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CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
Spiritual Talks of Swami Shivananda	481
The Indian Masses— <i>Editorial</i>	484
The Meaning of the Grace of God— <i>By Swami Sarvagatananda</i>	490
Rāmānuja on Māyā and Avidyā— <i>By Professor Surendranath Bhattacharya</i> ..	494



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CONTENTS (*Contd.*)

	<i>Page</i>
Sri Ramakrishna and the Spirit of Hinduism— <i>By Swami Nageshananda</i>	498
The Spiritual Significance of Indian Art—2— <i>By Sri P. Sama Rao</i>	505
Santa Tukārāma— <i>By Kumari Nonika A. Handoo</i>	515
Notes and Comments	518
Reviews and Notices	518
News and Reports	520



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उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत ।

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

SPIRITUAL TALKS OF SWAMI SHIVANANDA

Belur Math, December 7, 1929

In the morning, as the talk turned to a monk's journey on foot to Kashmir in this extremely cold season, Mahapurushji said: 'So Peta has gone to Kashmir in this winter! They say that he walked all along from Rishikesh. I have been feeling worried from the moment I was told of this. Ah! Master, do please take care of him; he has taken refuge in you alone. I think he has become a little unbalanced in mind; else, why should he be so whimsical? Does anyone go to Kashmir in this season?' (After keeping silent for a while) 'This is a difficult path, my son. This pursuit of the knowledge of Brahman is no easy affair. Not every brain can comprehend this, for it is subtler than the subtlest. It is easier to master secular knowledge. It is comparatively easier to become a great philosopher, a noted scientist, a great poet, a famous artist, or a well-known politician; but it is no easy matter to acquire the knowledge of Brahman. That is why the Upanishadic seer sings: "The wise ones describe that path to be as impassable as a sharpened razor's edge is difficult to tread on." Those

who do not tread on this path can have no idea as to how difficult it is. In the Upanishads, this knowledge "by which is realized that immutable Brahman" is called the higher knowledge, while all other secular knowledge is called the lower knowledge. One must practise absolute continence if one desires to have this higher knowledge. As a result of prolonged continence, practised heart and soul in all the planes of existence, the body and mind become fit for leading a divine life. For reaching the state of Brahmanhood, the brain develops a new nerve, and all the cells in the body become transformed. One must observe absolute continence. The Master used to say that one hesitates to pour milk in a vessel that had contained curds, lest the milk should get spoiled. That is why he loved the pure-minded boys so much; for it is they who can imbibe spirituality fully. These are all very subtle matters. Of course, above all, one must have the grace of God. Unless the Divine Mother is gracious, there is no hope of all this. It is only when She opens the door to spirituality out of Her compassion that the aspirant becomes able to enter there,

and not otherwise. In the *Caṇḍī*, we have: "This very graceful Mother becomes the cause of the liberation of men, when She is favourably disposed." It is She who grants the boon of freedom, when She is pleased with men. There are quite a number of fine nerves in the brain; should any of these be deranged, man loses his balance. The Holy Mother used to say: "Pray to the Master that he may keep the head steady." To lose one's head is to lose all. "Shoot me," said Swamiji (Swami Vivekananda), "if my brain goes wrong." When Peta first came to this Math, I could see from the very formation of his head that he would not have a steady mind, and that he would lose his balance. It was reported to me that he had been learning *hatha-yoga* at Rishikesh. I tell you, my boys, that is no good. Besides, he had been moving about from place to place for a very long time, keeping little touch with this monastery and its monks—he had been roaming about just as he liked. Now, you see, he has lost his head. Maharaj (Swami Brahmananda) also used to say that it is not at all safe for a monk to live a solitary life in the early stages; he should have at least one companion. Is that the kind of spiritual practice that one should undertake? Does it mean merely to move about among places like Rishikesh, Uttar Kashi, and such other hilly and forest regions? After remaining quiet for a while, he said: 'Master, save him. Who indeed but you can save a man? Ah! He was a sincere boy after all.'

A *brahmacārin*: 'The *Uddhava-Gītā* in the *Bhāgavata* states that it is very difficult for an aspirant to progress in the path of spirituality, because celestial powers, planets, diseases, relatives, and others create all sorts of difficulties during the course of spiritual effort.'

Mahapurushji: 'All the difficulties can be surmounted when God becomes propitious. The Master has verily the power to set at nought all past *karma*; all hindrances, whether they are on the material plane or on the divine plane, are removed if one but takes refuge in him. "When favourably disposed," says the *Caṇḍī*, "you cure all one's diseases without exception; but

you destroy all one's desirable things when you are angry. People who take refuge in you have no fear, for those who take shelter under you can give shelter to others as well." They become one with Brahman; as such, they grant asylum to others. And then, there is such a thing as the companionship of the good; it saves men. It is absolutely necessary to live in the company of holy men. Thousands of people make the attempt, but only one or two among them succeed in realizing the truth. A devotee once asked Maharaj: "How can one get devotion?" In answer, Maharaj repeated the words "holy company" and then added: "The holy men lead one to God. One must have the companionship of holy men, my son, one must have holy association. All the scriptures are full of the praise of holy companionship."'

The *brahmacārin*: 'The *Rāmāyaṇa* puts it thus: "Companionship of the *ṛṣis* who are bright and holy like fire."'

Mahapurushji: 'You have rightly quoted. It was after receiving the boon and blessing of the *ṛṣis*, "bright and holy like fire" itself, for the killing of Rāvaṇa that Śrī Rāmacandra prepared himself for the destruction of the *rākṣasas*.' He then repeated the Sanskrit phrase '*satām saṅgaḥ*' (companionship of the holy) several times, and then finally added: 'But I tell you, my boys, that nothing will avail unless the Divine Mother is propitious. One can be saved only when She takes pity and allows one to escape out of Her domain (of this cosmic *Māyā*). There is no other way out. Grace, grace, grace! To a sincere soul, She does become gracious.'

Belur Math, December 8, 1929

In the morning, the *sannyāsins* and *brahmacārins* had gathered in Mahapurushji's room. The talk turned to spiritual practice.

Mahapurushji: 'Self-control will come as a matter of course if one repeats God's name constantly, and is earnest in spiritual endeavours. The name of God has such innate power that all the internal and external organs become naturally subdued by it. But, then, one

has to call on Him with sincere love. If one can somehow acquire love for God, one has nothing more to worry about; one can then advance towards Him very quickly. If one somehow acquires the feeling that God is one's own, one can set one's mind completely at rest. One cannot, however, have real love for God so long as one's mind is preoccupied with sensuous things. When the *kuṇḍalinī* is awakened as a result of intense spiritual practice and prayer to God, and when the mind gradually rises above the three lower planes and continues to remain in the fourth plane, the aspirant gets visions etc. of God, and he gradually imbibes a love for Him. How can anyone have love for God, pure and untouched by sin as He is, unless one's own mind becomes purified? For that, one needs intense spiritual practice and sincere hankering. You will have this, and that very soon; for you are all lifelong celibates, and your minds have not been so much as touched by lust and lucre; you are all fit and pure mediums for spirituality. The purer the medium, the quicker is His manifestation. Just try a little with determination, and see if it does happen or not. You have to consider spiritual practice as the chief aim of your lives; as for the rest—lectures, discourses, and so on—they are but secondary. It is good to have a fixed seat for one's meditation and *japa*, for that creates an atmosphere and helps the mind to become concentrated quickly. And whenever you meet a woman, salute her mentally as your mother, with all respect. That was the special instruction of the Master to us, and he himself did so all his life. A *sannyāsin's* life is, as it were, a devotional fast, when even a drop of water is not taken. There must not be a single blemish—the whole life must be absolutely pure. Do not allow your mind to be polluted even by the slightest touch of lust and lucre. Yours is a spiritual life, a divine life. The Master used to say: "The bee sits on the flower alone, and it sucks the honey alone." A true *sannyāsin's* life must be like that of a bee. He will enjoy divine bliss alone, and he will not allow his mind to wander about elsewhere. It is for the fulfil-

ment of the message of the *avatāra* of this age that you have taken refuge under this Order. The whole world is athirst and is looking at you for receiving the message of the Master. As for ourselves, our earthly lives are all but ended. Now it is your turn to fill up those places. Just think of this—what a great responsibility rests on your shoulders! He alone is the source of all power; he will transmit the power to you as the need will arise; and he will make you fit vehicles for spreading his message and his ideas. The more you can have him established in your heart, the more will you understand that it is he who sits in your inmost heart and guides you from behind, for he is none other than God Himself. He has taken you under his care; he will grant you illumination, devotion, love, purity, and all else, to make your lives a blessing.'

Referring to the *avatāra*hood of Sri Rama-krishna and his descent on this earth for alleviating human suffering, a monk asked him: 'Maharaj, does an incarnation retain the fullest consciousness of his divinity for ever?'

Mahapurushji: 'Well, he does it, to be sure. Look at Śrī Kṛṣṇa's life, for instance. From his very birth onward, he gave proofs of his divinity. But it is true that the outer expression of that divinity is not the same in all the incarnations, though they themselves have the fullest consciousness of their godhood. It is only for the spiritual good of the world that their power is manifested. All that they do is out of mercy, for an *avatāra* is not born as the result of *karma*. And how can he have any ignorance? It is the eternal Brahman in His fullness, the Lord of Māyā, who descends with the help of Māyā; and He returns to His own real state after the need of an age is fulfilled. All the spiritual practice that the *avatāra* undertakes, all the hard austerities he undergoes are merely for setting an example to others, for holding an ideal before men. For he is God, he is infinity itself. Where can he have any finitude? In the *Gītā*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says: "O Arjuna, I have no duty in all the three worlds; there is nothing unattained or attain-

able for me. And yet, I keep myself engaged in work." There is nothing that is not already achieved by him, for he is infinite. He adds further: "No duty can bind me; nor have I any hankering for the result of any work. He who knows me as such never comes under the bondage of work." He has no craving for the result of his own work, and work also cannot bind him. If this be not so, where else would you seek for his divinity or avatārahood? As long as the *avatāras* remain in their human bodies in this world, all their behaviour appears to conform to human norm; they are happy at things that make others happy, and unhappy at those that make men unhappy. So much so, one comes to think that they do not retain their divine consciousness fully. Really, however, this is not so. Especially in the case of the Master, one comes across very little of the manifestation of divine glory; his life expressed itself mostly on the human plane. His was a descent with the purest *sāttvika* qualities (of enlightenment, saintliness, kindness, etc.). That is why he said: "This is as though the king is on an inspection of his kingdom under disguise." It is extremely difficult to understand this mood of the Master. For instance, look at how bitterly he wept at the death of Keshab Chandra Sen. "At Keshab's departure," he lamented, "I think one of my limbs has dropped off. Whom shall I talk to when I visit Calcutta hereafter?" and

so on. It was just like one sorrowing for the death of a near relative. This is what they call *līlā* (mystic play); it is very difficult to comprehend this. The *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* relates a fine incident in which one finds a beautiful harmony between knowledge and devotion. Rāmacandra was none other than the supreme Brahman, who knew the past, present, and future. He had incarnated himself for the sake of destroying Rāvaṇa, with all his *rākṣasas*, and for re-establishing the reign of virtue. He knew it well enough that Rāvaṇa would carry off his wife Sītā. The *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa* itself states how, even before Rāvaṇa came to carry her away in the guise of a mendicant, Rāmacandra had told Sītā: "Rāvaṇa will come as a mendicant to abduct you; so, you just place here a shadow-form of yours and then vanish into fire, where you should stay for a whole year. You will join me again after Rāvaṇa is killed." Saying this, he made Sītā enter into fire. And yet, at the same time, how bitterly he wept after Sītā's abduction! He gave up food and rest; and with tears in his eyes, he wandered about day and night in search of Sītā, enquiring trees, creepers, animals, and birds about her whereabouts. Stricken by the grief of separation, he was crying, and went about the forest in search of Sītā. All this looks so strange! Such lives are not easy of comprehension.'



THE INDIAN MASSES

According to some schools of modern sociology, the masses are intrinsically the same all over the world, and their reactions to certain situations in life are the same, irrespective of past traditions. Where the influence of tradition is admitted, it is argued that tradition is a barrier created artificially for directing the mass mind along channels subservient to vested interests. It is this kind of approach that would divest all sociological, economic, and political

thoughts of their past religious and cultural moorings. This is called scientific thought, which would deny the existence of any natural spiritual tendency in the mass mind, and would credit humanity merely with self-seeking, modified by different degrees of love for what one feels to be one's own. From such a point of view, the Indian masses present no novelty, and pose no new problem. Any peculiarity in their case that may strike a casual observer is

the effect of the artificial conditioning of the human masses here by the vested interests; the sooner the Indian masses are dehypnotized, the better; and then they can stand on an equal footing with the human masses all over the world.

As against such a naive argument borrowed from the modern West, Swami Vivekananda defined education as 'the manifestation of the perfection already in man', and religion as 'the manifestation of the divinity already in man' (*Complete Works*, Vol. IV, Seventh Edition, p. 358). If human developments in the economic, social, and political fields be natural, the progress in the cultural and spiritual fields must be more so, for the simple reason that these spring from the very humanity of men, whereas they share their self-seeking in common with the animal world. We are not, however, concerned here specifically with this aspect of the question. If we refer to this at the very beginning, it is with a view to showing that, when Swami Vivekananda presented the Indian masses in a new light, and urged that all attempts at their elevation must leave their spiritual tendencies undisturbed, and linked up all his programmes of social betterment on the philosophy of the freedom of the soul, he had ample reason behind this unique approach. Moreover, we may remark in passing that the modern methods of indoctrination and conditioning and making the masses hysterical with catching slogans and motivated propaganda are not the natural processes of growth that the modern materialists themselves swear by. Thought and action are here controlled and canalized by a group of powerful men, and the masses become mere tools in their hands. 'Liberty is the first condition of growth', Swami Vivekananda declared again and again. He was not afraid of granting this even to the masses. 'Now the question is: Is it for the good of the public at large that social rules are framed, or society is formed? Many reply to this in the affirmative; some, again, may hold that it is not so. Some men, being comparatively powerful, slowly bring all others under their control, and by

stratagem, force, or adroitness, gain their own objects. If this be true, what can be the meaning of the statement that there is danger in giving liberty to the ignorant?' (*ibid.*, Vol. V, Seventh Edition, p. 141). To steer clear of both the diabolical mastery of the masses and uninformed irresponsible action by the common people, the Swami conceived of basing all his programmes on the solid foundation of a spirituality which guaranteed freedom and vigour in every sphere of life. And he could trust the Indian masses, because he knew that they were naturally religious. Granted this background, he was afraid of nothing.

Growth must be from inside, and that society is better which affords a comparatively greater opportunity for the development of the innate goodness lying dormant in each man. Swami Vivekananda could never tolerate unnecessary social trammels: 'Those who say that if the ignorant and the poor be given liberty, i.e. full right to their body, wealth, etc., and if their children have the same opportunity to better their condition and acquire knowledge as those of the rich and the highly situated, they would become perverse—do they say this for the good of society, or blinded by their selfishness? ... Who constitute society? The millions—or you, I, and a few others of the upper classes?' (*ibid.*). He wanted liberty and natural growth for all, welling out of their inmost divinity. It pained him to notice the thousand and one social handicaps which perpetuated the poverty and ignorance of the Indian masses. Of one thing, the Swami was convinced, and that is that, judged from the standpoint of higher values, the Indian masses stood head and shoulders above their compeers abroad: 'Our masses are gods as compared with those of other countries. This is the only country where poverty is not a crime. They are mentally and physically handsome, but we hated and hated them till they have lost faith in themselves' (*ibid.*, p. 223). 'Our masses are very good, because poverty here is not a crime. Our masses are not violent. Many times I was near being mobbed in America and England, only on account of

my dress. But I never heard of such a thing in India as a man being mobbed because of peculiar dress. In every other respect, our masses are much more civilized than the European masses' (*ibid.*, p. 213).

This difference is created by the central fact of Indian life that it is based on spirituality. 'Here in India, it is religion that forms the very core of the national heart. . . . I have been told a hundred times of the want of information there is among the masses of the Indian people. . . . There is no lack of information, nor lack of desire for information where it is of the character that suits them, when it falls in line with the necessities of their life. Politics and all these things never formed a necessity of Indian life, but religion and spirituality have been the one condition upon which it lived and thrived, and has got to live in the future' (*ibid.*, Vol. III, Eighth Edition, p. 204). 'Touch him on spirituality, on religion, on God, on the soul, on the Infinite, on spiritual freedom, and I assure you, the lowest peasant in India is better informed on these subjects than many a so-called philosopher in other lands' (*ibid.*, p. 148).

II

The Indian masses are spiritually strong, nay, better than the Western masses. That is the judgement pronounced by Swami Vivekananda. But this did not make him complacent, for he was painfully aware of their poverty and social backwardness. Even in religious matters, he felt the need of a new and dynamic approach, for India was passing through an era of decadence, when old values suffered from misguided estimation and lack of proper perspective.

Of the social evils of his days, untouchability was the worst, which not only degraded the masses, but weakened the nation as a whole. Swami Vivekananda was uncompromising in his denunciation of this evil custom masquerading as spiritual sanctimony. 'We are neither Vedāntists, most of us now, nor Paurāṇikas, nor Tāntrikas', declared the Swami. 'We are just "Don't-touchists". Our religion is in the kitchen.

Our God is in the cooking-pot, and our religion is "Don't touch me, I am holy". If this goes on for another century, every one of us will be in a lunatic asylum' (*ibid.*, p. 167). That spells degeneration for the whole country: 'It is we who have degraded them by our outcry "Don't touch, don't touch!" And so the whole country has been plunged to the utmost depths of meanness, cowardice, and ignorance. These men have to be uplifted; words of hope and faith have to be proclaimed to them. We have to tell them, "You are also men like us, and you have all the rights that we have"' (*ibid.*, Vol. VII, Fifth Edition, p. 108).

This 'don't-touchism', again, is an appendage of the caste system, which, according to the Swami, was originally based on merit and profession, but gradually became hereditary and stereotyped. This worked well for a time protecting the weaker members, like some trade guilds etc. But by eliminating competition altogether and arresting social dynamism for all time, it produced a frozen society, which lacked initiative and vigour, and could hardly withstand the onslaught of more vigorous cultures from outside. The hereditary caste system has lost all meaning for the present age, and the uplift of the masses requires a thorough rethinking. Of course, the Swami did not stand for outright abolition of qualitative caste. He believed in social differences. 'I do not propose any levelling of castes. Caste is a very good thing', he argued. 'Caste is the plan we want to follow. What caste really is, not one in a million really understands. There is no country in the world without caste' (*ibid.*, Vol. V. p. 214). Social classification adjusting itself constantly to the demands of higher achievements is good, but hereditary classes are bad. 'I admit that the qualitative caste system is the primary one; but the pity is qualities yield to birth in two or three generations. Thus the vital point of our national life has been touched; otherwise, why should we sink to this degraded state?' (*ibid.*, p. 456).

The fact is that, in the name of caste and spiritual purity, priestcraft and privilege have

been perfected to such a subtle degree that the masses have come to think these things to be quite natural, and they submit to the resulting social oppression without a murmur. The priests have joined hands with the other superior castes to make their own position secure. 'Priestcraft is the bane of India. Can man degrade his brother, and himself escape degradation? ... The mass of Brāhmaṇa and Kṣatriya tyranny has recoiled upon their own heads with compound interest; and a thousand years of slavery and degradation is what the inexorable law of *karma* is visiting upon them' (*ibid.*, Vol. IV. pp. 327-28). 'The masses who comprise the lowest castes, through ages of constant tyranny of the higher castes and by being treated by them with blows and kicks at every step they took, have totally lost their manliness and become like professional beggars' (*ibid.*, Vol. V. p. 354).

True Brāhmaṇahood consists in being spiritual and helping others to be so. If, instead of that, birth is made an excuse for claiming privileges, it is bound to lead to degradation. To fortify one's false pride of birth with fulsome sophistry is the sign of death. Besides, not only were the masses degraded for the protection of the vested interests, but they were also neglected for the sake of the spiritual progress of the few. The institutions that were started and the laws that were framed were such as to provide the greatest scope for spiritual development. Nay, society itself was organized merely for spiritual endeavour without paying proper attention to the needs of the body. This was all the more pronounced during the downfall of Buddhism, which then over-emphasized monasticism as the surest and only means of salvation. In proportion as society became tuned to higher spiritual achievements, secular activities for social welfare, even for simple food and raiment, suffered. That is, indeed, the surest way of national death. 'We talk foolishly against material civilization. The grapes are sour. Even taking all that foolishness for granted, in all India, there are, say, a hundred thousand really spiritual men and women. Now, for the spiritualization of these,

must three hundred millions be sunk in savagery and starvation? Why should they starve? How was it possible for the Hindus to have been conquered by the Mohammedans? It was due to the Hindus' ignorance of material civilization' (*ibid.*, Vol. IV. p. 368).

The fact is that India of the Middle Ages suffered from a confusion of values, partly owing to natural decadence and partly owing to her eagerness to protect her heritage from the onslaught of foreign hordes, which rolled over her plains one after the other for centuries. Withdrawing herself into a hard shell, she then mistook inactivity for the highest spiritual tranquillity, and hereditary caste for a natural, spiritual stratification. The masses imbibed both these ideas from the higher classes, though, in fact, society could not thrive without activity, and caste was only a social institution subserving some social purpose. This perverted outlook that has continued for ages needs rectification, and the present caste system deserves to be abolished altogether. Caste is a barrier to progress. The tyranny of caste has sapped the vitality of the nation. Its worst feature is that it suppresses competition and thereby causes political downfall. 'Caste is the greatest dividing factor, ... all caste, either on the principle of birth or of merit, is bondage.'

III

The masses have to be elevated physically, culturally, and spiritually. Swami Vivekananda was convinced, more than anybody else, that India's future lay in the uplift of the masses. He was one of the first among our nation builders, if not the very first, who saw and declared that, for the liberation of India, it was futile to merely pass strongly worded resolutions without making the masses stronger with food, both physical and mental. They needed physical sustenance, and they had to be educated. 'The only hope of India is from the masses. The upper classes are physically and morally dead' (*ibid.*, Vol. V. p. 105). 'Remember that the nation lives in the cottage. But, alas! nobody ever did anything for them. Our modern re-

formers are very busy about widow remarriage. . . . But the fate of a nation does not depend upon the number of husbands its widows get, but upon the condition of the masses' (*ibid.*, p. 29). 'I consider that the great national sin is the neglect of the masses, and that is one of the causes of our downfall. No amount of politics would be of any avail until the masses in India are once more well educated, well fed, and well cared for. . . . If we want to regenerate India, we must work for them' (*ibid.*, pp. 222-23). He noted that the English rulers laughed in their sleeves when they found the Indian leaders clamouring for political freedom at the same time that they denied social liberty to their own poorer classes. He also felt that India could not free herself from the shackles of foreign rule until her masses took up the challenge.

The masses had to be helped to raise themselves, for they had preserved some of the virtues that the upper classes lacked. They had greater physical strength, more patience, more assiduousness, and fewer wants. 'You, the upper classes of India, do you think you are alive? . . . It is among those whom your ancestors despised as "walking carrion" that the little of vitality there is still in India is to be found. . . . You merge yourselves in the void and disappear, and let New India arise in your place. Let her arise—out of the peasant's cottage, grasping the plough. . . . Let her spring from the grocer's shop, from beside the oven of the fritter-seller. Let her emanate from the factory, from marts, and from markets. Let her emerge from groves and forests, from hills and mountains. These common people have suffered oppression for thousands of years—suffered it without murmur, and as a result have got wonderful fortitude. They have suffered eternal misery, which has given them unflinching vitality. Living on a handful of grain, they can convulse the world. . . . And besides, they have got the wonderful strength that comes of a pure and moral life, which is not to be found anywhere else in the world. Such peacefulness, such contentment, such love, such power of silent and in-

cessant work, and such manifestation of lion's strength in times of action—where else will you find these!' (*ibid.*, Vol. VII. pp. 326-27).

Lastly, the leaders had to strive for their elevation, since that was a form of worship that the divinity in them demanded of each one in the country. God resides not only in every being individually, but He constitutes the different social groups as well. 'O India, . . . forget not that thy social order is but the reflex of the infinite universal Mother; forget not that the lower classes, the ignorant, the poor, the illiterate, the cobbler, the sweeper are thy flesh and blood, thy brothers' (*ibid.*, Vol. IV. p. 480). And the Swami's exhortation was: 'Serve as worship of the Lord Himself in the poor, the miserable, the weak' (*ibid.*, p. 246).

IV

The last question we have to discuss is about the method to be adopted for the elevation of the masses. We are now familiar with the phrase 'class struggle' with all that it implies. The higher and the lower classes are ever antagonistic to each other, and the lower classes can hope to raise themselves only by fighting for their rights. Swami Vivekananda did not deny such a possibility, and he foresaw that the Śūdras would assert themselves with their Śūdrahood, unless the higher classes helped them to imbibe a higher culture and occupy a position of equality with the Brāhmaṇas, when there would be but one caste—the Brāhmaṇas. Time and again, therefore, he called upon the higher classes to address themselves willingly to this task. The rise of the Śūdra power is inevitable; so, let the Brāhmaṇas help its progress along the most beneficial channels and without the least friction. Let it be a guided development, helped through a spirit of service, and let it be inspired by a true desire for the good of the poorer classes and by self-assertion on their own part resulting from a liberal education. The Śūdras will rise; but it is not necessary that this should happen through strife, or that the higher cultural values should be pulled down in the process. The ideal in every society is

the Brāhmaṇa, and the effort everywhere should be to raise all to the position of the Brāhmaṇa-hood and not to bring down all to the level of the Śūdrahood. His exhortation therefore was: 'To the Brāhmaṇas, I appeal that they must work hard to raise the Indian people by teaching them what they know, by giving out the culture that they have accumulated for centuries. . . . So this accumulated culture of ages, of which the Brāhmaṇa has been the trustee, he must now give to the poor at large; and it was because he did not give it to the people that the Mohammedan invasion was possible. . . . To the non-Brāhmaṇa castes, I say, wait, be not in a hurry. Do not seize every opportunity of fighting the Brāhmaṇa, because, as I have shown, you are suffering from your own fault. . . . Instead of wasting your energies in vain discussions and quarrels in the newspapers, . . . use all your energies in acquiring the culture which the Brāhmaṇa has' (*ibid.*, Vol. III, pp. 297-98). 'The solution is not by bringing down the higher, but by raising the lower up to the level of the higher' (*ibid.*, p. 295).

Naturally, this method differs from the well-known socialistic or communistic approaches. And yet, the Swami declared 'I am a socialist', though he added at the same time, 'not because I think it is a perfect system, but half a loaf is better than no bread. The other systems have been tried and found wanting. Let this one be tried—if for nothing else, for the novelty of the thing. A redistribution of pain and pleasure is better than always the same persons having pains and pleasures. . . . Let every dog have his day in this miserable world' (*ibid.*, Vol. VI, Sixth Edition, pp. 381-82).

Contrasting this declaration with the earlier consideration, one is led to conclude that the pronouncement in favour of socialism gushed out of a heart lacerated by the callousness of the higher classes and their blindness to the fact that, unless they mended their ways, their fate was sealed. It was the denunciation uttered by a saint, who found his countrymen irresponsible to reason. That we are right in this conclusion is borne out by the fact that the Swami

seldom dealt with the economic or political aspects of socialism or communism; he was really concerned with their cultural bearings and spiritual implications. He did, of course, say: 'All the members of a society ought to have the same opportunity for obtaining wealth, education, or knowledge' (*ibid.*, Vol. V, p. 141). He also added at the same time: 'Freedom in all matters, i.e. advance towards *mukti*, is the worthiest gain of man. . . . Those social rules which stand in the way of the unfoldment of this freedom are injurious' (*ibid.*, p. 142). These principles are more in accord with democracy than with other systems which stand not only for equality of opportunity, but for equality in other respects as well. Yet, socialism appealed to the Swami because of its active sympathy for the poor.

Again, Swami Vivekananda declared that the Hindus are socialistic, in the sense that their social rules and institutions are framed not merely for personal gain or enjoyment, but for the good of society as a whole. For the sake of social well-being, the individual must sacrifice personal considerations. This was altogether a new sense that he imparted to the word. Consider, for instance, his use of the word in such contexts as: 'The Western man is born individualistic, while the Hindu is socialistic' (*ibid.*, Vol. VIII, Second Edition, p. 62); 'We are socialistic. For the sake of one man's or woman's exquisite pleasure, we don't want to load misery on hundreds of others' (*ibid.*, p. 63); 'The Indian mind is socialistic' (*ibid.*, p. 65). We cannot dilate too much on this aspect of the Swami's message. Enough has been shown to convince the reader that, irrespective of the merit or demerit of socialism or communism, he used those terms entirely in a sense of his own. Their stress on equality appealed to him, since it approximated to his own Vedāntic conception of society.

What, then, was his method of social uplift, if it was not merely economic or political? We have hinted that this, according to him, depended on wider sympathy and practical help from those who were better placed in society, and

on greater liberty for the masses. While all this was quite true in one sense, practical considerations required a more thorough programme of mass education, along with instilling into the common man a stronger faith in himself and a higher ambition. According to the Swami's estimation, education is the panacea for all social evils. If the masses are properly educated, they can take care of themselves and strive to rise higher in the social scale. 'The real nation, who live in cottages, have forgotten their manhood, their individuality. . . . They are to be given back their lost individuality. They are to be educated' (*ibid.*, p. 307).

Swami Vivekananda was not in favour of those forms of religion which enervate the masses. For a more vigorous national life, he advocated wider dissemination of the message of the Upanishads. He did not believe that the masses could not comprehend that message, nor did he fear that it would disturb social tranquillity. 'Tell each and all that infinite power resides within them, that they are sharers of immortal Bliss. Thus rouse up the *rajas* within them' (*ibid.*, Vol. VII. p. 182).

Above all, the Swami was neither an impractical idealist nor a sentimentalist. He knew that a nation advances on its belly. Food and raiment were the first necessities of life. For providing these for the masses, the country had to be industrialized and their standard of living raised considerably. His was no crass world-negating philosophy that would deny the ordinary comforts to men. 'First make the people of the country stand on their legs by rousing their inner power; first let them learn to have good food and clothes and plenty of enjoyment—then tell them how to be free from this bondage of enjoyment' (*ibid.*).

Such were the views of this great son of Mother India about the condition and worth of the Indian masses, and such the methods he advocated for their elevation. Conditions have not changed very much even now, though the country is on the threshold of a revolution that he visualized more than sixty years ago. A prophet's vision can never be false; and we earnestly pray that people may acknowledge the truth of what he said and put forth every effort to make his prophecy an actuality.



THE MEANING OF THE GRACE OF GOD

BY SWAMI SARVAGATANANDA

Two forces are constantly functioning in the universe and in the lives of men and women. One is the known force called natural law, and the other is the unknown force known as the grace of God. In the field of matter, natural law operates; and in the context of the spirit, the divine grace plays an important role. Strictly speaking, both these forces are created and operated by God, the author and the ruler of the entire creation. Hence, God is not only just, but also merciful and full of grace.

Natural law follows a definite course of action purely based on simple mathematics. As much

fuel you feed into a machine, so much power you get out of it. It is based on cause-effect relationship, and it is exact and infallible. To that extent, natural law is efficient and foolproof. Because it is foolproof, it is also grace-proof. We all know well the functioning of natural laws, particularly in this age of scientific and technological developments. Let me tell you something about the meaning of the grace of God.

As opposed to the rigorous working of natural law, grace at times follows altogether a different pattern, where the undeserved becomes de-

served; the worst becomes the best. It does not depend on any earthly consideration whatsoever. No plausible explanation can be given for the functioning of the grace of God. It works absolutely according to the divine will, as we find it clearly expressed by Jesus: 'The last shall be first, and the first shall be last.'

Grace may be defined as a favour which we receive for nothing, or something that we get which is many times more than what we really deserve. Grace operates at three different levels, viz. at the level of nature, at the level of humanity, and at the level of God direct.

At the level of nature, it is surprising to find how little we sow and how much we reap. Because we are habituated to harvest as a matter of course, we fail to see the operation of grace through nature. One may even say, as the naturalistic humanist insists, that unless man does his part he may not get what is possible from nature. The important factor is that whatever may be the man's part, nature's is much greater. We always obtain more than what we generally give. For instance, if we do a little good to some one, the same good will come to us in many ways; so also, if we do evil to others, we have to suffer ourselves the same in greater measure. Furthermore, we cannot compensate for the things we get through nature. It is good to receive with humility and obedience. As we obtain these benefits, we should share the same with our fellow-beings as well. People observe Thanksgiving Day every year, and thus try to show their gratitude for the abundant grace they receive through nature.

Secondly, at the human level, we all know well how the milk of kindness and generosity flows whenever we hear the cry of the suffering and the helpless. At the time of floods, famine, and pestilence, when people throng helplessly, it is well noted how kind-hearted men and women come forward to help them. In that very act of getting help from others, there is the expression of grace. God inspires us through His grace and makes us feel for our needy neighbours. It is also true that many feel for others, but only a few give expression to that kind

feeling by acting immediately, while others by suppressing this generous feeling virtually kill the grace of God. There are many who even forget everything for the time being and sacrifice their all to serve and save others. This is all due to the grace of God that flows through human hearts.

Last but not the least is the grace of God that operates directly from Him. The grace that functions through nature and humanity is temporal and is limited in its scope, whereas the grace that comes direct from God is permanent and unlimited. This grace of God operates generally in the spiritual life of mankind. Some say that spiritual experience can be had through self-discipline and personal exertion. But others are there who sincerely believe that spiritual experience is bestowed by God's grace, and cannot be desired, far less obtained. Both of these views contain some elements of truth, but they are to be understood properly. They are not to be taken as entirely different and contradictory. Almost all religions declare that God helps men by grace. It may be true that by logical argument one may find it difficult to prove this. Religions insist on grace, because many claim to have experienced it. From the lives of the saints all over the world, throughout the ages, we find instances to support the above theory of grace.

St. Paul's experience near Damascus is a clear proof of how one obtains grace of God all of a sudden. It was an unexpected and unparalleled event in his life. That experience changed his life and character completely. All the hatred he had in his heart was transformed into love and reverence. This was all due to God's grace; nothing else could account for such an experience.

St. Augustine, too, was a participant in such a grace of God. In this case, the transformation of his life is all the more spectacular and inspiring. He lived a very free life; and such a questionable character in the end became a great saint. Thomas à Kempis tells in his famous book, *Of the Imitation of Christ*: 'Grace is a supernatural light and special gift of God,

the proper mark of the elect, and the pledge of eternal salvation. It elevates man from the things of the earth to the love of heavenly things, and makes him spiritual who before was carnal.' St. Augustine boldly declared that 'men are called gods, being deified by God's grace, not as born of God's substance'. He further said that 'damnation proves God's justice; salvation, His mercy and grace'. St. Augustine was of the opinion that man was a born sinner and that he could not abstain from sin, and so, only God's grace enabled men to be virtuous. 'Thus,' he said, 'by the ineffable mercy of God, the penalty of sin is transformed into the pamply of virtue, and the punishment of the sinner into the testing of a saint.'

Unfortunately, there is a wrong notion regarding sin and the saving succour of God's grace. Even though it is seen in some cases that the worst sinner obtains the maximum grace from God, it does not mean that one has to commit sin to deserve His grace. It is true that men commit sin or follow the evil ways more easily than that of virtue. It is well known that water when unchecked seeks always the lower level. So also the mind of man, if left unrestrained, follows the lower morals. As it needs some force to lift the water up, so also man needs a kind of spiritual force to lift his mind up. That force works through the grace of God.

Now, let me tell you how the grace of God saves a sinner. Imagine a swimming contest that is held in the Hudson River. Someone, perchance, failing to swim the course, might start to sink in the river. Then, immediately, the life-guards rush to the spot and, lifting him up quickly, put him on the shore, before the other contestants reach the destination. Grace of God is like bringing the sinking man to the shore, because God, being very compassionate, never abandons anyone, however sinful or weak he might be. I am sure, none of us here would like to be in the miserable condition of a sinking soul to deserve God's grace. But we definitely cherish the wish to reach the destination by our own efforts.

When we speak of the grace of God, we cannot but think about our free will. Some feel that man's free will does not function effectively; hence, for everything in his life, he has to depend upon God's grace. Such people generally follow the words of Luther, who said: 'Our own judgement tells that neither in man nor in angels nor elsewhere in any created being can there be a free will.' Added to this is the statement made by Calvin: 'Inasmuch as the human will is fettered by sin, it can achieve no manner of good.' We cannot deny the functioning of our free will, however limited it might be. Man cannot say that he has no responsibility whatsoever for all his actions. Erwin Schrodinger says in his book, *Science and Humanism*, while referring to the standpoint of St. Augustine: 'God being omniscient and almighty, I cannot do a thing without His knowing and willing—not only consenting, but determining it. How, then, could I be responsible for it? I suppose the religious attitude to this form of the question eventually has to be that we are here confronted with a deep mystery into which we cannot penetrate, but which we certainly must not try to solve by denying responsibility. We must not try, I say; or we had better not try, for we fail pitifully. The feeling of responsibility is congenital, nobody can discard it.'

Undoubtedly, to some extent, we have our own free will, and God expects us to exercise it properly. But, unfortunately, some people misuse that free will and practically land on the brink of destruction. St. Bernard says: 'Grace is necessary to salvation, free will equally so—but grace in order to give salvation, free will in order to receive it. Therefore, we should not attribute part of the good work to grace and part to free will; it is performed in its entirety by the common and inseparable action of both; entirely by grace, entirely by free will, but springing from the first in the second.'

Free will is also given to us by God, and as we exercise it with wisdom and obedience, the same free will ultimately leads us towards absolute freedom. In this connection, Sri

Ramakrishna gives the following illustration: 'A cow is tied to a post with a rope, and she is free to move within the limits of the rope. If the cow, being obedient, behaves well, then the owner increases the length of rope and thus gives her more freedom. And when the owner is fully satisfied with the good behaviour of the cow, he may let her free without the rope. On the contrary, if the cow does not behave well, the little freedom she got will be curtailed, and she may even ever remain tied tightly to the post without any freedom whatsoever. So also God has given us free will, and expects us to use it well; thus we deserve His grace, which ultimately brings us complete salvation. Then such a one never violates God's commandments, and continues to be virtuous throughout.' St. Paul mentions in his *Epistles*: 'For sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace. What then! Shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.'

Sri Ramakrishna tells us that the wind of God's grace is always blowing, and we have to simply unfurl our sails and thus catch the breeze. The idle and the lazy, not acting properly, fail to reap the benefit; but the active and the prompt receive and enjoy the grace of God.

God is always attracting us through His grace, as a magnet draws the needle. If the needle is covered with dirt, it cannot be attracted by the magnet. So also, when our minds are covered with the dirt of worldly desires and evil thoughts, we fail to receive His grace.

As fire gives heat to all irrespective of any consideration, so also God's grace descends on all. But, if one comes close to fire, he enjoys the warmth, and if he goes away from it, he suffers from cold. So also God's grace is always ready to warm us. But, when we turn away from Him, how can we have His grace?

The sun is ever shedding its light on all beings and things, but we enclose ourselves by

artificial means and thus fail to receive its light. We have to simply come out of the enclosure and enjoy the sun. So also God's grace is ever shining, and we have to turn towards God to receive the same.

Rightly has it been said by Meister Eckhart: 'God expects but one thing of you, and that is that you should come out of your self in so far as you are a created being and let God be God in you.' That much we have to do: to open up our hearts, so that we may receive His grace, which is eternally flowing in all directions. To receive God's grace, one has to surrender completely to God's will and say, 'Not I, but Thou'. By righteous living, ever engaged in prayer and meditation, one can have the grace of God without any doubt.

When we speak of the grace of God, we cannot attribute any partiality to God, because He is the same to all. Śrī Kṛṣṇa tells in the *Gītā*: 'Alike am I to all beings. To Me, there is none hateful or dear. He who devotedly worships Me is with Me, and I with him.' God's grace is always present; only man, out of egoism and ignorance, fails to take advantage of His grace. If we do not turn towards God and seek His grace, we are to be blamed. He is always inviting us and is ever anxious to give us freedom and bliss, but we make ourselves deaf and blind to all things noble and divine. In the Bible, it is said: 'Ask and it shall be given you; seek and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you.' That much of self-effort we have to make. This aspect of self-effort is very beautifully explained by Sri Ramakrishna as the grace of our mind. Even if we have the grace of God, the grace of the spiritual teacher, or even the grace of the devout people around us, without the grace of our own mind, we can achieve nothing in life. It is like having a fine scenery in front and bright light to illumine it; but if we close our eyes, we fail to see its beauty. Hence one must be willing to partake of the grace of God with an open heart and an alert mind.

RĀMĀNUJA ON MĀYĀ AND AVIDYĀ

BY PROFESSOR SURENDRANATH BHATTACHARYA

Although most of the objections raised by Rāmānuja against the Advaita theory of *avidyā* have already been answered in a way, yet I make no apology for re-examining them more fully, for Rāmānuja leads the opposition, and his arguments appeal to common sense more than those of any other. The ordinary thinker, I make bold to assert, is easily carried away by him. Vyāsa Tīrtha (author of *Nyāyāmṛta*) is too learned, and he has been perhaps finally silenced by Madhusūdana Sarasvatī in his *Advaitasiddhi*.

Rāmānuja says that no locus can be found for *avidyā* (*āśrayānupapatti*). It cannot be said that *avidyā* abides in *jīva*, for *jīva*hood is held by the Advaitins to be a product of *avidyā*, and being posterior to *avidyā*, *jīva* cannot be its locus. Neither can Brahman be the locus of *avidyā*, for Brahman is knowledge *per se*, and *avidyā* is said to be destructible by *vidyā* or knowledge. So, it is impossible for *avidyā*, being insentient, to reside in Brahman (knowledge-in-itself), as Brahman and *avidyā* are contradictory.

Nor should it be argued that *avidyā* does not come into antagonism with Brahman as knowledge *per se*, but only with the perception of Brahman as such. According to the Advaitins, in the perception of Brahman itself (*brahmākārā-vṛtti*), the real absolute nature of Brahman, that is, knowledge *per se*, is reflected, and, as such, knowledge is not different from Brahman, which is knowledge *per se*. So, if *avidyā* is contradicted by the knowledge or Brahman reflected in perception, then it must also be opposed by Brahman, knowledge *per se*, as the latter is identical with the former in its real nature.

It should be noted that perception of Brahman is not possible, because Brahman, knowledge *per se*, being also the subject, cannot be the object. So, it is not possible for the Advai-

tins to argue that *avidyā* is contradicted by the perception of Brahman and not by Brahman, knowledge *per se*. If *avidyā* is to be opposed, it must be by Brahman Itself. Hence, *avidyā* cannot rest on Brahman.

The Advaitins may say that it is not the knowledge of Brahman that destroys *avidyā*, but the knowledge of things other than Brahman as false, because ignorance of Brahman (*avidyā*) is not the object of this knowledge. So, the ignorance of Brahman remains as it is. True, this latter piece of knowledge can only destroy the sense of reality of the world. How can it remove the ignorance about Brahman? Anyway, Brahman, being ever-luminous knowledge, can never be conceived as the locus of *avidyā*, the very nature of which is opposed to Brahman. Next, according to the Advaitins, ignorance of Brahman veils the real nature of Brahman. To say that the self-luminous (*svaprakāśa*) Brahman is any time veiled by *avidyā* is to admit that the self-luminosity—the real nature of Brahman—vanishes (at least temporarily), which is absurd, for to do so would be allowing Itself to be extinct.

Further, if *avidyā* remains in Brahman, it must veil the real nature of Brahman, and in the act of veiling, it must *be cognized* by Brahman. Now, the question arises: Whether it, first of all, covers Brahman and afterwards is cognized by It; or, first, it is perceived by Brahman and then covers It. To say this is to involve the fallacy of *petitio principii* (*anyonyāśraya*), that is, the cognition of *avidyā* depends upon the veiling of Brahman, and the veiling of Brahman depends upon the cognition of *avidyā*.

Again, the cognition of *avidyā* may be possible in two ways: (1) either by the very nature of Brahman, or (2) by some extraneous cause. In the first case, salvation is not possible. It will again involve the extinction of Brahman,

for the very nature of Brahman is to manifest *avidyā*. If *avidyā* is destroyed by the knowledge of Brahman, with the destruction of *avidyā*, the nature of Brahman will disappear. (Here, Rāmānuja apparently forgets that, although *the perceiver of the illusory silver, as such*, disappears, the perceiver himself does not become extinct. It can safely be admitted that, along with true knowledge, *Brahman as the perceiver of ajñāna* does indeed vanish, but it is too much to say that pure Brahman, too, disappears.) On the other hand, the cognition of *avidyā* by Brahman cannot be said to be due to an extraneous cause. If the extraneous cause is another *avidyā*, then the Advaitins would be committing the fallacy of *regressus ad infinitum* (*anavasthā*). If it is admitted that *avidyā* is cognized after Brahman is veiled by it, then *avidyā* having a separate existence, like the disease of the eye, has to be accepted. Previously, the illusory existence of *avidyā* was accepted; now the veiling of *avidyā* is not possible unless it has got a different existence, like that of the disease of the eye which becomes the instrument for perceiving two moons. So, *avidyā*, like it, is the cause of the perception of this worldly diversity. As the disease is not destroyed by the knowledge of it, so the object *avidyā* will not be destroyed by the knowledge of Brahman.

Again, Brahman is not fully manifest during the time of *avidyā*; it becomes fully manifest (*viśada*) when ignorance is completely dispelled. Now, it is asked: What is the meaning of full manifestation (*viśada*) and apparent manifestation (*aviśada*) of Brahman? An object, which has parts, becomes fully manifest in knowledge when all the parts are cognized; and it is partly manifest when some parts are known and other parts are not known. But, as Brahman is without parts and self-effulgent, the conception of its apparent manifestation due to *avidyā* and its full manifestation during the true knowledge of Brahman is impossible.

The Advaitins hold that *ajñāna*, as distinct from non-existent things (such as sky-flower), is an existent principle (*bhāvarūpa*) and that

it can be proved by perception as well as by inference. 'I am ignorant', 'I do not know myself and others', and similar other perceptual knowledge involves *ajñāna* as a percept. This *ajñāna* is not certainly the mere absence (*abhāva*) of knowledge, for absence is cognized only by *anupalabdhi* and not by perception (*pratyakṣa*). But the consciousness 'I am ignorant' is as much perceptual as the consciousness 'I am happy'. Even if we admit that *abhāva* is known by perception, we cannot say that during the perception 'I am ignorant' the object of knowledge is total absence of the self's knowledge; for, if the self has no knowledge of itself, it would not have perceived even its ignorance. To be more explicit: In a perception like 'I do not know myself', the subject is apparently the 'I'. If *ajñāna* would be taken as mere absence of *jñāna*, such a perception as 'I do not know myself' would be impossible. Such a perception proves that *ajñāna* is not contradictory to the 'I', the knowledge of which is surely present in the contents of perception. When the consciousness of the 'I' is found to coexist with *ajñāna* in perceptions like 'I do not know myself', *ajñāna* must be taken to be an existing fact, and not mere absence of *jñāna*.

It is the self-consciousness (*ātma-caitanya*) or the witness-consciousness (*sākṣi-caitanya*) which is the subject of pieces of knowledge, irrespective of their truth or falsehood. *Ajñāna* is false knowledge, and not absence of knowledge. Hence, although the Ātman is consciousness itself, yet it can very well comprehend *ajñāna*, and there is no incongruity in holding that the Ātman is the locus of *ajñāna*.

Now, Rāmānuja will not accept *avidyā* as an existing principle. On the other hand, he accepts it as 'want of knowledge', i.e. *abhāva-padārtha*. For this purpose, he asks the Advaitins, who accept ignorance as an existing principle, whether this ignorance is perceived as distinct from the individual self—either as a locus or as an object—or not. If it is perceived as distinct from the individual self, then this knowledge of the self, which is its locus or

object, will destroy this ignorance, and ignorance cannot have the self as its locus. If this distinction is not perceived, then how can this ignorance be cognized without a locus and an object? It is said that this ignorance is not contradicted by the general knowledge of the self, in which the nature of the self is not fully manifested, but only by the clear and full knowledge of the self. Then ignorance can remain in the individual self when it is not fully manifested. Such a thing will be possible in the case of the want of knowledge (*jñānābhāva*). In the perception of *abhāva* (negation), the knowledge of the *pratiyogī*, that is, that which is negated, and *dharmī*, that is, that on which negation will remain, are absolutely required. The knowledge of negation is possible when there is general knowledge of *pratiyogī* and *dharmī*.

Ajñāna, according to the Advaitins, is not negation of knowledge, but a positive principle. In the case of *ajñāna* as it is expressed in the judgement 'I do not know myself', the knowledge of 'I' is vivid. So, when there is knowledge, there cannot be negation of knowledge (*jñānābhāva*), but if this ignorance can remain contradicted when there is a general knowledge of the locus as said before, then, Rāmānuja contends that *ajñāna*, that is want of knowledge, is also possible when there is meagre knowledge of the *pratiyogī* and the locus of negation. Moreover, the prefix 'nañ' in *ajñāna*, meaning negation, must be taken into account either as negation, or as opposition, or as difference. In any of these cases, *ajñāna* presupposes knowledge. And as said before, *ajñāna*, as want of knowledge, can remain, and is never opposed, when there is a general knowledge of the *pratiyogī* and *dharmī*. So it (*ajñāna*) can be accepted as *abhāva-padārtha* and not as *bhāva-padārtha*.

The Advaitins further maintain that *ajñāna* as a *bhāva-padārtha* and with Brahman as its locus (*āśraya*) may be ascertained by inference as well. They say that just as darkness, an existing thing (and not mere absence of light), is destroyed by light, so *ajñāna*, as something

existing and destructible by *jñāna*, may be inferred from ordinary experience. I direct my eyes to the yonder object and know it to be a tree. It is evident that, previous to this knowledge, I had *ajñāna* about the object, which has just now been removed. From the very perception of an object, it follows that something must have kept the object concealed before its revelation.

Rāmānuja says that the *hetu*—the middle term—is fallacious. If the argument which proves the existence of ignorance can prove a kind of ignorance other than this, then the middle term or *hetu*, which proves the desired proposition (*sādhya*), also proves another thing besides it; and if it cannot prove the other ignorance, then it falls short of what it tries to prove. Moreover, the example is not right, because the light of the lamp does not really manifest the object of perception. It is the knowledge that manifests the object; the light only helps the object to be manifested in perception. When the veil of ignorance is destroyed by the light, the object is known. The veil and the knowledge of the object are not the same. On the other hand, when the object becomes useful in actual life, it is manifested in knowledge or known. Knowledge is that which makes the object fit for actual activity.

It is said that *ajñāna* (ignorance) is *anirvacanīya* (indescribable) or false. It is neither *sat* (existing) nor *asat* (non-existing). Against this, Rāmānuja says that an object is determined according to the character and form of perception. In our knowledge, the object is manifested either as *sat* (existing) or as *asat* (non-existing), but not as something different from both. So, it is absurd to accept that which is not found in our experience.

In a general way, Rāmānuja observes:

(i) When a piece of rope is mistaken for a snake, it is found that *ajñāna* about the rope has for its locus the deluded person, and for its object the rope. How can it be said that *ajñāna* abides in Brahman, who can never be supposed to be deceived? The instance also does not warrant us to hold the locus and the object

of *ajñāna* to be one and the same thing.

(ii) In the instance cited above, *ajñāna* is found to conceal only the material object and not the consciousness of the perceiver. How can it therefore be said that *ajñāna* resides in Brahman, who is pure Consciousness itself?

(iii) It is found that ignorance about an object is destroyed by its knowledge. But Brahman is always the subject and never an object. It is therefore futile to say that the knowledge of Brahman destroys *ajñāna* about Him, and that *ajñāna* envelopes Brahman, because in both these cases Brahman becomes simultaneously both its locus and object.

(iv) It is not proper to say that every right knowledge presupposes *ajñāna* as an existing something and different from its prior absence (*prāgabhāva*). For, then, the validity of all knowledge itself would be vitiated, being invariably ushered by *ajñāna*.

(v) Contrary knowledge is never found to destroy an existing object. Neither should it be argued that knowledge of the rope removes fear, trembling, etc., for, in fact, fear etc. are not removed by knowledge, because they are, by nature, of a temporary character, and subside by themselves when the cause for their production ceases to work.

These are the chief objections of Rāmānuja against the theory of *avidyā*. It will be seen that most of these objections are uncalled for and misdirected. Rāmānuja attributes such characteristics to *avidyā* as are actually denied by the Advaitins. He need not have picked up quarrel with the Advaitins on the point of the appearance of the illusory silver. He, too, has to admit *anyathākhyāti* (unconsciously though), in order to explain illusory perception. He should have only objected to the Advaita view that, during the illusory perception of silver, actual silver is produced for the time being by the *vikṣepa-śakti* (projecting power) of *ajñāna*. Rāmānuja demands a cause for such production of silver. But he conveniently forgets that, if a definite cause could be ascertained, it would no longer remain *anirvacanīya* (inexplicable). As an

honest thinker, Śaṅkarā is not ashamed to confess that he fails to determine the cause of the illusory silver, except that it is due to *ajñāna*, which, too, on careful examination, proves a riddle. And hence the necessity for the use of the term '*anirvacanīya*' (inexplicable).

Rāmānuja's explanation of the appearance of silver is not at all convincing. To say that everything contains the elements of every other thing is too much. He says that a shell contains the elements of silver; and at the time of the so-called illusion, only the elements of silver are apprehended and not those of the shell, due to some defect of the sense. The explanation is clearly unconvincing. In fact, Rāmānuja's philosophy ignores the fact of illusion. According to him, all apprehensions are true.¹

When the knowledge of the shell sets aside the knowledge of silver, it is called *bādha* (sublation). To Rāmānuja, *bādha* can only mean substitution. But everybody has the unquestionable conviction that the knowledge of the shell *falsifies* the knowledge of silver. According to Rāmānuja's explanation, this would be unwarrantable. And this is the most crucial point. The Advaitins, too, do not question the truth of an illusion so long as it lasts. The truth or falsehood of a piece of knowledge cannot be ascertained during the period in which it continues. It may remain ever the same truth, if no contrary knowledge falsifies it.² If the knowledge of silver were as true as the knowledge of the shell, how is it that on knowing the shell one declares one's previous knowledge as false?

However, the line of argument adopted by Rāmānuja was taken up by later thinkers to refute the Advaita theory of *avidyā*. We may here simply mention the name of Vyāsa Tīrtha (sixteenth century) who, in his famous work *Nyāyāmṛta*, vehemently attacks the Advaita theories with a forceful dialectic unparalleled by his predecessors. His arguments were answered, point by point, by Madhusūdana Śara-

¹ *Yathārtham sarvavijñānam iti vedavidām matam'* —*Śrī-Bhāṣya*, I.1.1.

² Śaṅkarā's commentary on *Brahma-Sūtra*, II.1.14.

svatī (seventeenth century) in his *Advaitasiddhi*. Vyāsa Tīrtha's disciple Rāmācārya (seventeenth century), however, attempted to refute the arguments of Madhusūdana Sarasvatī in his *Taraṅgiṇī*. Brahmānanda Sarasvatī (seventeenth century) in his *Laghucandrikā* answered Rāmācārya with a view to establishing the points of

Madhusūdana Sarasvatī. Of course, quite a good number of scholars preceded Vyāsa Tīrtha, and each tried in his own way either to establish or refute the Advaita theory of *avidyā*. But we have chosen here Rāmānuja as the chief representative of the opposition, challenging the views and theories of the Advaita school.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA AND THE SPIRIT OF HINDUISM

BY SWAMI NAGESHANANDA

Among the great religions of the world, which have all come to exist as a result of man's craving for the Divine, Hinduism is the oldest, sustaining the hopes and aspirations of millions of people. It has held together the people of India in one bond of union for centuries, and has also been a source of perennial inspiration to all who have approached it with loving veneration. Its catholicity of outlook and its deep spiritual content have had an irresistible appeal to many cultured minds of foreign countries, ever since they started coming to India. A host of eminent orientalisks of the past and the present bear testimony to the powerful influence Hinduism had on the minds of foreigners.

From time immemorial, Hinduism has produced sages, saints, and world teachers of the highest order. Right from the early Vedic times to the present day, the religious history of India is full of such spiritual personages, both men and women. They have appeared at different periods of history, bringing spiritual message for the welfare of mankind, and have played a great role in shaping the lives of men and women of this holy land. Their message has been the same: to make mankind aware of the divinity within. Only the mode of expression differs to suit the needs of the times in which they are born. As each age offers its

own problems, a great world teacher has to move with the spirit of the times.

In our own times, we have such a great world teacher in the personality of Sri Ramakrishna. Sri Ramakrishna is one of the fairest flowers that have ever blossomed in the world's religious history. His life and message, while they are fully in conformity with the highest ideals of Hinduism, have a freshness of appeal to the modern mind. At the time he appeared on the Indian soil, Hinduism needed a genuine representative of its high ideals, and the world needed a prophet, who could transcend the limits of his own religion and its cherished dogmas, to harmonize the different faiths of the world on a broader basis of truth and thus give religion a universal character. Both these needs have been fulfilled in the advent of Sri Ramakrishna.

The purpose of the present article is to show how the religious and spiritual assertions of Hinduism find their fulfilment in Sri Ramakrishna. For as Swami Vivekananda says: 'Without studying Ramakrishna Paramahansa first, one can never understand the real import of the Vedas, the Vedānta, of the *Bhāgavata*, and the other Purāṇas. His life is a searchlight of infinite power thrown upon the whole mass of Indian religious thought. He was the living commentary to the Vedas and to their aim. He

had lived in one life the whole cycle of the national religious existence in India' (*The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. VII, Fifth Edn., p. 473). A close study of the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna in relation to the ideas and ideals of Hinduism reveals the truth of this statement.

THE IDEAL

As a result of their long search in the realm of religion, the ancient seers of Hinduism discovered that there is an unchanging supreme Reality underlying this universe, which is also the Self of all beings. Man is not merely an aggregate of material elements. He is essentially a divine and spiritual being, and in him is embodied the truth that is the source of real joy and happiness. Man's life on earth has a great significance and purpose, which is realization of the divinity within. This spiritual realization, or *mokṣa* as it is termed, is the highest good that is worthy of man's achievement. Real joy consists not in enjoying the world through the senses, but in going beyond the senses. For the joy that man seeks from without cannot quench his thirst for enjoyment. Manu, the great Indian law-giver, rightly says: 'Desire is never satisfied by enjoying the desires; it only increases all the more, like fire when butter is poured upon it' (*Manu Smṛti*, II. 94).

The *Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad* records a dialogue, where Maitreyī, the noble wife of Yājñavalkya, a great sage, questions her husband: 'Sir, if indeed the whole earth, full of wealth, be mine, shall I be immortal through that?' The reply is very significant. Yājñavalkya says: 'No, your life will be just like that of people who have plenty of things, but there is no hope of immortality through wealth' (II.4.2). In the same Upaniṣad, Yājñavalkya tells Gārgī, a learned woman of ancient India: 'He, O Gārgī, who in this world, without knowing the Immutable, offers oblations in the fire, performs sacrifices, and undergoes austerities, even for many thousand years, finds all such acts perishable. He, O Gārgī, who departs from this world without knowing the Immortal is

miserable' (III.8.10). We find the same line of thought in all the Upaniṣads and other scriptures of Hinduism. Thus Hinduism has, from the very beginning, held this attainment of immortality as the highest ideal.

Sri Ramakrishna is a living symbol of this ideal of Hinduism. From his boyhood, he was seized with the ideal of God-realization. As he grew older, he found life itself meaningless without spiritual realization. The Upaniṣads declare: 'For one who has realized It here in this world, there is true life. For one who has not, great is the destruction' (*Kena Upaniṣad*, II.5). Sri Ramakrishna said once in a reminiscent mood about his early restlessness for God-realization: 'There was then an intolerable anguish in my heart, because I could not have Her vision. Just as a man wrings a towel forcibly to squeeze out all the water from it, so I felt as if somebody caught hold of my heart and mind and was doing so with them. Greatly afflicted with the thought that I might never have the Mother's vision, I was dying of despair. Being in an agony, I thought there was then no use in living this life. My eyes suddenly fell upon the sword that was there in the Mother's temple. I made up my mind to put an end to my life with it that very moment. Like one mad, I ran and caught hold of it, when suddenly I had the wonderful vision of the Mother and fell down unconscious' (*Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master*, p. 140). Thus the highest ideal of Hinduism is well demonstrated in the spiritual fervour of Sri Ramakrishna. He reiterated for humanity this ideal of spiritual awakening as the supreme end of human life. He said: 'Man should possess dignity and alertness. Only he whose spiritual consciousness is awakened possesses this dignity and alertness, and can be called a man. Futile is the human birth without the awakening of spiritual consciousness' (*The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, p. 830).

THE WAY

If, as Yājñavalkya says, immortality cannot be attained through wealth, then it follows as

a corollary that through renunciation alone is the way to that blessedness. Renunciation has been the very foundation on which the whole edifice of Hinduism rests. It is, as Swami Vivekananda said, one of the twin national ideals of India, the other being service. Ages ago, the Vedic seers sang: 'Not by work, not by progeny, and not by wealth, but by renunciation some attained immortality.'

One of the noblest conceptions of Hinduism is that of the four stages of life, viz. that of the student, the householder, the hermit, and the monk. Renunciation forms the basis of all these stages of life. While the principle of renunciation pervades the activities of the first three stages of life, in the last stage, man is required to renounce the world totally to gain spiritual wisdom before his life terminates on earth.

The ideal of renunciation was remarkably manifest in the life of Sri Ramakrishna. In fact, this was the striking feature of his life. His own disciples, who had lived under his loving care, had subjected him to severe tests, but only to find that the Master always stood the tests well, and was completely free from the least trace of lust and greed. Sri Ramakrishna literally carried out in his life the stern disciplines that Hinduism had imposed upon the life of a monk. He demonstrated to the world, by his own example, that lust and greed, to which man clings so tenaciously, and which are the two great impediments in his spiritual progress, can be entirely renounced, nay, the very ideas can be obliterated from the mind. He was, in the words of his illustrious disciple Swami Vivekananda, 'a triumphant example, a living realization of the complete conquest of lust and of desire for money. He was beyond all ideas of either' (*Complete Works*, Vol. IV, Seventh Edn., p. 184).

THE TWOFOLD PATH

The genius of Hinduism lies in its positive approach to life, especially in guiding humanity towards the lofty ideal it has set forth. A religion that fails to recognize the human frailties

while providing such an ideal will make the ideal too arduous to accomplish. At the other extreme, instances are not wanting in the world's religious history of how a religion, in its over-enthusiasm to raise mankind from the material level to that of the spiritual, had made a travesty of religion and spirituality and had defeated its own purpose.

Hinduism has steered clear of these dangers by prescribing a novel way of life, which, on the one hand, is in tune with the highest ideal itself, and, on the other, infuses hope and confidence into the heart of mankind to march courageously towards the goal by following the line of least resistance. This way of life is the twofold path: the *pravṛtti dharma*, or the way of action, and the *nivṛtti dharma*, or the way of renunciation. Śaṅkara, the great saint and philosopher of India, brings out this spirit of Hinduism in the beautiful introduction to his commentary on the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. He says: 'The Lord, having created the world and wishing to secure order therein, first created the Prajāpatis (the lords of creatures) and made them adopt the *pravṛtti dharma*. He then created others ... and made them follow the *nivṛtti dharma*, characteristic of knowledge and indifference to worldly objects. It is the twofold Vedic religion of action and renunciation that maintains the order in the universe. This religion which leads to *niḥśreyasa* (spiritual liberation) and *abhyudaya* (worldly prosperity) has long been practised by all castes and religious orders who sought welfare.'

All individuals are not equally suited to embrace a life of complete detachment from the world. For those who cannot, Hinduism offers the way of action, with graded discipline to help them in their onward journey to spiritual perfection. Though it affords an opportunity to enjoy the little joys of ordinary life, yet its aim is to lead them gradually to the ideal of *niḥśreyasa*. As Sri Ramakrishna used to say: 'Those who still have a few worldly experiences to enjoy should lead a householder's life and pray to God' (*The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, p. 182). Hinduism inspires every man to strive

for a better life, irrespective of the path that he chooses.

In every society, there are persons to whom the ordinary values of worldly life have no charm, for they are attracted by the higher spiritual values. They have the strength to question the 'credentials of the senses' and to gain mastery over them. As the *Katha Upaniṣad* says: 'Both the good and the pleasant approach man. The wise one discriminates the two, having examined them well, and prefers the good to the pleasant. But the fool chooses the pleasant, through avarice and attachment' (I.2.2). To these brave ones is open the way of renunciation. True, Hinduism has always glorified the all-renouncing monks. But it is only a deserving compliment that Hinduism has paid to the courageous few who dared to walk over the path of renunciation, which is compared to the razor's edge, and was never meant to decry others. Deserving, because, as Sri Ramakrishna was wont to say, 'He who has renounced the world has already made great progress' (*The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, p. 320). When possessed with true spiritual hankering and pursued with the spirit of *yoga*, both the paths prove equally effective in carrying us to the shores of immortality.

In the modern age, Sri Ramakrishna has thrown new light on both the paths and given a new meaning to them. He has given a corrective to the critical attitude of extolling the one and belittling the other. Though Sri Ramakrishna himself was dedicated to the life of absolute renunciation, he was in full sympathy with mankind. It was no new religion that he taught. He only restated the old truths in a new light. In its spirit, it was the same old Vedic religion characterized by the twofold path. He held that the life of action, based on devotion and discrimination, was as sacred a path as that of renunciation. What testifies to a true religious life is the inner spiritual qualities of man, and not the outward forms and observances. He said: 'Blessed is he who feels longing for God, though he eats pork. But shame on him whose mind dwells on "woman and gold",

though he eats the purest food' (*ibid.*, p. 525).

To Sri Ramakrishna, an active life devoid of spiritual background lacks the strength to bear the stress and strain of worldly pursuit. To put it in his own inimitable words: 'If you enter the world without first cultivating love for God, you will be entangled more and more. You will be overwhelmed with its danger, its grief, its sorrows. . . . First rub your hands with oil and then break open the jack fruit; otherwise, they will be smeared with their sticky milk. First secure the oil of divine love and set your hands to the duties of the world' (*ibid.*, p. 6).

Thus presenting the Hindu ideal of the twofold path in its proper perspective and with loving assurance, Sri Ramakrishna created, in his own life time and out of ordinary men, some of the noblest spiritual characters, who lived up to the highest ideal, though remaining in the world. And by his own exemplary life of renunciation, he brought into existence a band of all-renouncing monks to work for the good of humanity. These were the early apostles chosen by Sri Ramakrishna to spread his message and fulfil his life's mission, under the inspired guidance of Swami Vivekananda, his foremost disciple.

ASPECTS OF DIVINITY

A special feature of Hinduism is its broad conception of Divinity. This spirit of catholicity has attracted the followers of even alien faiths to Hinduism. Diverse as are the temperaments of individuals in comprehending God, Hinduism recognizes two aspects of Divinity, the personal and the impersonal, to suit the different individuals. As Swami Vivekananda has expressed: 'There are two ideas of God in our scriptures—the one the personal, and the other the impersonal. The idea of personal God is that He is the omnipresent creator, preserver, and destroyer of everything, the eternal Father and Mother of the universe, but one who is eternally separate from us and from all souls. . . . Then there is the other idea of the Impersonal, where all those adjectives

are taken away as superfluous, as illogical, and there remains an impersonal, omnipresent Being' (*Complete Works*, Vol. III, Seventh Edn., p. 128). This double conception of Divinity fulfils the spiritual demands of two different types of minds, the intellectual and the emotional. The impersonal aspect, as the Self of all beings and as the basis of all experience, has remained unchallenged through the ages. But the personal aspect, being influenced more and more by the theistic outlook, had a significant development, and gained great popularity with its appeal to the heart and imagination of the people.

The spiritual personalities of Hinduism who preceded Sri Ramakrishna had laid greater emphasis on one or the other of the two aspects. It was Sri Ramakrishna who, by his own *sādhanā* and spiritual realization, pointed out that the personal and the impersonal aspects of God were not two different aspects, but were the obverse and reverse of the one supreme Reality. So, to him, both the aspects were equally true and noble conceptions, worthy of realization. This is an outstanding contribution of Sri Ramakrishna to the spiritual heritage of Hinduism. He was never wearied of impressing this truth upon the minds of the people. 'To tell you the truth, He who is formless is also endowed with form. To His *bhaktas* (devotees), He reveals Himself as having a form. . . . Under the cooling influence, so to speak, of the *bhakta's* love, the Infinite appears to take a form. . . . One who follows the path of knowledge—the path of discrimination—does not see the form of God any more. To him, everything is formless. But mark this: form and formlessness belong to one and the same Reality' (*The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, p. 317).

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE

In order that a religion may be effective in fulfilling the spiritual needs of human beings, it has to provide a comprehensive scheme for spiritual practice or *sādhanā*, so as to include within itself varieties of religious disciplines. Hinduism provides everyone a way to blessed-

ness, according to his taste and temperament. Hinduism has always discouraged the dogmatic assertion that there can be only one way to immortality and that there can be only one prophet as its authentic exponent. Swami Vivekananda remarks about this all-embracing outlook of Hinduism: 'From the high spiritual flights of the Vedānta philosophy, of which the latest discoveries of science seem like echoes, to the low ideas of idolatry with its multifarious mythology, the agnosticism of the Buddhists, and the atheism of the Jains, each and all have a place in the Hindu's religion' (*Complete Works*, Vol. I, Ninth Edn., p. 4).

The entire spiritual *sādhanā* of Hinduism is generally classified into two broad divisions: the one based on the impersonal aspect of Divinity, with more rigorous disciplines, and the other centring round the personal aspect, with less severe practices. The former is called *jñāna-mārga*, or the path of knowledge; and the latter, *bhakti-mārga*, or the way of devotion. To say that one is superior to the other is to miss the real spirit of Hinduism. As, in course of time, the disciplines became more and more systematized, based on the attitudes of men, there developed the four *yogas*, or paths to spiritual perfection. These are commonly designated as *jñāna-yoga*, *rāja-yoga*, *karma-yoga*, and *bhakti-yoga*. 'But you must, at the same time, remember', points out Swami Vivekananda, 'that these divisions are not very marked and quite exclusive of each other. Each blends into the other. . . . These divisions are made in accordance with the type or the tendency that may be seen to prevail in a man. . . . In the end, all these four paths converge and become one' (*ibid.*, p. 106).

Sri Ramakrishna, like a great adventurer in the quest of Truth, followed different *sādhanās* laid down by Hinduism, and demonstrated the truth of each one of them. He practised assiduously, one after another, the diverse disciplines which are enshrined in the holy scriptures of Hinduism, and vouched for the validity of each one of them. His struggle for the vision of Kālī, the Divine Mother; his Vedāntic dis-

cipline under Tota Puri, a great *sannyāsin*; his Tāntric *sādhana* under Bhairavi Brahmani, a venerable woman; his *bhakti sādhana* in all its aspects; his Islamic practice under a Sufi; and his vision of Jesus Christ—each one of these forms a full-blown flower in the bouquet of Sri Ramakrishna's spiritual *sādhana*. He is a solitary example in the world's recorded religious history, where one single person experimented with so many paths to see God face to face. He himself said about his *sādhana*s: 'I have practised the disciplines of all paths. Otherwise, I should have found no peace of mind' (*The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, p. 497). As a result of this, he discovered unto himself and proclaimed to humanity for its good the great truth that there existed no difference or conflict among the various sects and paths, since they all led to the same goal. His whole life was, indeed, an expression of this noble truth. He said: 'He is, indeed, a real man who has harmonized everything. Most people are one-sided. But I find that all opinions point to the One. All views—the Śākta, the Vaiṣṇava, the Vedānta—have that One for their centre' (*ibid.*, p. 446).

Both *jñāna* and *bhakti* had found their highest expression in Sri Ramakrishna's life. He had brought about a beautiful reconciliation between the two. However, the devotional aspect had gained greater prominence in his teachings than that of knowledge. For the path of devotion, owing to its simplicity, has a greater appeal to the minds of the people than the path of knowledge. Sri Ramakrishna believed that the *bhakti-mārga*, as taught by Sage Nārada, is a path suited to the needs of the present age. By this, the path of knowledge also remained in its pure form without losing its ancient lustre. Thus, Sri Ramakrishna enhanced the glory of both the paths.

Before the advent of Sri Ramakrishna, the great Vedic dictum 'Truth is one, and the sages call it variously' had never been proved in its completeness by one person. Sri Ramakrishna, after traversing the different paths of Hinduism, had widened the spiritual horizon to find the

truth contained in the other religions as well. An eager spiritual aspirant that he was, he verified the truth of each religion by following it to its perfection. Sri Ramakrishna's study of comparative religion was not through books, but by direct experience. The great achievement of Sri Ramakrishna was his discovery that the different religions were not at variance with each other, but there was harmony and unity of purpose among them. So the cause for religious quarrels lies in not recognizing the underlying harmony. To love one religion and hate another is not a sign of true spiritual outlook. According to Sri Ramakrishna, the qualities that constitute this spiritual outlook are faith in one's own religion and an attitude of love and sympathy towards those of others. This, in fact, was the key-note of his teaching. The instruction he imparted to a member of a sect brings out this spirit clearly. He said: 'When you mix with people outside your Samaj, love them all. When in their company, be one of them. Don't harbour malice towards them. Don't turn up your nose in hatred and say: "Oh, this man believes in God with form and not in the formless God. That man believes in the formless God and not in God with form. This man is a Christian. This man is a Hindu. And this man is a Mussalman." ... Know that people have different natures. Realize this and mix with them as much as you can. And love all. But enter your own inner chamber to enjoy peace and bliss' (*ibid.*, p. 604).

Thus, Sri Ramakrishna used to teach people the profound spiritual truths of Hinduism, which, to him, were the fruits of his own realizations, in simple language rich in homely similes, apt illustrations, and instructive parables. While remaining faithful to the ancient traditions, he was yet modern in presenting them to the modern man. As Dr. Radhakrishnan rightly remarks: 'He is one of those rare beings in whom the flame of spiritual life burns so brightly that all who come near are able to share the illumination and see the world new-born as on the first day. He is an illustrious example of the mystical tradition which runs right through

the religious history of this country from the days of the Vedic ṛṣis' (Introduction to *The Cultural Heritage of India*).

HUMANISM

There have always been critics who contend that Hinduism, with spiritual realization as its highest ideal and all the activities of man directed towards this goal, is, indeed, other-worldly in its outlook, and is unconcerned about human suffering and human progress. In short, they maintain that there is no room for humanism in Hinduism. To these uncharitable remarks, the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna will provide an illuminative answer and help the critics to understand the true character of Hinduism.

Humanism, without having its roots in the Divine, has never been an end in itself in Hinduism; but it has a great value as means to an end. Long before the modern thinkers felt the futility of humanism as an enduring philosophy of life, the wisdom of Hinduism, speaking through the pages of the Upaniṣads, had proclaimed that a deluded fool thinks that humanitarian works alone are the highest, and does not understand the divine knowledge that leads to liberation (*vide Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, I.2.10). In recent years, some of the modern thinkers are coming closer to this Hindu view. Lin Yutang, the celebrated Chinese writer, says in his article 'My Steps Back to Christianity': 'For over thirty years, my only religion was humanism: the belief that man guided by reason was sufficient unto himself, that progress only in knowledge would automatically bring a better world. But having witnessed the advances of twentieth century materialism, and doings of the nations living without God, I am now convinced that humanism is not enough—that man for his very existence needs contact with a power outside and greater than himself' (published in *The Reader's Digest*, December 1959; see also his latest book *From Pagan to Christian*). This shows how the emphasis is slowly shifting from the material to the spiritual.

Sri Ramakrishna is an illustrious example of

the Hindu idea that he, indeed, is a humanist who has his whole being established in the Divine. Such a person is said to be *sarvabhūta-hiterataḥ*, interested in the good of all beings. Hinduism believes in what may be termed as spiritual humanism. A realized soul blossoms into a real humanist. As Śrī Śaṅkara tells in a beautiful verse: 'There are souls, calm and magnanimous, who do good to others as does the spring. Having themselves crossed the ocean of worldly existence, they help others as well to cross it without any selfish motive' (*Viveka-cūḍāmaṇi*, 39).

There are two well-marked phases in the lives of great spiritual leaders. The first phase consists in complete retirement from the world in quest of Truth. The world outside remains unaware of the aspirant's inner struggle for spiritual realization. In the second phase, he emerges as an enlightened spiritual leader of humanity. To him, human progress is not confined to particular spheres, but it is a continuous march towards a great spiritual ideal. Sri Ramakrishna's life, too, was comprised of these two phases.

The greatness of a world teacher is that he combines within himself the highest spiritual experience and the deepest human feeling. The divine ecstasy and intense love for mankind were beautifully blended in Sri Ramakrishna. Human suffering in any form found an immediate response in his heart. Sri Ramakrishna's life abounds in innumerable incidents to illustrate the human side of his life. One day, he uttered in an ecstatic mood: '*Jīva* is Śiva. Who, then, dare talk of showing mercy to them? No mercy, but service. Service to man must be regarded as service to God.' Swami Vivekananda, who was standing nearby, declared to others: 'I have heard a great saying today. I will proclaim this living truth to the world.' It was no wonder that this truth formed the very basis of the Order which the Swami founded in the name of his great Master. Once, Sri Ramakrishna met Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, the great scholar and humanist. Sri Ramakrishna's remark about him forms the essence

of the Hindu view of humanism. He said: 'Vidyasagar has both scholarship and charity, but he lacks inner vision, *antardṛṣṭi*' (*The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, p. 207).

It is therefore a noteworthy point that, while the Hindu ideal of *abhyudaya*, based as it is on human progress, has wide scope for the full development of all noble sentiments like humanism etc., this ideal is subordinated to the greater ideal of *niḥśreyasa*.

The life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna are an authentic commentary on the spiritual ideals of Hinduism. Posterity will find him not as a forgotten religious leader confined to the pages of history, but as a living power guiding

the destiny of Hindu religious and spiritual thought. To sum up the present subject in the glowing words of Swami Vivekananda: 'Sri Bhagavan Ramakrishna incarnated himself in India to demonstrate what the true religion of the Aryan race is; to show where, amidst all its many divisions and offshoots, scattered over the land in the course of its immemorial history, lies the true unity of the Hindu religion; ... and, above all, to hold up before men, for their lasting welfare, as a living embodiment of the *sanātana dharma*, his own wonderful life into which he infused the universal spirit and character of this *dharma*, so long cast into oblivion by the process of time' (*Complete Works*, Vol. VI, Sixth Edn., pp. 185-86).



THE SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE OF INDIAN ART—2

BY SRI P. SAMA RAO

III

Before we discuss Indian painting and sculpture, we ought to know that they achieve their best results only through the science of symbolism. Since Indian art is chiefly hieratic, it cannot be understood and appreciated without due knowledge of the religious literature referred to already. The iconography of all lands is only a symbolic representation of the many ideas of the deities and the attributes given to them by people from time to time. Symbolism is therefore a history of culture, setting out the means employed for concrete portrayal of the abstract conceptions we have of the supreme Being. Finite with his own limitations of time, place, and circumstance, man cannot rise to abstract ideas straightway. He therefore builds his abstractions, in the first instance, upon the basis of his own finite self and its experiences, and projects his own *guṇas* or characteristics, such as goodness,

cruelty, valour, beauty, etc., into his ideas of others. The solid earth on which he stands is the spring-board therefore for a jump into the beyond. Thus he radiates his own personality. When he has attained to a state of abstraction, it may not be necessary for him to think of concrete symbols to denote his abstract ideas unto himself; but it becomes necessary for him to employ the symbols to crystallize his ideas for others. The *Darśanoṇiṣad* lays down: 'The *yogins* see Śiva in the self, not in images; the images are created as aids for contemplation by the ignorant.' In other words, symbols are deemed necessary for the propagation of the invisible conceptions into others' minds. Language, gesture, music, etc. are such symbols. That we rise from the finite to the Infinite, or that we make use of the finite to interpret the Infinite, is a truth alluded to already.⁵⁶ God, the purest and highest abstraction, has no

⁵⁶ See footnote 41.

qualities or attributes; He is how we make Him in our own finiteness.

The ordinary language is not universal and adequate to express ideally our high conceptions of love and life, of growth and decay, of creation and destruction, and of the progress of the individual soul to the universal Soul. Art alone is the universal language that surmounts all barriers of provincialism and makes a universal thought universally understood. Its primary letter is symbolism, consisting of gestures, *mudrās*, and *bhaṅgis*. Our Tantra-śāstras, Śilpa-śāstras, and Āgamas set them down in detail.⁵⁷ Without an understanding of these, no Indian art can be produced or appreciated. For in the Indian art, 'the scheme of physical sense perceptions was rejected; it was built on other solid foundations'.

The procedure of the Indian artist was first to get a focus within the mind to discover a psychological point, and from there, and in accordance with the subtler laws and conventions of an inner vision, create a world that is unique and stands by itself. The aim was to build from within, and not from without; not even from without inwards. It is not the physical nature, but the psychological nature that the Indian artist represents. This concentration is the 'willed introversion of a creative mind, which, retreating before its own problem, and inwardly collecting its forces, dips at least for a moment into the source of life in order there to wrest a little more strength from the mother for the completion of the work'.⁵⁸ For, to the Indian artist, the foundations of his artistic ideas are above, and they branch out downward like the branches of the *aśvattha* tree, which alone 'is the bright One, that is Brahman'.⁵⁹ The Indian artist's world is 'therefore the basic world, the world of fundamental truths and realities behind the universe of apparent phenomena. It is this that he con-

templates, this upon which his entire consciousness is concentrated, and all his art consists in giving a glimpse of it, bodying it forth or expressing it in significant forms and symbols'.⁶⁰

The function of symbolism, as conventionalized by our ancients, does not stop here; it is employed to heighten the effect of beauty or form, or create the atmosphere and the necessary environment for the shining forth of the Idea or the content of art. The subject may be an immortal deity, or a mortal human, or the nebulous melody, or an abstract thought. Thus symbolism has a dual purpose: first, to make the artist himself realize in an idealistic concrete form his abstract Idea before setting out its copy in an art form; and secondly, to make people, with the use of these symbols, realize to the same extent his abstract conception. These art conventions do not in any way deter the Indian artist from a free realization of his conception. On the other hand, they are essential aids to him for such a purpose. So, these conventionalized symbols 'carry all the authority of principle, since they regulate the symbolic expression of metaphysical and psychological truth'.⁶¹

Adverting to the gesture language (flute in the hands of Kṛṣṇa), Sri Gangoly observes, 'Finger plays not in accordance with human gesture, but is devised to show refinement of feeling through refinement of external action on the part of a superhuman personality'. Then the celestial melody so floated cannot but enmesh even the purest hearts of *vrajāṅganās*. In the language of the Upaniṣad, again, the artist, be he a singer, a poet, a painter, or a sculptor, 'separates the spirit, the inner soul from his body, as from a painter's brush a fibre', and dedicates his purified soul to the service of God and His creatures. 'Fundamentally, the Creator and the creation are one and the same; but, for the fuller manifestation of the Creator in creation, and of creation in respect of the Creator, the universe abounds with the rich

⁵⁷ *Mānasārāgama*, *Supravadbhedāgama*, *Aṁśavad-bhedāgama*, *Sukranītisāra*, *Kāśyapīya*, *Māyā-śāstra*, Bharata's *Nāṭya-śāstra*, *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, *Silparatna*, *Samarāṅgana*, *Citralakṣaṇa*, etc.

⁵⁸ Jung, *The Psychology of the Unconscious*.

⁵⁹ *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, VI. 1; also *Gītā*, XV.1-2,

⁶⁰ A. K. Coomaraswamy.

⁶¹ James Cousins,

glory of infinite life-complexes.⁶² Thus Brahman is the real theme of secular as well as of spiritual songs.⁶³ Ultimately, in every piece of high art, 'on the vast canvas of the Self, the self itself paints a picture of the various worlds, and the supreme Self seeing but Itself enjoys immense delight'.⁶⁴ This is certainly self-realization through art; for 'he who attains to the vision of Beauty is from himself set free',⁶⁵ inasmuch as the artist has emptied himself out so thoroughly that the great Soul of the universe (Brahman) has filled him entirely with His breath.⁶⁶

The artist's ideas of abstraction relating to Beauty are primarily devotional and philosophical, and quite foreign to the tendencies of modern life. In the realm of love and spirituality, these abstractions centre round the ethereal attachment between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.⁶⁷ In the philosophical realm, the yogic beatitude is figuratively described as 'a flame in a windless place' (*Gītā*, VI. 19), and the yogic detachment is sublimely expressed in the simile 'like a drop of water on a lotus-leaf' (*ibid.*, V. 10).⁶⁸ There are monuments in stone of these grand ideas, illustrating to the Westerner the truth of Wordsworth's definition of poetry as 'Emotion recollected in tranquillity'. These are expressive of the static equilibrium, the yogic poise. The highest dynamism subtly growing into static equilibrium, *samatā* (poise), is expressed by the various specimens of Nāṭarāja images.⁶⁹ Laocoon compared with these is but coarse and rudimentary, in that it evidences only muscular struggle against the sinuous clamping of serpents.

These symbols range from the natural to the arbitrary, with transitions in between. Most of

them are concerned with the Hindu cosmogeny. A few fundamental ideas of it may be given here.

God has two aspects: *amūrta* (Absolute), which is beyond mind and speech; and *mūrta* (soul), which is made up of Puruṣa (consciousness) and Prakṛti (matter). In this *mūrta* aspect, He becomes *saguṇa* (qualityful) from the standpoint of form (*rūpa*), and Śabda-Brahman from the standpoint of sound (*nāda*). He is then called Paramaśiva or Mahādeva or Liṅga, according to the Śaivites; or Mahāviṣṇu or Nārāyaṇa, according to the Vaiṣṇavites. In the universe He creates, He manifests Himself in three states: (1) *avyakta* (unmanifested), in which His three *guṇas*—*sāttvika*, *rājasika*, and *tāmasika*—are in equilibrium. He becomes known as Śiva after the word 'Śivam', which means perfect harmony or auspiciousness. He is then compared to *kālarātri*, the night of *pralaya* or 'nothing', before creation starts again; (2) *avyakta-vyakta* (transitory or nebulous), where the *guṇas* are in a disturbed state with the *sāttvika* uppermost, when He is called Mahāviṣṇu in the twilight period, on the eve of the beginning of creation. He is then known as Nārāyaṇa, the primeval Creator, who, having created Brahmā, assigns further creation to him; and (3) *vyakta* (manifested), where the *guṇas* are in a more disturbed state with the *rājasika* uppermost, when He becomes Brahmā, the Creator, as is usually known. In this state of creation, He is compared to *divan* (day), because the creation is definite.

Brahmā is said to rise from the *nābhi-kamala* (the lotus of the navel) of Viṣṇu as Nārāyaṇa. According to our *yoga* texts, there is a mysterious *śakti* called *kuṇḍalinī*, which, if mastered through *yoga*, is capable of creating or destroying things at will. The spiritualism in Viṣṇu projects a world, which unfolds itself in a lotus form. This world is the objective universe of matter, and Brahmā sitting therein as the Puruṣa (Spirit) of *rajas* puts or regulates the still unshaped universe (Hiraṇyagarbha) into order and form. Hence the lotus is symbolic of the finite universe. In other interpretations, the

⁶² Apurnadevi.

⁶³ Śaṅkara's commentary on *Brahma-Sūtra*, I. 1.20-21.

⁶⁴ Śaṅkara, *Svātmanirūpaṇa*, 95.

⁶⁵ Goethe, *Maxims*.

⁶⁶ Laurence Binyon.

⁶⁷ *Gīta-Govinda*, *Śrī Kṛṣṇakarnāmṛta*, *Śrī Kṛṣṇatīlā-taraṅgiṇī*, Rajput paintings of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, Nāyikā-Nāyaka lores, and Rāgiṇīs.

⁶⁸ Dhyāna-Śiva of Elephanta.

⁶⁹ Candraśekhara, Gaṅgādhara, Gajāsura-damana, Nāṭarājas of Srisaila and Tiruvengaladu.

lotus stands for *ākāśa* or space, and its different layers of petals, unfolding, are emblematic of the different worlds, both gross and subtle. In this manner, the lotus in the hand of Padmapāṇi Avalokiteśvara of Ajanta has to be interpreted. The white lotus, like the white swan, is a symbol of innate purity, which is undefiled by the muddy surroundings amidst which it is born, and has its being. The lotus-leaves and flowers, widely opened or dying down, represent the ebb and flow of *saṁsāra*. The lotus is the seat of *amṛta* to which bees go; the simile is extended to souls aspiring after liberation. The lotus also stands for the bodily centres of consciousness, such as the solar plexus, navel, heart, and brain. A blue lotus is symbolic of beatitude or divine repose. A drop of water on the lotus-leaf has already been described as an emblem of yogic detachment. The use of lotus motif on a pedestal to a seat, or beneath the feet of the standing figures of deities, pictures the fact that they are not earthly, while the same employed on a temple dome stands as an emblem of the dedication of the builder's heart that is opening out to receive divine grace. In the realm of romance, the petals of the lotus are the ideals for the eyes, hands, and feet of beautiful women, just as their delicate pink colour is the glory of every lake and pool. The lotus-stalk connecting Nārāyaṇa with Brahmā stands for the umbilical cord, and is symbolic of the flow of Vedic knowledge from the higher to a lower world, without which all flow of life, all Prakṛti, becomes inane. Brahmā is four-faced, each face representing a Veda. These four faces may represent the 'quadruple rhythms of the universe'.

Brahmā bestrides the swan (*haṁsa*). The *jīva* goes out with the sound 'ha' and gets in with the sound 'sa'. Thus the *jīva* always utters this 'Ajapā-gāyatrī'—'Haṁsa, haṁsa, haṁsa' (*Dhyānabindu Upaniṣad*). According to another interpretation, the word 'haṁsa' is made up of the words 'aham' and 'saḥ', that is, 'I' and 'That' respectively. 'I' is the ego, and 'That' is God. So, 'haṁsa' represents the craving of the individual soul to get absorbed into

the universal Self. Brahmā, having conquered death, and being the universal Self himself, is said to bestride the swan. 'For, pervading all bodies, *haṁsa* exists, as fire in the fuel, as oil in the sesame. Having known that, one does not reach death' (*Haṁsopaniṣad*). *Haṁsa* also stands for logical thought, the quality of discrimination. While the beauty of its poses and the purity of its white feathers symbolize auspiciousness, in the kingdom of romance, beautiful women are said to possess *haṁsagati* (graceful gait of the swan). Since Brahmā creates out of *rajas*, the *kāmic guṇa*, he is red in complexion. He is represented with the *yogin's* *jaṭāmukuta* and beard, symbolic of his hoariness and *yoga*.

Mahāviṣṇu or Nārāyaṇa is usually represented as lying on the five-hooded Ādiśeṣa (serpent) or Ananta, coiled three and a half rounds. He has *cakra* (wheel) and *śaṅkha* (conch) in his two back hands. One of his front hands supports his head like a pillow, and the other in *nidrita-hasta* is relaxed horizontally on his side. His feet are being tended by his spouse Lakṣmī. The five hoods of the serpent are symbolic of the five root races, while the serpent itself represents eternity. The *cakra* stands for Prakṛti, or space, or consciousness, or the thinking faculty of man who strives to discover the truth. The *cakra* is supposed to destroy ignorance and wickedness, and to return of its own accord to the hands of Mahāviṣṇu. The *śaṅkha* is the seat of *nāda*. It therefore stands for Puruṣa or consciousness, which also destroys ignorance. It is also said to denote causality or the *ākāśa-tattva*. The standing posture of Viṣṇu is invested with a few more attributes, such as *kaustubha*, *śrīvatsa*, *gadā*, *vaijayantīmālā*, and bow and arrows, which are all symbolic of the 'pure soul of the universe, void of *guṇas* before creation', eternity, *buddhi*, and the *indriyas* respectively. Viṣṇu's vehicle Garuḍa (the golden eagle) is emblematic of Mahākālpa (the greater cycle of time).

In the *Ṛg-Veda*, there is no deity by name Śiva. For the first time in the *Yajur-Veda*, the name 'Mahādeva' comes into vogue. He be-

comes symbolized by *liṅga*, which denotes immanence. Śiva as an emblem of auspiciousness is a post-Vedic conception. He is said to destroy at *pralaya* (end of a cycle of time) all things in order to evolve a perfect form out of the disintegrated residue of matter. As Mahādeva, he is the patron of all *yogins*, who strive to realize themselves. Śiva is called *aliṅga*, while Viṣṇu is called *amṛta*. In the *mūla-*vigraha** (pristine form), he appears as *liṅga*; in the *utsava-*vigraha** (ceremonial form), he is endowed with a human form. His *liṅgatva* expresses the process of creation. The *gaurīpaṭṭa* is the ovular representation of the *bindu* element, while the *liṅga* is that of the *nāda*. Thus, he is represented as the primeval Creator. There are five phases of this *liṅga*, corresponding to the five elements: *ākāśaliṅga* (Chidambaram), *vāyuliṅga* (Kalahasti), *agniliṅga* (Tiruvannamalai), *āpasliṅga* (Tiruvanaikkaval), and *pṛthvīliṅga* (Tiruvallur).

Śiva in his *pratimā* form has either five heads or one head, and multiple hands. With five heads, he represents the five root races, like Ādiśeṣa. Each of these five faces is a characteristic aspect of his divinity. He is known as Aghora, Sadyojāta, Vāmadeva, Tatpuruṣa, and Īśāna. Corresponding to these five facts, he has ten arms bearing symbolic weapons of destruction. In his right hands, he holds *triśūla*, *khadga*, *paraśu*, *vaḍavāgni*, and *abhaya-mudrā*. The hands on his left bear *nāga*, *vajra*, *ghaṅṭā*, *pāśa*, and *aṅkuśa*. All these weapons have their own symbolic significance in accordance with the attributes of the Deity. The *triśūla* is the weapon with which he destroys the *triguṇas* in Prakṛti. It denotes his creative, preservative, and destructive aspects. The *khadga* and the *paraśu* stand for his valour in the destruction of ignorance or *avidyā*. The *vaḍavāgni* swallows up all things at the time of deluge. The *nāga* stands for eternity, as well as for procreational felicity. The *pāśa* is an insignia for his lordship over Yama, the god of death, while the *aṅkuśa*, which is held in his hand of bestowal (*varada-hasta*), stands for perseverance necessary in penance to attain

him. The *ghaṅṭā* is symbolic of the eternal *nāda*, while the *vajra* is of eternal wisdom. He is Nilakaṅṭha, because of the great poison *kālakūṭa* which he swallowed for the sake of preserving the worlds from destruction by its fumes. It is said that he wears Gaṅgā and *candrakalā* on his head (tokens, again, of purity and fertility) to counteract the fiery fumes of the poison. So Śiva, wearing the moon as a crescent, denotes life eternal. In his manifestation as Ardhanārīśvara, he is a combination of both Puruṣa and Prakṛti.

As Mahāyogin, he is the spirit of asceticism, and is endowed with the purest transparency. His *bhālākṣa* (eye on the forehead) also stands for his destructive aspect. *Rudrākṣas* as well as *brahmakapāla* indicate his great loving regard for his devotees Tripura and Brahmā, whom he had to destroy for sinning against him.⁷⁰ His yogic aspect and his primal preceptorship are celebrated in the image of Śrī Dakṣiṇāmūrti.⁷¹

The sacred ash smeared over Śiva and his emanations has several names: *vibhūti* (yielding supreme prosperity), *bhasita* (iridescence), *bhasma* (protection against danger), *kṣāra* (protection against malevolent spirits), etc. The sacred ash has therefore spiritual qualities; and without the *tripuṇḍra* ash marks on one's forehead, one is not purified to meditate on Gāyatrī.⁷²

The Ādiśakti is variously known as Mahālakṣmī, Mahākālī, etc. From the standpoint of her triune functions of creation, protection, and destruction, she is differently called as Mahāsarasvatī, Mahālakṣmī, and Mahākālī, respectively. They are the divine consorts of the great Trinity—Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Maheśvara, and are endowed with the same emblems. As an autumnal goddess, Lakṣmī is golden yellow, bordering a little on orange, and her vehicle is, however, an owl, symbolic of great wisdom. In her other manifestations, she is red-complex-

⁷⁰ *Rudrākṣa: Jābālopaniṣad.*

⁷¹ *Dakṣiṇāmūrtiyuṣāniṣad, Śaṅkara's Prapañcasāra, etc.*

⁷² *Bhasma: Jābālopaniṣad.*

ioned. She is always accompanied by a pair of white elephants, signifying purity and wisdom. She is the goddess of wealth and every other felicity. A *dhyāna* of hers reads: 'She, the mother of all the worlds, who is seated on a lotus, who is of the colour of its pollen, who holds in her frontal lotus-like hands an arrow and *abhaya-mudrā* (both symbolic of protection) and two lotuses in her back hands, and who is adorned with numerous ornaments and a beautiful crown set with gems—may she ever protect us.'⁷³

In her manifestation of Satī, Pārvatī stands for ideal beauty and chastity. She is white in colour. As Durgā Mahiṣāsūramardīnī, she is red in colour. As Śakti, she has self-power. She entices all, holding in her arms *pāśa*, *aṅkuśa*, bow, and arrows. She is the great wisdom (*Devyūpaniṣad*). In her aspect as Kālī, she is black, and her appearance is terrible. She is the destructive goddess at *pralaya*. She has a flaming third eye on her forehead. She is dressed in a girdle of hands, and has garlands of black cobras suspended from her neck and waist. Round her neck, she also wears a necklace of skulls. In one of her hands, there is the newly hewn head of a demon, dripping blood. Like the Egyptian Isis, 'She can conceal herself in the cloud of her long and abundant tresses'. She has four arms. In one, she holds the demon's head; in the other, a sword; while the remaining two hands are raised in *abhaya* and *varada mudrās* to bless mankind. As Umā, the ideal virgin, she is exceedingly lovely, and is the paragon of purity and wisdom. She is then dazzlingly transparent. As Pārvatī, she is the acme of chastity and beauty. She is the most benevolent mother of the world (Bhavānī or Bhagavatī).

The arts of the Buddhists and the Jains are but limbs of the Hindu art. Every Jina and every Avalokiteśvara has his own composition, cognizance, and *dikṣā* tree. According to the Jains, red, orange, and white are symbols of purity, while grey, blue, and black stand for wickedness in different degrees. The Buddhists,

in imitation of the Brāhmaṇical theology, adopted the eightfold marks of auspiciousness on Buddha's feet. They also borrowed the *agniliṅga* form of the Śaivites for their representation of bodiless Buddhas. The symbols of divinity of the Mahāyāna school of Buddhism are close imitations of the Hindu symbols. The yogic representation of Buddha is practically that of Mahādeva.

The hand poses (*mudrās*) are said to have originated from the Tāntric ritual of the Vedic age. The Śāktopaniṣads contain them. They seem to be very pleasing to the deities worshipped, and are capable of procuring from them whatever is desired, from the highest to the lowest. There are nine fundamental *mudrās*, from which not only the sculptural, but also the dance poses are derived and elaborated upon in order to accommodate diverse shades of thought. The sculptural ones—*kaṭaka-hasta*, *lamba-hasta*, *abhaya-hasta*, *varada-hasta*, etc.—about fourteen in all, are by far the purest and the most graceful, and have been usually adopted in the portraiture of deities, while the dance *mudrās* are less so. According to Bharata, there are twenty-four single-handed (*asaṁyuta*), thirteen combined (*saṁyuta*), and twenty-eight dance *bhaṅgis*. But the *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, a much later text, while confirming most of the above, adds eight more to the single-handed, and nine or ten to the combined, as well as to the *bhaṅgis*. These hand poses are manipulated for purposes of suggesting and indicating both the finite and the abstract.⁷⁴ Of these *hastas*, the *patāka* is regarded as the most important. It is said to have sprung from Brahmā, and so it is of the Brāhmaṇical caste, white in complexion, and presided over by Brahmā himself, but published by Śiva. It stands for cloud, forest, night, horse, wind, flow of water, *devaloka*, wall, delight, etc. *Tripatāka* has sprung from Indra; it is of the Kṣatriya caste and red in complexion; it is presided over by Śiva and published by his son Guha. It stands for *kirīṭa*, tree, *vajrāyudha*, Indra, *ketakī*, the sputtering of

⁷³ *Saubhāgya-lakṣmyūpaniṣad*.

⁷⁴ Nandikeśvara, *Abhinayadarpaṇa*, 198-200.

flames, etc. *Kartarī-hasta* is born of Śiva; it is of the Kṣatriya caste, blood-red in colour, patronized by Viṣṇu, and published by Parjanya. It indicates writing, separation of couples buffalo, bull, peak, elephant, tower, etc. *Ardhacandra-hasta* is born of Indra for the sake of Śiva, and belongs to the Vaiśya caste; it is rose-red in colour, patronized by Mahādeva, and published by Ṛṣi Atri. It symbolizes wrist, looking into a mirror, surprise, tender plant, youth, etc. *Muṣṭi* was born of Viṣṇu, when he was in fight with the demon Madhukaitābha; it is of the Śūdra caste, indigo in colour, patronized by Indra, and published by Amarendra. It indicates grip, running fast, lightness, holding of weapons like mace, spear, etc.⁷⁵ In the manipulation of the *saṁyuta-hasta*, most of the single-handed are doubled or joined. For instance, *añjalī* is the joining together of two *patāka-hastas*, and it is employed for the adoration of deities, preceptors, Brāhmaṇas, and superiors. *Svastika-hasta* is again a combination of two *patāka-hastas* with the wrists touching each other. It symbolizes crocodile, talking in fright, etc.

The birds, like the babes, are 'God's apostles every day, sent out to preach of love and hope and peace'.⁷⁶ So, no review of any principles of art, especially the spiritual aspect of the Indian art, can be complete without some reference to them. Only the symbolism of a few birds, of spiritual import, is referred to here.

Garuḍa (golden eagle): Stands for eternity.

Haṁsa (swan): Symbolizes purity; other attributes have already been mentioned.

Cātaka: Longs for raindrops for its existence.

Cakora: Longs for the moon, like a lover for her beloved.

Cakravāka or *koka*: Stands for an ideal spouse, and its yearning for the sun is similar to that of *cakora* for the moon.

Mayūra (peacock): Stands for vanity when it is at play spreading out its tail fanwise; also for the wail of the individual self for the uni-

versal Self; its heavenly blue is compared to higher *manas*; its ideal gait is compared to the graceful gait of the *padmini-stri*; it stands for Śiva as Naṭarāja, because it has conquered the serpent, an emblem of eternity.⁷⁷

To sum up: The various conceptions of symbolism detailed above are meant to indicate the rhythmic vitality of the spirit of harmony, the essential quality of the Indian art. For 'that alone is the masterpiece where the spirit sets into motion the phenomena of the world, as the hand of the harper sets into motion the strings of the instrument. Rhythm is the motion of life in life in the aspect of the manipulation of movement'.

IV

Indian painting, sculpture, and architecture, too, are informed with the very same principles as set out above. The same vitality, unity, rhythm, and maximum likeness to their prototypes were striven after. There is no surplussage of either the sentiment or colouration or decoration. Technique just enough to announce the essence of the subject is indulged in. There is absolutely no attempt made to be effective or garish. In a masterpiece thus produced, means and ends coalesce into an appearance of transcendental beauty. The artist allowed in his representation every detail of his to sing its own essential glory, either solo or in combination with its surroundings and in consonance with the *bhāva* of the subject. Nothing beclouded its clarity. He knew how to achieve the necessary perspective with the depth of his rhythmical lines.

In painting, the Indian artist's palette consisted mainly of the five *śuddhavarṇas*—symbolic perhaps of the *pañcabhūtas*—red, yellow, blue, white, and black.⁷⁸ The subsidiary or middle tints, like *mṛdurakta* (light red), *gaura* (rose), etc., were various. But there was a different classification, too. The primary colours were only four (yellow deleted); and each of these had three intermediates, so that in

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 219-26, 228, 231, 244-46, 253-58, 430.

⁷⁶ Robert Lowell.

⁷⁷ Cf. Śaṅkara's *Sivānandalahari*, 53-54, 59.

⁷⁸ *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa*, Part III, Chapter 27.

all there were sixteen colours called the *svatan-travarnas*. For aiding remembrance of them, they were likened to specimens of natural life; for instance, *arūna*, the blood of hare; *śoṇa*, the hue of *kiṃśuka* flower; *harita*, the colour of the cat's eye or *gomedhika*; *nīla*, the colour of the monsoon cloud; *śyāma*, the colour of the crow; *karāla*, the colour of the peacock's neck; *kṛṣṇa*, the jet black of the beetle's wings; etc.⁷⁹ The six canons prescribed by Vātsyāyana, viz. (a) the knowledge of appearances; (b) correct perception, measure, and structure; (c) action of feelings on form; (d) infusion of grace, rhythm, and artistic representation resulting in a suggestion of the eternal (*dhvani*); (e) similitude; and (f) artistic technique in the manipulation of colour tones, were scrupulously observed.⁸⁰

It is to be noted here that in Indian painting the effects of light and shade were not totally dispensed with, although the perspective, gracefulness (*lāvanyatā*), tenderness (*komalatā*), etc. were expressed by the depth and swerve of the line. Light and shade were, however, resorted to, and that to a minimum only when indispensable and necessary; but that was done so as not to detract from the expression of linear rhythm. Ajanta and Sigiriya paintings give evidence of this.

There was very little of landscape painting, for its own sake. Even the colouration and structure of natural objects, like trees, flowers, shrubs, clouds, birds, etc., were symbolic of their qualities. The natural scenes were subordinated to and painted in as background only for the atmospheric setting of the *bhāvas* represented. *De facto* naturalism seems to have come into vogue only in the representation of secular life—garden, hunting, warfare, court and durbar scenes, portraiture of men, women, and birds, etc.—with the advent of the Moghul influence after the manner of the Persian art. This was calligraphic. Otherwise, symbolism prevailed to a very great extent in painting, and the most lyrical trend based on the ideal love

of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa held its sway over the Indian artist.⁸¹ Lyricism of colour and linear rhythm were its main characteristics.

A few injunctions were, however, laid down for the colouration of the faces of certain classes of people and of deities. 'While Vāsuki (Nāga king) should be of *śyāma* colour, the *nāgas*, his subjects, should be white in the *dvāpara* age; the *daityas*, *dānavas*, *rākṣasas*, *guhnyakas*, *piśācas* should be of the colour of water without any glow. . . . The Brāhmaṇas should be painted of the colour of the moon; the Kṣatriyas as well as the king and prosperous people, of the colour of the *padma* (white lotus). The Vaiśyas, again, should be slightly light in colour; and the Śūdras, dark. *Gandharvas* and *apsarasas* are traditionally said to be in many colours. The sick, the evil-doers, those who are oppressed by evil stars or have taken shelter in penance, and all family men engaged in toilsome work should also be dark.'⁸²

Architecture is mainly of three kinds: for the housing of gods, men, and their religious saints. Sometimes, it commemorated historic events, and sometimes, it was built to cherish the memory of the dead. There are characteristic differences in its forms and styles consonant with the purpose.

Perhaps, the most 'utilitarian' among the fine arts are the domestic architecture and the handicrafts, relating to the *anukaraṇas* (aids), like the instruments and vessels of religious ritual, in *yāgas*, *yajñas*, and the worship of the Divine. These are shaped and carved into forms of *dīpa-lakṣmīs*, *somasūtra*, and *aḷagāratī* plates, and ornamented duly with *kalpaka-latās*, lotuses, *mandāras*, serpents, etc., in keeping with the essential glory of the subject and the purpose. The temple architecture is the most comprehensive and immense among them all, for the reason that the infinity of the Godhead requires it, and that can be concretized only in a huge structure as diversely planned as the variegated

⁸¹ Portraits of nobles; illustrations to *Akbarnama* of Fazl; Rajput paintings of Rāginiś etc.; illustrations to *Gīta-Govinda* and the *Bhāgavata*.

⁸² *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa* (Translated by S. Kramrisch).

⁷⁹ *Arṇśavadbhedāgama*.

⁸⁰ Yaśodhara's commentary on Vātsyāyana's *Kāma-sūtra*.

universe itself. The temple is regarded as an earthly dwelling of the Almighty. In a way, the temple is the most self-contained unit, with everything beautiful that the universe holds in its infinite scope and glamour and the human genius can imitate and achieve. Thus, the temple bespeaks itself of the here and the hereafter, of the past, the present, and the future, the Being and the becoming, and the concretization of every luscious dream the human mind is capable of devising. Hence the temple shines with a glory unique to itself. It is at once a museum, a library, an altar, an audience-hall of both kings and subjects, a place for all communities to meet and deliberate on the *para* and the *apara* states of existence. It is also a school where wisdom, worldly and unworldly, emanated from the hoary heads of the learned and realized souls—verily, a centre for the propagation of knowledge, secular and spiritual. It is a place as open and inviting as the star-decked sky. Nothing is denied inclusion, nor anything remains unaccepted, because everything betokens God and His immensity. In other words, the temple is a huge monument and a measure not only of the donor's dedication, but also of *samatva* (equable vision). Everything and every one has a due and rightful place in its all-loving and all-embracing arms. As Ruskin puts it: 'And the less valuable offering was rejected not because it did not image Christ nor fulfil the purpose of sacrifice, but because it indicated a feeling that would grudge the best of its possessions to Him who gave them; and because it was a bold dishonouring of God in the sight of man. Whence it may infallibly be concluded that in whatever offerings we may now see reason to present unto God, a condition of their acceptableness will now be as it was then, that they should be the best of their kind. ... So long as men receive earthly gifts from God, ... His tithe must be returned to Him. ... There can be no excuse accepted because the deity does not now visibly dwell in His temple; if He is invisible, it is only through our failing faith; nor any excuse because other calls are more immediate or more sacred; this

ought to be done, and not the other left undone.'⁸³

The Indian temple architecture may be divided primarily, according to style and pattern, into (a) the Indo-Aryan or the Āryāvarta, (b) the Dravidian, and (c) the Cālūkyan or the Hoysala—the blend of (a) and (b). Geographically, the Indo-Aryan style prevails in northern India, while the other two are to be seen in southern India. The third style came into existence in the eleventh century A.D., and achieved its best results by the end of the thirteenth.⁸⁴ Its distinctive features are star-designed polygonal high plinths, and over-massing of decorative sculpture of gods; of Purāṇas, Itihāsas, Nāṭya-sāstras, Rati-sāstra, etc; and of animals, birds, floral motifs of *kalpaka* and *nīpa* centring them together with yogic poses—all round the plinth and the superstructure. There is in this style the conspicuous absence of any tall tower over the shrine, unlike in other styles.

The beginnings of any Indo-Aryan stone architecture that has survived the pre-Christian era are the dolmens, the fore-runners, too, of the elaborated Buddhist *caityas*. But on the sprouting of Buddhism, the architectural forms improved into two types, viz. the *vimāna* and the *stūpa*. The Āryāvarta style was evolved from the Buddhist *stūpa* (which enshrined Buddha's relics), while the Dravidian style was developed from the Buddhist *caitya* or monastery. The Indo-Aryan temple consists essentially of a rectangular cell, which enshrines the image, and a curvilinear steeple or tower with vertical ribs (circularly bent), by which it is surmounted. A porch or a nave is generally added in front of the doorway of the cell, but it is not essential. The *śikhara* is capped with an *āmalaka* (called after the fruit of that name) of 'flattened circular cushion form' with stone vase (*kalaśa*) above it.⁸⁵

In the Dravidian style, the distinguishing fea-

⁸³ Ruskin, *The Lamp of Truth in Seven Lamps of Architecture*.

⁸⁴ Halebid, Somanathapura, Belur, etc.

⁸⁵ Aihole, Bhuvaneshwar, Khajuraho, Puri; Jain temples at Mt. Abu etc.

ture is its prominent tower, which is horizontally divided into terraces and capped over by a roof of either the barrel form of the old *caitya* type or a globular dome. The *kalaśas* are either of the umbrella or of the spherical form. The dome is usually ribbed in imitation of the elastic bent-bamboo, and is designed in the shape of either an inverted lotus moulding or calyx beneath. These designs are symbolic of *śānti* and perfection. About the middle of the fourteenth century A.D., the Dravidian style got elaborated into close imitation of the earlier wooden forms. The elaboration resulted in differently patterned pillared halls (monolith and compound, of various patterns—round, rectangular, polygonal, etc.), or in separate *chatras*, *maṅṭapas*, and bazaars round about the main shrine.⁸⁶ The halls are roofed over with horizontal slabs of stone, and possess most elegant cornices with a 'double flexure, supported on delicate pseudo wooden transoms'. The pillars, though monolithic, are often of compound design, and may be combined with figures of *yālīs*, rearing horses, gods or goddesses, warriors, dancing girls, and other motifs.

But there is, however, an isolated instance of the Gothic style temple building in Kashmir (Mārtāṇḍa temple, second century A.D.) built by Lalitāditya. Here, there is not much ornamentation of the temple with sculpture or painting of the Purāṇas or the Itihāsas.

Domestic architecture means and includes every structure like house, mansion, pleasure-garden, water-pavilion, dancing saloon, granary, cattle-yard, etc., all well designed and executed strongly to contribute to the residence, pleasure, and comfort of human beings and animals. It must yield wealth, righteousness, peace, and every other mundane desire. It must withstand hot and cold draughts; it must contain wells that give perennial supply of fresh and good water; and it must have places that inspire perfect devotion to the gods, with facilities for

their due worship.⁸⁷ Though the principle of utility was dominant in the domestic architecture, the metaphysical principles of all-round health were not given the go-by. The human dwelling is circumscribed after all, and therefore suffers from certain limitations that do not pertain to the temple architecture. First and foremost, the house should be a private centre of great peace and loveliness, and everything that contributes to their disruption, like evil passions, gruesome sights, miserable scenes, etc., is tabooed. It is enjoined in the Āgamas that the walls of private houses and of temples should be decorated with paintings. Figures of gods, executed in conformity with their description as per their *dhyānas* (*mantra-mūrtis*), and paintings of happy events recognized as such by the Purāṇas and the Āgamas, all painted in proper forms and conveying *rūpa*, *rasa*, and *bhāva*, formed the subject-matter of art in dwelling houses. Pictures of wars, death scenes, and sad events, and figures of nudity and wild emotions were prohibited.⁸⁸

V

The universe and all the things in it, inclusive of the *pañcabhūtas*, mind, form, sound, the triple *guṇas*, etc., are born of God's *saṅkalpa* (will) and yogic nature. They are not God, but they are in Him. All these are threaded on Him as rows of gems on a string.⁸⁹ They are all indispensable to one another. Everything, in the due discharge of its legitimate function, contributes to the common weal, and so is auspicious and holy. The universe is a huge work of art, built of tangible and intangible things and qualities, all designed to attain 'Śāntam, Śivam, Sundaram' (peace, felicity, and beauty) through perfect consecration to divine purpose in both the physical and metaphysical planes of existence. 'Art is *yajña*; art is *vijñāna*; art is earthly wisdom; art is ritual; art is truth; art is the secret; art permeates the entire universe;

⁸⁶ Hampi; temples of Vijayanagara period at Srirangam, Vellore, Chidambaram, Madurai, Rameswaram, etc.

⁸⁷ *Kāśyapīya*; Vātsyāyana's *Kāmasūtra*.

⁸⁸ *Aṁśavadbhedaḡama*; Rāmāyaṇa for picture galleries.

⁸⁹ *Gītā*, VII.7.

for that alone conduces to the welfare of the worlds.⁹⁰

But art is the greatest of illusions created by man. In a way, art is a blasphemy, too, because it seeks to formalize the Formless, describe the Indescribable, assign place and locality to the Immanent, and make finite the Infinite.⁹¹

That is not so much the fault of the artist as of the Creator, who, having created men and qualities, commands them to emulate Him. This is all a divine play, where the Creator and the created are ever hunting one another in great bliss, like lovers, for a dissolution, as it were, of one into the other.⁹² The created are eternal lovers, be they lovers pure and simple, or parents and children, or masters and servants,

⁹⁰ *Śilpavidyā-rahasyopanīṣad*.

⁹¹ Śaṅkara, *Kṣamāpaṇa-stotra*.

⁹² Francis Thompson, *Hound of Heaven*.

or preceptors and disciples, or friends.⁹³ This duality is engineered by the great goddess of illusion (Māyā), who is always fresh and harpy-tongued and ever young, who is skilful in weaving impervious veils of appearance, and who accomplishes even the impossible. She rears in her breast the two birds, the cosmic Soul (Īśvara) and the individual soul, and is still blissful.⁹⁴ As Schelling puts it: 'Art is the production or result of that conception of things by which the subject becomes its own object, or the object its own subject. Beauty is the perception of the Infinite, and the chief characteristic of works of art is unconscious Infinity.' The highest stage of art consists in 'the art of life', which directs its activity towards the adornment of life, so that it may be a beautiful abode for a beautiful man.

⁹³ *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanīṣad*, *Gīta-Govinda*, *Śrī Kṛṣṇakarnāmrta*, etc.

⁹⁴ Śaṅkara, *Śataślokī*, 26.

SANTA TUKĀRĀMA

BY KUMARI NONIKA A. HANDOO

Temple bells are ringing on a desolate hill; there are a few marshy hills around; and below, an untidy village lies sprawled out, intercepted by a small river. It is time for worship in the Viṭṭhala temple.

Outside the threshold of the temple lies a stone slab. This was the seat of meditation of Santa Tukārāma, the great saint of Maharashtra. Here he did penance with utter self-abandonment; and here an abundance of divine help and faith came to him in answer to his prayers.

Born in A.D. 1583 in a farmer's family, in the remote village of Dehu in Maharashtra, Tukārāma was a contemporary of Śivājī. The outward circumstances of his life seem familiar and commonplace, being the misfortunes of an average farmer, but the divine grace that de-

scended on him raised him from all that was mundane and made his life unique and almost divine.

Lack of education was no handicap to Tukārāma, for a wealth of wisdom as well as a heart full of understanding was his. As was customary at that time, Tukārāma was married at the age of thirteen, but an unfortunate discovery followed soon after. His good-natured and refined bride was suffering from tuberculosis. This knowledge was sufficient justification for the arrangement of a second marriage, which soon took place. Still in his teens, Tukārāma was burdened with two wives, and his aging parents retired, leaving on him the responsibility of the family.

A few years passed smoothly; then, suddenly,

one difficulty followed on the heel of another, and life for Tukārāma became rough and complicated. The first sorrow was the premature death of his elder brother's wife. That caused profound grief to Tukārāma's brother, who shortly after left home permanently. In his wanderings from one place of pilgrimage to another, he died somewhere.

Gloom had already been cast on the family, and another shock was added specially for Tukārāma, who acutely felt the loss of his brother. Tukārāma now experienced an ever-increasing sense of dissatisfaction in his work. At home, he was unable to give his attention to anything he did. Naturally, his business suffered, and slowly his paternal inheritance dwindled away by degrees. Tukārāma felt weighed down with the responsibility of maintaining two wives, a child, a younger brother, and a sister, he being the sole bread-winner. The strain on Tukārāma was immense; losses were mounting up. There was no one to turn to, no solution, and no escape. In short, he was desperate. To make matters worse, the domestic affairs were also cheerless. His second wife, unlike the first, proved to be ill-tempered and nagged him continually.

At last, what was expected, the inevitable crisis, came in the form of bankruptcy for Tukārāma; his respectability was at stake; and he was reduced to utter poverty. Tukārāma was a sorry picture; his sincerest efforts to recover from business reverses were a total failure.

A touching incident, remembered and related by the contemporaries of Tukārāma, reveals his large-heartedness, despite his poverty, and his endearing sense of humour. One day, he was bringing home some ripe sugar-cane from his fields. On the way, some street urchins pestered him to give them some sugar-cane, which he generously distributed till only one remained. When he reached home, he graciously presented to his wife that one and only sugar-cane. His hungry wife rebuked him for his foolishness, and hit him with that sugar-cane so furiously that it instantly broke into two. Tukārāma only laugh-

ed at this, and said: 'What a devoted wife I have; even before I could ask her, she has divided the sugar-cane into two. How fortunate and blessed I am!'

About that time, there was a severe famine in the Poona district. Amongst the innumerable people that died of starvation was Tukārāma's elder wife. This tragedy was followed by another. Soon after, his little son also passed away. This was the climax of all Tukārāma's miseries. He could endure the sorrowful world no more, and so decided to give up the cares and anxieties of this worldly life. Thus, this became the turning point of his life and the beginning of his spiritual career.

The first step that Tukārāma took to withdraw from the world was when he gave his younger brother half the letters of credit and told him: 'Many people owe us money; now it is up to you to collect it from them if you care to. Frankly, it makes no difference to me what you do.' The other half of the letters of credit that belonged to Tukārāma was thrown into the river Indrāyaṇī, thinking that it would be a hindrance to his *sādhanā*.

Absolved from worldly responsibility, Tukārāma felt now quite free, and devoted all his time to prayer. Meditation and *kīrtana* were his favourite forms of worship. Early in the mornings, he would go to the Viṭṭhala's temple situated on a hill; after performing the worship at the feet of the Lord there, he would go up either to Gonda or to Bhardara hill, where he used to meditate on Ekanātha's *Bhāgavata*, followed by the repetition of the name of God. In the evenings, often till midnight, Tukārāma, immersed in listening to the *kīrtana*, would be lost to the world. Singing the glories of God gave him strange powers of eloquence. Through divine grace, a wealth of wisdom flowed from his lips, called the 'Abhaṅgas' (glories of the indivisible or ultimate Truth). These Abhaṅgas received honour and recognition both by the laity and the learned men of those days.

All but one accepted the saintliness of Tukārāma. This person was one Rāmeśvara Bhaṭṭa, a scholar well versed in the scriptures, and he

lived in the vicinity of Poona. He felt mortified that an ordinary farmer should be honoured in that manner. He troubled Tukārāma in several ways. The havoc and disaster caused to Tukārāma by his jealousy were terrible. He ordered the village chief of Dehu to exile Tukārāma from the village for the audacity of composing those Abhaṅgas. But Tukārāma told the chief: 'The Abhaṅgas I compose, because the Lord commands me to. Since you are a Brāhmaṇa, you are godlike; and if you order me, I shall discontinue composing them, but what should I do with those that have already been written?' 'Throw them into the river', commanded the village head. Tukārāma complied with his wishes, and threw the manuscripts into the river Indrāyaṇī.

The censure of the Brāhmaṇas was heart-rending for Tukārāma; distracted with grief, he gave up eating. Seated outside the Viṭṭhala's temple on the stone slab that still lies there, he prayed that God should either rescue him or let him die, for on no account could he face such a severe social boycott. Thirteen days and thirteen nights passed this way, without Tukārāma eating a morsel of food. At last, the self-surrender and sincere prayers of Tukārāma were rewarded by a vision of God, who appeared in the form of a child. Tukārāma touched the tender feet of the divine child. In that vision, God, embracing him, said: 'I saved your Abhaṅgas from sinking, preserved them all these days, and today presented them to your devotees.' After conveying these joyful tidings, the vision ended. After this great event in his life, Tukārāma lived for another fifteen years, preaching devotion and religion to the people.

The *kīrtanas* and songs of this great soul had a popular appeal, and he gathered a large following around him. A number of miracles and legends have been attributed to him, but we do not know how far they are authentic. One that impresses us is simple and quite plausible. Soon

after Tukārāma threw his Abhaṅgas into the river, the arrogant Rāmeśvara Bhaṭṭa, after bathing in a pool, felt a burning sensation all over the body. He wept in agony; even the loving ministrations of his disciples could not bring him any relief. His conscience was taking its revenge on his body. The pain persisted until his *guru*, Jñāneśvara, appeared in a dream and suggested a remedy that could be bought at the cost of his pride, namely, that he should beg Tukārāma's pardon. The noble-minded Tukārāma unhesitatingly forgave him and accepted the proud pundit as his close disciple.

Tukārāma passed away in A.D. 1650, and it is believed that the Lord Himself came down to receive His great devotee and took him to heaven, and unto His bosom. Even after the death of Tukārāma, he appeared to many of his devotees in dreams and visions to guide and encourage them. The village of Dehu and the adjoining areas are saturated with the memories of this devotee of God. Unfortunately, the rocks and hills and streams have no tongue to speak of their rich experience.

To understand this mystic, we must turn to his Abhaṅgas, which are noted for their simplicity, lack of pretensions, and spontaneity. These alone reveal the profound insight of the mind of the composer, and describe the moments of his spiritual despair as well as the hurdles and pitfalls that he encountered during his spiritual development. In various ways and forms, these Abhaṅgas speak to us about the glory of God, the value of devotion and self-surrender, and the vanity of worldly life. Santa Tukārāma's life and teachings have powerfully influenced the religious life of Maharashtra during the past three centuries and more. Even today, his Abhaṅgas have their fascination for devoted souls, and are on the lips of the literate and the illiterate, the rich and the poor, the young and the old. Tukārāma is even now a living force in the religious life of the people of Maharashtra.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

TO OUR READERS

The article 'The Meaning of the Grace of God' by Swami Sarvagatananda, of the Vedanta Society of Providence (R.I.), U.S.A., is based on a lecture he gave at the Vedanta Society of New York on the occasion of the observance of Thanksgiving Day last year. ...

With the publication of the article on 'Rāmānuja on Māyā and Avidyā' by Professor Surendranath Bhattacharya, M.A., formerly of Bihar National College, Patna, we bring to an end the series of articles on *māyā* and *avidyā* which he had been contributing to *Prabuddha Bharata* during the past three years. The present article is the eighth and last in the series. ...

In his article on 'Sri Ramakrishna and the Spirit of Hinduism', Swami Nageshananda, of the Ramakrishna Order, shows how the Paramahansa's life and teachings are 'an authentic commentary on the spiritual ideals of Hinduism'. ...

The second and concluding part of Sri P. Sama Rao's article on 'The Spiritual Significance of Indian Art' is presented in this issue. The first part of the article was published in the November 1961 issue. ...

Kumari Nonika A. Handoo, B.A. (Hons.), of Bombay, offers in her article a brief study of the life of 'Santa Tukārāma', the great mystic of Maharashtra, focussing her attention only on the main events of the saint's life.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

PATTERNS IN THE SKY. BY JULIUS D. W. STAAL. *Published by Hodder and Stoughton Limited, London EC.4. 1961. Pages 208. Price 15 shillings.*

Few, if ever, can remain unmoved by the beauty of a starlit sky on a clear night. But to many who are uninitiated in the mysteries of the star lore, the sky means no more than a jumbling together of a number of stars. With the result, the joy and fascination they feel on looking at a star-studded sky is a vague, passing experience. For those who wish to make this experience richer and more permanent, here is a beautiful book written by a scientist, who is at present Assistant Director of the Planetarium of Witwatersrand University, Johannesburg. It is a book which every lover of stars would like and enjoy, and the novitiates in the art of star-gazing would find it very useful in locating their favourite stars.

The book makes an introductory survey of the aesthetic and astronomical aspects, and deals in greater detail with another aspect, viz. the mythology and legends of the stars, with the hope that it may serve as an incentive to readers 'to know a little more about the heavens from a scientific point of view'.

'The mythology of the stars, with its celestial

actors,' as the author says in the Epilogue, 'has stood the test of time.' What are these mythologies and legends? Why has mankind wanted these stories and narratives, mostly imaginary, and developed them? Maybe to amuse itself. But not altogether so. Behind these stories, there is the attempt of the human mind to concretize its realized and unrealized aspirations in life, its ideals and struggles to reach them, its successes and failures, and to preserve and pass them on to posterity. A further step in the preservation of these ideals was taken when the ancients, endowed with tremendous imagination and living close to nature, associated these stories and narratives with various groups of stars and their diurnal and yearly motions. Sometimes, certain stars or groups of them were named after certain objects to commemorate certain facts of history.

The author makes available to us in this book some of the stories, culled from Greek mythology and from other sources wherever possible, and associated with the main groupings of stars. The stars described are classified under four groups: the stars of autumn, the stars of winter, the stars of spring, and the stars of summer. After narrating the stories

connected with each group of stars, visible from the British Isles (and with more or less accuracy, from other places in the northern hemisphere), the author gives us interesting information about them as known to the present-day science. 'Many star stories are formed by groups of constellations, which make an inseparable entity, such as the "Orion, Taurus, Pleiades, Canis Major and Minor, Auriga, Gemini, group", or the "Cassiopeia, Cepheus, Andromeda, Perseus, Pegasus, Cetus, group". In these cases, the group as a whole is first of all described, and after that, where necessary, each individual constellation is enlarged upon.'

To help the reader further, most of the sections are followed by astronomical addenda, giving particulars of the astronomical curiosities that can be seen by the naked eye, or with a pair of binoculars, or a small telescope. A special feature of the book is the star charts. The stars in white are set against a deep black background, picturing to us vividly the stars and the various objects associated with them.

With the possession of the book, 'if we have patience and do persevere, the most beautiful sideline of astronomy can become the most rewarding hobby in our life'.

S. K.

THE PAGEANT OF LIFE. BY B. G. KHER. EDITED BY S. B. KHER AND G. K. RAO. *Published by Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad. Pages 305. Price Rs. 4.*

A great man's life is truly a pageant in more senses than one. The late Sri B. G. Kher, formerly Chief Minister of Bombay State, who passed away in 1957, was loved and respected by his associates and colleagues, not only for his sacrifices during his long association with the Indian National Congress in the independence struggle, but also for his qualities of head and heart. As a scholar, Sri Kher was at home in the great literatures of English, Sanskrit, and Marathi. Besides, he had an intimate knowledge of Hindi, Gujarati, and Kannada.

In the book under review, various speeches of Sri Kher have been collected together and edited by his son Sri S. B. Kher and his erstwhile private secretary Sri G. K. Rao.

These speeches cover many subjects—lives of great men, education, aesthetics, social work, reform, etc. It may be remembered that Sri Kher had paid particular attention to educational work. In every one of these speeches, we find the stamp of a keen intellect and a sober mind. We feel that a great number of people should read this book and derive benefit from the thoughts of this scholar-statesman.

S. S.

KUNḌALINĪ YOGA. BY M. P. PANDIT. *Published by Ganesh & Co. (Madras) Private Ltd., Madras-17. Pages 80. Price Rs. 4.*

This is a study of Sir John Woodroffe's masterpiece *The Serpent Power*, which is built round two important Tāntric works in Sanskrit—the *Ṣaṭ-cakra-nirūpaṇa* of Śrī Pūrṇānanda Svāmin and *Pādukā-ṣaṅcaka* of unknown authorship. The book is known for Sir John Woodroffe's scholarly introduction and notes, and valuable for his clear insight into the Tantra Śāstras. The work under review draws a clear outline of the mystical aspects of the *kuṇḍalinī* in six chapters entitled: Consciousness, Consciousness in Embodiment, Mantras, Cakras, Yoga, and Kuṇḍalinī Yoga. The appendix contains three important reviews of *The Serpent Power*. The present publication will be greatly useful as a suitable introduction to the study of the Tantra Śāstras dealing with the *kuṇḍalinī*.

In the chapter on the *cakras*, the author has done well to draw the attention of the readers to the fact that the *cakras* and *nāḍīs* are not to be understood as something physical; they are centres of consciousness. It needs no emphasis that the aspirant should not rush headlong into Tāntric and Yogic practices without the guidance of an adept.

S. S.

SANSKRIT—MALAYALAM

PRABODHASUDHĀKARAM (OF ŚRĪ ŚAṅKARĀCĀRYA). WITH A MALAYALAM TRANSLATION BY A. SANKARA SARMA. *Published by Sri Ramakrishna Advaita Ashrama, Kalady, Kerala State. 1960. Pages 94+ix. Price Re. 1.*

This book of 257 verses is one of the famous works of the Ācārya. The edition under review contains the text in Malayalam characters and a lucid, accurate translation. Divided into nineteen *prakaraṇas*, the work aims at leading the disciple or the reader, step by step, to the final beatitude. To create dispassion for worldly things, the great Ācārya starts with disparaging the body and other sense objects, on which man has foolishly superimposed the idea of the Self. Superimposition is caused by ignorance. The cessation of ignorance by the knowledge of the oneness of the individual soul and universal Soul is the goal of Vedānta. The Ācārya discloses, in the guise of prayer, his conception of the ultimate Reality in the form of Kṛṣṇa. His Kṛṣṇa is the essence of eternal beatitude, of the form of knowledge and effulgence, the supreme Being, desiring to describe whom even the Vedas prefer to be silent. The rest of the book deals with the ways and means for the realization of that Lord.

SWAMI GABHIRANANDA

NEWS AND REPORTS

THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION ASHRAMA CHANDIGARH

REPORT FROM JANUARY 1957 TO MARCH 1961

After the partition of India, the Ramakrishna Mission centre at Lahore had to be closed down, owing to the changed political conditions which did not permit the smooth running of the centre. With a view to restarting the activities of the Mission in Punjab, a centre was opened anew at Chandigarh, the capital of Punjab, on a plot of about three acres of land donated by the State government. Collections raised in Bombay during 1956 as well as generous help received from the government and the local public made it possible to construct the necessary buildings for the Ashrama, a homoeopathic dispensary, and a library, during the years 1957 to 1959. In 1960, a students' home was also started. In all these departments, the work has been steadily increasing.

During the period from January 1960 to March 1961, weekly *satsangs* were held on Sunday evenings, when *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* was expounded in Hindi.

The library had 807 books, and the number of books issued was 1,240. The charitable dispensary treated 19,231 cases, of which 7,180 were new cases. The students' home had 18 students on its roll at the end of March 1961. All were college students, and two of them were full-free boarders.

Immediate Needs:

1. Students' home: To construct the first floor and the guest-rooms and servants' rooms .. Rs. 90,000
2. For completing the shrine and service room built up at present to plinth level .. Rs. 8,000
3. To complete the partly built compound wall Rs. 15,000
4. Donations for the general maintenance of the library, the charitable dispensary, and the shrine.

THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION, SHILLONG

REPORT FROM JANUARY 1960 TO MARCH 1961

The Shillong centre, started in 1929, conducted the following activities from January 1960 to March 1961:

1. *Medical:*

Charitable dispensary: Homoeopathic section: Patients treated: 18,820; new cases 11,333. Allopathic section: Patients treated: 47,528; new cases 28,636. Cases treated in special departments: Laboratory: 1,138; X'ray: 280; Eye: 545; E.N.T.: 925; Minor surgical cases: 241; Vaccination: 7,873.

A rural mobile dispensary started its work during the year at Nartiang, a village about 40 miles from Shillong; and later, another centre was opened at Laitkro, about 16 miles from Shillong. This section treated 3,429 cases during the period, and is gaining popularity.

2. *Educational and Cultural:*

(i) The Vivekananda Library and Reading Room contained 4,914 books, and received 27 periodicals and 12 newspapers. 9,878 books were issued. New books added: 236. Average attendance: 43.

(ii) Students' Home: Strength: 27 (four full-free and four partly paying); number of religious classes held for students: 120.

(iii) L. P. School: The school, situated in the nearby Harijan colony, had 33 students on its roll.

(iv) Night School at Nartiang: Number of students: 21.

(v) Sarada Samsad: This is a cultural unit for children, providing scope for art, music, and extra-curricular activities. More than hundred classes and discourses were held. Average attendance: 30.

3. *General:*

(i) Preaching: Classes held at the Ashrama: 78; average attendance: 101. Classes held in other localities: 16; average attendance: 58. Besides these, six public meetings, including documentary film shows, were arranged at the Ashrama with an average attendance of 367 persons.

(ii) Celebrations: The birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother, and Swami Vivekananda, as well as festivals like Durgā Pūjā, Kālī Pūjā, etc. were observed with due solemnity.

(iii) Publications: During the period under review, two books in Bengali, viz. (1) *Sat-prasaṅga*, Part II, by Swami Vishuddhananda, and (2) *Śrī Śrī Caitanya Deva* by Swami Saradeshanda, were published.

THE HOLY MOTHER'S BIRTHDAY

The 109th birthday of Sri Sarada Devi, the Holy Mother, falls on Friday, the 29th December 1961.