,' continues St. John of the Cross, 'above all being, in the Being of God.'²¹ Bernardino De Laredo, a Spanish mystic, speaks of 'a sudden and momentary uplifting of the mind, in which the soul . . . is suddenly upraised so as to unite itself with its most loving God'.²² 'Now what is this union?' asks *Theologia Germanica*. 'It is that we should be of a truth purely, simply, and wholly at one with the One Eternal Will of God.'²³ But the union here is the union with a personal God, and in such a union the 'I-'Thou' relation cannot be transmuted. Thus we find both Mirā and St. Teresa of Jesus rejoicing in being the brides of God. Here we have a

¹⁹ *The Works of Oscar Wilde* (Collins Edition), p.864.

²⁰ H. D. Thoreau, *Walden* (New York: Carlton House), p.119.

²¹ E. Allison Peers, *The Mystics of Spain*, p.129.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 49.

²³ *Theologia Germanica*, Chapter XXVII.

¹⁶ *Katha Upaniṣad*, II.1.11.

¹⁷ *Poems of Shelley* (Collins Classics), p.71.

¹⁸ Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Canto 3.lxxv.

union, but not the Unity. The mystics themselves seem to realize this, for St. Teresa observes: 'It seems that the object of the Divine Majesty in granting the soul this wonderful companionship is to prepare her for more.'²⁴

Now, we come to the final union in which there is neither knower nor known, neither slayer nor slain, neither subject nor object. The highest mystical experience is that state in which the union is so complete that the 'I'-'Thou' relation stands abolished, and the unity is so universal and infinite that the One is all. 'He who knows that highest Brahman', declares the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, 'becomes even Brahman.'²⁵ The Spanish mystic Francisco De Osuna writes: 'This self-giving of man to God, and of God to man, is a gift so perfectly given that when it is given God seems to be wholly and entirely in man.'²⁶ 'If I am to know God directly,' affirms Eckhart, 'I must become completely He and He I; so that He and this I become and are one I.'²⁷ Gulshan Raz, the Sufi, says: 'In His divine majesty the *me*, the *we*, the *thou* are not found, for in the One there can be no dis-

²⁴ E. Allison Peers, *The Mystics of Spain*, pp.88-89.

²⁵ *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, III.2.9.

²⁶ E. Allison Peers, *The Mystics of Spain*, p.63.

²⁷ Cited by W. B. Selbie, *Psychology of Religion*, p.262.

inction.' This union, in short, is total and absolute.

With this, we conclude our brief account of mysticism. Within the compass of a short article, we have attempted a delineation of the distinctive facets and features of mysticism. The importance of mysticism for religion and philosophy can never be exaggerated. If the concept of God is the nucleus around which revolve all or at least most of the religions and philosophies, then, mysticism, as Bergson has pointed out, 'must furnish us with the means of approaching, as it were experimentally, the problem of the existence and nature of God. Indeed, we fail to see how philosophy could approach the problem in any other way.'²⁸ If we are ever to transcend the limitations of the finite and the relative, and regain our essential divine nature, then we must follow the lead of the mystics. In a word, the immense importance of mysticism is enshrined in the fact that only through this method can we know the truth and become the ultimate Truth (Sat), infinitely widen our consciousness and become the infinite Consciousness (Cit), and enjoy bliss and embody the supreme Bliss (Ānanda).

²⁸ Henri Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, p.206.

THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE COSMIC MIND

BY SWAMI SHRADDHANANDA

Two persons were standing face to face outside the town hall—one a man and the other a woman. Each of them was trying to read the mind of the other. The man, a professor, had just delivered a lengthy public lecture, and the woman happened to be one of the audience. The professor thought: 'She must be

admiring my great scholarship.' But, as a matter of fact, the woman's mental reaction to the lecture was: 'What a proud person he is; it is disgusting to talk to him.' The woman, on the other hand, clad in very costly silk, was thinking: 'Well, this gentleman must have been captivated by my dress.' What actually the

professor ruminated was: 'How vain of her to make a show of her apparel!'

Thus the attempt of each to read what was going on in the mind of the other proved to be a failure, and that is what it should be. An individual's mind is a remarkably individual entity encased in a sort of impenetrable wall, so that it is extremely difficult for any other mind to have a direct contact with it. Each of us, wherever he goes, has his own individual mind, and it is not possible for our neighbours or our closest friends to know what is happening there. It is easy to have some direct knowledge of another's body from the appearance etc., but never of the mind. Our so-called knowledge about another's mind is often a conjecture. Shut up within the precincts of our own comprehension and unknown to others, our mind remains to us a constant companion all through our life. It serves us in our physical actions, intellectual enterprises, and moral endeavours. Sometimes it is friendly. At other times it may turn hostile. Even then we have no other choice but to endure it. Lastly, when we aspire after transcendental truth, it is with this individual mind, again, that we have to struggle for it. Our mind must show us the way to go beyond the mind! The individual mind certainly admits of various degrees of transformation, good or bad, but the fact remains that at no stage is its direct experience possible to anyone outside our own personality. The individual mind is exclusively our own possession.

Ordinarily, it is not necessary to know what the nature of our mind is. It is enough for us to feel that we *have* a mind, and we can receive its help in the different pursuits of our life. But there are occasions when doubt comes, and we are prone to inquire what might be the constitution and *modus operandi* of our mind. For example, I see something at a distance and instantly have a knowledge of that thing in my mind. Does my mind somehow go outside my body and touch that distant object? I ask. Certain schools of Indian psychology explain perception with some such assumption. It is

assumed that, in perception, first there is contact of the object with the particular sense-organ, and then the mind, which is made up of a very fine material, also goes outside the body and forms a wave (*vrtti*) similar to the object. Take, again, the case when I am deeply engrossed in the thought of a dear person hundreds of miles away. I am totally oblivious of my present surroundings. Does my mind actually run to that place in some incomprehensible way? I ask naively. Similarly, when my mind is profoundly occupied in some event of the past, and at least for the time being seems to have been entirely cut off from the present, I wonder: Has the mind any magical power of moving along time backward or forward? Yet another question. I find that I cannot put a hard and fast limit to the forms in which my mind may think. This moment it thinks of a *particle*, and in the next, of a *mountain*. The latter thought entails no additional labour for the mind, even though its content is infinitely more 'massive'. The mind seems to be so constituted that it has great liberty in the matter of generating thought forms. These are some of the questions that we are prone to ask about our own mind. The professional psychologist may not bother with these naive questions, but sometimes sublime truths dawn upon us through simple channels.

Thus, when I am in a metaphysical mood, I may be led to attribute the following characteristics to my mind:

1. My mind is made up of a very fine material—much finer than the body material.
2. My mind has mobility. Very rightly the ancients called mind the swiftest thing in the universe.
3. My mind has extension and pervasiveness.
4. My mind exhibits great creativity.

If these traits are admitted for the mind, a further generalization may appear valid, namely, my mind is not rigidly confined within the walls of my body. It can act upon other minds.

The findings of clairvoyance and telepathy must have an element of truth that cannot be summarily brushed aside, even though they speak of some unusual and ununderstandable phenomena. The Yoga-sāstra speaks of many more interesting truths about the mind. In fact, the mind has unforeseen hidden powers, and it is possible, by special methods, to develop these powers and thereby extend the limits of our individual mind. Of course, the mind still continues to remain an individual mind to us operating through our body.

There are thus various grades of the individual mind—beginning from the ordinary and terminating in the highly developed 'yogic' mind. Different shades of intellectual and moral attainment can be conceived to lie between these two extremes. In none of these stages, however, has the mind ceased to be an individual.

But the human mind, by virtue of its inherent creative tendency, sometimes rebels against the limitations of individuality. And that is how we are led to the concept of what is called the cosmic mind. The notion of the cosmic mind is very old. In fact, as soon as we conceive of a God, we are bound to accept a cosmic mind too, because God, as a supreme Being, as the Creator and the supreme Lord of all happenings in this world, must be a conscious Being. Since He is a conscious Being, He must have a mind; He must be able to think. But then His thoughts, the process of His thoughts, and the workings of His mind are not similar to those of our individual mind. At one single moment, He can apply Himself to thousands of things! He can attend to some event in a distant star, and at the same time He knows what is happening inside the minutest atom in our world. Our concept of God as the all-knowing Being naturally gives Him the power to know everything at all moments. So God's mind must be a universal or cosmic mind. Whatever is, is in God's mind. Whatever happens is known to God's mind.

But even though we may not believe in God, there are other considerations which force us

to accept the concept of cosmic mind. We see in this universe order, creativity, etc. Where do they come from? Well, when we look into our own individual mind, we find in it the power to link different things into a harmonious whole; to recognize and utilize cause-and-effect relation between things and events. Orderliness and purposiveness are functions of the mind we know. When, therefore, viewing the world outside, we see things in order and events pointing to certain definite purposes, we cannot but conclude that behind all these there is some sort of a thinking mind. The universe is not a chaos. It is an ordered universe, designed and directed by the working of some sort of mind. It may not be God; we may give it the name of Nature, but its essential function is to think in an orderly way, just as our own individual mind thinks. And on these assumptions, we know that many philosophers and some scientific thinkers, even apart from any religious consideration, have been prone to think of this universe as manifesting mind.

This second picture of the cosmic mind does not, of course, give us the great spiritual satisfaction of comprehending our beloved God as the Master Thinker, the Master Creator, His great mind operating through this manifold creation, and our individual mind, in its turn, through prayer and meditation, coming in contact with that great mind of His to realize eventually His knowledge, His love, and His joy. That is the religious perspective. The second picture of the cosmic mind can at the most give us some sort of intellectual satisfaction. Whatever might be our approach to the cosmic mind, it cannot be denied that it is a concept—an idea in the individual mind. Our individual mind, tired of its individuality, tries to formulate a cosmic mind, of course with logical reasoning. So, ultimately, that cosmic mind is resting in the individual mind as a concept—as a thought. Surely, it is a very powerful and majestic thought, but still it has not that unquestionable validity of direct experience. We cannot see for ourselves what the cosmic mind is. We only *infer* the universal mind from cer-

tain facts within our mind and certain facts outside ourselves in Nature. But what the cosmic mind is, we cannot know. We have no direct experience of it.

The Vedānta has made valuable researches about the nature of our own mind in its aspect of consciousness and, as a result of these researches, has developed its own idea of a cosmic mind. Here the cosmic mind does not remain merely a concept, *but is an indubitable fact of our own experience*. We can know the cosmic mind directly for ourselves. Let us try to briefly present this particular research. When I look into my own mind in the waking state, I find two distinct aspects of my mind: (1) the thought content and (2) the consciousness surrounding the thought. It is not possible to have a thought without being conscious of it. So there seems to be such a thing as a consciousness operating throughout the mind, illuminating everything happening in the mental field.

Thought means conscious thought. It is a mixture of an objective content and a sort of effulgence of my mind—I do not know what. Now, so far as our waking life is concerned, we find that it consists of a series of these 'mixtures'; sometimes a perception of sight, sometimes of a sound, sometimes of touch, sometimes my internal emotion, my desires, my feelings. All these together have to pass through my mind, and my waking life each day is the sum total of these separate 'mentations'. Then I go to sleep. I dream. Something unusual happens. The waking life is shut off, and I am ushered into a new type of waking—a new world. Many things not common with my familiar world of waking stand before me. I see persons; I see things; I see several events. It is, as it were, a new life, a new experience similar to the waking experience. When I wake up, I know that the world of dream was just a figment of the mind; it was purely imaginary. This is well known. But the question remains how the mind in the stage of dream exhibits these unusual properties, namely, things are created, things are connected, experiences are

given, and, lastly, the sense of reality is as strong as in the waking state. While dreaming, we do not discover that it is only our own mind that is producing the dream forms. Only when we wake up do we discover this trick. The mind somehow could create a world of its own with its own space and time and with its own notions of causality. The causal sequence in the dream is quite different from that of the awakened state. Many strange things can happen which could not possibly happen in the waking state. The whole order of causality is topsyturvied. The mind somehow in dream has that power to create things and to connect things, so that, even though impossible, they appear quite in order! The experience of the dream state, when we thoroughly analyse its implications, forces upon us these conclusions: (1) The mind in dream somehow has unlimited power to create things; (2) it has the power to connect things into a new order of time, space, and causation; and (3) it has somehow the power to lend a sense of reality to its creations.

Now let us go to another stage, namely, deep sleep. In deep sleep I do not dream; there is no thought. But when I am awake the next morning, I find myself much refreshed, and I think I slept very profoundly. All my nerves have been soothed; temporarily at least I had no worries and enjoyed great happiness. My memory gives me these ideas. The question remains what happens to my personality—to my mind—in deep sleep? My mind exhibits certain characteristics in the waking state; it exhibits other characteristics in the dream; and when deep sleep comes, what are the characteristics of that same mind? Did that mind disappear?

When I try to recall my experience in the sleep state, I remember a kind of void, but at the same time I cannot deny that I, as the experiencer of that void, was there. In fact, there is a feeling of identity in the different levels of experience. Somehow I retain my identity in all these three states. This is a new revelation

of my personality. It is not the waking mind which I ordinarily deal with. It is not the dream mind either. What is it that gives me this strong sense of identity throughout these three states? That is the question. The Vedānta says it is necessary to distinguish the two aspects of the mind which we find in the waking—the aspect of thought content and the aspect of consciousness. Thought and consciousness are mingled in such a manner that we do not care to distinguish between the two. It is not necessary for our normal purposes in life to separate the two. We see our mind knowing this and imagining this, and that is sufficient. But when we come to the question of deeper truths of life, it is necessary to analyse this mixture of mind. There is a permanent element in the mind that gives us the notion of our identity through different states of experience. This is responsible for our consciousness. There is, again, a passing aspect, a changing aspect—the *thought content*. The first is called in the Vedānta *draṣṭṛ* (the Knower), and the second *dṛśya* (the Known). The thought forms change, but the illuminator of the thought forms does not.

Getting this clue, we can extend this knowledge into other directions and try to find out the nature of this permanent factor of the mind. Let us think of a state of things before birth. Let me try to imagine where I was before I was born. A picture of darkness and void comes, and I say: 'Well, I do not know—perhaps it was darkness—suddenly I emerged. I was absent before my birth!' This seems to be a nice answer superficially. But if we analyse it deeply, we find that even with that concept of darkness, with that idea of vacuum, some element of my personality is convinced of its own existence. Somehow I, in a certain form, am standing in that distant past and seeing for myself that vacuum which was before my birth. I can think of vacuum, but still I am there in some form. That is my sense of identity. The core of my personality that is working in my body, that same 'I' is there even when I try to think of the state of things before my birth!

Let me, again, try to imagine what will happen at my death. Well, some day I will probably become ill, conditions will worsen, and gradually all mental functions will become dim, then the heart will stop, and the body will die. I can visualize this picture, but what happens to that 'I'? Unconsciously, in that picture, I have not been able to withdraw my mind. I am in some form present in that distant future to see my own death! When we analyse these concepts, these implications become clear. In other words, it is not possible to annihilate the observer—that element of the mind which continuously presents before us the sense of identity. Behind the series of thoughts of my ego—'I', 'I', 'I'—there is an abiding element of my mind, which is the steady observer of things. The observer of the happenings in the waking, dream, and sleep states—the observer of what was there before birth and also what is going to happen after death—this permanent factor of our mind can never be eliminated. The Vedānta says that this permanent part, if we are permitted to use the word 'part', of our mind is our *consciousness*. This consciousness is something of the nature of a steady, unchanging light which throws its rays on every thought, and then these thoughts become significant. Without this ray of light from this consciousness, no thought is possible, no experience is possible, no action is possible. Our individual mind is carrying in its bosom a very precious treasure, the treasure of consciousness. And this consciousness is not an individual consciousness, in the sense we speak of our individual mind. This consciousness has no limit. Nothing can bind this consciousness. All that we think of—all that we come in contact with—come in the category of the second aspect of our mind, namely, thought content or, in the Vedāntic terminology, the *dṛśya*, the objective element of the mind.

The conscious element of our mind is birthless and deathless. Our individual mind is always carrying this great power, but we are not careful enough to see it. It is this conscious

element that knows, that gives to our personality a sense of identity in and through all possible states of life. The purpose of the Vedāntic inquiry is to make us grasp this factor of our mind. We can, then, at once see that this permanent element of our mind, namely, our consciousness, is nothing but the cosmic mind. If for a moment we can identify ourselves with this consciousness, which is standing behind our thoughts, behind our actions, our body, our world of experience, we know ourselves to be infinite—the infinite mind on which all this manifoldness of creation is hanging. Everything in this universe, then, becomes a thought of that cosmic mind, which is my consciousness. The Vedānta says that it is possible to know that we are not that little individual mind working through a limited body. We are that all-perceiving consciousness which always is and shall be. It is ever free. Our own mind, when properly understood, becomes the supreme truth of life, the supreme basis of this universe. If we are eager to give it a name, we can call it the cosmic mind. But this is not any longer a concept; it is not a subject of philosophic speculation. This cosmic mind is *one with me*. I am *it* always. It is the truth of

truth to me, of course, when I am able to *know* it.

Sri Ramakrishna said: 'Mind when properly purified and understood becomes the pure Self.' The mind that is working through individuation becomes infinite when it can stand on its own nature; that is the Vedāntic finding of the cosmic mind. Cosmic mind means, in the final analysis, *our* consciousness, and there is no such thing as *my* consciousness. There is only one Consciousness, and that Consciousness may be given the name of God—the God we worship. God is an aspect of that supreme Consciousness, which is also the basis of my own being. That is the true Self, or the Ātman, as the Vedānta calls it; but, put in our language, we can well call it the cosmic mind, the cosmic mind that is myself. The moment I can identify myself with that cosmic mind, I find that the whole universe is in me. This body, and whatever is in this world, is resting in me. That is the declaration of the Vedānta, and that is the real truth of the cosmic mind. Other pictures of the cosmic mind are mere concepts; they have their own value, no doubt, but they cannot give us that supreme knowledge and satisfaction and fulfilment which the cosmic mind, as the truth of truths, can give us.

ŚRĪ-BHĀŚYA

BY SWAMI VIRESWARANANDA

(Continued from previous issue)

TOPIC 4

THE CHIEF PRĀṆA (VITAL FORCE) IS
DIFFERENT FROM AIR AND
ITS FUNCTIONS

न वायुक्रिये पृथगुपदेशात् ॥२।४।८॥

8. (The chief *prāṇa*) is neither air nor its function, on account of its being mentioned separately.

The *sūtra* discusses the nature of the chief *prāṇa*. Is this *prāṇa* mere air or its function, moving-in and out as breath, or is it mere air which has assumed a special condition? The opponent holds that it is mere air according to the text, '*Prāṇa* is air'; or that it may be the function of air as inhalation and exhalation. These views are rejected by the *sūtra*, on account of its being mentioned separately from

air in the text, 'From Him are produced the vital force, mind and all the sense-organs, space, air, fire, water, and earth that supports everything' (*Mu.U.*, II.1.3). It cannot be a mere function of air, for the text does not mention the functions of the other elements as separate things. The text 'Prāṇa is air' only indicates that *prāṇa* is air which has assumed a special form, but not altogether a separate thing from air, like fire. It is not a separate element. The next *sūtra* establishes this.

चक्षुरादिवत् तत्सहशिष्यादिभ्यः ॥२१४१९॥

9. But vital force (is an instrument of the soul) like eyes etc., on account of (its) being taught with them and for other reasons.

The vital force is not a separate element, but an instrument of the soul like eyes etc. This follows from the fact that it is mentioned in the conversation of the *prāṇas* along with the organs of the soul. In common parlance, only like things are mentioned or grouped together. So the vital force is an instrument of the soul. 'And for other reasons' refers to texts where the organs are called *prāṇas* and the vital force is said to be the chief *prāṇa*. *Vide Chā.U.*, I.2.7.

If the vital force is an instrument of the soul, then like eyes etc. it must have some particular activity or function helpful to the soul. But no such activity is visible. The next *sūtra* refutes this objection.

अकरणत्वाच्च न दोषः ; तथा हि दर्शयति ॥२१४१९०॥

10. On account of its not having any activity (there is) no objection, because thus (the scripture) teaches.

The objection that the *prāṇa* has no activity helpful to the soul is not correct, for the vital force maintains the body with all the organs. *Vide Chā.U.*, V.1.7. So the *prāṇa* subserves the purpose of the soul, and is therefore an instrument of the soul like the eyes etc.

पञ्चवृत्तिर्मनोवद्वयपदिश्यते ॥२१४१९१॥

11. It is taught as having a fivefold function like the mind.

Even as desire etc. are not different from the mind, though different functions of it producing different effects, according to the text, 'Desire, purpose, doubt ... all this is mind' etc. (*Br.U.*, I.5.3), even so according to the same text, 'Prāṇa, apāna, vyāna, udāna, and samāna—all this is *prāṇa*', they are but fivefold functions of the one *prāṇa* and not different from it.

TOPIC 5

THE MINUTENESS OF THE VITAL FORCE

अणुश्च ॥२१४१९२॥

12. And it is minute.

Like the sense-organs, the vital force is also minute, for the scriptural texts declare that it passes out of the body with the soul, that it moves, and so on: 'When it (soul) goes out, the vital force accompanies it' (*Br.U.*, IV.4.2). An objection may be raised that other texts declare that it is infinite: 'Equal to these three worlds, equal to this universe' (*Br.U.*, I.3.22). This is only by way of praise, as the life of all living beings depends on breath.

TOPIC 6

THE PRESIDING DEITIES OF THE ORGANS

ज्योतिराद्यधिष्ठानं तु तदामननात्
प्राणवता शब्दात् ॥२१४१९३॥

13. But the ruling over the senses by Fire and others and of the soul (over the organs) is owing to the will of the highest Self (as is known) from the scriptures.

The rule of the deities Fire etc. over the organs (*vide sūtra* II.1.5) and of the soul also, as is known from common experience and texts like *Br.U.*, II.1.18, ultimately depends on the will of the highest Self. 'He who, abiding within Fire, rules Fire from within' etc. (*Br.U.*, III.7.5). *Vide Tai. U.*, II.8.1 and *Br.U.*, III.8.9 also.

तस्य च नित्यत्वात् ॥२१४१९४॥

14. And on account of the permanence of this.

This quality, inhering in all things, of being ruled by the highest Self is permanent, as it is connected with His essential nature. 'Having sent forth this, He entered into it; having entered into it, He became Sat and Tyat' (*Tai. U.*, II.6). This text shows that He enters into all things to be their ruler. *Vide Gītā*, X.42 also. So, ultimately, the rule of the gods and the soul over the organs depends on the will of the Lord.

TOPIC 7

THE ORGANS ARE DIFFERENT FROM THE CHIEF PRĀṆA

ते इन्द्रियाणि, तद्व्यपदेशादन्यत्र श्रेष्ठात् ॥२।४।१५॥

15. They (the other *prāṇas*), except the chief (*prāṇa*), are organs, on account of (their) being so designated (by the scriptures).

Are all the *prāṇas* mentioned in *Bṛ.U.*, I.5.21 organs, or is the chief *prāṇa* to be excluded from this category? The chief *prāṇa* is not an organ like the rest, for texts like 'The organs are ten and one (mind)' mention only the senses and the mind as organs and not the chief *prāṇa*.

भेदश्रुतेर्वैलक्षण्याच्च ॥२।४।१६॥

16. On account of differentiating scriptural texts and characteristic differences.

'From Him is born *prāṇa*, the mind, and all organs' (*Mu.U.*, II.1.3): here the chief *prāṇa* is stated as different from the organs. No doubt the mind also is separately stated from the organs, but other texts declare that the mind is an organ. *Vide Gītā*, XV. 7. The chief *prāṇa*, again, differs in characteristics from the organs, for in *susupti*, deep sleep, the chief *prāṇa* functions, but not the mind and other organs. The organs including the mind are instruments of the soul for cognition and action, while the chief *prāṇa* maintains the body and the organs. It is because of this dependence of the organs on the chief *prāṇa* that they are called *prāṇas* in *Bṛ.U.*, I.5.21. So the chief *prāṇa* is different from the organs.

TOPIC 8

THE EVOLUTION OF NAMES AND FORMS IS THE WORK OF THE LORD AND NOT OF THE SOUL

संज्ञामूर्तिवृत्तिस्तु त्रिवृत्कुर्वत उपदेशात् ॥२।४।१७॥

17. But the creation of names and forms is by Him who does the tripartite (creation), for so the scriptures teach.

A question is raised whether the Hiranyagarbha (*Brahmā*) or the highest Self, having the Hiranyagarbha for its body, fashions gross objects of name and form like gods etc. The *sūtra* states that this activity belongs to the highest Self, having Hiranyagarbha for its body, and not to Hiranyagarbha (*Brahmā*) only, for texts teach that names and forms were evolved by the same agent that produces the tripartite combination. 'Let me ... differentiate name and form, ... of these let me make each one threefold' (*Chā.U.*, VI.3.2-3). Moreover, *Brahmā* cannot be the agent of the tripartite combination, for he comes into existence only after the tripartite creation is finished and the gross elements are produced. The mundane egg is produced from the gross elements, and from this egg is born the four-faced *Brahmā* (*Hiranyagarbha*).

मांसादि भौमं यथाशब्दमितरयोश्च ॥२।४।१८॥

18. Flesh etc. are of earthy nature; so also in the case of the other two, according to texts.

An objection is raised against what is said in the last *sūtra*. The objection is that, though the agent of both the tripartite creation and evolving of name and form is the same, he need not be the highest Self, but can be the individual soul *Brahmā*. For texts do refer to a tripartite process regarding food taken by the individual souls. So it is not a fact that the tripartite creation takes place before the evolution of name and form. Moreover, the *Chāndogya* text (VI.3.2-3) quoted in the last *sūtra* clearly says that name and form were evolved first and then the tripartite creation took place: 'Let me ... differentiate name and form, ... of these let me make each one threefold.'

The *sūtra* refutes this and says that the tripartite process referred to in *Chā.U.*, VI.5.1 is only a description of the evolutionary process of food, drink, etc. taken by (human) beings and not the true tripartite process described in the earlier *Chāndogya* text. 'Food when eaten becomes divided into three parts' etc. (*Chā.U.*, VI.5.1). Food undergoes a threefold change: a portion, the grossest, is rejected by the organism; a portion, the nutritive part, is assimilated for body building; and the finest or the subtle essence goes to build the mind. So the refused matter, flesh etc., and the mind are all earth (food). Similarly, the other two elements, water and fire, also undergo a threefold change as described in the next two verses (*vide Chā.U.*, VI.5.2-3). What the *Chāndogya* text 'Let me ... differentiate name and form, ... of these let me make each one threefold' means is that the highest Self willed to evolve name and form,

and for this purpose, He created as a first step the gross elements from the fine ones by the tripartite process, and then evolved name and form with these gross elements. So the highest Self alone, having Hiranyagarbha as its body, is the evolver of name and form.

वैशेष्यात् तद्वादस्तद्वादः ॥२१४१९॥

19. But the designation (of the gross elements as earth etc.) is on account of the preponderance (of a particular element) in them.

Though each gross element is a compound of the three rudimentary elements, yet due to the preponderance of one of these three fine elements in the gross element, it is called after that element as earth, water, or fire. The repetition of the word 'designation' indicates that the chapter ends here.

(To be continued)

NOTES AND COMMENTS

TO OUR READERS

Mr. Christopher Isherwood, the well-known English writer, is writing a new biography of Sri Ramakrishna, which is appearing first in instalments in *Vedanta and the West*, published by the Vedanta Society of Southern California, Hollywood. 'The Birth of Ramakrishna', forming the second chapter of Mr. Isherwood's forthcoming book, appeared in the May-June 1959 (No. 137) issue of the above journal, and it is presented to our readers here with the kind permission of Swami Prabhavananda, head of the Society. Sri Ramakrishna's birthday this year falls on the 28th of this month. ...

A keen student of both philosophy and science, Dr. Pravas Jivan Chaudhury, M.A., M.Sc., D.Phil., Professor of Philosophy, Presidency College, Calcutta, has kindly sent a series of three articles on 'Vedānta as a Scientific Philosophy' for publication in *Prabuddha Bharata*. The first article of the series presented here points out that there is a philosophical

creed even in modern science, where certain abstract theories and conceptual constructs, representing some entities, are accepted as the basis for offering us some explanatory knowledge of the observable data. ...

Mysticism constitutes the kernel of all religions, and is the source of many philosophies. The sublime verities of mystical experience form the apogee of human knowledge. Though union with the Divine is the goal of all mysticism, there are varieties in the subjective experiences of the mystics. 'Mysticism: Its Verities and Varieties' is the subject of an illuminating article by Sri S. Subhash Chandra, M.A., of the University College of Arts, Hyderabad. ...

'The Individual and the Cosmic Mind' by Swami Shraddhananda, of the Vedanta Society of Northern California, San Francisco, is a lucid exposition of the Vedāntic concept of mind in its twin aspects. .

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

LOGOSOPHY: SCIENCE AND METHOD. By CARLOS BERNARDO GONZALEZ PECOTCHE. TRANSLATED FROM THE SPANISH BY FRANK GAYNOR. Published by Philosophical Library, 15 East 40th Street, New York 16. 1959. Pages 103. Price \$3.75.

Of late, the traditional metaphysic has been at a discount in the West. Its place has been usurped by science or by an analysis of language. It is heartening to find Spanish America taking up to real philosophy. From Argentina comes the new voice of Pecotche, whose nine discourses on logosophy are presented in this handy volume.

By logosophy is meant a new line of cognitions, a doctrine, a method, and a technique, which are eminently typical of it. It aims at enabling the individual to know and to realize the manifestation of supreme knowledge. This manifestation is the goal of conscious evolution. It dispels the smoke-screen of our own ignorance. This is a startling contention apparently arrived at independently of Śaṅkara's teaching of *ajñāna* and *adhyāsa*. From Spanish America comes a modern voice confirming the central doctrine of Śaṅkara.

Pecotche is interested, in this volume, in presenting the necessity of this conscious evolution of supreme self-realization, and this implies the necessity of what we, in this country, call *sādhana*. This *sādhana* or process manifests the reality of the specific aspects and

qualities suppressed or not contained previously in the individual. In explaining this process, Pecotche outlines the mental system in the third discourse. It is the higher mind that is said to activate consciousness, and one should realize the reality of knowing oneself to be capable of self-knowledge and of comprehending the purpose of existence. The logosophic cognition awakens and activates the faculties of the sensory system. Such a logosophic teaching does not argue; it formulates no hypothesis; it goes directly to the life of man to help him.

As Pecotche tells us, we have to be aware of a new mental energy which illuminates us from within, and which enables us to experience the innermost truths. It is both a metaphysical and a psychological discipline. In this connection, the ninth discourse on the directives for the approach to individual perfection is a valuable one. 'Man must be torn', observes Pecotche, 'out of the shadows cast by his ignorance of himself, and be carried toward the cognition that is to illuminate his reality.' Our goal is to fathom the great Truth, which is God Himself. And 'as every individual seeks himself, at the end of his search, he will find his own Creator, and identifying himself with Him, he will be his own creator and a direct collaborator in creation'.

DR. P. S. SASTRI

NEWS AND REPORTS

THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION SOCIETY

RANGOON

REPORT FOR 1958

Free Library: Total number of books in the library in English, Burmese, Hindi, Tamil, Sanskrit, Bengali, and Gujarati: 23,177. Books issued during the year: 30,758.

Free Reading Room: Dailies received: 23; periodicals: 125. Average daily attendance: 225.

Scriptural Classes: Classes on the *Bhagavad-Gītā* and the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* were held on Sundays and Saturdays respectively. Besides, the teach-

ings of some saints were also discussed. Total number of classes held during the year: 76; average attendance: 22.

Cultural Study Group: Several discussions on educational, cultural, and religious subjects were conducted.

Celebrations: The birthdays of saints and seers belonging to different faiths were observed.

Other Cultural Activities: 32 public lectures and symposia were arranged. The Society also organized 3 musical performances and 16 film shows on cultural and educational subjects.

Publications: Two books, translated into Burmese, have been published, and one book is in the press.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA'S BIRTHDAY

The 125th birthday of SRI RAMAKRISHNA falls on Sunday, February 28, 1960.