

PRABUDDHA BHARATA

Vol. LXV

MAY 1960

No. 5



उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत ।

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

SPIRITUAL TALKS OF SWAMI SHIVANANDA

January 17, 1930

When asked whether he had read the article on the Master by Romain Rolland in the *Asia* magazine, Mahapurushji replied: 'I have not read the whole of it, but his presentation seems to be excellent—though from the human point of view rather than that of an incarnation. He might have been under the belief that to think of him as divine brings in the idea of superhuman power, which creates some distance. But why should any idea of distance come? All powers and other glories become harmonized in him, so that the awe arising from superhuman glory etc. shrinks back. Is any one afraid of one's father even if he should be a millionaire ?

'But in the relation that we had with the Master, there was not the slightest touch of awe. Speaking for ourselves, we did not look upon the Master like that, and the Master also liked it that way. He would be offended if any one called him an incarnation of God. That really seems to undermine the intimacy one hopes to gain through love. A relation of love and faith is engendered by thinking of a person

as one's mother, father, brother, friend, and so on. Do you not remember the story of Guhaka Caṇḍāla in the *Rāmāyaṇa*?'

January 19, 1930

When a *brahmacārin* prayed for *sannyāsa*, Mahapurushji remarked, addressing all of us: 'The Master gave each one of us a piece of ochre cloth to be worn at the time of meditation. That is a good idea, and anyone can adopt it. Then Swamiji (Swami Vivekananda) secured the *mantras* for the formal vow of monasticism and made us all take orders. An ochre robe helps one in begging for food, for otherwise one has to introduce oneself to all and sundry as a monk at the time of begging. God is our inner Ruler, the Soul of our souls—of all and of myself too. It is enough if one has love, devotion, and faith in Him. One should strive to have these. But instead of that, one would perform *homa* (offering oblations in fire) and take up the monastic life, and there it ends! It has become a fashion, and I have no liking for such a farce. If one does not strive to realize Truth even after coming here, then all is in vain. Which

is greater—the realization of God or these external paraphernalia? All this has taken a peculiar turn, the sole aim now being to take orders somehow. Except A—nobody understands the *mantras* even—no, not even a single word of Sanskrit. It is a rule for the monk that he should perform the *Virajā homa* every day, or at least do so mentally. Celibacy is the chief constituent of monasticism, and the ochre cloth puts the stamp on it. The devotees do not require any formality. For them, their renunciation consists in believing in the incarnation of God and dedicating themselves heart and soul to Him.'

January 20, 1930

Mahapurushji was instructing a monk about full enlightenment and the nerve called *sūṣumṇā*. . . . The concluding portion of the conversation was this: 'Shall I come again? I doubt even if I have come at all; methinks, I have not come at all.'

When the *brahmacārin*, referred to earlier, came to pray again for granting *sannyāsa*, Mahapurushji said, addressing all: 'The essence of it all is God-realization. Divine enlightenment is the chief thing, the core of the whole matter. Should we be moving like dumb driven cattle even while under the aegis of the Master? A (*gerua*) dress is necessary as a help in begging; as to that, it is enough if you put on an ochre robe. One has to perform the *Virajā homa* every day. The chief thing needed is to be free from *rajas* (dirt). Does that come about by merely burning a few *bilva* leaves in the sacrificial fire? You must have the realization that God is the Soul of your soul, as also of the whole universe. There are quite a number of monks who gain nothing even by taking orders. Should there be a repetition of this even in the name of our Master? A *sannyāsin*, who is also a devotee,¹ does not talk like that. Existence-Knowledge-Bliss, Śiva, Śiva!

¹ *Sannyāsins* are generally supposed to tread the path of knowledge alone; but Madhusūdana Sarasvatī and others never discarded devotion.

January 21, 1930

It was the birthday of Swami Vivekananda, it being the seventh day of the dark fortnight of the month of Pausa. After talking on various subjects, Mahapurushji said: 'Swamiji was a great lover of music. In those days, he used to sing every morning in the *Bhairavī* tune. Do not forget to read the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* in Swamiji's room today.² This is a day for happiness; be you all filled with bliss!'

He asked Su—Maharaj to sing; and he sang:

'The great *yogin* Śiva sits immersed in *yoga*,
Methinks, a snow peak raises its head there
above the limitless snow' etc.

Hearing the song, Mahapurushji remarked: 'Girish Babu (Girish Chandra Ghosh) has composed the line "Time is confined to the present alone" in this song very graphically.'

When H—Maharaj came to pay his respects, Mahapurushji asked him, 'How are you celebrating the day at your place?'

H—Maharaj replied: 'We shall worship the Master and the Holy Mother a little elaborately.'

Mahapurushji: 'That's fine. Now see to it that there is plenty of *dhrupad* music.³ You call in Bhagavan, who plays the *pakhwāj*.⁴

H—Maharaj said: 'Bankim also has come. Su—Maharaj has arranged for some well-known musicians to sing at noon; there will be *jalatarāṅga* also.'

Mahapurushji: 'That's all right. But before that, you can finish your songs of Śiva. This is the day when Śiva incarnated, for Swamiji was like Śiva.'

Then, in the visitor's room, they sang several songs in praise of Śiva.

January 22, 1930

When I went to salute him in the morning, Mahapurushji said: 'Victory to Brahman that is Existence-Knowledge-Bliss! Victory to Mother

² Swami Vivekananda liked this *Upaniṣad* very much. The custom still prevails at the Belur Math.

³ Swami Vivekananda was a lover of classical music.

⁴ Also called *mṛdaṅga* in some parts.

who is full of love! Victory to Her who is full of compassion!' Then he sat meditating with his hands folded. A little later, he was asked, 'Many people came here yesterday; did it cause any inconvenience to you?' In answer he replied: 'What inconvenience? Not any that I remember. It was Swamiji's birthday, a day of jubilation, a day of ceremony. And it was exhilarating to see the number of people coming here attracted by the Master and Swamiji. What inconvenience can there be? To be sure, I feel a little strain now and then; but when his thoughts fill me up, I forget everything.'

January 23, 1930

The Kumbha fare (at Allahabad) was still continuing. Another party going there came to take his permission. He said: 'You have embraced the holy life; you have become monks; and you are going to Kumbha (where monks and holy men gather)—a meritorious act, to be sure. So who can say, no. Very well, set out for a few days with the Master's name on your lips; but take care that the works here are properly arranged for. (With a smile) But that is a cold place. Go to enjoy the cold and see the congregation of holy men. Those who are in ill health should not go. I have forbidden K—. It will be very cold on the sandbanks at the confluence (of the Gaṅgā and the Yamunā). You should spread your bed over dry straw; they keep warm. When I lived at Varanasi, I made a mattress of straw and a carpet of the same stuff to sit on; I felt very warm. I have nothing to say against any good work; it does not even require my permission.'

When he was told that G— Maharaj had been twice to the Kumbha fare with D— Babu and B— Maharaj, Mahapurushji said: 'Fine! The more you do such things in the name of our Master, the better; but see to it that you do not have any ill feeling towards any person or religion. That is what is wanted.'

January 24, 1930

Mahapurushji said to N— Babu: 'When you notice all this, you get more faith in the Master.

The Master himself has instilled such compassion in their hearts; expecting nothing and having no personal consideration, they are serving others without any selfish motive. They want nothing, so they are bound to progress spiritually.' By and by, they fell to talking about a devotee, and Mahapurushji said: 'His is a wonderful life. His life shows to a great extent how God protects His devotees. He loses his way; in front are high hills; the road is narrow; and there are wild buffaloes. Just then, a woman is seen walking in front of him. She wades across the river to show that it is not deep; and then, suddenly, there is no trace of her. A few incidents of this kind are known personally to us as well. Well, there are quite a lot of them in this world. He had a firm belief in God along with a sense of complete surrender. He was ready to face all hardship. Victory to our *guru*! Victory to the merciful Mother!'

January 25, 1930

Questioned by Sai— Maharaj, Mahapurushji said: 'Activity is good. But those who would realize God must pass through the stages of withdrawal from the sense objects, concentration, meditation, and *samādhi* (God-absorption). Proper environment is also necessary for keeping up the inspiration. These stages are nothing but an experience of the gradually ascending states of spiritual refinement and remaining in them.' When the talk turned to N— Babu, he said, in connection with the characteristics of a good worker, that such a one must be honest, industrious, expert, and must have such other personal qualities; and over and above all these, he must have a knack for managing others.

January 26, 1930

To Sai— Maharaj he said: 'Low thoughts will be passing over the mind; there is nothing to worry about them too much. Through the grace of our Lord, you will acquire great strength of mind by constant practice. One should fully engage one's mind in any one of

the practices—*japa*, meditation, worship, scriptural study, prayer, etc.—that appeals to the mind for the time being; and the Master will take care of the rest. He used to say, “I enjoy everything equally—be it a hot curry with chillies, a soup, a chutney, or a fried thing”.’

When asked whether an incarnation maintains an intimate, personal relationship with his devotees even after giving up the gross body, Mahapurushji replied: ‘That’s the exact position to be sure, till the end of a cycle of creation. Else, how long can the gross endure? It is the fine that we really need.’ On the question of meditation, he said: ‘One has to concentrate the mind on the different centres of the nerve *sūṣumṇā*. In the heart is (the lotus of a red hue with twelve petals, which is) the seat of the *iṣṭa* (chosen deity); and in the head is (the lotus of a white hue with a thousand petals, which is) the seat of the *guru*. This kind of meditation helps *japa*; and that is why these should be pursued.’

Mahapurushji was talking with Su—Maharaj and Ni—Maharaj; the talk related to the ‘Independence Day’.⁵ In the course of this, he said at last: ‘The Master and Swamiji came for the good of India and the world. That being so, good must follow, some amount of it at the least.’

January 27, 1930

India, America, Japan, China, England, Socialism, Bolshevism, and such other topics form-

⁵ Before India became independent in 1947, ‘Independence Day’ used to be observed all over the country on the 26th January every year, which has now become our Republic Day.

ed the subject of a talk with Ni—Maharaj.

It being the day for the worship of Raṭantī Kālī, the talk turned to the subject of what things would be offered to the Mother, in the course of which Mahapurushji was asked about the food that the Master took. ‘He had no speciality about his food’, said he. ‘His eating was not just of the ordinary sort. Like a child, he would just ask for some little thing to eat. Sometimes, he would prefer a little curry of brinjals with some chillies and other spices; he would then taste a bit and leave it. Once, on his way to Kamarpukur in a bullock cart, he ordered Hriday, his nephew and attendant, for such a titbit. Hriday was at a loss where to get the ingredients at that odd place. But by the Mother’s grace everything came to hand. He relished *jilabis*, and sometimes he would eat *sandēs* as well, but always a bit only; he would break the sweet and take a small bit. He would call the *jilabis* ‘the wheels of the Governor’s carriage’!⁶ One day, he said, “I want to have some pudding made of *chānā* (Indian cheese)”. In those days, it was not possible to procure *chānā* unless one went to Calcutta. But such was the play of the Divine Mother that the mother of Baburam Maharaj (Swami Premananda) came there with some pudding made of *chānā* prepared by herself. The Master took it with great relish. All that was divine play. How and what can I understand of all this? His eating was like that of a child, sticking to no particular thing.’

⁶ The *jilabis* are a kind of sweets, juicy and shaped somewhat like wheels. The simile here is that, just as the crowded traffic in a street clears away before the Governor’s carriage, even a full stomach makes some space for *jilabis*!

The knower of the Atman, who wears no outward mark and is unattached to external things rests on this body without identification, and experiences sense-objects as they come, through others’ wish, like a child.

— *Vivekacūdāmaṇi*

RELIGIOUS AND MORAL INSTRUCTION

A preceptor is no preceptor, a relation is no relation, a father is no father, a mother is no mother, a deity is no deity, . . . if they are unable to show the path of spiritual freedom to those that are under their care.

—ŚRIMAD BHAGAVATA, V.5.18.

I

In our last editorial, when we were discussing about the role of religion in society, we made a passing reference to the part that individual homes and religious institutions ought to play in any progressive society—progressive morally, culturally, and spiritually. Considering the prevailing conditions of our society today, in which moral and spiritual values are at a discount, we strongly feel that there is an urgent need for reviving certain religious practices in our homes, as well as for intensifying our traditional methods of diffusion of moral and spiritual ideals among the people. Of the need for providing religious and moral instruction in educational institutions, the government and enlightened leaders in the country have already become aware, and are taking certain steps in the right direction. Student life constitutes but a very small period in a man's life. Outside the school, too, he needs constant guidance for his moral and spiritual well-being. It is in the fulfilment of this need that our homes and social and religious institutions have to play their part. And for them to do so effectively and to bring about the desired results, there should be a restitution of religious practices at home and a revival of our traditional methods of disseminating moral, cultural, and spiritual ideals among all classes of our people.

To err is human. But man errs in ignorance, when he is not aware of what is right or proper for him to do. At this stage, his actions may be condoned because of the lack of correct understanding of moral values. On the other hand, if a person persists in doing what is wrong even when he comes to possess the awareness of the good and the right, then the situation becomes serious, for it is a symp-

tom of an undisciplined life and a wanton display of wickedness. Such cases must be strongly condemned and sternly dealt with, affording a corrective to dissuade them from the wrong path. Those who deal with them should have sympathy and understanding in handling them, and keep in view their moral and spiritual welfare.

As a person grows from childhood to manhood, passing through the stages of boyhood and youth, he needs constant guidance from those around him for the growth of his moral and spiritual being. The evolution of the inner man, gradually putting off layers of imperfection that hide the purity of the soul within, is a lifelong process, and so no period of man's life can be overlooked or neglected. All the influences that man is subjected to in the course of his life must be such as will conduce to the growth of a pure and perfect character. To attain this in full measure, man must grow in an atmosphere which is morally elevating and spiritually salutary. In other words, he must have about him men and women saturated with moral and spiritual ideals to guide and instruct him both by precept and practice.

Viewing the life of a man as a whole, we may clearly distinguish three different spheres of influence in which he grows. The first is his own home, where the parents and the elders in the family powerfully influence the young mind of the child. The influence of the home continues to operate even when the growing youth becomes subject to other influences, which come into his life later on as he advances in age. The second sphere is the school, where he grows under the guidance of his teachers. Its influence continues right up to the stage that his mind becomes well developed, with a sense of

independence and a will of his own, and he is ready to enter society as a self-conscious and self-reliant individual and to shoulder his responsibilities. And the third influence that works on his character at the next stage of life is the cultural and spiritual heritage of the land which is made available to him in several ways. It is at this stage that man imbibes moral and religious values not only to stabilize and strengthen his own spiritual life, but also to provide healthy and helpful conditions at home for the moral and spiritual growth of his children.

Now, in all these three spheres, man needs to be guided and impressed with lofty idealism, in order that he may become responsive to edifying moral and spiritual ideas and ideals. Religious and moral instruction should therefore be provided to man at all stages of his life. It is the responsibility of those that are entrusted with the maintenance of the social order to see that its various constituent elements are properly functioning in their respective spheres, contributing nourishment to the physical, moral, and spiritual well-being of society as a whole. For a society to function in an orderly fashion and to flourish in a vigorous way, it must have a strong and sound spiritual basis and must become sensitive to moral and spiritual values. Bereft of such values, which are the real forces that hold society together, evils will abound, thwarting all progress in society and causing confusion and chaos in every sphere of social life.

In the traditional scheme of social organization in India, the function of every person, whether at home or in the wider context of the community, was clearly defined; and his duties and obligations in relation to his own kith and kin and to society at large were enunciated without any ambiguity. Various practices and methods were in vogue both at home and in the community by which the young as well as the grown-up would be instructed with regard to the regulation of their conduct and the moulding of their character. Those practices and methods, which were effectively function-

ing in our homes and in our society even a generation ago, and traces of which may still be found lingering in rural parts, perhaps in very few families, were kept up in such a natural way and presented in such forms and modes as would create interest and zest among persons for true religious pursuit. Unfortunately, in recent years, with the oncoming of fresh forces in our economic and social life, and the consequent transformation that has taken place in our social organization, those practices and institutions are fast disappearing even from our rural parts, not to speak of urban areas where they have almost completely disappeared. It is our conviction that, for the revival of interest and creation of faith in religious and moral values among our people, those traditional practices and methods of religious and moral instruction should be reinstated and reinvigorated, and all facilities should be created for their effective functioning at home and in the community. Those methods had been tried for centuries, and were found to be helpful in strengthening the moral fibre of man and society. They are suited to the genius of the race, and in their revival lies the moral and spiritual regeneration of our land.

II

Of the several ills that are afflicting our society today, owing to a rapid deterioration in the moral and spiritual standards in the life of the people in general, one that is most alarming and which needs our immediate attention is that which is affecting our student community. Of late, indiscipline among students in the different parts of the country is assuming ugly forms, which is a sad turn of events indeed. The students of today are to grow as responsible citizens of tomorrow. Tomorrow's leaders of society and men to be in charge of public administration are to be shaped in schools and colleges today. If they are to behave in a disciplined manner and learn to grow as self-respecting individuals, they need proper guidance from their teachers. For what is happening in educational institutions, the entire blame can-

not be laid at the door of the students. Leaders in society as well as teachers and professors in schools and colleges must also own some responsibility for this sad state of affairs. Young men should have before them exemplary characters who uphold moral and spiritual principles in their lives. In intimate association with the pupils, the teacher is expected to inculcate in them by personal example and practical teaching the life-building moral and spiritual ideals.

After the recent unfortunate disturbances in some of the well-known universities in the country, eminent leaders and experienced educationists have been seriously pondering over the problem. They have put forward various suggestions to meet the situation, which deserve to be earnestly considered, and some of them implemented without any delay. It is not our purpose to go into the details of those proposals here. But an important step taken by our national government in this direction is of special interest to us, and that was the appointment of the Committee on Religious and Moral Instruction, which was to make a study of the question of religious and moral instruction in educational institutions in the country. The Committee has submitted its report to the government, in which it has stressed that provision should be made for the teaching of moral and spiritual values to students. It is our belief that religious and moral instruction to students by competent teachers, who must be themselves imbued with those ideals, will certainly pave the way for building up the moral character of the students, infusing into them such qualities as obedience, disciplined conduct, seriousness in their pursuit of knowledge, and a sense of purpose in their life. We therefore heartily acclaim the main recommendations made by the Committee and look forward to their immediate implementation in our educational institutions.

Analysing the problem against the background of the country as a whole, the Committee, which wants all difficulties in providing moral and spiritual education to be surmount-

ed, 'is of the view that many ills in the education world, and in society as a whole today, ... were mainly due to the gradual disappearance of the hold of religion on the people'. The Committee goes on to say: 'The old bonds are fast loosening, and the various new ideologies that are coming to us, and which we are outwardly accepting without inwardly digesting their meanings, are increasingly worsening the situation. The only cure, it seems to us, is the deliberate inculcation of moral and spiritual values from the earliest years of our lives. If we lose these, we shall be a nation without a soul.'

The Committee has rightly emphasized that 'in any educational scheme, the home should not be left out', and suggests that 'through mass media, the faults and drawbacks of our homes ... should be pointed out and instruction given as to how these can be removed'. The members of the Committee have studied the problem of religious and moral instruction in educational institutions from various points of view, keeping in their mind the spiritual background of the past, the crying need of the present, and the future good of the country. The Committee has also taken into consideration the constitutional provisions with regard to religious education, and accordingly suggested that its recommendations may be adopted in all institutions without in anyway interfering with those provisions. The report further emphasizes that very much depends upon the atmosphere that only good teachers can create, and adds that great care should be taken in the recruitment and training of competent teachers.

It is to be hoped that the government, which appointed the Committee, would accept the principal recommendations made by it after careful consideration of the needs of the prevailing situation, and give effect to them soon. By implementing them in all educational institutions, one of the chief influences that powerfully affect man during a very important stage of his life becomes effective in ensuring the moral and spiritual growth of society.

Educational institutions are regarded as

temples of learning. Their sanctity can be maintained only when both the teacher and the taught work together in a spirit of devotion to the Goddess of Learning. The student days are the most precious ones in everyone's life. That is the most impressionable part of a person's life. Any idealism that is infused into him at that period sticks on and tempers his attitude to life. It is therefore imperative that the noblest of ideals that have come down to us from the past are presented before the pupils in schools and colleges, so that these may soak into their souls and saturate their personality and silently bring about a transformation in their character.

III

A very significant observation made in the report of the Committee on Religious and Moral Instruction says: 'The situation is appreciably affected by the disruptive forces at work outside the school. It would be incorrect to lay the blame for the present situation on the youth alone, for they are being influenced all the time by the standard of values and conduct of the adults at home, in business life, in politics, and other spheres of activity.'

Normally, a boy enters the school at the age of five or six, and completes his education between twenty and twenty-five. It means that apart from the influence that he comes under during his educational career, there are two other major influences which vitally affect him. The first five or six years of childhood form the real foundation of his life. And later on, in his post-education career, when he assumes the responsibilities of a householder, he is to absorb all that is good and noble in our cultural and spiritual heritage and live in a way which not only brings his personal happiness, but also works for social good and welfare. Hence is the need for revitalizing these two spheres of influence as well, if they are to yield the desired results. For this, as we said earlier, there should be a revival of our traditional religious practices at home, as well as a restitution of our popular methods of religious and moral instruction to

the members of the community.

The home is the preparing ground. The foundation of man's life is laid there. What he sees and absorbs there will remain with him for the rest of his life. There he must receive the right sort of guidance from his parents and elders in the family. The inner culture of man must begin at home, right from the beginning of his life. In this, the home and the parents cannot shirk their responsibility, and must fully assume the role that is assigned to them. Parenthood is a sacred trust, and so it cannot be treated casually. Its obligations must be discharged with a sense of sanctity and duty. That has been the tradition of our land.

The first condition that is to be fulfilled in this regard is the creation of a happy and contented home. This can result only when the elders in the family are imbued with a religious spirit, and act according to certain moral principles. Faith in those principles becomes firmly established by observing religious practices daily, which may include worship, meditation, singing of prayers, chanting of hymns, and reading from sacred scriptures, which are all considered to possess spiritual value.

Restoration of the family shrine to its pride of place is one of the foremost steps to be taken in revitalizing the spiritual life of the home. Hardly a generation ago, in our homes, a room or even a part of a room used to be set apart as the shrine of the family, which played a very significant part in the religious life of its members, both young and old. It is really sad that such an easily available medium of spiritual benefit as the family shrine has almost disappeared from our modern homes.

Another characteristic aspect of India's traditional social organization, viz. the joint family system, is fast dying out, perhaps never to be revived because of the pressure of socio-economic forces that are current today in our society. The joint family used to jealously preserve certain healthy traditions of the family, the senior and the aged members seeing to it that the family customs—religious, cultural, and

social—were maintained properly. The young ones grew under their watchful eye, and their life was moulded with loving care and sympathetic understanding. That salutary influence is sadly lacking in our modern homes. In its absence, not only the habits and customs which were healthy for the body, mind, and spirit of the members of the family have gone away, but in their place have appeared new modes of life and habits which are anything but healthy for the spiritual growth of its members. And the result has been a lowering of standards in moral and spiritual life, both individual and social. It may be true to say that the joint family system cannot be revived, but certainly attempts should be made to preserve its noble traditions which served to develop the moral and spiritual life of the people.

Apart from observing those practices which are purely religious, the parents have to set up a standard of behaviour and conduct in their social relationship too. The youngsters growing under their charge should be expected to note them and copy them in their own lives. The moral implications of the words we speak and the acts we do in our daily lives should be brought home to the minds of the youngsters. It is in this way that a happy home is built by the elders and parents in the family, which exerts a very powerful influence on the character and conduct of a man at the very beginning of his life.

As regards religious institutions and the several methods of popular religious instruction, which were disseminating moral and spiritual ideas among all classes of people in our society, it must be said that they have all received a serious set-back as a result of the rapid growth of industrialization and the rush of people to towns and cities. Our traditional arts and literature, which were serving as vehicles to bring religious and moral ideas to the common people, are also fast losing their fascination for the people of cities and towns.

It is a remarkable phenomenon indeed how, in the past, in a country of such vast dimensions as ours, when modern means of communication

and mechanical aids for the dissemination of ideas were lacking, moral and religious instruction was brought to the doors of the people all over the country by several methods. There were wandering monks and minstrels travelling from village to village carrying with them the lofty ideals of philosophy and religion and singing before common people songs depicting the doings of gods and goddesses and the glories of our ancient national heroes and heroines, whose shining characters have been enshrined in our sacred literature. In temples and public places, people used to congregate daily as well as on occasions to listen to the recitation and exposition of our religious literature by competent persons who were specially trained for this purpose. *Maṭhas* and *āśramas*, monasteries and retreats, where monks stayed and preached, were the custodians of the spiritual heritage of the land. The temples were the centres round which not only the religious life of the community, but even its cultural and social life revolved. Through *harikathās*, *kathakatās*, *yātrās*, and open air theatres, people had both entertainment and enlightenment with regard to moral and spiritual values. Through discourses, recitations, and narratives, the lives of incarnations, of mythological personalities, of saints and seers, and of other national heroes were presented before eager audiences who would devoutly listen to them. Public worship, organization of religious festivities, congregational singing like *bhajanas* and *kirtanas*, all contributed in no small measure to the spiritual development of the members in a community.

In this ancient land of ours, while the teeming millions of our people were no doubt illiterate, they were never uninformed or uncultured, and they held on with faith and conviction to the basic virtues of a moral and religious life. They may not have had scholastic education, but they did certainly have that essential spiritual knowledge which gave them joy, happiness, and contentment in life. It is this want of spiritual knowledge among men and women today that is causing all the stress and strain that is evident in our modern society.

What can bring them that knowledge are these traditional methods of religious and moral instruction. And therefore is the need for intensifying and spreading these popular methods of disseminating spiritual ideas among our people.

Thus we see that man needs religious and moral instruction at all stages of his life. It is not enough if such instruction is confined to the home or the school alone; every sphere of

life has a function to perform, which must be done in all faith and with a sense of duty. The home sows the seed and provides nourishment; the school provides air and light and strengthens the plant; and personal striving in tune with lofty spiritual ideals puts forth the blossom from which emanates the soul-elevating fragrance of a perfect character, which is the true end and aim of all religious and moral instruction.

GAUDAPĀDA ON MĀYĀ AND AVIDYĀ

BY PROFESSOR SURENDRANATH BHATTACHARYA

Some Upaniṣads suggest that the subject alone is real. The Buddhists proceed negatively and try to prove the unreality of objects (the extremists denying even the subject). Gauḍapāda (end of the seventh century or beginning of the eighth century A.D.), upon whom the Buddhistic influence is so palpable that some scholars doubt his Brahmanism, establishes the Upaniṣadic doctrine with Buddhistic dialectic. The second *prakaraṇa* of his *Kārikā* has the avowed object of proving the unreality of objects. He says that the waking experiences are as much unreal as the dream experiences.¹ Moreover, a thing which is non-existent in the past and in future must also be so at present, though it might appear to be existent now.² This characteristic applies to all experiences, and they must therefore be held to be unreal. Although Gauḍapāda proves the unreality of all objects, yet he is not a nihilist. He says that, though both the waking objects and the dream objects are alike false, there must be something to cognize them, to imagine them.³ This substratum, he says, is Ātman or Brahman. The Ātman (the permanent Subject) regards Himself as so many objects. And as there

cannot be any actual transformation of the subject into the object, the phenomenon is effected by the Ātman's own Māyā;⁴ in other words, the entire world of experience is brought into existence by an inscrutable something, called Māyā. Here Gauḍapāda evidently takes Māyā to mean the inexplicability of the relation between the only really existent Ātman and the world of experience. Again, the absolute oneness of the Ātman would preclude Māyā as a separate entity. Hence Gauḍapāda says that Māyā is in the nature of the Ātman.⁵

Gauḍapāda examines the different theories of creation and concludes that creation can be nothing but the Ātman's nature.⁶ He, however, attaches no importance to the problem of creation, which, according to him, is not worth investigating; for Reality-in-itself has nothing to do with creation.⁷ The problem is discussed only for the benefit of the student and to help him in realizing the transcendental Truth.⁸ And when discussed for a practical need, it is found that creation is inexplicable and, as such, it should best be characterized as Māyā.

¹ *Māṇḍūkya-kārikā*, II.4, 5, 31.

² *Ibid.*, II.6

³ *Ibid.*, II.11.

⁴ *Ibid.*, II.12.

⁵ *Ibid.*, I.9; also note the word '*svamāyayā*' in II.12.

⁶ *Ibid.*, I.7-9; see also Śaṅkara's commentary on these verses.

⁷ *Ibid.*, II.32.

⁸ *Ibid.*, I.18.

Gauḍapāda argues that it is impossible that the world should originate from Brahman; for (i) Brahman can have no necessity for it;⁹ (ii) to say that the world originates from Brahman is to say that Brahman is born as the world, but Brahman is unborn (*aḥa*), and therefore It cannot take birth in any shape, unless it forgoes its own nature.¹⁰ To say that the Sat (the ever-existent Ātman) is actually born is to commit the fallacy of *regressus ad infinitum*. In fact, nothing can be said to be born of itself or of another.¹¹ To speak of a thing as self-born is meaningless, for, if the thing is already existing, the term 'birth' would be inapplicable to it. Similarly, to speak of one thing being born of another would be equally meaningless and fallacious, for, unless the thing is there, it cannot come into sudden existence,¹² nor does one pot produce another, or one pot another cloth. To speak of the production of a pot out of clay, or the birth of a son of a mother, is but conventional. Thus the very idea of creation or production is fallacious. So it is impossible that Brahman should modify Itself into the world.¹³ The illustrations in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* of earth, iron, sparks of fire, etc. are given only to begin the discourse and not to preach the real modification of Brahman. Hence, whenever the world is said to originate from Brahman, it is to be understood to do so only through Māyā.¹⁴ The only reasonable reconciliation of the statements of Śruti which deny differences of all kinds (*neha nānāsti kiñcana* etc.) and those that speak of the origination of the world of diver-

sity out of the only one Sat is to take this origination as purely illusory. And such texts as '*Indro māyābhiḥ pururūpamiyate*' etc. clearly lay down the theory.¹⁵ The world of diversity is therefore nothing but Māyā.¹⁶

Thus we see that Gauḍapāda takes Māyā to mean:

- (i) The nature or power of the Ātman by virtue of which He (though unchangeable) appears as the manifold world.
- (ii) The inexplicability of the relation between the Ātman and the world.
- (iii) The apparent dreamlike condition of the world.

To describe the relation of the world and the individual Ātman (*jīva*) with the unchangeable Ātman, Gauḍapāda adopted the theory of Māyā. He examines the three states of consciousness (*jāgrat*, *svapna*, and *susupti*) and the so-called law of cause and effect in the objective and subjective fields and concludes that the states are mere appearances superimposed on the pure Cit (*śuddha-caitanya*, pure Consciousness), which alone is real (existing unconditionally). But how this superimposition takes place, nobody can explain, yet it is undeniable. Similarly, the relation between cause and effect, and that between subject and object, admits no satisfactory explanation. This impossibility of reasonable explanation of phenomena and, none the less, their perceptibility are what Gauḍapāda would call Māyā or Avidyā. We shall present later how this fundamental idea was further developed by Śaṅkara and his followers.

⁹ *Ibid.*, I.9.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, III.20-22.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, IV.22.

¹² cf. Satkāryavāda of the Sāṅkhya.

¹³ *Māṇḍūkya-kārikā*, IV.7-8; cf. *Brahma-Sūtra*, II.3.9.

¹⁴ *Māṇḍūkya-kārikā*, III.19.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, III.24, 27; also see III.48, IV.6-8.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, I.17; also see II.19, 31.

THE GOSPEL OF THE GĪTĀ

BY DR. P. NAGARAJA RAO

In a world where one half lacks a common faith and the other half has a faith imposed on it, the only hope for humanity is the rational, spiritualistic humanism of the *Gītā*.

Sri Aurobindo says: 'The greatest gospel of spiritual works ever yet given to the human race, the most perfect system of *karma-yoga* known to man in the past is to be found in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. In that famous episode of the *Mahābhārata*, the great basic lines of *karma-yoga* are laid for all time with incomparable mastery and the infallible eye of an assured experience. It aims at the secret of dynamic and not only static identity with the inner presence.'

The *Bhagavad-Gītā* is an episode in the *Bhīṣmaparvan* of the *Mahābhārata* (chapters XXV to XLII). The *Mahābhārata* has a special place in Indian culture and religion. It is the biggest epic. It is 'mahat', because it is vast; it is 'bhārata', because it is full of weight (*bhāra*); hence it is called 'Mahābhārata'. Further, it is stated: 'In respect of the fourfold values of *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma*, and *mokṣa*, what is here is also dealt with elsewhere; what is not here cannot be found elsewhere.'

The importance of the *Gītā* is accepted on all hands. Its popularity is second only to the Upaniṣads. It is the favourite scripture of the ancients as well as the moderns. The Vedānta philosophy in all its forms accepts the *Gītā* as one of the *prasthāna-traya*, triple texts, i.e. source-books for its doctrines. Hence it is commented upon by all the great *ācāryas*—Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, Madhva, and others.

The ancients have sung the praise of the *Gītā*. Śaṅkara declares: 'A little of the *Gītā* will do; it is as profound as the sacred waters of the Gaṅgā.' 'He who reads and sings the *Gītā*, why need he toil at other sacred scriptures?' In a familiar verse, the Upaniṣads are compared to cows; and the *Gītā*, to the milk derived from them. Its dramatic setting has

attracted great attention. The dialogue between two of India's fascinating figures in a critical moment heightens the value of the poem. The occasion and the personalities contribute to the importance of the theme. Professor Edgerton says that the literary merit of the poem is not small: 'The pithy *anuṣṭubh* verses, the flow of the lines, the similes and metaphors—these give it a form of interest all its own.'

The *Gītā* has enjoyed a unique reputation throughout the ages. It has influenced Sanskrit literature considerably. It is mentioned in the *Varāha*, *Skanda*, and *Padma Purānas*. Dr. V. Raghavan, in one of his revealing articles, gathers for us details like the popularity of the recitation of the *Gītā* for securing happiness mentioned in Bāṇa's *Kādambarī*. In Kalhaṇa's *Rājataranṅiṇī*, it is recorded that King Avanti-varman had the *Gītā* read to him in his last hours.

As for the message of the *Gītā*, one must be cautious. One cannot escape the ancient commentators, nor can one completely rely on any of them. The three distinguished ancient commentators have interpreted the *Gītā* in such a way as to uphold the doctrines of their systems. This has led to the straining of the meaning of many verses to represent the view that each one of them stands for. The sectarian interpretations have led to polemics and bitter criticisms among them. The language of the *Gītā* and the flexible nature of the Sanskrit verses make different interpretations possible and to some extent plausible. But to one who is detached and disinterested, the *Gītā* does not completely or exclusively offer the views of the one or the other of the traditional schools of the Vedānta.

It has a general outlook suitable to all men having a spiritual bent of mind. It represents, in the words of Sri Aurobindo, 'a teaching which is universal, whatever may have been its

origins'. 'Its language and structure and combination of balancing of ideas belong neither to the temper of the sectarian teacher, nor to the spirit of a rigorous dogmatist. It is an undulating, encircling movement of ideas, which is the manifestation of a vast synthetic mind. It is the richest synthesis of Indian culture.'

It is the opinion of all the modern interpreters of the *Gītā*, like Mahatma Gandhi, Tilak, Aurobindo, Radhakrishnan, and others, that it is a world scripture. It is neither old nor new. It is eternal. Its influence on reascent thinkers in India is profound, and has been more far-reaching than any other single influence. It has guided the life and action of our leaders. It has been the spiritual charter to all of them. It has set the moral ideal before India. Referring to this scripture, Dr. Radhakrishnan writes: 'It sets forth as a tradition that which has emerged from the religious life of mankind. It is articulated by a profound seer, who sees truth in its many-sidedness and believes in its saving power. It represents not any sect of Hinduism, but Hinduism as a whole; not merely Hinduism, but religion as such.' Its universality has no limit of time or space.

One important factor that strikes the student of the *Gītā* is that there is frank disagreement about the message of the *Gītā* among ancient commentators, and there is a striking agreement among the modern interpreters of the *Gītā*. The latter hold that its message is most essential for the spiritual regeneration of man and that it is applicable to all men and at all times. Its significance to man is spiritual as well as social.

Mahatma Gandhi regarded the *Gītā* as his mother. He says: 'I lost my earthly mother who gave me birth long ago, but this eternal mother has completely filled her place by my side ever since; she has never changed, she has never failed me. When I am in difficulty or distress, I seek refuge in her bosom. . . . I can declare that the *Gītā* is ever presenting me with fresh lessons, and if somebody should tell me that it is my delusion, my reply

to him would be, I should hug this delusion as my richest treasure.'

He very clearly states the message of the *Gītā* to us: 'It calls upon us to dedicate ourselves, body, mind, and soul, to pure duty and not become mental voluptuaries at the mercy of chance desires and undisciplined impulses.'

The ideal of the *Gītā*, according to the modern commentators, is compressed in the word '*karma-yoga*'. The ideal man of the *Gītā* is called a *yogin*, and the method is described as *yoga*. The spiritual regeneration of man is to be effected by *karma-yoga*. Man in this world of ours exists not in a perfect state. He is assailed by several temptations, and feels unnerved. He doubts, and is unable to decide. He makes up his mind, and is not able to execute. His will is paralysed, his mind is confused, and his vision is clouded. At times, he is enveloped by ignorance about the beginning and end of things. He has scientific skill and technical power, but is not able to use them for social good. His advance in knowledge is marked by the deterioration in his character. He is, at times, a paradox to himself. He passes through several moods in a single day, and has no steady purpose. He swings between mania and depression; he is a pendulum between tear and joy. If he has the knowledge of ends, he is unable to will them into action. If he has a firm will, he has no knowledge of ends. His possession of power is so great that he has no knowledge and wisdom to use it aright.

Scientific power has made men feel that there is no need for faith in God or any supernatural element. So they put their faith in science. The sense of power has made men go about as they like. Militant atheism and irrational materialism have become fashionable. Men have lost their faith, though they want to believe. This 'will to believe' makes men put their faith in strange gods, such as nation, ideology, science, art, etc. These have taken the place of God. Kingsley Martin, Editor of *New Statesman and Nation*, writes: 'Men and women are now unable to face the loneliness

and aridity of the gospel of science, and therefore, though without any settled faith in religious dogmas, seek a personal religion to give them inner comfort. They do not believe, but they desire to believe. I see very clearly every day . . . that the will to believe cannot be overcome.'

The modern man, in spite of his immense knowledge and astounding powers of organization, is still far away from social peace or individual happiness. He is stricken by psychic anxiety, cloven by emotional conflicts, beset by economic insecurities, and assailed by political doubts. Hence he is confused, and knows not his duties.

It is to such distracted men that the *Gītā* is addressed. Arjuna is 'the representative man', 'the chosen instrument', and 'the close companion' of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. On the battle-field, Arjuna stands before his cousins, who have no sense of justice or love for him, and are ready to kill him and deprive him of his part of the kingdom. On this historic battle-field, what is at stake is *dharma*. Arjuna is not able to face the call of duty, and shuns the effort to take arms against injustice. He knows the injustice done to the Pāṇḍavas by the Kauravas. He has not only the power himself, but also the help of many kings to fight his enemies. All the methods of compromise are tried out, but to no avail. Judged by the normal standard of morality, Duryodhana and his party deserve to be killed in order to vindicate *dharma*.

In the face of gross injustice, Arjuna, the great warrior who knows his duty, his prowess, and the justice of his cause, falters and wants to run away from the path of duty because of sentimental feelings. He says that he is in great sorrow, that he would not see the death of his cousins. The immediate consequence of bloodshed and the death of his cousins unnerved him. He came to the battle-field to punish his wicked cousins, who had robbed him and his brothers of their kingdom, by banishing them from the kingdom for thirteen years, and who had treacherously refused to redeem their pledge to

give back even a part of the kingdom. He was unhinged at the possibility of a fratricidal war. So he trotted out arguments in favour of peace and a life of renunciation. This pseudo-pacifism is foreign to him. He cries out, 'Alas, what a great sin have we resolved to commit in striving to slay our own people, through greed for the pleasures of the kingdom!' (I.45). 'Far better would it be for me if the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, with weapons in hand, should slay me in the battle, while I remain unresisting and unarmed' (I.46). Arjuna dreaded to do his duty; so he invents arguments to give it up. He seeks escape into inaction. His failure is felt in his limbs; they quail; he perspires; his mind and gait are reeling. He becomes unsteady and drowned in sorrow. He seeks a way out of the crisis by taking refuge in Śrī Kṛṣṇa and by putting himself in the place of a disciple seeking instruction from him.

Arjuna's arguments are refuted by the powerful and convincing discourse of the Lord, and also by the demonstration of the Lord's transfiguration which Arjuna is shown. He is put to his duty and made to do it in a spirit of perfect conviction. Arjuna says in the end: 'Destroyed is my delusion; I have come into my own through Thy grace. I stand firm, with my doubts dispelled; I shall act according to Thy word' (XVIII. 73).

In short, Arjuna is *sakta* (sentimental), and he is taught the goal and the way of *yoga*. He is asked to fight, no doubt, many times; but not like an unregenerate soldier, but as a *yogin*. He is asked to establish the God-centred life and then fight. He is asked to become a *karma-yogin*. The superiority of *karma-yoga* to all the other ways of God-realization is asserted. The *yogin* of the *Gītā* is greater than the ascetic; he is considered to be greater than the man of knowledge and greater than the man of ritual. Therefore, 'become a *yogin*' is the injunction.

Karma-yoga is the best way to God-realization. It includes *jñāna* (knowledge of God), *bhakti* (devotion to God), *karma* (action), and

sevā (service). With all this, it does not renounce action. It is not world-negation, but self-abnegation. It is not freedom from action, but freedom in action. It is the most desirable and feasible means for God-realization, within the reach of all of us. The faith of the *karma-yogin* is the first thing to be noted. The *yogin* is not a rationalist, in the narrow sense of the term, nor is he an agnostic or a sceptic. He is not an unbeliever. The first article of his faith is the belief in the omnipotent and loving nature of God. Faith in God and His goodness is the foundation of the *yogin's* character. The God of the *karma-yogin* is immanent as well as transcendent. He has fashioned the world by exerting His power on Prakṛti (IV.6). He is organic to the universe. This means that the world is dependent on Him, but He is not dependent on it (IX.4,5). The Lord is the father of this world, the mother, the supporter, and the grandsire. He is the object of all knowledge, the purifier, the syllable *Om*, the *yogas*, and the Vedas. He is the goal, the upholder, the Lord, the witness, the abode, the refuge, and the friend. He is the origin, the dissolution, the ground and the resting place, and the imperishable seed (IX.17,18).

The God of the *yogin* does not sit on the fringes of the universe and watch the drama of life. God is in us, with us, and above us. He has left His impress on nature and man. The Lord says, 'I am seated in the heart of all' (X.20). 'The Lord is the enjoyer of sacrifices and austerities; He is the Lord of the world and friend of all (*suhṛdam sarvabhūtānām*)' (V.29). He is dynamic; He incarnates Himself to redeem the world from injustice at all critical times. He imparts wisdom and drives away despair in His devotees. Further, the *yogin* believes that souls are immortal, pure in their intrinsic nature, and eternal. The world of nature is the handiwork of God, and hence is governed by moral laws. He believes in the Law of Karma, i.e. that actions have reactions and that there is nothing private or unimportant in the world. He holds that man

takes a number of births to realize the fellowship of the Lord.

This raises the question as to what makes man oblivious and neglectful of his duty. In short, what is it that holds man in bondage and eclipses God's light from his vision? It is this state that is referred to as the 'fall' in the Christian terminology, and as *avidyā* in Vedānta. The cause of this bondage is vividly described in the *Gītā*. It is passions, sense attachment, anger, and irrepressible desires that hold man in bondage. Passions and desires take their abode in the sense-organs and delude man. They are the enemies and destroyers of knowledge and wisdom. They veil the real nature of the soul and God from man (III.37-42).

It is this unregenerate nature of man that is responsible for his anti-social, selfish, and occasional criminal actions. It is the cause of the inhumanity of man to man. In short, it is the cause of anarchy among nations and listlessness in man.

The way out of this predicament is *karma-yoga*. This path is first and foremost opposed to complete renunciation of all works as the means for God-realization. In India, two ways to spiritual realization have been preached: *nivṛtti-mārga*, the way of complete renunciation, and *pravṛtti-mārga*, the way of action. The way of renunciation turns man away from action. He must keep himself free from the stain of action. The world is a snare; it is a nightmare; he must get out of its grips. Any type of action he does produces results that bind him to *saṁsāra*. Action forges chains and binds him down. So let him renounce all action. The *Gītā* is opposed to such renunciation.

The other view of life, called *pravṛtti-mārga*, makes a man live an active life for securing the material and other goods. In the words of Professor Hiriyanna: 'The *Gītā* has discovered the golden mean between the two opposing ideals. It preserves the excellence of both the methods. It does not abandon activity; it preserves the spirit of renunciation. It commends

a strenuous life, and yet gives no room for the play of selfish impulses.' The ideal of *karma-yoga*, which keeps the spirit of renunciation and combines it with a life of ceaseless activity, is given wide and permanent currency by the *Gītā*. The *Gītā* has focussed this practical teaching in its splendidly devised setting. This ideal is the central message of the *Gītā*, according to all the modern interpreters of the *Gītā* in India.

The *karma-yoga* ideal is in keeping with the biological and the psychological nature of man. Activity is the very breath of human existence. Man cannot live even for a moment without action. Cosmic existence is based on dynamic activity. Act we must to keep life going, and there is no escape from it. It is necessary for social order. Not all action is *karma-yoga*. Nor all giving up is renunciation. The *karma-yoga* doctrine requires us to lead an active moral life and still escape from the bondage that our actions forge for us. That is the secret of *karma-yoga*. The active moral life of man is to be lived in a particular spirit. It is this spirit that quite paradoxically transmutes all action into a condition of freedom from that of bondage.

Karma-yoga is not mechanical activity. It is not physical interaction. Nor is it the mere promptings of instinct, as in the animal world. It is not even the egotistic activity of a so-called utilitarian, who acts on pleasure principle. It is a *yoga*, i.e. an activity which seeks God-union by a definite method.

It is not unconsidered action, nor vague speculation. It takes intellect into account. An enlightened understanding is the necessary prerequisite for *karma-yoga*. Further, the doer must act from a sense of duty and not for any particular fruit. He must not be obsessed by the idea of the result. This spirit of detachment is absolutely necessary for the *yoga*. It makes for equanimity, and does not disturb us. It makes our effort efficient. It secures concentration and makes one-pointed attention possible. Besides, the doer not being obsessed by the fruits of action, there is no temptation

or chance of his adopting any unscrupulous means to achieve his end.

Then, what is the motive that prompts the *karma-yogin* to do action? Motiveless action is psychologically impossible. The author of the *Gītā* does not deny all motives. He only denies selfish motives. The central motive that actuates the *karma-yogin* is love of God, *Īśvaraprīti*. He is not a stoic who prides upon his sense of fortitude and powers of self-denial. He renounces not only the desires for the fruit of action, but also the sense of agency.

With sincere effort, it is quite possible for man to be detached about the fruits of his action, but it is very difficult to rid himself of the sense of agency. It is in this effort that the *karma-yogin* needs the spirit of devotion and surrender to the Lord; *bhakti* comes in here. Without a complete knowledge of the philosophical truths and the love of God, and without an attitude of unreserved surrender to Him, it is not possible for the *yogin* to give up his sense of agency and feel himself as an instrument of the Lord, to do His will. Whatever may be the differences among the ancient commentators of the *Gītā*, they are all agreed that it teaches all the *yogas*—*karma*, *bhakti*, and *jñāna*. The modern commentators, too, have shown that *bhakti* and *jñāna* are not exclusive of *karma-yoga*.

The element of renunciation in *karma-yoga* is the giving up of the desire for the fruit of action and the sense of agency. The positive element is the love of God and the willing co-operation to carry out His will. This is the ideal of the welfare of the world (*lokasaṅgraha*). The *karma-yoga* ideal is not meant only for extraordinary men. It is within the reach of all of us. Its scope is comprehensive. It is not meant only for the selected or privileged few. It does not make impossible demands on man. Nor does it say that all must do the same thing. Its way of life is not ascetic. It stands for an all-round development of man. No aspect of human nature is to be overlooked or overstated. It stands for the

doctrine of moderation. 'Yoga is not for him who eats too much, or abstains too much from eating. It is not for him who sleeps too much, or keeps awake late. For a man who is temperate in his food and recreation, who is restrained in all his actions, and who has regulated his sleep and vigils, *yoga* puts an end to all his sorrow' (VI.16, 17). The moral ideal of the *karma-yogin* lays stress on self-control and not on repression. It stands for *saṁyama* (perfect control), resulting in an integrated personality. It asks each individual to pursue the calling or duty that is nearest to his *svabhāva* (temperament). It equates duty with one's nature (*svadharma* with *svabhāva*). The pursuit of one's nature makes for ease, spontaneity, and grace in one's actions. It also avoids social waste and engenders perfect co-ordination. *Karma-yoga* insists on each individual to take to his own *svadharma*. Each one must pursue the duty that is native to his self. The *Gītā* is harsh on those who take to others' duty, and forbids it. The moral life of the *karma-yogin* is not arid; there is joy and perfect freedom in it. It is not a cold gospel that asks us to repress our impulses, to endure all evils, biting our lips. It is not a kill-joy morality. It stands for a 'life guided by knowledge and inspired by love.'

The greatness of the *Gītā* as a world scripture consists in the fact that it makes the ideal of *karma-yoga* a concrete way of life. We have in it all details about food regulation, the technique of meditation, duties and responsibilities, the nature and types of gifts, etc. It is complete and comprehensive in its details. Man must live as the active contemplative, who lives in the world and is not of it, who regards all as his own self, and who sees divinity in all. The *karma-yogin* is a *bhakta* and a *jñānin*. He brings his devotion into action. The *Gītā* ideal is Śrī Kṛṣṇa himself.

The religion of the *karma-yogin* is the genuine spiritual religion the world needs. The *Gītā* is known for its tolerance and non-dogmatism. Śrī Kṛṣṇa declares, 'As men approach Me, so do I accept them; men on all

sides follow My path' (IV.11). The *Gītā* stands for a fellowship of faiths. It breathes an air of tolerance and represents the universal elements of religion. It makes out that religion should help us to lead a good and useful life. 'Religion is of the nature of truth, is the repose of life, the delight of the mind, and is the fullness of peace and eternity.'

The *Gītā* ideal has not merely a national significance. Its message is for all and for all times. Referring to its universality, Aldous Huxley, in his introduction to the translation of the *Gītā* by Swami Prabhavananda and Isherwood, writes: 'The *Gītā* is one of the clearest and most comprehensive summaries of the perennial philosophy ever to have been made. Hence, its enduring value is not only for Indians, but for all mankind.'

The universal character of the message of the *Gītā* is consistent with reason and the demands of humanity. God, according to the *Gītā*, is not exhausted or completely revealed in only one form. It is not that there is only one incarnation of God. All the forms in which divinity manifests itself are true, and they are all of equal value. Śrī Kṛṣṇa goes further and declares, 'Whatever form a devotee with faith wishes to worship, I make that very faith of his steady'. Such an attitude alone makes for a fellowship of faiths. The message of the *Gītā* is not violence or goading us to fight. It is a gospel that teaches the way to perfect oneself and realize one's divine potentialities.

The *Gītā* has influenced contemporary Indian thought to a degree that no other single book has done. 'It is catholic in its message, comprehensive in its outlook, and concrete in its suggestions.' Its great merit is that it does not preach an impossible and austere morality. It is a layman's gospel. It is supremely alive to the differences of minds and temperaments of individuals. It makes provision for the diversified individuals that inhabit the earth. Its message does not smoothen out all differences and steam-roller all into one. It allows each

to grow to his best, according to his grain. It does not bother how big a circle we draw but insists that there must be always a centre for it. It is particular that we must stand on our own feet, even if bare, rather than in borrowed shoes. We must stand erect and free. It pleads that we must first study the truths of the scriptures from a realized *guru*. This is called *śravaṇa*. Secondly, we are to critically examine the truths taught in the scriptures through reasoning (*manana*). After this, we must intensely and continually meditate on the truths, till they result in a vivid, direct realization of God. For this moral discipline, what is absolutely necessary is the consolidation of the three-level practice in thought, speech, and action of the truths of religion.

The *Gītā* has given us the religion of spiritual humanism. It presents a complete and integrated spiritual ideal for man. It advocates

the love of God as the supreme end of life. In making *bhakti* the supreme ideal, it gives a blow to the mechanical observance of rituals that is mistaken to be religion. It also criticizes vague speculation of religious categories. That is not true religion. It advocates God-love in a manner which is open to all. It breaks down all the barriers that divide man and man, and God and man. It throws open the road to God for all, irrespective of their caste, creed, sex, or status in life. It only insists on an earnest and devout heart. The insistence of the *Gītā* on morality makes the doctrine of *bhakti* a powerful force both in the social and spiritual spheres. Its insistence on an active moral life offers no excuse for neglecting one's daily duties and social obligations. In the *Gītā* ideal of action and devotion, all work becomes worship, and all human activity becomes spiritually transformed.

THE POETRY OF ŚRĪ ŚAṄKARA—1

BY SRI P. SAMA RAO

He leads
Through widening chambers of surprise to where
Throbs rapture near one end that aye recedes,
Because his touch is infinite and lends
A yonder to all ends.

—BLAKE

I

If poetry were a sensuous expression of what is beautiful and enspelling in the sense-world, and is symptomatic of the Ineffable, there is certainly a profusion of it in Śrī Śaṅkara's works. Śrī Śaṅkara was a divinely inspired poet, and his vision of the Divine was obtained through an acute intuitional quality of the aesthetic, in which there is, as it were, a reminiscence (*cintana*) of Beauty in the strictest Platonic sense with a dispassionate transparency of his own.

If his poetry had not been imbedded in his

stutis and philosophical discourses, but had chosen the commoner forms of the drama and the epic, he too would have been accorded a prominent niche along with Bhāsa, Kālidāsa, and Bhavabhūti in the gallery of the purely poetic geniuses.

An aestheticism pure and simple and crystal-clear, and soothingly reflective of the ethereal beauty of form, tint, and sound, in nature and in the heart of man who is really attuned to the Divine, has been the distinctive quality of Śrī Śaṅkara's poetry. His sensuousness does not stop with being merely sensuous; it is

impregnated with the seeds of the supra-sensuous and supra-intellectual. There is ever an aroma of the highest ethereality surrounding it and safeguarding the sensuous from deterioration into the sensual. In his poetic flights into the loftiest empyrean, there is always an echo (*dhvani*) of the 'Intimations of Immortality' from the Supreme. We are made to feel that it is not Śrī Śaṅkara who is singing, but some Power higher than him that is rehearsing through him its own inimitable message to the world.

Words are the spearheads of thoughts and conceptions. They hit their targets as surely as the mind that wields them has the sincerity with which they are projected. An absolute and truest representation of them is possible only when the mind does not import its own subjectivity into the bargain, but in a yogic dispassion limns the ideas as they really are. Unless the mind is absolutely clean and perfectly submissive with a consecration to its own object, the object cannot be truly reflected. Then only divine grace, which can invest the creative faculty with infinitude, can descend into it and endow the work with enduring quality. So for the creation of all enduring works, literary, artistic, and philosophical, the mind must be informed with yogic dispassion and poise, purity and tranquillity of spirit. As Sri Aurobindo has it: 'The Vedic poets regarded their poetry as *mantras*; they were the vehicles of their own realizations, and could become vehicles for realizations for others. Naturally, these mostly would be illuminations, not the settled and permanent realization that is the goal of *yoga*—but they could be steps on the way. . . . Anything that carries the word, the light in it, spoken or written, can light the fire within, open a sky, as it were, bring the effective vision of which the word is the body.'

The ultimate harmony in expression is the inevitable co-ordination or correspondence between the object and the means employed to describe it; or rather, words being symbols of what they seek to set out, every care should be

taken to exhibit them in their truest and essential colours. For words and the seed-syllables of which they are composed have their own potencies, material and spiritual. It is in this spirit that Śrī Śaṅkara, a follower of the Vedic tradition, has composed his poetry. It is in this vein alone that he has compared his *Śivānandalaharī* to a 'charming virgin of noble descent, gentle and melodious in conduct and speech, simple and precise, modest, natural, and transparent, apt and adequate, fully decked in manifold gems of metaphor and simile, and full of light in it' (98).

Art appeals only in consonance with one's own *saṁskāra* and *saṁskṛti*. The ideals of all forms of art are the same. They are potency, melody, beauty, clarity, infinitude, and an unflinching suggestion of the Absolute.

Art is the very life and essence of the soul. The things of beauty it creates are but various vestiges of its own infinitude and glory. Through them the soul allows its own innate light to flood and illumine the worlds. Ignorance of the world can be routed only with this light. A perfect artist like Śrī Śaṅkara, though a traditionalist, is yet free from the shackles of tradition, and creates his own tradition for the future. In every work of his, his past and his future coalesce, as it were, into his momentary present, which treasures up his experience. He is thus a minstrel, a seer, and a poet all at the same time. In fact, he is the supreme Lord whom the entire creation obeys (see *Agni Purāṇa*, CCCXXXIX. 10).

Despite the fact that Śrī Śaṅkara has been regarded as a sublime philosopher, he is still conspicuous for his poetic diction, high imagination, and divine intuition. While Kālidāsa's poetic faculty mostly plays about the sensual and sensuous imports, Śrī Śaṅkara's extends to the farthest extreme of the supra-sensuous, and even transcends it in a manner quite symptomatic of the melodic nature of the Divine (*Śivānandalaharī*, 47, 53). No other poet seems to have achieved that comprehensive sense of the syllables which compose the word, or that synthesis of the syllables put together

in the unit of sense, namely, the word. Śrī Śaṅkara's diction has been more the result of his spiritual contemplation of the atomic seeds of *nāda*. His artistry has been a direct inheritance from the Vedic poet, to whom sound was form and form sound, and the compound of the two, the peerless edibility or *mādhurya* of the Lord.

The artistic genius of Śrī Śaṅkara is multifaced like his spiritual one. He is a great synthesis of the two, the sensuous and the sublime. No better instances of this alchemization can be cited than his own twins—the *Saundaryalaharī* and *Śivānandalaharī*—and *Śataślokī*.

Śrī Śaṅkara, the master of the word, its form, melody, and sense, was not a stranger to the other arts like painting, sculpture, music, etc. He was learned in all the sixty-four branches of knowledge. That he was a great connoisseur in the fine arts is evident from his *Saundaryalaharī*, *Śivānandalaharī*, and *Prapañcasāra*. He defines the high function of art in his *Svātmānirūpaṇa* (95), which reads: 'On the huge canvas of the self, the self itself paints a picture of the manifold worlds, and the supreme Self seeing but Itself therein enjoys great delight.' This statement weds art with religion, and is unequivocal in stressing that art is a spiritual *sādhana*. None but an artist, a master of rhythm and grace, could have felt the glamour of the different shades of the red—of the complexion, face, lips, feet, nose, limbs, and the nails—of the Devī in his *Saundaryalaharī*; or conceived the sublime peacock's form of Naṭarāja in his *Śivānandalaharī*; or given the different ecstatic *dhyānas* of gods and goddesses in his *Prapañcasāra*; or set out the various elements of sublime poetry, uniting and transfiguring them all in a superb metaphor of the perfect bride (*Śivānandalaharī*, 98), and dedicated her to the Lord who was Himself the greatest Kalyāṇa Sundara (auspicious beauty).

II

The few English poets who approximate to Śrī Śaṅkara's Advaitic ideals are Wordsworth, Shelley, Blake, and Coleridge.

To Śrī Śaṅkara, Nature is not a simple pander to earthly delights. She is both an effluence and an emanation of the Absolute, and is even the symbol, though transient, of the Divine in both His melodic and terrific aspects. He has no predilection for either. He has found the gentle streak of tenderest compassion even in the *raudra* aspects of Kālī, Kātyāyanī, Nṛsimha, the cosmic Mahā-Viṣṇu, and Pañcānana-Śiva. He welcomed both the *saumya* and *bhīkara* aspects as necessary influences to spiritual inspiration in life, inasmuch as the Divine is essentially compassionate, though multifaced or multi-complexioned. But to Wordsworth, only Nature in Her beneficent and calm moments is salutary to spiritual progress and happiness, but not Her terrible moods of storm and stress; for the impetuous 'tumult of a tropic sky might well be dangerous food'. Wordsworth considers man is lost 'when Nature had subdued him to Herself'. This is indeed surprising, especially in the light of his own definition of Nature as the sole primal Spirit from whom all creation proceeds, has its variegated being, and finally is dissolved into Her at the Finale. Subjugation by Her in the spiritual sense may be equated to willlessness and an effacement of the individual ego, which certainly mark the descent of divine grace into the subdued.

Wordsworth's conception of the Divine is a queer blend of both the Puruṣa and Prakṛti and the Śākta ideals. From Nature, a universal Principle personified, proceed the male principle termed as human nature, equated to the mind of man, and the female principle termed nature, embodied in the spirit of the outward world. The male principle is wedded to the female principle, like our Puruṣa to Prakṛti, in love and holy wedlock. The human nature, i.e. the mind of man in Wordsworth's regard, does not seem to be an agent or *upādhi* of the universal Principle or Consciousness, but acts directly by itself out of its own consciousness. The spirit of Nature of the outward world does not consist of dead matter; it is enlivened into action having been animated thereto by a soul

of its own, which communes with the poet's soul through his own senses. An active Principle therefore subsists in all things, in all natures, 'from link to link it circulates, the Soul of all the worlds', and binds them all together. This active Principle cannot be other than the 'Universal Spirit or Principle' or 'The Great Plastic Force' (Shelley and Coleridge) immanent in creation, which is symbolic of our Brahman.

Wordsworth's dictum that the human nature (the mind of man) acts directly out of its own consciousness and independent of the universal nature has to be understood aright in the light of the poet's own further statement that the universal active Principle gave a distinct soul to each in creation and assigned to each a distinct work to do: 'The stars have their tasks, the silent heavens their goings on.' Is this not similar to the triune function of the supreme Godhead—Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva—entrusted with the offices of creation, maintenance, and destruction of worlds? This universal Principle is not merely an infinite Thought, but a Person, according to Wordsworth, who lives, moves, and rejoices in all Her works. She is not only the God in man, but also the God in nature:

Dwelling in the light of the setting suns,
And the round ocean, and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man,
A motion and a spirit that impels
All things thinking, all objects of all thought
And rolls through all things.

(*Tintern Abbey*)

This pantheistic monism, which is akin to our Vedic monism, affirms God in all and all in God. In any spiritual contemplation of the Godhead, 'the material world fades away, and we feel as if we ourselves were pure spirit, and all the objects of sense were not all real things we could touch, but unsubstantial appearances. ... Through the sense we lose the sense, through the visible we enter the world of the Invisible' (*Prelude*). Wordsworth expresses this 'sea-change' in glowing terms, quite yogic.

In such access of mind, when sensation, soul,
and form (knowledge, knower, and the known)
all melt in one self,

In such high hour
Of visitation from the living God,
Thought was not, in enjoyment it expired.

(*Excursion*)

This confirms the spiritual experience on the eve of final dissolution (*Brahmatva*), for the aspirant thereafter gets merged into the great silence, vocative only to itself; and his mind

Was a thanksgiving to the power

That made him: it was blessedness and love.
(*Ibid*) This is, indeed, our *sāyujya* or the final beatitude (liberation).

Shelley, according to his contemporaries Leigh Hunt, Byron, Hogg, etc., was the gentlest, purest, bravest, and the most spiritual being; and both he and Śrī Śaṅkara died young, about the same age. While others simply speculated about the soul and the Over-soul, nature and the mind of man, Shelley and Blake lived factually ethereal existences in the here and the beyond. While the fruit of Śrī Śaṅkara's mind had got ripened by systematic yogic reflection, Shelley's had been 'plucked before it had mellowed'. Though both had composed with all their faculties, mental, emotional, and physical, 'at a white heat of intense fervour', yet the result in the case of Shelley, even in his finest efforts—'natural and elemental' like the wind, the sea, the depth of air, etc.—is more of a troubled spirit, rather than that of yogic calm we find in the case of Śrī Śaṅkara's compositions. They differed from each other in the intensity and nature of their identification with their contemplated. In Śrī Śaṅkara, the identification is complete with the essence of things, while with Shelley, it is not quite so. The reaction in Shelley is only to the extent of translating himself into the moods of things, rather than into their essence. 'He passes from magnificent union of himself with Nature, and magnificent realization of Her storm and peace, to equally great self-description, and then mingles all Nature and all himself together that

he may sing of the restoration of mankind.' In other words, humanity was his supreme God-head. No better instances of this unique blend can be cited than the poet's *Cloud*, *The Skylark*, and *The Ode to the West Wind*. Shelley always believed that 'humanity was but an imagery of an eternal Oneness behind it, which, reflected in the ever-changing mirror of circumstance and nature, made its infinite variety'. This is an Advaitic truth which Śrī Śaṅkara was never wearied of preaching.

As Plato would have said: The Muses filled them both, but with different effects. Both strove to attain one and the same object, the Bliss Eternal, and the sensuous investiture for their thoughts of the earth and the heavens. Shelley struggled still in his 'sacred madness', while Śrī Śaṅkara, having conquered it, had attained to a yogic tranquillity, which we glimpse now and then in Wordsworth, whenever he is not didactic. Yet as Symonds puts it: 'Shelley never willingly composed under the impulse to body forth a vision of the love and light and life, which was the Spirit of the Power he worshipped.' But in Śrī Śaṅkara's poems, we always feel the calm of heavens and unfailingly touch their dazzling denizens.

We have glimpses of the Reality in Shelley only when he is impersonal, but in Śrī Śaṅkara, we have a continuous vision of it. Shelley's premature absorption into the mystery of the Unknown lands him often into a pessimistic disillusion of men and things. In such dark moments (closing lines of *Alastor*), we sense the unripeness of his soul. At other times and in moments of blissful realization, we see him exclaim in syllables of light:

... look on That which cannot change—the
One
The unborn and the undying. Earth and
ocean
Space and the isles of life or light that gem
The sapphire floods of interstellar air,
The firmament pavilioned upon chaos
With all its cressets of immortal fire, ...
... this whole

Of suns, and worlds, and men, and beasts,
and flowers,
With all the silent or tempestuous workings
By which they have been, are, or cease to be,
Is but a vision: all that it inherits
Are motes of a sick eye, bubbles and dreams;
Thought is its cradle and its grave, nor less
The future and the past are idle shadows
Of Thought's eternal flight—they have no
being:
Nought is but that which feels itself to be.
(*Hellas*)

Again, while bewailing the loss of his dear friend Keats, in his memorable lines (*Adonais*, stanzas: XL, XLII, XLIII), Shelley stresses the eternality of the self, its oneness with the Absolute (though through Nature), and the one Reality behind all the temporal existence of the many:

The One remains, the many change and pass;
Heaven's light for ever shines, earth's shadows
fly:
Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
Stains the white radiance of Eternity,
Until Death tramples it to fragments. (LII)

We do not know if Advaitism has been poetized better in English poetry anywhere else than in Shelley. Shelley 'flew at the grand, the spacious, and the sublime, and did not always succeed in realizing for his readers what he had imagined'. For his expression was still passionate and coloured with his personality. Śrī Śaṅkara's was, on the other hand, tranquil and dispassionate.

Despite, again, his imbalance and immaturity, which may be probably due to his *saṁskṛti*, Blake comes very much near our Vedāntic ideals of monism. He was acclaimed as a poet of the soul among English poets in contradistinction with Wordsworth and Shelley, who were labelled poets of nature and of revolt respectively. Shelley is rather vague and uncertain about the way the redemption of external nature could be effected. But Blake, endowed as he was with a keener vision into the heart of things, was clear and precise. To

him, redemption of man lay in his supernatural consciousness of the truth of the One in the many and the many in the One, i.e. in the perception of his own self in the selves of the many and his own identification (*samatva*) with them. Blake considered that external nature could be redeemed only 'by the imaginative energy of the soul of man, and man's love bringing to birth a new consciousness in Nature' (last lines of *Jerusalem*). This consciousness in Nature, or her own redemption, is signalled by the humanization of all things—trees, metals, earth, the very stones: all are identified in human forms and endowed with the consciousness of man. What was a pious and instructive desire in Shelley was an intellectual conviction in Blake.

The Absolute (Brahman) is a colourless blend of Puruṣa and Prakṛti. Like the Vedic seers and Śrī Śaṅkara, both Shelley and Blake humanized the natural forces. Blake's origin of priesthood and his explanation how we mortals forget all deities, although they reside in the human breast, are really like our own and quite illuminating. Blake says: 'The ancient poets animated all sensible objects with gods and geniuses, calling them by the names and adoring them with the properties of woods, rivers, mountains, lakes, cities, nations, and whatever their enlarged and numerous senses could perceive. . . . Thus men forgot that all deities reside in the human breast' (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*). This is, indeed, a parallel to our own Vedic religion. His lines

We like infants descend
In our shadows on earth

import a quickening of matter (Prakṛti) with life by the spirit (Puruṣa); for he regards 'Life as a descent of spirit into matter in order that spirit may achieve form'. Blake's Reality is therefore the informing spirit, and the unreality is the corporal or the vegetable form it takes, the 'passing shadow'. Towards his end, and in a moment of perfect realization when he had disowned his body, he exclaimed: 'I do not behold the outward creation (mortal body),

and that to me is hindrance and not action: it is as the dirt upon my feet—no part of me.'

Coleridge is also an 'Advaitin' in his own way, and shadows forth our own Śrī Śaṅkara. To Shelley, Nature was self-existent, while to Coleridge she is an effluence from God. He conceives that 'the one all-conscious Spirit has within Himself, and sends forth from Himself, infinite myriads of self-conscious minds: some to weave the fates of man and live in man, others to live in and inform all the organic and inorganic forms of Nature' (cf. the imagery of the spider weaving gossamer out of itself and withdrawing it: *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, II.1.20 and Śaṅkara thereon). Thus Nature in all her myriad forms, and invested with distinct spirits, is always alive in God. Coleridge holds that the world and all its contents, save their selves, are phenomenal and unreal; and that the real creator of all these in Nature is the 'Thought of God' in us and none other; and 'thinking these—we see, hear, and feel them and build up the world of Nature from ourselves'. Hence, when we receive any impressions from Nature, they are but our own thoughts (*Dejection: An Ode*). This is in yogic vein, when the ego has been completely submerged in the supreme Will:

O the one life within us and abroad,
Which meets all motion and becomes its soul,
A light in sound, a sound-like power in light,
Rhythm in all thought and joyance every-
where— . . .
And what if all of animated Nature
Be but organic harps diversely framed,
That tremble with thought, as over them
sweeps
Plastic and vast, one intellectual breeze,
At once the Soul of each, and God of all.
(*Eolian Harp*)

Compare this with stanza 68 of Śrī Śaṅkara's *Śataśloki*: 'Although the hearing of the sound proceeds from the musical instrument, it is nevertheless produced only by striking the instrument. The sounds that proceed from striking the instrument are not heard separately,

but only in conjunction with the striking. So, too, this universe, whose efficient cause is illusion (Māyā), is manifest, as it were, in conjunction with Brahman. But when that Brahman is realized inwardly, nothing will remain the object of perception.

As Rev. Stopford Brooke sums up: 'We each

in our thinking make the outward world for ourselves; but our thinking in this sphere is in its source the one Thought of God, in which infinitely varied through a myriad secondary forms of thought the universe consists.'

(To be continued)

'GOD IS NOT GOOD—I AM GOOD'

BY SWAMI NIKHILANANDA

This provocative title is taken from Meister Eckhart, one of the prominent Rhineland mystics. A Vedāntist can accept the statement. When it is said that God is not good, it follows that He is not evil, either. The Godhead, or ultimate Reality, is untouched by good and evil, or the other pairs of opposites. When it is said that I am good, it means that I can be evil also. A man, or a phenomenal creature, is a victim of both good and evil, and of the other pairs of opposites.

The concept of the goodness of God and the sinfulness of man forms the basis of Christianity, Islam, and Judaism, all of which come from a Semitic source. This concept may very well apply to all dualistic religions, which admit the personal God as the ultimate Reality, speak of Him as the Creator, Preserver, Destroyer, and Saviour of the universe, and attribute to Him such qualities as compassion, justice, omnipotence, omniscience, and so on.

Those who attribute goodness to God generally have at the back of their thought what happens to themselves. God is good, because He is the bestower of health, wealth, prosperity, and a heavenly life after death. Men worship God, in times of war, for victory. They sing His praise when the enemy is crushed. But the enemy, too, may worship God for victory. Does he feel that God is good after his defeat?

That God's justice, goodness, and compassion are judged by what happens to ourselves is vividly described in the *Book of Job* in the Old

Testament. Job was perfect and upright. He feared God and eschewed evil. He was a happy and prosperous man with seven sons, three daughters, seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she-asses. To make his happiness complete, he was blest with a large household of servants and slaves. Job regularly worshipped God according to the scriptural injunctions. One day, the Lord praised Job highly for his virtues before an assembly of his creatures, where Satan was present. When the Lord reminded Satan of Job's piety, Satan said that there was nothing to wonder at; but if he lost his possessions, he would curse the Lord to His face. The Lord asked Satan to take away all his possessions, but not to touch his person. It so happened that Job lost his cattle, his servants were killed, his sheep and camels burnt up, and his children all destroyed when the house in which they were feasting fell down. Job rent his garments, shaved his head, and worshipped God. 'Naked', he said, 'I came from my mother's womb. Naked I shall return thither. The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.' The Lord again praised Job's devotion before Satan. Satan said that, if his bones and flesh were touched, he would certainly curse the Lord. The Lord permitted Satan to afflict his body, but asked him to save his life. Satan smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot to his crown. His wife rebuked him for

still trusting in God. Job remained firm and said to his wife that one should take from God both good and evil. Then his friends rebuked him. Job's faith was shaken. He cursed the day when he was born and the night in which he was conceived. The Lord appeared before him in the form of a whirlwind and said: 'Gird up thy loins like a man. Where wast thou when I laid the foundation of the earth? Declare if thou hast the understanding.' Surely, Job's idea of God's justice and kindness was based upon his all-round prosperity. When he lost it, he doubted God. The Lord asked Job if he was there when He had created the world and men. If justice and compassion were the Lord's attributes, they must exist from everlasting to everlasting.

When a ship goes down, it is natural for a man to speak of God's compassion if he survives the shipwreck and all others perish. Can a man praise God for His compassion if, in the same shipwreck, he goes down and all others are saved?

The concept of a good God creates the problem of evil. The Bible says: 'And God saw everything that He had made, and behold it was good.' Therefore God must be good. But the problem of evil haunts us. We see horrors in nature and imperfection in the world and men. Since the time of the Greek philosophers, Western thinkers have been struggling with the problem of evil. Plato admitted the goodness of God and also saw the intractableness of nature. God could not control rebellious nature. Thus His goodness remained ineffective. According to the Gnostic philosophers, the world was created by the Devil, and God has been trying to redeem it. St. Augustine accepted the depravity of human nature as a result of temptation. He also believed that it could be redeemed by divine grace. Leibnitz saw many defects in the world, but derived consolation from the thought that it was the best of all possible worlds. John Stuart Mill tried to demonstrate God's omnipotence by making Him the creator of the Devil.

Thus theologians and philosophers admit of a friction between God and the Devil, the outcome sometimes favouring the one, and sometimes the other. Non-dualistic Vedānta does not relate either good or evil to the ultimate Reality. They are facts of the phenomenal world. The phantoms of good and evil arise when the light of Reality is obscured by the inscrutable Māyā. As long as a man regards himself as a part of the phenomenal universe, he cannot experience good without evil, and *vice versa*. They are the two sides of the same coin. A storm uproots houses and trees, and also kills harmful germs and insects. The same fire burns down a city and gives men warmth. War destroys human lives and monuments of civilization; it also promotes science, technology, and medicine. It stimulates man's cruelty and also his philanthropic spirit. The two great wars of the present century have been the sources of many evils. They have also helped several dependent countries to obtain their political freedom.

Socrates admitted the coexistence of good and evil. He explained to his disciples that he felt pain when his body was shackled, in the prison, and felt happy when the chains were removed. He pointed out that he could not feel the happiness without the previous pain. Plato spoke of good and evil as two quarrelling gods who could not be reconciled; so the Demiurge, in desperation, chopped off their heads and tied them together. Thus good and evil coexist in the phenomenal world. If God is good, He can be evil too. The result of a good action can also be evil. Sri Ramakrishna tells the story of a butcher who felt exhausted while dragging a cow to the slaughter house. When given food by a kind man, he felt strong again. Thus strengthened, he took the cow to the slaughter house and had it killed. The sin was visited upon the kind host.

Belief in a personal God as the ultimate Reality, who is good and moral, has often introduced an element of dogmatism and intolerance in dualistic religions. The adherents of other faiths are persuaded, bribed, or forced to

accept the God of a particular religion. It has also led to the doctrine of exclusive salvation, the chosen people, and the attitude of either-or. Furthermore, it has brought about religious wars, inquisitions, the burning of witches, and untold suffering to humanity.

The religious concept of God is largely based on faith and scriptural dogma. There is another concept of Reality, which is given to us by the higher mystics from all the major religions. It is based upon direct experience arrived at mainly through meditation, which they practised along with physical, mental, and moral disciplines. They claim a direct intuition of the ultimate Reality, which is described as a state of transcendental consciousness. They claim union with it. Thus they realized that Reality is their inmost nature. While practising meditation, some of them took the help of a symbol of the external God, but in the end they realized that the God in themselves received the God who came to them from outside. Sri Ramakrishna described this exalted phenomenon as the experience of Consciousness by means of one's inner consciousness.

There seems to be a common agreement among mystics of a high order that Reality is impersonal and devoid of name, form, or attributes. The mystics of non-dualistic Vedānta describe Brahman, or ultimate Reality, as devoid of all indicating marks and qualifying characteristics (*neti*). Thinking stops before this experience. The *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* describes Brahman as 'without parts and without relationship, the cessation of all phenomena. It is all good and non-dual'. This goodness is not to be confused with the goodness of God derived from the fulfilment of desires. The non-dual Reality is free from friction and contradiction. Therefore it is all good. In the experience of non-duality, the individual self merges in Brahman. A somewhat similar conception of impersonal Reality is found in Confucianism, Taoism, and the Egoless Mind of Zen Buddhism. The non-dual Reality may have personal embodiments in

the phenomenal world, but the Impersonal is their substratum. When Arjuna extolled Śrī Kṛṣṇa as the ultimate Absolute, the latter showed Arjuna the Tree of the Absolute, from which hang numerous Kṛṣṇas like black berries. All manifestations in the relative world are different readings of the Absolute. One may regard the personal God as the highest reading. The dualistic conception of a personal God is good up to a point. Through such a concept, a seeker may cultivate devotion, one pointedness, and spiritual enthusiasm. But beyond that, it is bad, in that, as stated before, it often produces bigotry and fanaticism.

According to mysticism, the apparent diversity of independent consciousness is supported by a spiritual unity. The *Vedānta-Sūtra* says that, in the non-dual Brahman alone, all the apparent contradictions of the phenomenal world are harmonized. With the attainment of enlightenment, duality ceases to exist. Personality, according to the mystics, is not the ultimate fact. It is possible for the individual to merge his vision of the personal God in a greater, impersonal Consciousness. Sri Ramakrishna's visions of Christ and Mohammed first disappeared into the World Soul (Saguṇa Brahman) and finally into undifferentiated pure Consciousness.

The Upaniṣads condemn duality: 'He wanders from death to death who sees diversity in Brahman.' Diversity produces fear, secretiveness, selfishness, and the desire to obtain the agreeable and shun the disagreeable. Both Hinduism and Buddhism have condemned desire as the cause of rebirth. Desirelessness is the condition of immortality. The Upaniṣads say that, by getting rid of all the desires clinging to the heart, the mortal man attains to immortality in the physical body. Even good desires are ultimately harmful, in that they lengthen the chain of phenomenal existence. The Holy Mother emphasized the fact that we can instantaneously attain liberation by being desireless.

But this desirelessness is impossible as long as there is any trace of individuality, which in-

evitably creates the idea of separation. The evil of separation can be seen in the evolutionary history of the world. From separation arises specialization, the result of which is dangerous, because it leads to the ultimate extinction of a species by precluding the possibility of further biological progress. The study of fossils shows the dangers of specialization. Both men and society, too, by insisting on separation and specialization, can be turned into fossils. Love and understanding, which remove separation, are valuable on the biological level as well.

The ultimate Reality, experienced by the mystics, is not personal. Hence it is not ethical either. The ethical categories of good and evil do not apply to the ultimate Reality.

Albert Schweitzer criticized Hinduism, because it describes the ultimate Reality as not good, and consequently as not moral. Hindu mystics, he says, by uniting themselves with the non-moral Brahman, remain indifferent to moral values. This opinion is both an unfair one and a verbal one. Hinduism insists on morality and goodness as a preparation for the ultimate, non-dual experience. Without being moral and good, one cannot come anywhere near the non-dual experience. Why is this so?

Every man, before attaining identity with the undifferentiated Consciousness, lives in his own private universe. On the physical level, separation is a brute fact of experience. Diversity cannot be explained away. The private universe is conditioned by the sense-organs and the mind. Animals, ordinary men, good men, saints, all live in their private universes. The private universes of men endowed with five sense-organs would change if they could develop a sixth one. But these separate universes must merge into the experience of non-dual Consciousness. One of the disciplines for this realization is the practice of goodness. By means of it, we overcome our animal and separate natures and experience the oneness of existence. Goodness consists of love, compassion, and understanding, which are the essence of ethics. A man cannot enjoy an exalted

mystical experience and at the same time cherish his separate nature. A man cannot approach Reality without being moral and good. If one wants to have knowledge of Reality, small or great, one must be good to a smaller or greater degree. But ultimately, the mystical experience transcends both good and evil. One is reminded of the admonition of Christ to 'let the dead bury their dead'. If I am always looking frantically outside to do good to others, I certainly cannot realize the kingdom of heaven within. The enlightened mystic does not strive for goodness; goodness clings to him. The real basis of goodness is the mystical experience of the undifferentiated Consciousness. The real God-men, ancient or modern, derive their goodness from their mystical experience of non-duality. Christ, during the day-time, ministered to the needs of others, but at night he retired from the multitude to commune with Reality. Sri Ramakrishna dwelt in two states of consciousness. In the external state, he taught, danced, or sang the glories of God. In the internal state, he remained silent absorbed in *samādhi* or ecstasy. He compared these two states to the two sets of teeth of an elephant. With the help of its tusks, the elephant deals with the outer world; and with the inner grinders, it chews food and gets nourishment. Christ never made good works a substitute for inner experience. It is this inner experience which makes good works possible.

Man is good; he can be evil also. Good and evil are categories of the phenomenal world, associated with desires ranging from the fulfilment of animal cravings to the enjoyment of heavenly happiness. They do not exist in the ultimate Reality. The fantasies of good and evil appear when Reality is covered by *Māyā* or cosmic ignorance. Good, however, is closer to Reality than evil. But Reality is not good. Remove evil by good. Go beyond both, and experience God.

Good and evil cannot contaminate God. One smells good and bad odours in the air, but the air itself remains unaffected by them.

Once, a woman disciple of Sri Ramakrishna was disturbed at the apparent attachment of the Holy Mother to her relatives. She thought the Holy Mother was very much involved with them. Coming to the Gaṅgā for a bath, she saw the corpse of a baby floating in the water. She also saw the Gaṅgā being worshipped by numerous people. Suddenly, it was revealed to her that the Gaṅgā was unaffected by good or evil.

Sri Ramakrishna often admonished his disciples not to waste their time trying to deter-

mine God's nature. God is infinite. The capacity of our minds is limited. An ant can eat only a grain of sugar and carry one other in its mouth to its hole. It will be presumptuous for an ant to think that it can carry home the whole mound of sugar.

If God is not good, shall we then call Him bad? If He is not compassionate, shall we call Him cruel? Sri Ramakrishna said to some devotees who thus remonstrated with him: 'Fools, did I forbid you to call Him good? All I say is, love Him.'

HAZRAT NIZAMUDDIN AULIA

BY DR. M. HAFIZ SYED

Hazrat Nizamuddin, whose name was Mohammad and who was called 'Beloved of God, King of Saints', was born in Badayun in the year 634 A.H. His forefathers originally came from Bokhara; first they came to Lahore, and then migrated to Badayun. Both his father and mother came from pious and saintly families.

When Mohammad was just five years old, his father passed away. He was brought up under the loving protection of his mother, who was looked upon with great reverence for her piety and austere living.

Nizamuddin received his early education in Badayun. Maulana Alauddin Usuli invited the learned men of the time, and in their presence the 'turban of learning' was put on his head in recognition of the fact that he had completed his education, as it was in vogue in those days.

In order to carry on still more advanced studies in Islamic subjects, he migrated to Delhi with his mother. There he learnt several subjects from Maulana Shamsuddin Wamghani, whose erudition was recognized by King Balban by conferring on him the title of 'Shamsul-Mumalik'.

His spiritual teacher was Baba Ganjshakr, who not only initiated him into the mysteries of

spiritual life, but also taught him various religious and mystical subjects in which he was considered an adept. For several years, Nizamuddin lived in the monastery of his teacher and performed severe austerities and completed his spiritual development.

After some time, he was directed by his Murshid (teacher) to go to Delhi and occupy himself in the devotion of God and in the service of his fellowmen.

At the time of his passing away, Baba Ganjshakr willed that his staff and robe be given to his devoted disciple Nizamuddin, as his vicegerent (Khalifa).

While Sheikh Nizamuddin was taking leave of his Murshid, he gave him a word of admonition:

(1) If ever you borrow anything from anybody, you must see that you return it as soon as possible.

(2) Try to serve and please your enemies under any circumstances.

The last time when Sheikh Nizamuddin went to his Murshid, at the time of leaving, he blessed the Sheikh with these words: 'May God keep you regenerated and spiritually elevated at all times. You would be like an evergreen tree, under whose shadow people

would find comfort, rest, and inspiration.' Further, he added: 'Do not relax your efforts in developing more and more spiritual knowledge and insight.'

When Sheikh Nizamuddin came to Delhi first at his Murshid's bidding, he did not find there a quiet and secluded place for his prayer and meditation. Therefore, he had to resort to the outskirts of the city to find a lonely place to continue his spiritual practices.

At that time, the city of Delhi was the centre of all sorts of social evils and malpractices. That was one of the main reasons why he took his abode outside the city, in a village called Ghyaspur. For a long time, he spent his days there in great hardship and starvation. Once, he had to go without food for three days on end.

When Sultan Jalaluddin Khilji heard that the Sheikh was passing his days in penury and poverty, he was so much touched by this news that he offered to grant him free gifts of some villages, so that he may be able to maintain himself from their income. But the Sheikh and his disciples thankfully declined to accept this offer.

There is a touching story about this time of his life. For want of food, he had to starve for days. Once, a pious and kind-hearted lady living in his neighbourhood brought him a handful of flour, which was being cooked in an earthen pot. Just when this flour was ready for use, a dervish visited him and asked him for some food. The Sheikh brought the pot of food and placed it before the dervish, who satisfied his hunger with a few morsels of it and threw the pot on the ground and disappeared after uttering these remarks:

'Sheikh Fariduddin Ganjshakr endowed you with the wealth of spiritual life, and I broke into pieces the pot which was a symbol of poverty. Now you have been made the king of inner and outer life.'

After this incident, Sheikh Nizamuddin's indigent condition was surprisingly changed, and he began to receive gifts in abundance from his devotees and admirers. But the Sheikh

was so God-reliant and contented that he used to order that all that he received during the day should be distributed among the poor people, and did not allow anything to be kept overnight for the next day.

It was during this period of his life that Sultan Muazuddin Kaikubal built a palace near the Sheikh's village. It was on this account that the people used to congregate round about his village, and his peace was disturbed. He decided to leave this village, but an unknown person suddenly visited him and asked him not to be disheartened with the presence of the crowd, but to carry on his spiritual mission and remain inwardly undisturbed.

As the Sheikh was living in Ghyaspur village, very close to the royal palace, the ministers and the state officials used to visit him frequently. Some of them were initiated by the Sheikh, and thus they became recipients of his grace and guidance. Some well-to-do citizens, who were indulging in all sorts of objectionable pleasures, totally abstained from evil ways and led a pious life.

Amir Khusro's father, Amir Saifuddin, had joined the circle of the Sheikh's disciples. In fact, the members of his whole family accepted him as their spiritual leader. At that time, Amir Khusro was only eight years old. His parents placed him at their Murshid's feet. He was an accepted disciple at this tender age. Amir Khusro was utterly devoted to his teacher, and acted up to his instructions most loyally all his life. The Sheikh also was deeply attached to him.

Amir Khusro was not only an outstanding poet and a literary man of his time, but, on account of his close intimacy with the royal family, had built up a fortune. In the presence of the Sheikh, he behaved like a mere servant.

There is a touching story about his devotion to his spiritual teacher. Once, a dervish visited the Sheikh and wanted some gifts from him. But the Sheikh could not afford to give him anything, except a new pair of shoes which he had at that time. While the dervish was going on his way, he came across Amir Khusro and

his royal party. The Amir stopped him and asked if he had got anything from his Murshid. When he learnt that the dervish had a new pair of shoes from his Murshid, the Amir offered to have them back from him by surrendering to him in exchange all the wealth that he was carrying with him from an expedition. He took that pair of shoes, put them on his head, and carried them back to his beloved teacher.

Sheikh Nizamuddin passed away when Amir Khusro was away on an expedition with Sultan Mohammad Tughlak. As soon as the news of the passing away of the Sheikh was intimated to him, he took the king's permission and returned post-haste to the tomb of his teacher. Whatever wealth he possessed, he ordered it to be distributed to the poor. After six months of deep mourning, he expired, and was buried near the Sheikh's tomb.

During his lifetime, Sheikh Nizamuddin Aulia's influence was so great that even people living at a distance of fourteen miles lived a good and pious life and refrained from evil ways.

The author of *Searul Aulia* says that the Sheikh subjected himself to intense spiritual practices and austerities in his youth for thirty years. In his middle and old age, he devoted more and more time to spiritual development. Throughout the day and night, he used to say his prayers (*namāz*) four hundred times. He used to reside in the upper storey of his monastery. Even at the ripe old age of eighty, he used to climb down from his room to join the congregational prayer. After the morning and noon prayers, he used to engage himself in giving spiritual instructions to his disciples and followers. A large number of Sufis and aspirants on the path of God-realization used to flock round him.

Although he was deeply immersed in divine contemplation and devotion, he never forgot the interest of the general public, whom he treated with utmost consideration and helped them in every way.

His patience and forbearance was so great

that, even when he was ill-treated by his adversaries, he invariably returned good for evil. He took special delight in imparting instructions to his disciples and in transforming their moral character.

The day when he was about to quit his body and attain union with God, he peremptorily ordered that whatever was kept in his store-room should be given away to the poor, and nothing should be kept behind. Just a moment before he breathed his last, he opened his private box and bequeathed the following gifts to his disciple Sheikh Nasiruddin Chiragh: a prayer-carpet, a cloak, a rosary, and a wooden-staff.

Then he said his morning prayer. While the sun was rising, this 'glorious sun of religion' disappeared in the realm of eternity.

The date of his passing away, chronicled by the historians, is Wednesday, the 18th of Arabic month Rabiulawal 725 A.H. His mausoleum is in Delhi, where all classes of people congregate every week to pay their homage to him.

EPISTLES OF NIZAMUDDIN AULIA

The epistles of Nizamuddin Aulia are treated by Muslim scholars as his original works. The following books compiled by his disciples may be mentioned as authoritative: (1) *Fawedul Fawad*; (2) *Fazlul Fawad*; (3) *Rahtul Fawad*; (4) *Searul Aulia*.

The first one was compiled and edited by Khwaja Hasan Sanjari, who was one of the most beloved disciples of the saint.

There is a story about this disciple. Once, the Sheikh visited the tomb of Sheikh Bakhtiar Kaki, where he saw Hasan Sanjari enjoying his life in revelry and drunkenness in the company of his pleasure-loving friends.

As Hasan Sanjari had spent his early days in the company of the Sheikh in Badayun, and was quite familiar with him, he composed a quatrain addressed to the Sheikh, the purport of which was that he had spent years in his company, but had not derived any benefit from him. 'Thy piety has not helped me to renounce my evil ways, which are stronger than

thy piety.' These words touched the Sheikh's heart, who simply said that 'everything has its own time; you will have your better days'. These words of the Sheikh kindled a new life in Hasan Sanjari, who fell on his feet, and from that time, he renounced his sinful habits and began to lead a pious life.

The Sheikh accepted him as his disciple. From 707 till 719 A.H., whatever he heard from his Murshid's lips, he committed them to writing, which were compiled in a book form under the caption *Malfuzat*. These letters of the Sheikh were held in high esteem by the mystics of those times, and even up to this day, they are treated as the highest mystical authority.

Fazlul Fawad contains another set of epistles collected and chronicled by Amir Khusro.

The epistles of the third one, named *Rahtul Fawad*, were collected by an unknown disciple from 689 to 698 A.H., a rare copy of which is still preserved in the British Museum in London.

Khwaja Syed Mohammad Mubarak was one of the Sheikh's disciples who, in his well-known book *Searul Aulia*, has preserved the Sheikh's instructions along with the biographical notes of the saints of the Chisti order.

THE SHEIKH'S TEACHINGS

I. The true devotee of God is one who at all times bears Him in mind and loves nothing but Him and yearns for union with one's Beloved. Love of God has two aspects: love of God Himself and love of His attributes. The former comes from His grace, and the latter is the result of constant practice. What one has to do in this respect is to free one's mind from things other than God, and constantly occupy the mind with the thought of God. There are four obstacles in this path.

- (a) The world and its passing attractions.
- (b) God's creatures.
- (c) Temptations of the lower self.
- (d) Satan and the temptations spread by him.

The methods to remove these obstacles are these:

- (1) If you lead a sequestered life, people of the world would not disturb you.
- (2) Worldly desires can be overcome by contentment.
- (3) To overcome one's lower self and the temptations spread by Satan, one should sincerely pray to God to grant strength enough to overcome them.

II. The dervish is a creature of God's love, and the learned people follow the lead of reason. Sin is possible to commit so long as love of God is superficial, but when it becomes deeper and enters the inner core of the heart, sinful thoughts and acts become impossible.

III. Patience and resignation to the Will of God are the *sine qua non* for any success in the path of God-realization. In the face of affliction and calamity, not to murmur and complain is patience. Not to be disgusted when one is a victim of calamity is contentment and resignation. The best example of complete surrender to God's Will is that of a dead body in the hands of one who bathes it. The bather turns it to any side he likes. So the man who has surrendered himself completely to the Will of God has no will of his own. He has merged his individual will in the Divine Will. Full and abiding faith in God comes only to those who treat this world, with all its seeming attractions, as worthless, and who do not depend upon anything except God. Those who pretend to love God and at the same time love the world are liars.

According to Sheikh Nizamuddin, devotion to God depends upon six basic requirements:

(i) The aspirant should lead a sequestered life all by himself. This lonely habit will help him to analyse the insidious working of his lower nature and show him the way to overcome it.

(ii) The aspirant should see that he performs ablutions and preserves purity of body and mind. If at any time he is overcome by sleep, when he wakes up, he should perform ablution again.

(iii) He should try to keep 'fast' all the year round. If it is not possible, he should reduce his meal to a minimum.

(iv) He should always try to keep aloof from everything that does not relate to God.

(v) He should have intense love and devotion to his Murshid.

(vi) For the sake of God, he should be ever ready to renounce everything.

There are four things from which an aspirant should abstain:

(i) He should avoid the company of rich people.

(ii) Renouncing everything other than God, he should occupy his mind with constant remembrance of God.

(iii) He should wholly withdraw his attention from things other than God.

(iv) He should not have even the least interest in worldly things. When once an aspirant realizes the futility and harmfulness of any desire, and makes up his mind to desist from it once for all, he should never turn back and resume his old habits.

The Sheikh has paid equal attention to both outward morality and inner moral sense. He thinks that a man can develop his spiritual

faculties if he eats less, speaks less, and sleeps less, and does not mix himself with the people of the world.

He is definitely of opinion that, while refraining from the company of worldly people, he should not ignore what he owes to them. He should discharge his duties and responsibilities by the people with whom he comes in contact.

This leads the aspirant on to have sufficient consideration for the welfare of his neighbours, whose defects and shortcomings he should not make public.

The Sheikh has emphasized the need for the observance of the essential tenets of Islam under any circumstance. The aspirant is enjoined to say his prayer five times daily without fail, keep fast for thirty days, and scrupulously keep away from all evil ways. Further, he says that the aspirant on the path of God should not have the least desire to acquire such powers as may enable him to perform miraculous and extraordinary deeds.

The Sheikh has permitted his disciples to hear such select songs as depict or portray the glory and greatness of God.

ŚRĪ-BHĀSYA

BY SWAMI VIRESWARANANDA

(Continued from previous issue)

TOPIC 4

THE SOUL IN ITS DESCENT FROM THE MOON DOES NOT GET EMBODIED IN ETHER ETC., BUT ATTAINS SIMILARITY OF NATURE.

तत्स्वामाव्यापत्तिः, उपपत्तेः ॥३११२२॥

22. (The soul, when descending from the world of the moon) attains similarity of nature with them (i.e. with ether, air, etc.), (that alone) being reasonable.

The path of the descent of souls from *candraloka* is given by Śruti as follows: 'They return again the same way as they come by; they come to the ether, from the ether to the air; the sacrificer, having become air, becomes smoke' etc. (*Chā.U.*, V.10.5). The question is, Does the soul become ether, air, etc. in the same sense that it becomes a man on earth, that is, has it ether etc. for its body, or does it attain similarity of nature with ether etc.? The opponent holds that it takes ether etc. for its

body. Just as the soul in the *śraddhā* state becomes the moon, in the same sense it also becomes ether etc., i.e. it becomes embodied in ether etc., as there is no reason to differentiate between the two cases. This *sūtra* refutes this view and says that it only attains similarity of nature, and does not get embodied. There is a reason for this view. In the case of becoming a man or the moon, the soul gets embodied for the enjoyment of its *karma*, but there is no such enjoyment of *karma* in the intermediate stages of its descent, and so there is no need of a body. Hence it only attains similarity of nature.

TOPIC 5

THE ENTIRE DESCENT OF THE SOUL TAKES ONLY A SHORT TIME.

नातिचिरेण विशेषात् ॥३११२३॥

23. (The soul's descent from the moon through the various stages up to the earth takes) not very long time, on account of special declaration (of the Śrutis with respect to the stages after that as taking time).

The question is raised whether the soul in its descent, while passing through the various stages, remains in those stages for long or attains the subsequent stages quickly. The *sūtra* says that the soul passes through the various stages up to the earth quickly, as the Śruti text says explicitly about the later stages as hard to escape from, thereby hinting that the earlier stages are attained quickly. 'Thence he is born as rice and corn, herbs and trees, sesamum and beans. From there the escape is beset with many more difficulties' (*Chā. U.*, V.10.6).

TOPIC 6

WHEN THE SOULS ENTER INTO PLANTS ETC., THEY ONLY GET CONNECTED WITH THEM AND DO NOT PARTICIPATE IN THEIR LIFE.

अन्याधिष्ठिते पूर्ववदभिलापात् ॥३११२४॥

24. (The descending soul enters) into what is ruled by another (soul); for the Śruti state-

ment (here also) is as in the previous cases.

'Then he is born as rice' etc. (*Chā. U.*, V.10.6)—the question is whether the word 'born' is to be taken in its primary sense, meaning that the soul actually gets embodied as plants, herbs, etc., or whether the soul is merely connected with the plants etc. The *sūtra* says that it is merely connected with the plants etc. for the same reason as given in *sūtra* 22, i.e. there is no enjoyment of *karma* in these stages also, and so there is no need of a body. Whenever birth in the primary sense takes place, and there is experience of fruits of action, it is made clear by the Śruti by a reference to *karma* which brings about that birth, as in 'Those whose conduct has been good will quickly attain a good birth' etc. (*Chā. U.*, V.10.7). The actions which resulted in the enjoyment of heaven are exhausted before the soul begins to descend, and the other *karmas* which have not yet begun to produce their results lead to embodiment as mentioned in *Chā. U.*, V.10.7. In the interval between these two stages, no new *karma* originates for the enjoyment of whose results a body is necessary. So the souls are only connected with plants etc., and they are not born as such in the primary sense.

अशुद्धमिति चेत्, न, शब्दात् ॥३११२५॥

25. If it be said (that the sacrifices in which animals are killed) are unholy, (we say) not so, on account of scriptural authority.

A further objection is raised against the view expressed in the last *sūtra*. During the sacrifices, which entitled the soul to go to heaven and enjoy, there was some bad *karma* also due to the killing of animals. And this bad *karma* can lead to the soul's getting actually embodied as plants etc. during its descent from the moon. The *sūtra* refutes this view and says that no bad *karma* accrues by killing animals in sacrifices, as it is sanctioned by the scriptures.

रेतः सिग्योगोऽथ ॥३११२६॥

26. Then (the soul gets) connected with him who performs the act of generation.

That the descending soul is not literally born as rice etc. is further established by the verse which says that the soul becomes the person who performs the act of generation. 'For whoever eats food and performs the act of generation (the soul) becomes that being' (*Chā. U.*, V.10.6). This means that the soul only gets connected with that person. So we have to understand that, in the preceding stages also, the soul only gets connected with plants, herbs,

etc., and is not actually born as such.

योनेः शरीरम् ॥३११२७॥

27. From the womb a (new) body is born.

It is only when the soul reaches the womb that it gets, according to its residual *karma*, a body for the enjoyment of pleasure and pain. In the previous stages, it only gets connected with ether, air, etc.

(To be continued)

NOTES AND COMMENTS

TO OUR READERS

'Gauḍapāda on Māyā and Avidyā' is the fifth in the series of learned articles on *māyā* and *avidyā* that is being contributed by Professor Surendranath Bhattacharya, M.A., formerly of Bihar National College, Patna. . . .

The *Gītā* offers the ideal of *karma-yoga* as a concrete way of life, in which *karma* is harmoniously blended with *bhakti* and *jñāna*. That the *karma-yogin* brings devotion into action and performs it with detachment and dexterity is the theme of the article on 'The Gospel of the *Gītā*' by Dr. P. Nagaraja Rao, M.A., D.Litt., of Karnatak College, Dharwar. . . .

Sri P. Sama Rao, B.A., B.L., of Bellary, a regular contributor to *Prabuddha Bharata*, has sent a series of articles on 'The Poetry of Śrī Śaṅkara'. In the first article of the series, included in this issue, the characteristics of Śrī Śaṅkara's poetry are compared and contrasted with those of the compositions of some English poets like Wordsworth, Shelley, Blake, and Coleridge, 'who approximate to Śrī Śaṅkara's Advaitic ideals'. . . .

Swami Nikhilananda is the head of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Centre of New

York. The article 'God Is Not Good—I Am Good' is a summary of one of the talks the Swami gave at the Centre, last year, and shows that God or ultimate Reality, is untouched by good and evil. . . .

Dr. M. Hafiz Syed, M.A., Ph.D., D.Litt., of Allahabad, discusses in his article on 'Hazrat Nizamuddin Aulia' the life, works, and teachings of this well-known Muslim saint. The saint's mausoleum is in Delhi, where devout Muslims of all classes congregate every week to pay their homage to him.

TOWARDS MANKIND-AS-A-WHOLE

The inventive genius of man has achieved today astounding results in science and technology. Man has produced formidable tools that can lead to his own self-annihilation. He has sent rockets into space and brought them back. He has put artificial satellites into orbit round the earth and the moon. And in the womb of future, there may yet be still more amazing successes awaiting the ingenuity of man.

Applied science has conferred many benefits on man. For man as a human being, however, its greatest achievement is the physical integration of mankind as one vast human family. The oneness of mankind today is a physical reality. Never before was it so closely knit to-

gether as it is today. The concept of mankind-as-a-whole is no longer a mythical or mystical one. It is a felt reality. Fast moving vehicles of transport and quick means of communication have obliterated distance, enabling the different sections of humanity to come closer to each other. This coming together has opened up new avenues for intimate understanding and exchange of ideas among them, as well as for mutual appreciation of their social, cultural, and religious values and traditions.

As days pass by, the barriers that kept one section of mankind secluded or separated from another—barriers created by various kinds of prejudices, of class, colour, race, culture, and religion—are all disappearing gradually. Mankind is today thinking in terms of unity of efforts and unity of purpose. It is aspiring to establish one-world and one-government. It is aiming at shaping the one-world individual of peace, love, and compassion; it is aiming at creating the awareness, feeling, and will towards mankind-as-a-whole. In the words of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan: 'The days of cultural tribalism are over. We no longer have separate cultural universes. East and West have come together, never to part again, and they must settle down in some kind of peaceful co-existence, which will eventually grow into active, friendly co-operation. That is essential for the future welfare of the world itself' (quoted from his address delivered at the tenth session of the General Conference of UNESCO held in Paris in November 1958).

Human advance in the realm of physical sciences has made the physical integration of mankind a visible reality. This in itself no doubt constitutes a great step towards the progress of mankind-as-a-whole. But that is only the first step. For the concept of mankind-as-a-whole to fully bear fruits and bestow permanent peace, happiness, and welfare for all men everywhere, there is need for further human advance in psycho-social and ethico-spiritual dimensions. Progress in these realms brings about the emotional integration of mankind-as-a-whole, uniting all men in cultural

fellowship and spiritual bond. When that emotional integration becomes firmly established on the basis of the spiritual unity of all human beings, then the foundation of mankind-as-a-whole becomes stable, sound, and everlasting. Future human advance must aim at the accomplishment of this end; and for such advance, there are three indispensable prerequisites which must be fulfilled.

What these prerequisites are and how they are to be fulfilled are explained by Dr. Radhakamal Mukerjee, an eminent sociologist and formerly Vice-Chancellor of Lucknow University, in a very thoughtful article entitled 'Mankind-as-a-whole', published in the *Bulletin of the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture* for September 1959. Dr. Mukerjee says: 'There are three prerequisites for future human advance in different dimensions. In the intellectual dimension, there should be no dogmatism or absolutism in social theories and policies. There would then be ample scope for the fusion and integration of opposite or complementary ideas, values, and institutions within the plastic unity of culture without the wastes of coercion and extermination. Tolerance, synthesis, and humanism are the indispensable intellectual principles underlying conscious human advance.

'In the moral dimension, there should be a clear appreciation of the interest and well-being of the generations yet unborn. Human advance is not possible unless men, institutions, and cultures pledge a fellowship with the men, institutions, and cultures that are to come after them. Without limited experience of solidarity, without at least moral recognition of the interests and well-being of future generations, the continuity of the physical and social heritages of mankind is broken. Solidarity of man throughout his generations is the indispensable moral principle for the conscious direction of his evolution. It can be built up only by moral intuition and faith. For reason and intellect show their inadequacies in subordinating present to future welfare in a wide perspective of social development.

'In the spiritual dimension, love and compassion, stimulated by a world imagination and faith, can alone constrain to sacrifices the advanced and affluent for the underprivileged and poor nations, so as to share equitably the benefits of modern science, technology, and civilization. ... A sense of honour, solidarity, and compassion can alone induce the have nations to share the good things of the world with the have-not nations. A global endeavour for the improvement of economic, nutritive, and intellectual conditions among the have-not nations is inseparable from the global campaign against war and the threat of nuclear annihilation. More than the nations' disarmament, the mitigation of the dual standard of living will contribute towards a mankind-as-a-whole feeling and constitute the basis of man's advance. Compassion, love, and sharing are the most intensive and pervasive spiritual principles for the conscious direction of further human advance.'

While concluding the article, Dr. Mukerjee says: 'There is one God in the world under different names and symbols—the mystic's God. There is one religion in the world—the religion of reverence, love, and compassion, as basic and

inescapable as the laws of nature. There is one transformation of man in the evolutionary process which religion alone can bring about—the rise of the World-Man, with a universal lovingness and a universal reverence which ideally establish mankind-as-a-whole.'

Future human advance must therefore be indicative of an evergrowing and all-embracing religion of reverence, love, and compassion. It must work for the happiness and welfare of all. An ancient Indian prayer says: 'May all living beings be happy. May success attend all undertakings aimed at the welfare of all.' If any one limb in our body is injured, the whole system suffers the pain. If any one member in a family suffers, the entire family identifies with him and suffers with him. So, too, if one man suffers, the whole of mankind suffers, because he is a part and parcel of the latter. Any trouble or suffering in any part of the world means trouble or suffering for all humanity. So all our endeavours, individual, national, or international, should be directed towards the welfare of all men all over the world, towards peace and happiness for mankind-as-a-whole.



REVIEWS AND NOTICES

A STUDY IN HINDU AND EUROPEAN POLITICAL SYSTEMS. BY RAMAPRASAD DASGUPTA. *Sole Distributors: Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, Publishers and Booksellers, Calcutta-12. 1958. Pages xiv+319. Price Rs. 12.*

The volume under review from the pen of Professor Ramaprasad Dasgupta, a distinguished teacher of history and political science, was published after the author's death. A study of Hindu polity in the light of the development of European polity, it brings home the range and depth of the author's scholarship. Not a few foreign scholars have branded the Hindu polity as 'Oriental despotism', ignoring the fact that it was not worse than the feudal anarchy of Medieval

Europe. Tyranny of an individual is certainly not more oppressive or undesirable than the collective tyranny of a whole class. Some writers, mostly Indian, however, have made very tall claims for the ancient Hindu polity. The ancient Hindus, according to these writers, discovered all the secrets of modern government 2,000 years before Europe did. Parliamentary democracy with its paraphernalia of party system and ministerial responsibility is said to have been known to the ancient Hindus! Modern democratic ideas have been read into the pre-modern Indian and European polities by not a few Indian and European scholars, respectively.

The volume under review, on the other hand, is

an unbiassed, dispassionate, and scholarly account of the political systems of Greece, Rome, France, Germany, Scandinavia, Denmark, and England, as well as of the Indian polity in the Vedic, Epic, Buddhist, Maurya, and post-Maurya periods.

Students of comparative politics will be benefited by a perusal of Professor Dasgupta's posthumous publication.

PROFESSOR SUDHANSU BIMAL MOOKHERJI

THE RELIGION OF THE BUDDHA AND ITS RELATION TO UPANISADIC THOUGHT. BY BAHADUR MAL. *Published by Vishveshvaranand Vedic Research Institute, P. O. Sadhu Ashram, Hosiarpur, Punjab. 1958. Pages xvi+310. Price Rs. 4.50.*

For a long time, scholars and critics held the view that Buddhism arose as a reaction against the thought of the Vedic and Upaniṣadic times. But the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* (II.1.14) clearly refers to the view of *dharma-prthaktva*, a view basic to early Buddhism. It is therefore a welcome effort on the part of Professor Bahadur Mal to show that the religion and thought of the Buddha is closely related to the Upaniṣadic thought.

After outlining the social and philosophic atmosphere at the time of the advent of the Buddha, Professor Mal deals with the basic teachings of the Buddha in the first part. Comparing these to the Upaniṣadic teachings, our author has correctly emphasized the positive side of the teaching. The Buddha did not deny the ultimate Reality. Though he rejected the reality of the ego-self, he did not reject the real self. The concept of *nirvāṇa* is the same as that of *mokṣa*.

The second part is devoted to the development of Buddhism. During this period, the doctrine became closer to the Upaniṣadic thought, though the Mādhyamakas and Yogācāras professed opposition to the Vedic thought.

The third part deals with the expansion of Buddhism in the past and in the present. The socio-ethical cult of the Theravāda school, he argues, has an appeal to the present.

This work is a valuable one, as it is written for the common man without any technical jargon. As a work designed to popularize Buddhist thought and religion, and to study Buddhism in the proper perspective, it is eminently successful.

—DR. P. S. SAS TRI

AŚTĀDASA-UPANISADĀH—EIGHTEEN PRINCIPAL UPANISADS. VOLUME I. TEXT WITH NOTES AND INDEX. EDITED BY V. P. LIMAYE AND

R. D. VADEKAR. *Published by Vaidika Saṁśodhana Maṇḍala, Poona 2. 1958. Pages 748. Price Rs. 20.*

Among the laudable efforts that are being made by several institutions in our country in recent years to publish critical editions of our ancient sacred lore, the present edition of the Upaniṣads marks a signal and successful achievement. Entrusted to the care of the scholars of Acharya V. P. Limaye's and Professor R. D. Vadekar's standing, the book bears the stamp of their vast learning and painstaking labour, which can be discerned in the copious notes added under every verse or passage of the Upaniṣadic text given in the book.

Issued as the Gandhi Memorial Edition, *Eighteen Principal Upaniṣads* has been planned in two volumes, of which the present volume under review is the first, and the second volume, to be issued soon, will contain English translation of these Upaniṣads with explanatory notes and an etymological dictionary of Upaniṣadic Sanskrit.

The first volume 'includes practically all the old and oldish Upaniṣads', to wit, (1-10) the well-known ten principal Upaniṣads, (11) the *Śvetāśvatara*, (12) the *Kauṣītaki*, (13) the *Maitrāyaṇī*, (14) the *Bāṣkalamāntra*, (15) the *Chāgaleya*, (16) the *Ārṣeya*, (17) the *Śaunaka*, and (18) the *Jaiminīya Upaniṣads*. In this list, the four Upaniṣads from 14 to 17 are newly found ones, and have already been edited twice before by others. The last mentioned, though a Brāhmaṇa, 'shares all the traits of an Upaniṣad—in fact, a part of it (viz. *Kena*) is already included in the principal ten'.

Apart from a critically edited version of the Upaniṣadic texts, the special feature of this edition is the presentation of parallels drawn from the extant Vedic literature, as well as exegetical and grammatical notes. The most notable and valuable feature of the present volume is the 'Index of Words and Clauses', which occupies nearly a third of the book—over 225 pages. The plan of the Index here differs from Jacob's *Concordance*. The usefulness and value of this Index to every student and scholar of the Upaniṣads cannot be overstated, as it gives reference to practically every word or clause of the Upaniṣads included in the main body of the book.

In their Preface to the book, the editors have outlined the genesis of the present undertaking and the plan of their work. In the presentation of the Upaniṣadic texts, the text of the Wāi Prājñapāṭhaśālā edition has been followed in the main, of course with due corrections. Several other rare manuscripts have also been consulted in the preparation of the book. At places, the editors have suggested new readings giving their own reasons there-

for, 'but always bearing in mind the famous dictum: the correct need not be the original'.

Each Upaniṣad begins with a brief introductory note in English by the editors, which gives information regarding the place of the Upaniṣad concerned in the Vedic literature, its internal divisions, and other allied matters. Then the text of the Upaniṣad proper follows. Under each verse or passage (as the case may be) of the Upaniṣadic text are given copious notes which are grouped under two categories: the first group gives variants in the text; and the second, parallels in words, phrases, ideas, doctrines, technical terms, etc. from the Vedic literature. Eighteen pages of additional notes have been included (pp. 475-92), which are no doubt the result of a more scrupulous survey of the Vedic literature, and evidently a later addition to the notes already appearing under the texts proper. Intentionally perhaps, the notes are chiefly concerned in tracing the words to pre-Upaniṣadic Vedic literature, and they are practically silent about reference to parallels, adaptations, citations, etc. given even in the immediately succeeding post-Upaniṣadic literature. A number of references to readings proposed by European Indologists are also given for the benefit of the reader, and parallels from Plato's *Republic* and other similar works are really interesting.

A line, however, should be added with regard to the frighteningly long list of 'Errata', which runs to nearly 28 pages. Both the Sanskrit text and the notes contain a number of printing mistakes. The editors themselves are conscious of this sad drawback of the volume, and assure that these misprints will be duly corrected in the next edition.

The editors have done an admirable work and produced valuable notes and very laborious and extremely useful Index. Every lover of the Upaniṣads must be grateful to them as well as to the Vaidika Saṁśodhana Maṇḍala of Poona, the publishers of the book. The general get-up of the book leaves nothing more to be desired, and its price is remarkably low, considering the high cost of book production these days. We heartily commend both the publishers and the editors for this precious gift, and eagerly look forward to the publication of the second volume of this edition, which is to include not only the English translation of these Upaniṣads, but an etymological dictionary of Upaniṣadic Sanskrit as well.

S. A.

THE ADVENTURES IN RELIGIOUS LIFE. BY SWAMI YATISWARANANDA. Published by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras 4. 1959. Pages xxxiv+443. Price Board Rs. 4; Cloth Rs. 5.

Swami Yatiswarananda is a senior monk of the

Ramakrishna Order, and he is deeply respected for the qualities of his head and heart. When the Swami was carrying on the Vedānta work in Europe, America, and elsewhere, he used to prepare elaborate notes for his weekly class talks and lectures in those places. These notes were later developed as articles and published in the different journals of the Ramakrishna Order. And these articles have now been brought together and presented in a book form for the benefit of the seekers of Truth.

The Swami learnt his first lessons in spiritual life at the feet of Swami Brahmananda, the spiritual son of Sri Ramakrishna. From a reading of the book, one gets the feeling that the author himself must have passed through many of the hard adventures described in it. One can feel the earnestness and devout nature of the mind of the author in every page of the book.

In order to overcome the obstacles on the spiritual path, aspirants need constant guidance, encouragement, and even warnings in their religious practices. 'Religious life', says Swami Vivekananda, 'is a continuous struggle, a grappling with our own nature, a continuous fight till the victory is achieved.' Swami Yatiswarananda's book provides such helpful guidance and encouragement in the spiritual struggles of ardent aspirants.

It is only a hero that takes to the spiritual life. The Swami aptly says: 'Spiritual life... is certainly an adventure, a daring feat, a bold undertaking. It has its perils and difficulties, and also its pleasurable excitements, its joys' (p. 37). The nature of the external obstacles and inner trials and tribulations that the aspirant has to face and fight are all described, and the means and methods to overcome them all presented, in the pages of this book. Preparation of the moral life of the aspirant is the first step. 'If we first pay attention to moral practice, then in due time, through spiritual practice, we shall arrive at true spiritual realization. There are no short cuts' (p. 282).

Mystical experience is universal; all mystics the world over have had similar spiritual experiences. Though their expression is different, their essence is one and the same. Several anecdotes connected with the lives of mystics have been cited in the book, and their spiritual import indicated.

The value of the book is immense as a practical guide to every earnest seeker of Truth. The Swami's exposition is simple and clear. The bibliography, glossary, and index added at the end of the book will be found very useful.

SWAMI NIRGUNANANDA

THE STORY OF THE CULTURAL EMPIRE OF INDIA. BY P. THOMAS. Published by Joseph Thomasons & Co., 7 Ananda Bazar, Ernakulam, Kerala. Pages 337. Price Rs. 11.50.

An empire is usually associated with domination and exploitation. The conqueror imposes his own cultural beliefs on the conquered. The story of the expansion of Indian culture, however, whether in the homeland or outside the frontiers, is singularly free from these vices. Sri P. Thomas's book *The Story of the Cultural Empire of India* gives a fascinating account of the growth and expansion of Indian culture before the advent of the Muslims. His style is simple and lucid. The book is admirably suited to the lay readers. The author has refrained himself from making the book heavy with details and dates. The book is divided into two parts: part I deals with the development of Indian culture; and part II, with the Indian cultural expansion. The Indian cultural expansion was rarely sponsored under state patronage.

The author rightly observes in the preface that 'a detailed treatment of the subject in a book like this is practically impossible'. He should have therefore devoted less number of pages to the first chapter on 'Beginnings and the Background', as well as to the chapter on 'Persians and Greeks'. The space thus saved could have been profitably utilized in dealing with the contents of Indian culture in greater detail. On the topic of women, marriage, and morals, the author could have mentioned the practice of *svayamvara* as an interesting feature of ancient Hindu kingly families.

Without detracting the merits of the book in any way, it is necessary to point out that some of his statements require modification. In p. 77 the author writes, 'Selucus gave his daughter in marriage to

Candragupta'. This information is gathered from the Greek sources, and none of these mentions that Candragupta actually married a daughter to Selucus. The only inference that can be drawn is that the treaty terminating the war between Candragupta and Selucus was concluded with a matrimonial alliance. About the foreign origin of the Pallavas of South India (p. 95), his observation is one-sided. 'The origin of the Pallavas has been discussed by scholars for more than half a century; still the latest writer on the subject is constrained to say: "The origin of the Pallavas has remained till now a mystery"' (*History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. II. p. 255). To place the *Mahābhārata* earlier than the *Rāmāyana* (p. 168) is definitely against all Indian tradition, though the nucleus of the former might have existed prior to that of the latter. 'In spite of their old civilization, the Chinese have not developed that weariness with life which is the essence of Indian religion' (p. 283)—an unhappy statement. Our author is more to the point when he writes, commenting on the last days of Candragupta Maurya, 'There is something in the air of India which works against excessive worldly ambition' (p. 80). His remark on the influence of Indian culture on Indonesian life (p. 245) is not borne out by Professor Toynbee who observes, 'The celebration (of Muhammad's birthday) here takes the rather shocking form of an all-night puppet show in which the figures and the scenes are taken, not from the Prophet's biography, but from the *Mahābhārata*' (*East to West*, p. 50). A chapter on Malaya is a definite omission. The book has innumerable printing mistakes. A short bibliography and an index are also given. However, it deserves to be placed on the shelves of every library in India.

SWAMI VITASOKANANDA

NEWS AND REPORTS

THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION SARADAPITHA P.O. BELUR MATH

REPORT FOR 1958

The Vidyamandira: A residential intermediate college, with two hostels attached to it. Strength during the year: students: 213; staff (including 6 monastic members): 26. Extra-mural activities: Organization of various national festivals, games and sports, mock parliaments and debates, literary activities, dramatic performances, and social and religious functions; excursion tour to places of cultural and national interest; publication of *Vidyamandira Patrika*, wall bulletins, and manuscript magazines; birthday celebrations of religious leaders and national

heroes. Under the guidance of a qualified physician, a medical ward of ten beds catered to the needs of the ailing boys. There are ample arrangements for various indoor and outdoor games as also for physical exercises.

The Shilpamandira: (i) *Industrial School and Mahesh Chandra Mechanical Section*: Free training was imparted to indigent boys, mostly refugees, in auto-mechanics, general mechanics, fitting, electroplating, weaving, tailoring, carpentry, etc., and the needy students were helped with stipends. Numerical strength of this unit: 227.

(ii) *Licentiate Engineering Department*: Strength: students: 450; staff: 52. The institution has a well-

equipped library and reading room, having 2,247 valuable books on science, technology, and humanities. The *Chhatra Samsad* organized national festivals, managed games and sports, and conducted literary activities, such as the publication of a printed yearly magazine, *Trayee*, worship of Śrī Sarasvatī, staging of dramas, etc.

(iii) *The Hostel*: The construction of a hostel block to accommodate 135 students was completed, and there were 63 boarders during the year, under the care of two monastic members.

(iv) *Research and Production Section*: During the year, this section perfected considerably its petrol gas plants (Omnigas-types A and B), which can be operated either electrically or by hand. Manufacture of electric clocks of an improved type has been successfully experimented, and a number of them have already been put into use. Experiment on a special type of blower has been undertaken.

The Tattwamandira: This department fostered the study of Sanskrit learning in its various aspects. The monastic members of Saradapitha conducted public classes on various scriptures, and delivered lectures on religion and philosophy in different places. The birthdays of great religious personalities were celebrated. It has been decided to start an institution for higher study and research in different branches of Sanskrit learning.

The Janasikshamandira: In order to spread literacy among the masses, to teach them rudiments of health and hygiene, and to help them in various other ways to better their life, as also to train a band of young men in the ideal of selfless service, this department carried out the following activities: It ran six education centres in selected Adivasi, industrial, and rural areas, where attempts were made to teach the adult the three Rs., along with some crafts. The fully equipped audio-visual unit visited different places in rural and urban areas in seven districts, and exhibited 120 film and lantern shows on education, health, hygiene, etc. A new library building was completed. The library contains 14,406 books, and receives 22 magazines and 3 newspapers. Through its several mobile units and central wing, it issued 14,508 books to 1,066 readers. An active band of volunteers was trained in rendering selfless service. A youth camp with 50 campers was organized for 16 days, and the campers were given both theoretical and practical training in social service. A qualified doctor was engaged to examine the health of

the children, some of whom were supplied with medicine and diet, free of cost. 65,556 lb. of milk were distributed to school-going children and expectant mothers in 24 selected localities in different districts. 700 lb. of multipurpose food were distributed among the most needy, and 180 children on an average were given free tiffin daily.

The Social Education Organizers' Training Centre: 44 and 33 trainees, representing different states of India, were trained in the fifth and sixth batches respectively. The trainees were given lessons in First Aid under the auspices of the St. John Ambulance Brigade. The sessional magazine, *Anirvana*, was converted into an annual number.

The Sikshanamandira: This B. T. College was started from the session 1958-59. It is a residential institution, and there were 46 trainees on its rolls during the year.

Other Activities: The Saradapitha maintained a photography and film department, a dairy and agricultural wing, and also a publication section.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA MISSION ASHRAMA VISAKHAPATNAM

REPORT FOR 1958

Religious Activities: Daily worship at the shrine, prayers, exposition of the *Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa* in Telugu on Sunday evenings, observance of the birthdays of prophets and seers, and celebration of other religious festivals.

Free Reading Room and Library: Total number of books in the library: 1,881; number of magazines in the reading room; 20; number of newspapers: 6; number of books issued during the year: 1,958.

Students' Retreat: Strength: 10.

Middle School: At the request of the Hindustan Shipyard authorities, Visakhapatnam, the Ashrama started a middle school in 1955. Strength during the year: boys: 92; girls: 30.

Cultural and Recreational Centre for Children: Every Sunday morning, the children are taught devotional music and prayers, and stories from the Purāṇas and Itihāsas, bearing a moral and spiritual import, are narrated to them. They are also taught Sanskrit. On Sunday evenings, educational film shows are shown to them. There is a children's library.

Sarada Bala Vihara: This preparatory school for children was started in January 1958 with the co-operation of the local Bharatiya Stri Samajam. Strength: children: 41; teachers: 3.

CORRIGENDUM

In the March 1960 issue of *Prabuddha Bharata*, on page 98, second column, lines 15 and 16 should read: 'lectual giant of India, Brajendranath Seal, had experienced on being brought into contact with the Master of Naren-'.
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