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Prabuddha Bharata

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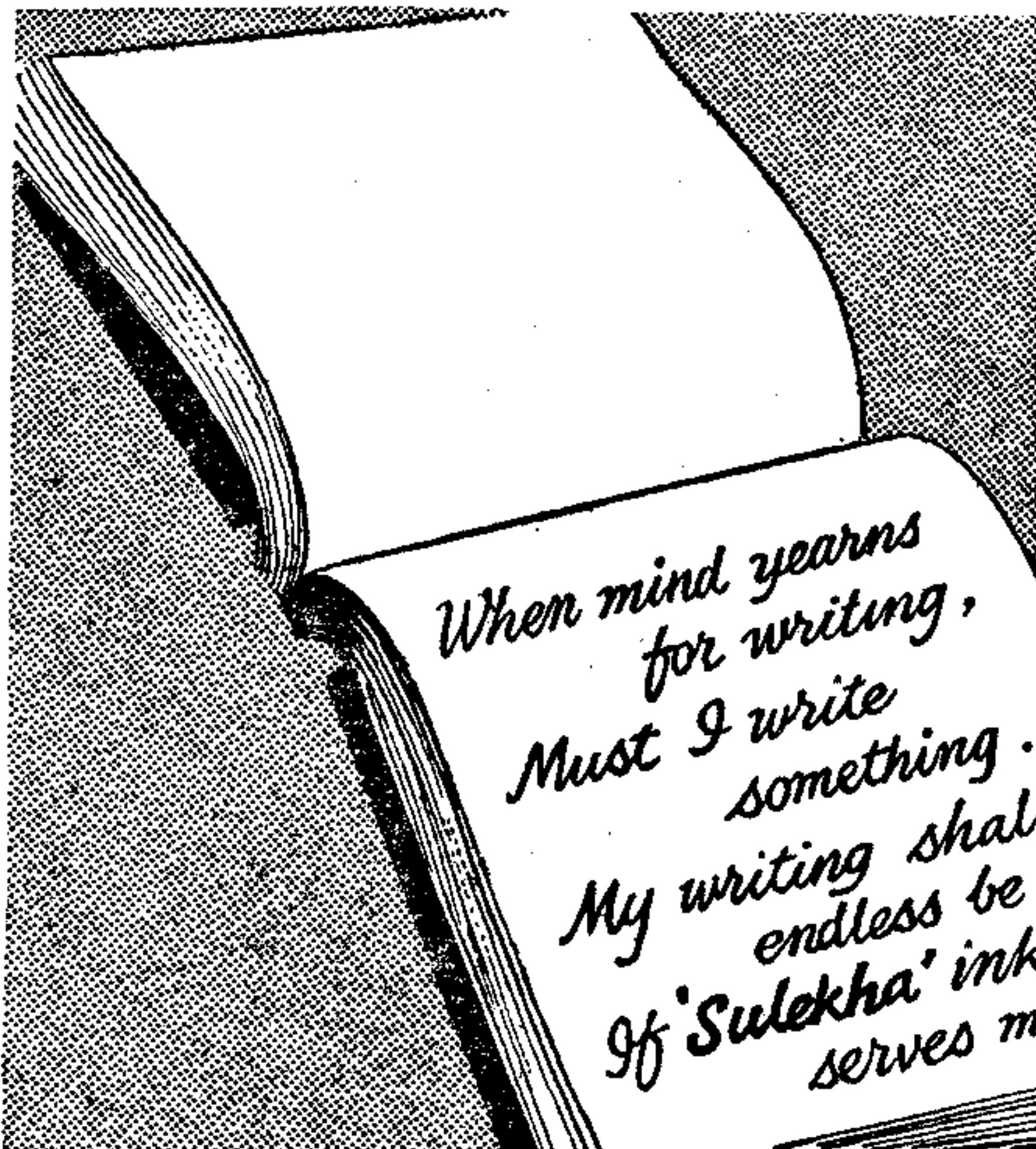
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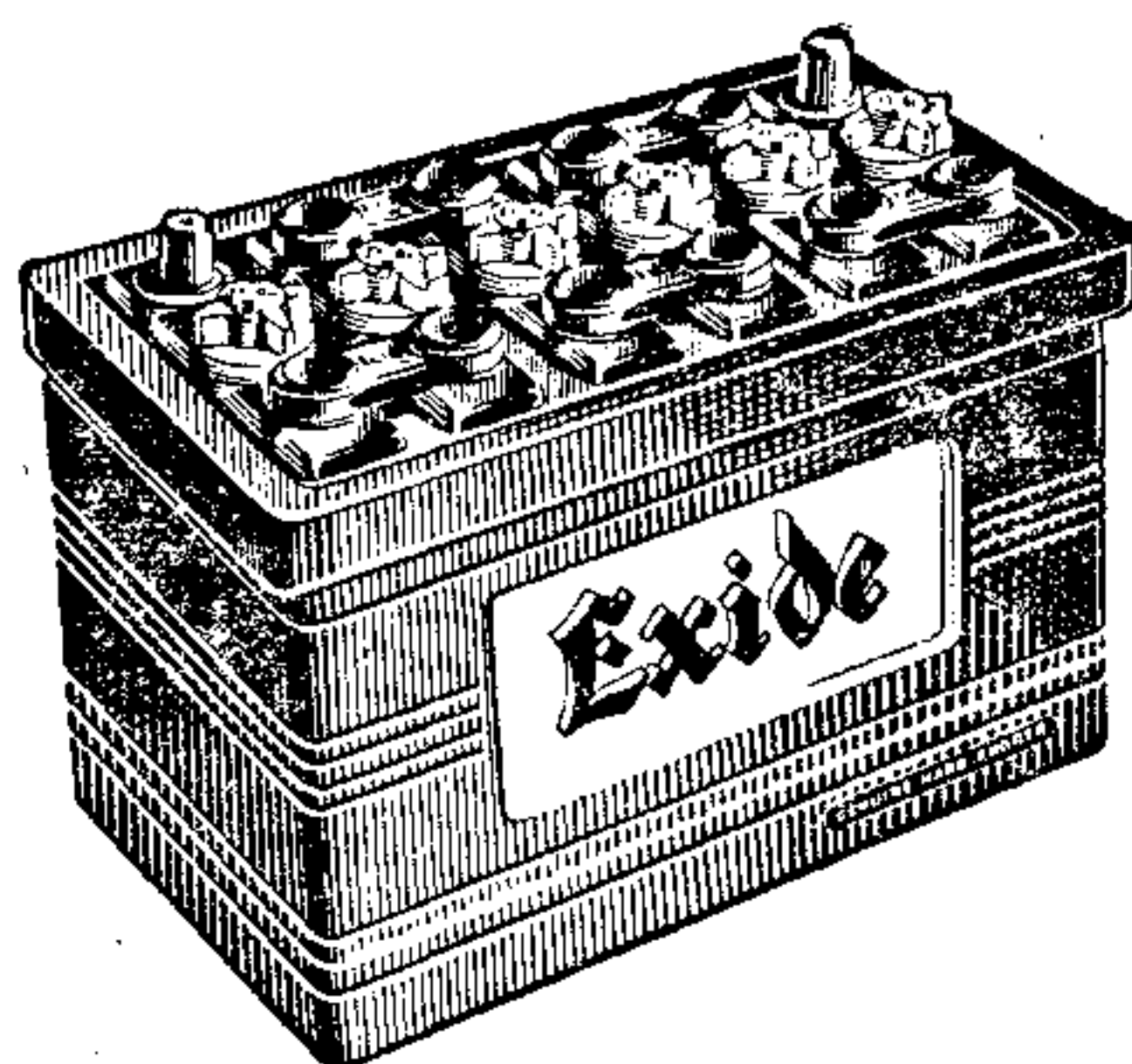
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PRABUDDHA BHARATA

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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, May 1923

A devotee from Sind was initiated today by Mahapurushji. The devotee had received a *mantra* in his dream while at home; but as he could not understand what it all meant, he was rather worried. So he wrote to Mahapurushji explaining his predicament, and begged for an interview. When the permission was granted, he hurried from that distant place to Belur Math to be at the feet of Mahapurushji.

It was about 10 o'clock in the morning. Mahapurushji washed himself with the Gaṅgā water, put on a piece of new cloth, and entered the shrine, where he initiated the devotee after worshipping Sri Ramakrishna duly. After this, as he returned to his own room over the connecting terrace, one could notice a divine aura on his face. Instead of sitting on the chair in his room as usual, he moved about with a tottering gait under divine emotion, clapping his hands as he sang: 'When one is blessed by a true *guru*, one is taught how to discriminate between right and wrong, and what true knowledge is; for then alone does coal get rid of its blackness when fire enters it.' It is impossible

to express that divine absorption of his in human words. His eyes were only half open; his mind seemed to have wandered to some super-sensuous plane; and he moved about in that room singing those two lines alone. His face was flushed, and he seemed to open his eyes with great effort just to have a glimpse of Sri Ramakrishna in the picture which was on the western wall. He had no consciousness of the world around. His naturally sweet voice sounded still sweeter, being mellowed by his inner feeling—it fell in cadences of nectar. Thus it went on for a long while, till at last he sat down in his chair almost unwittingly and remained there with his eyes closed. Only now and then, these words issued forth indistinctly from the bottom of his heart: 'Victory to the Lord! Refuge of the afflicted! Gracious Lord!'

The initiated disciple had been meditating so long on the veranda of the shrine, according to Mahapurushji's instruction. He now came to this room, prostrated himself at Mahapurushji's feet, and then, taking his seat on the floor, said with folded hands and tearful eyes:

'Your grace has brought peace to my mind today. I had no peace of mind from the day that I got the *mantra* in the dream. I could never make my mind calm, I was almost losing my balance. After receiving that very same *mantra* from you today, I am convinced that whatever I saw in my dream is true, and the person who blessed me in the dream is none other than yourself.'

Mahapurushji: 'It is the Lord Himself who appeared in the dream, just because He was merciful to you. It is the Lord Himself who blessed you today in another form. He is merciful; He blesses without any discrimination. He has incarnated Himself in this age for helping all creatures. I am a mere slave of His. He is the only dispenser of mercy. The Lord alone can bless others—this is all that I know. The scriptures also say that, when a true teacher initiates a disciple, the Lord reveals Himself in the heart of that teacher, and from there He inspires the disciple. The Lord Himself is the real teacher; man can never be a teacher. It is owing to the merit you had earned in your past lives that you are able today to take refuge at the feet of the Lord, who saves all lost souls. Today, I dedicate you to His feet; I make you His own.'

The disciple: 'Maharaj, I cannot see the Lord; I only know that you have blessed me.'

Mahapurushji: 'That is how you feel about it. But I know that it is the Master (Sri Ramakrishna) who has shown his grace to you today. From today, you are his. From now on, you cling to him all the more firmly. Try to see him within and outside yourself. Always believe that he is your nearest and dearest one. This world, after all, is transient. Father, mother, wife, son, daughter, relatives—all these are mere temporary relations, and last for a few days only. But the relationship that we have with the Master lasts for ever; it is not destroyed with the death of the body. The invaluable seed that is sown in your heart today will sprout and grow day by day when watered by love and devotion, and it will gradually develop into a huge tree of ambrosia, making

your whole life a blessing and bringing you all the fourfold ends of human life (spirituality, virtuousness, prosperity, and enjoyment). All your desires will be fulfilled.'

The disciple: 'I am an erring human being, lost in the many bondages of the world. Kindly bless me that I may not forget your gracious feet, under worldly delusion. Please tell me how I should live in the world, and give me some guidance so that I may not sink in worldliness for good. You must save this humble disciple by all means.' With these words, he caught hold of Mahapurushji's feet, while tears were dropping from his eyes.

Mahapurushji was visibly moved by his earnest entreaty. With a voice full of love and emotion, he said: 'I have already told you, my son, that I have offered you at the feet of the Master, who has accepted you and taken up your responsibility. It is precisely because he would accept you that he inspired you to come here. Today, you are born to a new life. If the Master is true, then what we say is also true. Take refuge in him heart and soul; throw all your responsibilities on him; and go on calling on him with earnest humility. That is all that is needed. You have nothing more to do. He will take care of you under all circumstances. As for your desire to know how you should live in the world, that you can learn from the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna himself. You must perform all your duties, but you must keep your mind fixed on the Lord. It is just like a maid-servant in a rich man's house, who does all her works, but whose mind is in her own house outside the town. Similarly, one should live in the world without any attachment. You must serve all the members of your family—wife, children, and other relatives—but you must know, in your innermost being, that God alone is your nearest and dearest. Apart from Him, there is none whom you can really call your own. That does not mean, however, that you must neglect your family; you must serve them to the best of your capacity, considering them to be the children of God, or to be so many parts of God Himself, entrusted to your care. You

must talk with them about God and try to instil in their minds a true love for God. You may be in the world, but your mind must not be tied to it. The Master used to say: "It is very necessary to have discrimination—to consider that the world is evanescent and that God alone is real and eternal. What can money give you? It can give you food, clothing, and a habitation. That is all; it cannot lead you to God. So money can never be the goal of life. Considering things like this is called discrimination." Do not cherish in your mind too much of worldly ambition. You have already provided for the bare necessities of life. Be content with them. The mind has a natural proclivity towards the low and the vulgar—towards lust and lucre and towards name and fame. Your task is to gather together that scattered mind and fix it on the lotus-feet of the Lord. The highest ambition in life should be the realization of God. Keep that ambition ever awake in the mind, and try heart and soul to reach that goal.' As he was speaking thus, the bell rang for all to partake of the *prasāda*, and Mahapurushji asked the disciple to go and have it.

A little later, an attendant brought some *prasāda* for Mahapurushji. He sat for his meal. From the moment he had come from the shrine that day, he seemed to be in a state of *afflatus*. His mind was indrawn; his eyes were half closed; and he hardly paid any attention to what he was eating. He just put a few morsels into the mouth as a matter of habit. Thinking that some conversation might divert his mind, the attendant broke silence with the words: 'Maharaj, you had to spend quite a long time in the shrine today for the initiation.' Mahapurushji started, as though from a sleep, and said: 'Yes, the man is very devoted; the Master has bestowed his favour on him. How else could he have so much devotion? One can well understand the potentiality of a disciple at the time of initiation. Those who are of a high spiritual calibre become spiritually overpowered as soon as they receive the *mantra*, and there appear such signs as shedding of tears, shaking of the

body, standing of the hair on end, and so on. One's power of *kundalinī* is roused, and one gets merged in deep meditation. I noticed this disciple to be of that kind. No sooner did he hear the *mantra*, than his body began shaking, his hair stood on end, and gradually he lost himself in meditation. What tears of love he shed! The tear drops rolled down from the corners of his eyes; and that delighted me very much. It makes one happy to initiate a real devotee, and the imparting of the *mantra* becomes a real success. Anyone whose time for receiving the *mantra* is ripe has the lotus of his heart opened, as it were, for accepting it; and as soon as he gets it, his heart holds it in with the greatest care. All this while, I was thinking of the grace of the Master and nothing else. Aha! In how many ways, and how many people, he is blessing! Nobody can keep count of the innumerable persons receiving his grace here and in other countries. Glory unto the Lord!

The attendant: 'But all people cannot have that kind of elation at the time of initiation. Will not those also who have not this kind of fervour profit by your blessing, Maharaj, and progress in the path of spiritual attainment?'

Mahapurushji: 'Yes, why should they not? They, too, will progress, though the advance may be slow. A realized soul has the power to mould the disciple's mind; and in a few days, he can turn his mind towards spirituality. The power of a *mantra* that has brought success to anyone is irresistible when imparted to another, and particularly is it so when it comes through a *guru* who is himself a realized soul. The Master used to say that, when the *guru* is perfect, the disciple's egoism vanishes after only three calls.¹ But if the *guru* is not perfect, the disciple's bondage is not removed, and he does not attain liberation.'

¹ The reference is to Sri Ramakrishna's parable of the snake and the frog. If the frog is caught by an ordinary snake, it goes on crying for long; neither can the frog escape, nor can the snake swallow it soon. But when caught by a poisonous snake, the frog has hardly time to cry even three times.

THE SOUL AND GOD

BY SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

Whether it was fear or mere inquisitiveness which first led man to think of powers superior to himself, we need not discuss. . . . These raised in the mind peculiar worship tendencies, and so on. There never have been [times in the history of mankind] without [some ideal] of worship. Why? What makes us all struggle for something beyond what we see—whether it be a beautiful morning or a fear of dead spirits? . . . We need not go back into pre-historic times, for it is a fact present today as it was two thousand years ago. We do not find satisfaction here. Whatever our station in life—[even if we are] powerful and wealthy—we cannot find satisfaction.

Desire is infinite. Its fulfilment is very limited. There is no end to our desires, but when we go to fulfil them the difficulty comes. It has been so with the most primitive minds, when their desires were [few]. Even [these] could not be accomplished. Now, with our arts and sciences improved and multiplied, our desires cannot be fulfilled [either]. On the other hand, we are struggling to perfect means for the fulfilment of desires, and the desires are increasing. . . .

The most primitive man naturally wanted help from outside for things which he could not accomplish. . . . He desired something, and it could not be obtained. He wanted help by other powers. The most ignorant and primitive man and the most cultivated man today, each appealing to God and asking for the fulfilment of some desire, are exactly the same. What difference? [Some people] find a great deal of difference. We are always finding much difference in things when there is no difference at all. Both [the primitive man and the cultivated man] plead to the same [power]. You may call it God or Allah or Jehovah. Human beings want something and cannot get it by their own powers, and are after someone who will help

them. This is primitive, and it is still present with us. . . . We are all born savages, and gradually civilize ourselves. . . . All of us here, if we search, will find the same fact. Even now this fear does not leave us. We may talk big, become philosophers and all that, but when the blow comes, we find that we must beg for help. We believe in all the superstitions that ever existed. [But] there is no superstition in the world [that does not have some basis of truth]. If I cover my face and only the tip of my [nose] is showing, still it is a bit of my face. So [with] the superstitions—the little bits are true.

You see, the lowest sort of manifestation of religion came with the burial of the departed. . . . First, they wrapped them up and put them in mounds, and the spirits of the departed came and lived in the [mounds, at night]. . . . Then they began to bury them. . . . At the gate stands a terrible goddess with a thousand teeth. . . . Then [came] the burning of the body, and the flames bore the spirit up. . . . The Egyptians brought food and water for the departed.

The next great idea was that of the tribal gods. This tribe had one god and that tribe another. The Jews had their God Jehovah, who was their own tribal god and fought against all the other gods and tribes. That god would do anything to please his own people. If he killed a whole tribe not protected by him, that was all right, quite good. A little love was given, but that love was confined to a small section.

Gradually, higher ideals came. The chief of the conquering tribe was chief of chiefs, god of gods. . . . So with the Persians when they conquered Egypt. The Persian emperor was the lord of [lords], and before the emperor, nobody could stand. Death was the penalty for anyone who looked at the Persian emperor.

Then came the ideal of God Almighty and

all-powerful—the omnipotent, omniscient Ruler of the universe. He lives in heaven, and man pays special tribute to his Most Beloved, who creates everything for man. The whole world is for man. The sun and moon and stars are [for him]. All who have those ideas are primitive men, not civilized and not cultivated at all. All the superior religions had their growth between the Ganges and the Euphrates. . . . Outside of India, we will find no further development [of religion beyond this idea of God in heaven]. That was the highest knowledge ever obtained outside of India. There is the local heaven where he is and [where] the faithful shall go when they die. . . . As far as I have seen, we should call it a very primitive idea. . . . Mumbo Jumbo in Africa [and] God in heaven—the same. He moves the world, and, of course, his will is being done everywhere. . . .

The old Hebrew people did not care for any heaven. That is one of the reasons they [opposed] Jesus of Nazareth—because he taught life after death. Paradise in Sanskrit means land beyond this life. So the paradise was to make up for all this evil. The primitive man does not care [about] evil. . . . He never questions why there should be any. . . .

. . . The word devil is a Persian word. . . . The Persians and Hindus [share the Aryan ancestry] upon religious grounds, and . . . they spoke the same language, only the words one sect uses for good the other uses for bad. The word '*deva*' is an old Sanskrit word for God, the same word in the Aryan languages. Here the word means the devil. . . .

Later on, when man developed [his inner life], he began to question, and to say that God is good. The Persians said that there were two gods—one was bad and one was good. [Their idea was that] everything in this life was good: beautiful country, where there was spring almost the whole year round and nobody died; there was no disease, everything was fine. Then came this wicked one, and he touched the land, and then came death and disease and mosquitos and tigers and lions. Then the Aryans left their fatherland and migrated southward. The

old Aryans must have lived way to the north. The Jews learned it [the idea of the devil] from the Persians. The Persians also taught that there will come a day when this wicked god will be killed, and it is our duty to stay with the good god and add our force to him in this eternal struggle between him and the wicked one. . . . The whole world will be burnt out, and everyone will get a new body.

The Persian idea was that even the wicked will be purified and not be bad any more. The nature of the Aryan was love and poetry. They cannot think of their being burnt [for eternity]. They will all receive new bodies. Then no more death. So that is the best about [religious] ideas outside of India. . . .

Along with that is the ethical strain. All that man has to do is to take care of three things: good thought, good word, good deed. That is all. It is a practical, a wise religion. Already there has come a little poetry in it. But there is higher poetry and higher thought.

In India, we see this Satan in the most ancient part of the Vedas. He just [appears] and immediately disappears. . . . In the Vedas, the bad god got a blow and disappeared. He is gone, and the Persians took him. We are trying to make him leave the world [al]together. Taking the Persian idea, we are going to make a decent gentleman of him; give him a new body. There was the end of the Satan idea in India.

But the idea of God went on; but mind you, here comes another fact. The idea of God grew side by side with the idea of [materialism], until you have traced it up to the emperor of Persia. But on the other hand comes in metaphysics, philosophy. There is another line of thought, the idea of [the non-dual Ātman, man's] own soul. That also grows. So, outside of India, ideas about God had to remain in that concrete form, until India came to help them out a bit. . . . The other nations stopped with that old concrete idea. In this country [America], there are millions who believe that God is a body. . . . Whole sects say it. [They believe that] he rules the world, but there is a place where he has

a body. He sits upon a throne. They light candles and sing songs, just as they do in our temples.

But in India, they are sensible enough never to make [their God a physical being]. You never see in India a temple of Brahman. Why? Because the idea of the soul always existed. The Hebrew race never questioned about the soul. There is no soul idea in the Old Testament at all. The first is in the New Testament. The Persians, they became so practical—wonderfully practical people—a fighting, conquering race. They were the English people of the old time, always fighting and destroying their neighbours—too much engaged in that sort of thing to think about the soul. . . .

The oldest idea of [the] soul [was that of] a fine body inside this gross one. The gross one disappears, and the fine one appears. In Egypt, that fine one also dies, and as soon as the gross body disintegrates, the fine one also disintegrates. That is why they built those pyramids [and embalmed the dead bodies of their ancestors, thus hoping to secure immortality for the departed]. . . .

The Indian people have no regard for the dead body at all. [Their attitude is:] 'Let us take it and burn it.' The son has to set fire to his father's body. . . .

There are two sorts of races, the divine and the demonic. The divine think that they are soul and spirit. The demonic think that they are bodies. The old Indian philosophers tried to insist that the body is nothing. 'As a man emits his old garment and takes a new one, even so the old body is [shed] and he takes a new one.' In my case, all my surrounding and education were trying to [make me] the other way. I was always associated with Mohammedans and Christians, who take more care of the body. . . .

It is only one step from [the body] to the spirit. . . . [In India] they became insistent on this ideal of the soul. It became [synonymous with] the idea of God. . . . If the idea of the soul begins to expand, [man must arrive at the conclusion that it is beyond name and form].

. . . The Indian idea is that the soul is formless. Whatever is form must break sometime or other. There cannot be any form unless it is the result of force and matter; and all combinations must dissolve. If such is the case, [if] your soul is [made of name and form, it disintegrates], and you die, and you are no more immortal. If it is double, it has form and it belongs to nature and it obeys nature's laws of birth and death. . . . They find that this [soul] is not the mind . . . neither a double. . . .

Thoughts can be guided and controlled. . . . [The *yogis* of India] practised to see how far the thoughts can be guided and controlled. By dint of hard work, thoughts may be silenced altogether. If thoughts were [the real man], as soon as thought ceases, he ought to die. Thought ceases in meditation; even the mind's elements are quite quiet. Blood circulation stops. His breath stops, but he is not dead. If thought were he, the whole thing ought to go, but they find it does not go. That is practical. They came to the conclusion that even mind and thought were not the real man. Then speculation showed that it could not be.

I come, I think and talk. In the midst of all [this activity is] this unity [of the Self]. My thought and action are varied, many [fold] . . . but in and through them runs . . . that one unchangeable One. It cannot be the body. That is changing every minute. It cannot be the mind; new and fresh thoughts [come] all the time. It is neither the body nor the mind. Both body and mind belong to nature, and must obey nature's laws. A free mind never will. . . .

Now therefore, this real man does not belong to nature. It is the person whose mind and body belong to nature. So much of nature we are using. Just as you come to use the pen and ink and chair, so he uses so much of nature in fine and in gross form; gross form, the body, and fine form, the mind. If it is simple, it must be formless. In nature alone are forms. That which is not of nature cannot have any forms, fine or gross. It must be formless. It must be omnipresent. Understand this. [Take] this glass on the table. The glass is form and

the table is form. So much of the glass-ness goes off, so much of table-ness [when they break]. . . .

The soul . . . is nameless, because it is formless. It will neither go to heaven nor [to hell] any more than it will enter this glass. It takes the form of the vessel it fills. If it is not in space, either of two things is possible. Either the [soul permeates] space or space is in [it]. You are in space, and must have a form. Space limits us, binds us, and makes a form of us. If you are not in space, space is in you. All the heavens and the world are in the person.

So it must be with God. God is omnipresent. 'Without hands [he grasps] everything; without feet he can move. . . .' He [is] the formless, the deathless, the eternal. The idea of God came. . . . He is the Lord of souls, just as my soul is the [lord] of my body. If my soul left the body, the body would not be for a moment. If he left my soul, the soul would not exist. He is the creator of the universe; of everything that dies, he is the destroyer. His shadow is death; his shadow is life.

[The ancient Indian philosophers] thought: . . . This filthy world is not fit for man's attention. There is nothing in the universe that is [permanent—neither good nor evil]. . . .

I told you . . . Satan . . . did not have much chance [in India]. Why? Because they were very bold in religion. They were not babies. Have you seen that characteristic of children? They are always trying to throw the blame on someone else. Baby minds [are] trying, when they make a mistake, to throw the blame upon someone [else]. On the one hand, we say: 'Give me this; give me that.' On the other hand, we say: 'I did not do this; the devil tempted me. The devil did it.' That is the history of mankind, weak mankind. . . .

Why is evil? Why is [the world] the filthy, dirty hole? We have made it. Nobody is to blame. We put our hand in the fire. The Lord bless us, [man gets] just what he deserves. Only He is merciful. If we pray to Him, He helps us. He gives Himself to us.

That is their idea. They are [of a] poetic

nature. They go crazy over poetry. Their philosophy is poetry. This philosophy is a poem. . . . All [high thought] in the Sanskrit is written in poetry. Metaphysics, astronomy—all in poetry.

We are responsible, and how do we come to mischief? [You may say:] 'I was born poor and miserable. I remember the hard struggle all my life.' Philosophers say that you are to blame. You do not mean to say that all this sprang up without any cause whatever! You are a rational being. Your life is not without cause, and you are the cause. You manufacture your own life all the time. . . . You make and mould your own life. You are responsible for yourself. Do not lay the blame upon anybody, any Satan. You will only get punished a little more. . . .

[A man] is brought up before God, and he says. 'Thirty-one stripes for you', . . . when comes another man. He says, 'Thirty stripes: fifteen for that fellow, and fifteen for the teacher—that awful man who taught him.' That is the awful thing in teaching. I do not know what I am going to get. I go all over the world. If I have to get fifteen for each one I have taught! . . .

We have to come to this idea: This my *māyā* is divine. It is my activity, [my] divinity. '[My *māyā*] is hard to cross, but those that take refuge in Me [go beyond *māyā*].' But you find out that it is very difficult to cross this ocean [of *māyā* by] yourself. You cannot. It is the old question—hen and egg. If you do any work, that work becomes the cause and produces the effect. That effect becomes the cause and produces the effect. And so on. If you push this down, it never stops. Once you set a thing in motion, there is no more stopping. I do some work, good or bad, [and it sets up a chain reaction]. . . . I cannot stop now.

It is impossible for us to get out from this bondage [by ourselves]. It is only possible if there is someone more powerful than this law of causation, and if he takes mercy on us and drags us out.

And we declare that there is such a one—

God. There is such a being, all merciful. . . . If there is a God, then it is possible for me to be saved. How can you be saved by your own will? Do you see the philosophy of the doctrine of salvation by grace? You Western people are wonderfully clever, but when you undertake to explain philosophy, you are so wonderfully complicated. How can you save yourself by work, if by salvation you mean that you will be taken out of all this nature? Salvation means just standing upon God, but if you understand what is meant by salvation, then you are the Self. . . . You are not nature. You are the only thing outside of souls and gods and nature. These are the external existences, and God [is] interpenetrating both nature and soul.

Therefore, just as my soul is [to] my body, we, as it were, are the bodies of God. God-souls-nature—it is one. The One, because, as I say, I mean the body, soul, and mind. But, we have seen, the law of causation pervades every bit of nature, and once you have got caught, you cannot get out. When once you get into the meshes of law, a possible way of escape is not [through work done] by you. You can build hospitals for every fly and flea that ever lived. . . . All this you may do, but it would never lead to salvation. [Hospitals] go up, and they come down again. [Salvation] is only possible if there is some being whom nature never caught, who is the ruler of nature. He rules nature, instead of being ruled by nature. He wills law, instead of being downed by law. . . . He exists, and he is all-merciful. The moment you seek him [he will save you].

Why has he not taken us out? You do not want him. You want everything but him. The moment you want him, that moment you get him. We never want him. We say: 'Lord, give me a fine house.' We want the house, not him. 'Give me health! Save me from this difficulty!' When a man wants nothing but him, [he gets him]. 'The same love which wealthy men have for gold and silver and possessions, Lord, may I have the same love for thee. I want neither earth nor heaven, nor beauty, nor learning. I do not want salvation.

Let me go to hell again and again. But one thing I want: to love thee, and for love's sake—not even for heaven.'

Whatever man desires, he gets. If you always dream of having a body, [you will get another body]. When this body goes away, he wants another, and goes on begetting body after body. Love matter and you become matter. You first become animals. When I see a dog gnawing a bone, I say, 'Lord help us!' Love body until you become dogs and cats! Still degenerate, until you become minerals—all body and nothing else. . . .

There are other people, who would have no compromise. The road to salvation is through truth. That was another watchword. . . .

[Man began to progress spiritually] when he kicked the devil out. He stood up and took the responsibility of the misery of the world upon his own shoulders. But whenever he looked [at the] past and future and [at the] law of causation, he knelt down and said: 'Lord, save me, [thou] who [art] our creator, our father, and dearest friend.' That is poetry, but not very good poetry, I think. Why not? It is the painting of the Infinite [no doubt]. You have it in every language how they paint the Infinite. [But] it is the infinite of the senses, of the muscles. . . .

'[Him] the sun [does not illumine], nor the moon, nor the stars, [nor] the flash of lightning.' That is another painting of the Infinite, by negative language. . . . And the last Infinite is painted in [the] spirituality of the Upaniṣads. Not only is Vedānta the highest philosophy in the world, but it is the greatest poem. . . .

Mark today, this is the . . . difference between the first part of the Vedas and the second. In the first, it is all in [the domain of] sense. But all religions are only [concerned with the] infinite of the external world—nature and nature's God . . . [Not so Vedānta.] This is the first light that the human mind throws back [of] all that. No satisfaction [comes] of the infinite [in] space. ['The] Self-existent [One] has [created] the [senses as turned] . . . to the outer

world. Those, therefore, who [seek] outside will never find that [which is within]. There are the few who, wanting to know the truth, turn their eyes inward, and in their own souls behold the glory [of the Self].'

It is not the infinite of space, but the real Infinite, beyond space, beyond time. . . . Such is the world missed by the Occident. . . . Their minds have been turned to external nature and nature's God. Look within yourself and find the truth that you had [forgotten]. Is it possible for mind to come out of this dream without the help of the gods? Once you start the action, there is no help unless the merciful Father takes us out.

That would not be freedom, [even] at the hands of the merciful God. Slavery is slavery. The chain of gold is quite as bad as the chain of iron. Is there a way out?

You are not bound. No one was ever bound. [The Self] is beyond. It is the all. You are the One; there are no two. God was your own reflection cast upon the screen of *māyā*. The real God [is the Self.] He [whom man] ignorantly worships is that reflection. [They say that] the Father in heaven is God. Why God? [It is because he is] your own reflection that [he] is God. Do you see how you are seeing God all the time? As you unfold yourself, the reflection grows [clearer].

'Two beautiful birds are there sitting upon the same tree. The one [is] calm, silent, majestic; the one below [the individual self] is eating the fruits, sweet and bitter, and becoming happy and sad. [But when the individual self beholds the worshipful Lord as his own true Self, he grieves no more.]'

. . . Do not say 'God'. Do not say 'Thou'. Say 'I'. The language of [dualism] says: 'God, Thou, my Father.' The language of [non-dualism] says: 'Dearer unto me than I am myself. I would have no name for Thee. The nearest I can use is I.' . . .

'God is true. The universe is a dream. Blessed am I that know this moment that I [have been and] shall be free all eternity; . . .

that I know that I am worshipping only myself; that no nature, no delusion, had any hold on me. Vanish nature from me; vanish [these] gods, vanish worship; . . . vanish superstitions, for I know myself. I am the Infinite. All these—Mrs. So-and-So, Mr. So-and-So, responsibility, happiness, misery—have vanished. I am the Infinite. How can there be death for me, or birth? Whom shall I fear? I am the One. Shall I be afraid of myself? Who is to be afraid of [whom]? I am the one Existence. Nothing else exists. I am everything.'

It is only the question of memory [of your true nature], not salvation by work. Do you get salvation? You are [already] free.

Go on saying: 'I am free.' Never mind if the next moment delusion comes and says: 'I am bound.' Dehypnotize the whole thing.

[This truth] is first to be heard. Hear it first. Think on it day and night. Fill the mind [with it] day and night: 'I am It. I am the Lord of the universe. Never was there any delusion.' . . . Meditate upon it with all the strength of the mind till you actually see these walls, houses, everything, melt away—[until] body, everything, vanishes. 'I will stand alone. I am the One.' Struggle on! 'Who cares! We want to be free; [we] do not want any powers. Worlds we renounce; heavens we renounce; hells we renounce. What do I care about all these powers, and this and that! What do I care if the mind is controlled or uncontrolled! Let it run on. What of that! I am not the mind. Let it go on!'

The sun [shines on the just and on the unjust]. Is he touched by the defective [character] of anyone? 'I am He. Whatever [my] mind does, I am not touched. The sun is not touched by shining on filthy places. I am Existence.'

This is the religion of [non-dual] philosophy. [It is] difficult. Struggle on! Down with all superstitions! Neither teachers nor scriptures nor gods [exist]. Down with temples, with priests, with gods, with incarnations, with God himself! I am all the God that ever existed! There, stand up philosophers! No fear! Speak no more

of God and [the] superstition of the world. Truth alone triumphs, and this is true. I am the Infinite.

All religious superstitions are vain imaginations. . . . This society, that I see you before me, and [that] I am talking to you—this is all superstition; all must be given up. Just see what it takes to become a philosopher! This is the [path] of [*jñāna*] *yoga*, the way through knowledge. The other [paths] are easy, slow,

. . . but this is pure strength of mind. No weakling [can follow this path of knowledge. You must be able to say:] ‘I am the soul, the ever free; [I] never was bound. Time is in me, not I in time. God was born in my mind. God the Father, Father of the universe—he is created by me in my own mind.’ . . .

Do you call yourselves philosophers? Show it! Think of this, talk [of] this, and [help] each other in this path, and give up all superstition!



SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S CONCEPTION OF NATIONAL UNITY

I

One thing that is obvious to the thinking minds of India in the present time is that we have laid too much emphasis on certain local traits and needs, and too little on the fundamental facts of our unity, so that the national life itself has been imperilled in more than one sense. We have our regional languages to which we stick passionately. We have our religious creeds which demand our personal protective care if they are to survive. We have our local economic interests which must be guarded against the evil eyes and intrusion of others. It is all an attitude of defence, springing out of a fear of losing what we have. To save ourselves, we get organized into small linguistic states which again split up into smaller units. In these circumstances, it will not be out of place to look into the pages of Swami Vivekananda to see if he can save us from this impasse.

Before that, let us have a hurried glance at the conditions which surrounded him and the method he adopted for saving the soul of India. Western glamour had then dazzled the Indian eye; and Western criticism of Indian life and the aggressive Western intention to transform Indian culture had put the Indians on the defensive. At this juncture, Swami Vivekananda preached before the West the greatness of Indian culture and spirituality which not only opened the eyes of the West,

but also infused faith in the drooping hearts of Indians and inspired them to stick to and revivify their old tradition and aspiration. For Vivekananda believed in a dynamic Hinduism, as Sister Nivedita put it, by which term she meant an active adherence to the essential truths of human life. Vivekananda believed in being faithful to one's own way of life and promoting it without harming others. His approach to the human problems was always positive and never negative. As pointed out by Rabindranath Tagore, ‘If you want to know India, study Vivekananda. In him everything is positive and nothing negative’. What Vivekananda actually did was to present to the West all that is best in the East, and to the East all that is best in the West. As a result, both appreciated him, and both gained from each other's experience. India learned to honour the scientific achievement of the West, and the West learned to adore the spiritual values of India. Besides, both found that true values can survive the clash of cultures, nay, they become more well defined and stronger thereby. Swami Vivekananda was convinced that India had something unique without which the world would be poorer; and the West too had something which India could ill afford to ignore. The best means of exchange would be to meet each other with boldness, confidence, and a spirit of mutual esteem.

In a way, this paved the way for Indian unity. It is an accepted principle in practical politics that a clash with foreign countries works indirectly for national solidarity. Vivekananda did not think in terms of a foreign war; he was never a politician; and aggressiveness is against Indian tradition. But he believed in comparing notes and in the method of give and take. He did not want his beloved motherland to go round the world with a begging bowl in hand. He wanted India to conquer the world with her spirituality, for which the other countries were athirst. That was his foreign policy. He would give and then receive in return. 'This is the theme of Indian life-work,' said he, 'the spiritualization of the human race.' And he added, 'Today the ancient Greece is meeting the ancient Hindu on the soil of India. . . . A broader and more generous conception of life is before us; and although at first we have been deluded a little and wanted to narrow down things, we are finding out today that these generous impulses which are at work, these broader conceptions of life, are the logical interpretation of what is in our ancient books. . . . We have many things to learn from the West'. Today, the Indians stand face to face with the West as a single unit with an individuality of theirs, to learn and teach in return.

II

From the above consideration, we arrive at some very practical principles for achieving national cohesion. The first is that we must be conscious of our national ideal of spirituality for which the world looks to us. Secondly, we must give up the fear of being conquered culturally by others, for nothing really valuable can be so easily wiped away, rather it is bound to make itself actively appreciated. Thirdly, we must be broad in our outlook. There must be a readiness to receive the new light from wherever it may come. And lastly, to profit by the experiment and experience of Vivekananda in the wider arena of the world, and to make the principles enunciated by him applicable to our immediate problems, our first duty must be

to think of India as a whole and to give up all narrow outlook. We are Indians first, and then Bengalis, Tamilians, Punjabis, Gujaratis, and all that. One trait of Vivekananda's character that arrests one's attention at the very first acquaintance is his universal outlook. He loved India as a whole; there was no reserved compartment in his heart for any regional group. When he was critical, he did not spare even his own Bengalis; nay, he castigated them all the more vehemently; for he knew that he was loved by them sincerely and would not be misunderstood. When he was in a mood of appreciation, no difference of religion, language, culture, or racial traits could debar him from completely identifying himself with the values that he might be dealing with for the time being. For instance, if he adored the modest mothers of India, he equally honoured the sprightly, cultured women of the West; and often enough he expressly stated that he wanted a suitable blending of the two ideals. So also he was eager to unite the quietism of the East with the activism of the West. Nearer home, he was full of praise for the cultural nobility of the Moguls, the heroism of the Rajputs, the bravery of the Sikhs, the Sanskrit learning, intellectual acumen, and the freedom of the women of Kerala, and the scholarship of the pundits of old. To him, Buddha, Śaṅkara, Mīrā Bāī, Rāmānuja, Akbar, Guru Govind Singh, the Rani of Jhansi, Tukārām, Dādu, Tulasīdās, and others were the national heroes and heroines. He accepted in the fullest sense the declaration of the *Gītā*, 'Whatever being there is great, prosperous, or powerful, that know thou to be a product of a part of my splendour' (X.42). That attitude was his antidote for parochialism.

India he loved from the bottom of his heart. How passionately he writes: 'I am an Indian—every Indian is my brother. . . . The ignorant Indian, the poor and destitute Indian, the Brahman Indian, the Pariah Indian is my brother. . . . India's society is the cradle of my infancy, the pleasure garden of my youth, the sacred heaven, the Varanasi of my old age. . . .

The soil of India is my highest heaven, the good of India is my good.'

Naturally, therefore, Sister Nivedita summed up his character thus: 'These, then—the Śāstra, the Guru, and the Motherland—are the three notes that mingle themselves to form the music of the works of Vivekananda. . . . These are the three lights burning within that single lamp which India by his hand lighted and set up. . . .'

Such patriotism alone can stir a nation, and such sincerity alone can make a nation builder that Vivekananda really was.

III

It may sound queer if one should assert that we have lost the real India that produced Vivekananda, and have conjured up an imaginary India through a process of intellectual cogitation copied from the West. We of the present generation want an India strong politically and economically. Lest religious ideas should hamper the new outlook, we have declared India to be a secular state. That phrase has been explained very often in a way to disarm the susceptibilities of religious people. But, somehow, people still think that secularism is different from spirituality; and that when a state declares itself loudly to be secular, it cannot be spiritual in the fullest sense. That was not certainly the India that Vivekananda preached. For he declared, 'Here in this blessed land, the foundation, the backbone, the life-centre is religion and religion alone. In India, religious life forms the centre, the keynote of the whole music of national life. . . . For good or for evil, our vitality is concentrated in our religion. You cannot change it. You cannot destroy it and put in its place another. . . . This is the line of life, this is the line of growth, and this is the line of well-being in India—to follow the track of religion. . . . And, therefore, if you succeed in the attempt to throw off your religion and take up either politics or society, or any other thing as your centre, as the vitality of your national life, the result will be that you will become extinct'.

Before Vivekananda's patriotic and spiritual eyes, the motherland was a living spiritual entity, a manifestation of the universal Mother Herself. Life in India was a continuous stream of renunciation and service—an unending worship of the Mother: 'O India! . . . Forget not that thy marriage, thy wealth, thy life are not for self-pleasure—are not for thy individual personal happiness; forget not that thou art born as a sacrifice to the Mother's altar; 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.'

Neither did we heed the prophet's warning nor did we take note of his spiritual vision. As a result, we are in a sorry plight. Renunciation and service, our national ideals, are forgotten; and we now shout for rights and privileges. Our immediate group interests are more important than the wider national interests. Let us compare the India of old with the India of today. During worship, we invoked the sacred rivers of our land—Gaṅgā, Yamunā, Godāvarī, Sarasvatī, Narmadā, Sindhu, Kāverī, and so on. They belonged to us all equally and evoked our best sentiments; but now they are mere streams, useful for agriculture and hydro-electric power. So, we now quarrel over the distribution of their water. They are no longer goddesses to be adored, but material possessions to be shared or fought for. We had our epics—the *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Mahābhārata*, etc.—which inspired us to noble deeds. But the *Rāmāyaṇa* must now be torn into pieces, because it is supposed to paint the people of certain regions in the darkest possible colour. We honoured and adored Mohammed, Guru Nānak, and all the other saints, prophets, and incarnations. But now we break one another's heads in their names; to show the greatness of our own saints, we decry the others; and all these in the name of religion! We moved around India freely and settled down without let or hindrance at any place of pilgrimage we liked. But now we must prove our right to be any-

where before others will tolerate our presence. Śaṅkarācārya moved all over India establishing monasteries everywhere and linking up the whole land into a single unit. Earlier still, Aśoka executed his own method of fusing the different communities; and later, the Mussulmans did their best to unify the land. But have we improved on them in point of emotional acceptance of India as a single entity?

IV

Swami Vivekananda laid the greatest emphasis on spirituality as the basic fact of Indian life. But this does not mean that he neglected the other sides of Indian life or the variety of its expression in different places. He believed that a rejuvenated India must be strong in spirituality, politics, economics, science, social laws and institutions, education, culture, and health. He, therefore, chalked out an all-round programme of which strength was the main plank—strength in all possible fields of human life in a variety of expressions.

For the proper integration of the social units, he laid stress on the reformation of marriage laws, and a liberal interpretation of the rules about food and social intercourse. Education, he thought, was the panacea of all our drawbacks. And he wanted to broaden our outlook through contacts with the Western world, which could teach us their sciences and methods of organized effort. Long before our present-day administrators thought about the problems of agriculture, untouchability, child-marriage, etc., he spoke vehemently and constructively about solving these. And above all, he entreated his countrymen to give more freedom to the women and the masses. 'The uplift of women,' said he, 'the awakening of the masses, must come first, and then only can real good come about for the country, for India.' National freedom, without social justice, was a myth to him.

These are, however, side issues, which we refer just for the sake of showing that Vivekananda was not an atavist, but had a very progressive mind. Our main concern here is about the unity of India itself, though that is dependent

on a better integration of the social units.

In our days, people believe that socialism will cure our parochialism by liberating the masses and diverting our attention to more active co-operation in the fields of industry, commerce, etc. We do not altogether deny such a possibility. But what we would emphasize is that this is not what Vivekananda taught. He did say, 'I am a socialist'. But his socialism was not a purely economic conception divorced from culture. He rather wanted cultural equality: 'In the beginning of the *satya-yuga*, there was one caste. . . . And in the coming *satya-yuga* all other castes will have to go back to the same condition.' He advocated evolution and not revolution; but he was not complacent. For instance, look at the boldness with which he probes into the history of the Mohammedan conquest, throwing to the winds all accepted theories of their conversion by sword and fire: 'The Mohammedan conquest of India came as a salvation to the downtrodden, to the poor.' It was not just a show of brute force that converted the millions. But that is another matter. Be it force or conversion through promise of social justice, it did not solve the real problem; the masses still remained where they were, because they did not have education and a higher standard of life. The Mohammedans were welcome, because they promised to remove the social evils; but they could not place India properly on the path of progress. Nay, they rather made the communal problem more acute and injected a sort of fanaticism for a certain order that barred progress.

Apropos of the last consideration, one would like to know how Vivekananda would solve the communal problem. In a very striking letter, written by him to a Mohammedan gentleman, occur these sentences: 'We want to lead mankind to the place where there is neither the Veda, nor the Bible, or the Koran; yet this has to be done by harmonizing the Veda, the Bible, and the Koran. . . . For our motherland, a junction of the two great systems, Hinduism and Islam—Vedānta brain and Islam body—is the only hope.'

The Swami wanted a *rapprochement* between the two great communities on two fronts—spiritual and social. Students of Vivekananda know that what he termed Vedānta was but the essential principles behind all religions. To distinguish between the outer expressions that generally go by the name of religion and the essentials of all of them which are the same everywhere, he used the terms religion and spirituality, respectively. We are all one in spirituality; but in religion, we differ. So when the Swami expected the Mohammedans to be Vedāntic in their thought, he did not ask them to adopt Hinduism as such; and when he exhorted his co-religionists to adopt the Mohammedan social equality etc., he did not expect them to become Mohammedans as such.

V

We come here against one of the greatest stumbling blocks in our national life. According to our understanding of the problem, what created Pakistan and what still keeps the two communities apart is not spirituality, but rather the social practices. True it is that Swami Vivekananda castigated his co-religionists alone, and as was his wont, he drew our attention to the good points alone in other communities. He arrived at the conclusion that the Hindu society progressed spiritually, because it gave full freedom to thought in that field; but in social matters restriction was the rule, so that growth became stunted there, and as a result we suffered even in our spiritual progress. 'Liberty is the first condition of growth. Your ancestors gave every liberty to the soul, and religion grew. They put the body under every bondage and society did not grow.' Through his exhortation and the efforts of others, Hindu society has now become broader in outlook and it is still developing in that line. Vivekananda would have rested satisfied with that much alone, leaving

other communities to grow in their own way, because he was a worshipper of freedom.

That does not, however, mean that he did not want others also to be more liberal. If he wanted his countrymen not to be denationalized, he did not certainly like them to change all their national traits, just because they happened to adopt another faith. Let us look at the Christians. There are thinking people among them who do not change their Indian dress, names, food, and customs even after conversion. The Mohammedans think and act otherwise. Now, if unity is to depend on the sameness of outer behaviour, at least to a great extent, here is a real difficulty for which the Hindus cannot be wholly responsible. The Hindus adore Mohammed in their own way, and Mohammedan saints are honoured just like any Hindu saint. But how can the Hindus change their social life totally to suit the tastes of others, who look for inspiration, not to India but to other lands? At the same time, the Hindus cannot ask others to change their outlook. Here is the crux of the problem. The solution is not easy, though it is obvious. Swami Vivekananda knew that; and so he confined his remarks to his own community, while believing that human goodness would respond to friendly approaches from others. That is the Hindu method. Let us be broad, let us be liberal, without losing our essential spirituality, and let us wait for the friendly reaction of others. At the same time, realistic politicians must not count too much on the mere goodness of opposing communities, and they must not lay the whole blame on either of the two, which may savour of what they call 'appeasement'. As for the Hindus, it is good to be told that they should be better Hindus; but it makes no sense when they are told that they must act in some way, just to please others, who do not love India with the same intensity as the Hindus do.

INDIA : THE SYMBOL OF SPIRITUAL UNFOLDMENT

BY SWAMI CHIDBHAVANANDA

Nature in her entirety is nothing other than Spirit revealing Itself as matter. For the purpose of self-expression, this Nature has put on the cloak of time, space, and causation. The cloak of this trinity and its wearer are really one and the same. The costume is identical with the wearer. In other words, it is not possible to distinguish Nature from time, space, and causation. An insurmountable barrier to transcendental knowledge is presented by this trinity assumed by Nature. This trinity is a mystery of hers. This great barrier has first to be propitiated by the enquirer into the truth of Nature. When this is religiously done, the ever-deluding phenomenal leads the enquirer, stage by stage, on to the Noumenal. For this reason, the sages of yore have designated Nature as Veda, the Perennial Book of Life and Learning. Sacred books revealed and reverentially preserved are also called Vedas, because they are good guides to the mystery of Nature. Nature is the only source and substance of creation. Manifestation through the medium of time, space, and causation is her eternal play, plan, and purpose. In this cosmic scheme, nothing is superfluous. Nothing in it is without a use. The tree of Nature has taken its root up in the Absolute, and has branched downwards multiform. Every branch, twig, and leaf has a special function of its own. The bark is as essential as the blossom; the root is as useful as the fruit.

In the cosmic plan of evolution, India seems to have been designed for a divine purpose. This land is verily a physical manifestation of spiritual verity. Both Nature and man have liberally contributed towards this sacred consummation. Geography and history bear unmistakable testimony to it. The land is ideally situated from the climatic point of view. From the tropical to the temperate, all grades of climate are found in this subcontinent. Man

here has not to resort to artificial protection against extremes. The heat and the cold here are just of the degree to train the body in the power of resistance, and the mind in equanimity. Rich forest-clad mountain ranges, perennially flowing rivers, and fertile soil all over the land have contributed to making life simple and attuned to Nature. The environment being thus propitious and benevolent, the Indian mind has entertained a reverential attitude towards this land.

Wind and river, earth and sun, plant and animal have here borne a sweet and inviting relationship with man, who in turn has considered them holy and auspicious. There has been no need for him to make the procurement of food and the waging of war the major issues in life. A contented and philosophical outlook has been the result. The physical feature of the land, man's mode of life, his attempts, his attainments—all these have contributed to building a spiritual India.

India is triangular in shape, carved thus by Nature herself. No political upheaval or commercial planning was in any way responsible for giving her this shape; and she is a unit complete in herself. Among symbols and mystic figures, the triangle plays the foremost part. In the economy of Nature, three straight lines are the minimum requirement to give form to space. A triangle is further capable of subdivision into any number of triangles without causing waste in space or extravagance in straight lines. *Śrī-cakra*, symbolizing the cosmic plan, is none other than a series of equilateral triangles harmoniously blended into one another. Each is a miniature pattern of the universe. Each is a self-contained unit and, at the same time, a part of the whole. In this sense, India herself, with all her subdivisions, is a divinely drawn *śrī-cakra*. The triangle further represents the three *guṇas*—*sattva*, *rajas*, and

tamas. Nothing exists in the universe apart from these categories. Equilibrium is maintained, or motion set in the cosmos, by the manner in which these *gunas* play their part. A triangle also symbolizes totality in time, space, and causation. Any one among these cannot exist to the exclusion of the other two. This trinity is so interrelated that, in the study of Nature, no aspect of it can be excluded. The triangle thus portrays the primordial energy, the perennial womb, or the source of the universe.

According to the Yoga philosophy, there is divinity inherent in man. The human body is a sacred temple obtained as a boon. Man is exhorted to assume a reverential attitude towards it in order to promote spiritual growth. In this body are certain centres where spiritual experiences are enshrined in a tangible manner. The first and foremost among these is the *mūlādhāra*, located at the base of the trunk. Life has both its origin and repose here. Further, it is the repository of all potentialities and of all divine possibilities. The Indian nation may be said to be the magnified replica of the *yogin*. The motherland is to the nation what the physical body is to the *yogin*. Almost all the *yoga* centres in the human structure have their corresponding geographical parallels. History and geography have transmuted themselves into the religion of the land. Kanyakumari is the *mūlādhāra* of the country. It is the base and bed-rock from where the national edifice commences. Haimavatī, the daughter of the Himalayan mountain-god, is the presiding deity here; and there is a temple dedicated to her. The symbol enshrined in it is that of a virgin bathed in tenderness, and breathing innocence. Intense penance has not turned her stern or jaded. She is freshness itself. Ethereal bliss and pristine purity are incessantly beaming from her. She verily symbolizes the great ideal of Indian life. The Indian nation is the oldest of the old, and the youngest of the young. It has both the power and the possibility to adapt itself to the play of time, space, and causation. Daily worship is conducted in the

temple at Kanyakumari with all decorum and devotion; and it has an all-India bearing and importance. The whole country looks to it for inspiration. The local rulers have all along been the custodians of the national cult enshrined here.

There is no cult or creed of importance in India that has not got its social reflex. A creed translated into action becomes, with the march of time, a social custom. *Kumārī-pūjā* or worship of the virgin thus came into vogue. The first-born of the house, if it happens to be a girl, is deemed to be the harbinger of auspiciousness and good fortune. Instinctively and informally, she is held in veneration. Baby though she is, she is addressed as mother, this being a characteristic national trait. And Mother worship is so old in this land that its origin cannot be traced. Nobody knows whence and how it started. But one thing is certain. Mother has always continued to be the pivot of the house. This, in essence, is the theme of Indian society. Kanyakumari indicates this and more. The sleeping potentiality of Nature in general, and of this nation in particular, has a great evolutionary purpose; and this potentiality is incessantly trying to find expression. India has been, and will always be, preserving her virginity. Though ancient, she is ever young and adaptive. Biology holds that those species that have made a great advance in evolution maintain a very long period of childhood. Is it because of this that the *devas* (angels) are said never to age? We know for certain that, among the denizens of the earth, it is the human being that takes a long time to pass through the stage of childhood. The greater the care and attention bestowed on the child, the profounder is bound to be its perfection in maturity. Actually, India might not have at all times been a devout adherent and zealous executor of this basic principle; but through all her vicissitudes, this has been her ideal in life. The worship of the Mother of the universe as a perennial child has ever been her way.

The second sanctuary in the human shrine,

according to *yoga*, is the *svādhiṣṭhāna*. Literally, it means one's own abode. Though all the yogic seats beam with spiritual energy, its variegated manifestations begin from here. The more potent a life energy, the larger are the number of patterns into which it is capable of casting itself. While the *mūlādhāra* is the power-house, various types of workshop may be said to begin at the *svādhiṣṭhāna*. Such are the amazing possibilities of human life. Madurai is to the country what the centre *svādhiṣṭhāna* is to the human body. It is called the city of Mother Mīnākṣī. As its queen, she rules over it. Thoroughgoing is her administration. But she has yet another important function in life. She is no more a blithely playful girl. Maturity marks her. Her eyes are charmingly elongated in the form of a fish, even as her name indicates. Growth and form have taken a perfect shape in her. Everything about her is comely. Beauty is now at its zenith in her personality. Now the question arises: How best can this beauty be consummated? A pretty flower blossoms, not to fade and wither away, serving no purpose. It is best used when offered at the feet of its Maker as a mark of adoration. The formless has taken form, so that the Spirit may reveal through it. Except for the manifestation of the Spirit, form has neither meaning nor purpose. Mīnākṣī at Madurai is the last word in maiden grace, beauty, and accomplishment. Now her life is to culminate in wedlock. And who is worthy of being her partner? Nature is rigorous in the enforcement of the law of selection. An unworthy match is both a waste and a violation of her plan.

Mīnākṣī is to be wedded to none other than the great God Śiva. Here, at Madurai, he is known as Sundarēśvara—the Lord of Beauty. At each of his principal abodes, Śiva assumes a very suggestive and self-explanatory name. Beauty beams out from him. Where else is it to be found, if not at its source—Śiva? Perfection both in spirit and form is what is called beauty. A perfect form is the best vehicle through which the Spirit seeks to revel in joy.

Formful beauty has for its substratum the formless Spirit, from which it ever derives its sustenance. Mythologically, this relationship is expressed as the endless marriage of Mīnākṣī to Sundarēśvara. This sacred act takes place at Madurai with due pomp and paraphernalia. Occupants of heaven and earth deem it a privilege to witness this great event. Joy and mirth are writ on every face. Fulfilment of life, to whatever degree and in whatever manner achieved, has its expression in exhilaration. The Madurai temple itself is a monument of marriage festivity. The Hindu is notorious for lavishing all his material resources on marriage! Both in extension and exquisiteness, this temple is about the most magnificent in India. Various branches of knowledge, tireless energy, and the devoted perseverance of the nation are all exhibited here.

Marriage further connotes the principle of Ardhanārīśvara—the half-female and half-male Being. The male and female aspects are seemingly two, but in reality one. In this form, Śiva occupies the right half, and Śakti the left; this is because the subtle governs and controls the gross. That which has evolved into high consciousness directs and draws towards itself that which is yet in the process of evolution. Whenever a distinction is made between the Puruṣa and the Prakṛti, it is the Puruṣa that ultimately guides and controls the Prakṛti. But in the early stages of evolution, Prakṛti stands in the forefront concealing the Puruṣa. Recognition of this fact and paying due homage to the Prakṛti are the most appropriate modes of worship. In all the temples constructed on the basis of the principles enunciated in the Āgamas, the female deity necessarily occupies a place to the left of the male deity. But it is interesting to note that this convention is deliberately set aside in the Madurai temple and at Rameswaram, Tirunelveli, and Courtalam, which are situated between Kanyakumari and Madurai. In these temples, the *dakṣiṇa-bhāginī* (right side partner) is Śakti, and the *vāma-bhāga* (left side partner) is Śiva. The idea is that till consummation in marriage is effected, all im-

portance and predominance is given to the bride in preference to her groom. As enunciated in the Nigamas, one phase of the spiritual culmination is the suzerainty of Śakti over the entire domain, inclusive of her Spouse.

The human body is full of life-currents manifesting through the gross vehicles known as the nerves and veins. But subtler than these, and imperceptible to anatomical analysis, are the real life-pulsations, technically styled *nāḍīs* in the science of *yoga*. The *nāḍīs* are as innumerable as the fibres in a pipal leaf. But among them, three are foremost, and they govern the rest. *Idā*, *piṅgalā*, and *suṣumṇā* are the names given to them. While the first two make themselves patent through the breathing by the left and right nostrils, the third is latent all through the spinal column in the trunk of the body. The *suṣumṇā* gets animated to the extent an aspirant makes progress in spiritual development, and corresponding to its animation is the awakening of superconsciousness. But in the normal functioning of the sense-bound life, *idā* and *piṅgalā* alone are at work. The functions of these *nāḍīs* have been elaborately dealt with in sciences of life, technically termed *Prāṇāyāma* and *Cara-śāstra*. When the *suṣumṇā nāḍī* gets purified, the *kuṇḍalinī-śakti* or coiled-up spiritual energy awakens at the *mūlādhāra* and rises up to the *sahasrāra* located in the brain centre, and then spiritual enlightenment becomes complete.

There is a parallelism between this and the geographical presentation of the God-concept in India. Religious instinct runs like the *suṣumṇā nāḍī* right through the land. The actual working out of this instinct is like the awakening of the *kuṇḍalinī-śakti* and its ascent. In order to bring about spiritual development in the human body, the *idā* and *piṅgalā* have to function harmoniously and efficiently. The Śaiva and the Vaiṣṇava cults stand for the *idā* and the *piṅgalā* of the country. They have both played a very important part in shaping the spiritual destiny of the land. Seemingly, there is a conflict between these two sects. In the march of time, ascendancy alternates between them, as in

the flow of the breath through the nostrils. The parallelism of Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism commences at Madurai, continues all through, and culminates at Kedarnath-Badrinath. In the vicinity of Madurai is a Vaiṣṇava temple, popularly known as Azhakarkoil. In Tamil, the language of the locality, Azhakarkoil means 'the mansion of the Lord of Beauty'. Though this temple is somewhat remote and not easily accessible, it is on a par with Madurai in tradition and significance. Parallel to Sundarēśvara at Madurai, Viṣṇu here is addressed as Sundararājan. *Idā* does not exist to the exclusion of *piṅgalā*. Similarly, Śaivism does not exist to the exclusion of Vaiṣṇavism. They always complement each other.

Maṇipura is the third stage of spiritual consciousness in the human tabernacle. Awareness here becomes more patent and expressive than in the first two. In the religious formation of India, Srirangam and Chidambaram together occupy a position parallel to *maṇipura*. Srirangam is the seat of Vaiṣṇavism, and Chidambaram that of Śaivism. Other names applied to Chidambaram are Cit Sabhā and Cit Ākāśa; 'conscience expansive' is the meaning of these terms. The Conscience is the arena wherein all things sentient and insentient have their being. The presiding Personality of this arena is at once all action and all inaction. Beyond His ken, nothing is. He is at once a vigilant Supervisor and a self-absorbed Personality. The Upaniṣadic statement 'Sitting, He goeth far; slumbering, He is everywhere' finds its full explanation here. As Raṅgarāja at Srirangam, He is in *yoganidrā*—wakeful slumber. In the ordinary sleep common to creatures, the seer and the seen are both merged in oblivion. Mere forgetfulness prevails then. It is a negative expression of the Self. But the positive aspect of it is the *yoganidrā*. The Lord is ever fully aware of Himself. His awareness is watchfulness as well. His watchfulness does not go outside His Personality, as nothing exists extraneous to Him. Because of this fact of self-sufficiency in Him, His self-absorption is complimented as *yoganidrā* or conscious slumber.

Now the active phase of the same Puruṣa is Naṭarāja, the presiding deity of Chidambaram. He is adored as Sabhāpati—President of the Cosmic Assembly. His presidentship is the one thing that explains the harmonious working of the universe. There is law and order in it because of His august presence. But for His superintending, there will be chaos instead of cosmos. In His assembly are present beings of all grades of evolution. They deem it a privilege to be in His presence. His perfect presidentship is extolled in human terms as *ānanda-tāṇḍava*, the joy-dance, and in tune with this dance does the entire creation function. The joy that emanates from Him permeates the universe, and whatever exhilaration is found in whatsoever creature is a ray of this universal joy. It is His presence that instils rhythm and bliss.

The Chidambaram-Srirangam area, which is the *maṇipura* of India, has been very productive in its crop of saints and sages. Such great personalities as Patañjali and Vyāgrapāda are especially associated with Chidambaram, where they received inspiration from the Lord of the Stage Himself. The cosmic dance of Sabhāpati was responsible for making these two *ṛṣis* what they were. Parallel to Patañjali, the author of the *Yoga-Sūtra* in Sanskrit, there was at Chidambaram another *yoga-siddha* of equal importance. Tirumūlar, as he is known, has left behind three thousand verses in Tamil dealing mainly with *yoga*. It is held that the temple of Chidambaram has risen on the spot where the remains of this sage in *mahāsamādhi* were interred. Śrī Śaṅkara, Śrī Rāmānuja, and Śrī Madhva, the three great and representative *ācāryas* of the three schools of philosophy—Advaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita, and Dvaita—had taken birth and flourished within this *yoga-cakra* of the land. Śrī Rāmānuja spent the best part of his life at Srirangam. The traditions set up by him are followed to this day in the ritual of this great temple. Similarly, Śrī Śaṅkara is said to have installed the 'Cidambara-rahasya'—the symbol of the absolute Reality incomprehensible to the human intellect. The Vaiṣṇava saints,

popularly styled Ālvārs, hailing from all grades of society, have all had close connection with Srirangam. The Śaiva saints, styled Nāyanmārs, have had in a similar fashion their association with Chidambaram. These saints have literally immortalized these two great temples.

The South Indian temple is a constructional graph of the spiritual significance of the human tabernacle. A symbological study of the exquisite temple structure gives a vivid clue to all the divine possibilities in the human frame. The main entrance to the temple is usually a skyscraping *gopura* or pyramid-like tower. Termed the *rājagopura*, it is at once a replica of the physical world and the physiological build of man. Innumerable figures of the celestials and the terrestrials, mythological and historical, are arrayed over this great edifice. Some of them are not altogether inviting. A few uncouth and indecent figures also find a place here and there. The implication is that the world we live in is a mixture of good and bad. The human body itself has a certain amount of vulgarity, however much we may try to hide or overlook it. The *rājagopura* of the temple openly betokens this fact. The worshipper's entry into this mighty gate indicates his setting aside the external world and taking an introspective step. Entering the first gate, the devotee comes across the *balipīṭha* or the altar of sacrifice. Here, he is expected to fall prostrate on the ground as a mark of sacrificing the lower nature lingering in him. While in that posture, he decides to renew himself, and gets up a mentally purified person. Calm and self-composed, and with a measured gait, he then walks in. The *dhvajastambha* or the flagstaff is next met with. The rigidly set metallic or wooden flag always points inward. The rectangular corridors have then to be circumambulated, keeping the sanctum and the flagstaff always to the right. This is a visible representation of the *prāṇāyāma* or the yogic breathing exercise which purifies the nerve currents. The *vāhana* or the vehicle of the presiding deity is met with at the completion of each circumambulation. Symbologically, the *vāhana* is an animal or a bird. Virtually every

living being, every *jīvātman*, is a vehicle of God.

The approach to the sanctum sanctorum is suggestively kept dark. No window is provided. The idea is that when all the senses are shut out, and when an introspective plunge is taken in meditation, it is darkness alone that is encountered in the initial stage. Within the sanctum, no worshipper should stand in a manner obstructing the *vāhana's* gaze, ever directed on the presiding deity. The point conveyed is that only an uninterrupted flow of the mind unto the Supreme takes it to the goal. Worship itself within the sanctum is all symbolic. The votary stands there in mute silence absorbed in holy thoughts. A bell rings inside suggesting the unuttered cosmic sound, which can be heard in the totality of Nature as well as in the constitution of the *yogin*. Then the curtain is drawn aside revealing a blaze of light. This means that the disappearance of the curtain of ignorance and the dawn of knowledge are simultaneous. The flame that comes from the burning camphor burns out, leaving no residue. This indicates that knowledge comes to the *jīvātman*, and after revealing the Reality to the *jīvātman*, both the knowledge and the *jīvātman* merge into the Reality. Through temple worship, all these sublime ideas are conveyed.

The next yogic seat of consciousness is *anāhata*, located at the heart. To the lever which has Śiva at one end and Śakti at the other, the *anāhata* is the fulcrum. As it is important and indispensable for the efficient working of the complicated human machinery, this seat is kept sound and well protected. It is unique in another way. The centres below the *anāhata* are marked by preponderance of matter. In the seats above, the Spirit predominates in higher and higher degrees. But it is at *anāhata* that matter and spirit—Prakṛti and Puruṣa—are at par. It is difficult to say whether here it is Prakṛti that reveals the Puruṣa, or it is the Puruṣa that gives individuality to Prakṛti. At this yogic seat, to make a distinction between matter and spirit, Prakṛti and Puruṣa, is as difficult as *distinguishing between fire and its*

property of burning.

What the heart, as the abode of *anāhata*, is to the body, Varanasi is to Bhāratavarṣa. The lie of the land in this region is similar to the body of man with arms outstretched. Like blood flowing to and from the heart, the nation's life-current of culture has been flowing to and from this ancient city from time immemorial. Every new cult or system of philosophy has had to be first presented here in order to get an all-India hearing. In the same way, whatever was the tradition in Varanasi was accepted in good faith all over the country; and the best ideas of the land have always been preserved there. Vrindaban is the Vaiṣṇavite counterpart of Varanasi. Śiva and Viṣṇu supplement each other in this region as everywhere else. One is called Viśvanātha and the other Jagannātha, the idea behind either being that He is the Lord of the universe. Knowledge and the diligent search after it distinguish Varanasi. All-consuming divine love dominates Vrindaban.

Kurukshetra, also in this region, goes to make the picture of life complete. The philosophy of action sprang here, and it was also enacted in this very place in all its perfection. Work is viewed by some as savouring of imperfection. But it was demonstrated here by Yogeśvara Kṛṣṇa, the Lord of action, that work may be born of perfection. And action is the gross manifestation of will.

Thus it is seen that will, emotion, and cognition—*kriyā-śakti*, *icchā-śakti*, and *jñāna-śakti*—are equally present at the *anāhata-cakra*. As a mark of Prakṛti's being as important as Puruṣa, Śiva, the Lord of Kāśī, begs of Mother Annapūrṇā sustenance, knowledge, and dispassion. Again, at the Vaiṣṇava centre, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Almighty, gets bent by the love of Rādhā. The balance of importance oscillates equally between the Puruṣa and the Prakṛti. That character alone is perfect in which *karma*, *bhakti*, and *jñāna* blend into a harmonious unit. This fact is further symbolically presented in the holy confluence of the Gaṅgā, the Yamunā, and the Sarasvatī at the Trivenī in Prayag.

Gaṅgā stands for knowledge, Yamunā for devotion, and Sarasvatī for will. The history of the nation has ever been an attempt at fulfilling this ideal—the harmonious blending of *karma*, *bhakti*, and *jñāna*.

Epoch-making incarnations of God have chosen this region for their descent and doings. In these incarnations, we find a confluence of name, form, and spirit. There is a unique and sublime purpose in their assumption of this triune personality; name is perfect in itself; form is equally perfect; spirit is of course ever perfect. By holding on to any one of these three aspects, the entire Personality is attained. To the average man, name and form are more tangible than spirit. Embodiment in the case of *avatāras* is no degeneration. The word 'Rāma' is sound, and the form Rāma, its meaning. Viewed in this light, creation is self-expression of the Almighty. Life that has come out of It is a holy trust charged to man. Life's fulfilment consists in playing one's part best. This is the message of all incarnations, given in several settings and in various readings. It is in this yogic region of Varanasi-Vrindaban, again, that both mythology and epic have struck a concordant note in symbolizing the plan and purpose of life. To the ignorant that hug life, Śiva shows the way out by remaining in contentment at the burning-ghat of Varanasi, the very scene of death. Out of love for humanity, Śiva consumes the poison, the inevitable after-effect of the churning of the ocean of life. Rāma, in his turn, demonstrates his detachment in life by voluntarily retiring into the forest, renouncing the kingdom coveted by his step-mother. Love gives away everything, including life, and expects nothing in return. The *gopīs* gave their all to Kṛṣṇa, the Child of their adoration, with no thought of reward, here or hereafter.

In India, it is not that love culminates in marriage, but it commences with it. Umā, the Mother of the universe, after being wedded to Śiva, makes it her ideal not to assert her individuality, but to merge hers in that of her Lord. Wifehood grows great in proportion to

its giving, not to its claiming. Umā does intense austerity in order to be fully worthy of her Lord. Through prolonged asceticism, patience, and spiritual practice, she gives herself away to her spouse, even as fuel gives itself away to be consumed and made one with fire. This sacrifice well becomes Satī—the perfect wife. As atonement for the slightest deviation from her husband's counsel, she let her form to be smitten into fragments, which fell in fifty-two places over this land. Because of this great sacrifice, every spot where a segment fell became sacred. This is how the whole of Bhāratavarṣa has been sanctified. The embodied facsimile of Satī is Sītā. Born though a princess and brought up in opulence, whole-heartedly she shares with Rāma his life of self-denial and discipline. Misery after misery assails her. She accepts all the miseries calmly, and thereby conquers them. There could not have been a greater tragedy for her than the discountenance by her beloved husband during her pregnancy. But, by her exemplary conduct, she proves that misery has no poignancy to one who has soared high. Sītā is the ideal character, after whose pattern the Indian woman strives to build her career. In a noble consummation of idealism and realism, the impress of Satī and Sītā is pulsating the *anāhata-cakra*, the heart of Hindusthan.

In the *yogin's* body, the fifth shrine of consciousness, in the region of the throat, is termed *viśuddha-cakra*. The ascent of the *kuṇḍalinī-śakti* to this centre is a mark of spiritual graduation. It comes as a result of thoroughgoing preparation and purification. There is no longer any poignancy or fluctuation in the spiritual struggle. Provided the gaze on the goal is steady, there are no more perils and distractions on the way. This is what this *ādhāra* indicates. Parallel to it in the formation of the country is Haridwar or Haradwar. The cults of Hari and Hara continue to be kept cogent. Both the names are derived from the root *hr*, which means 'the washing away of dirt'. The functions of Śiva and of Viṣṇu thus continue to be identical. This place also means 'entrance to the abode of God'. Literally it is so. The Hima-

layas are a heaven on earth. Pilgrims thereto have to pass through this gate. It is here that the sacred Gaṅgā presents herself to the people on the plains. From the unseen heavenly regions, she brings the message of life, love, and light. She sanctifies as well as fertilizes. This *ādhāra* is indeed *viśuddha*, purity itself. Life is impossible without the nectar that comes from above. The famous Naimiṣāranya is within this zone of consciousness. It was in this forest that the greatest enquiry ever held into the ultimate Reality took place. The origin, sustenance, and dissolution of the universe was investigated into in an exhaustive manner. Introspection into the uncharted ocean of consciousness was carried on here with adamant determination. The very depths of consciousness were probed into. This intrepid spiritual exploration took the enquirers to higher and higher realms, until the very source of Existence was reached. Haradwar, the *viśuddha-cakra* of the land, connotes the passage from the relative to the transcendental realm.

The *ājñā-cakra* is arrived at next. In the human shrine, this sanctuary is situated between the eyebrows. Spiritual illumination is here at its height. Transcending all limitations, the will of the *jīva* merges in the will of *Īśvara*. Having risen to this hallowed height, the *yogin* finds that whatever he commands comes to pass. Nature implicitly obeys and fulfils his *ājñā* or command. This is the implication of the *ājñā-cakra*. The will of the *yogin*, who has risen to this stage of realization, is but the manifestation of the will of the Lord. No ego-centred man ever rises to this level of spirituality. It being so, there is no dissonance here between the individual will and the cosmic will.

What the head is to the human frame, the Himalayas are to Hindusthan. In this eternal home of snow have been preserved from the hoary past the best thoughts of the people of this country. There has not been a single cult or system of philosophy which has not been carried over here from the plains, and established in a manner unaffected by the onslaught of time and political upheavals. Corresponding to the

ājñā-cakra, on the Himalayan heights surrounded by glaciers stand the celebrated shrines of Kedarnath and Badrinath. The parallelism between Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism, between *idā* and *piṅgalā* of the *yogin*, is maintained right up to this place. Kedarnath symbolizes the transcendental Reality, while Badrinath indicates the immanent Reality. Nirguṇa Brahman and Saguṇa Brahman are like colourless and colourful brilliance. One implies, and is contained in, the other. They are the inseparable phases of the Reality. Stationed as these holy places are in the *ājñā-cakra*, the most poetical spot of the country, they command the respect and homage of all systems of philosophy. If preference is ever shown to one shrine over the other, it is just due to individual aptitude. Devotionally inclined people generally take to Saguṇa Brahman, and the rational to Nirguṇa Brahman. The *svayambhu-linga* of Śiva at Kedarnath is a symbol of the Formless. Its snow-clad setting suggests transcendental illumination. Conventions and rituals get consumed in its blazing ecstasy. But, at Badrinath, the details of divine glory are distinctly maintained. The austerity of the sages Nara and Nārāyaṇa betokens the great pilgrimage that the individual soul undertakes in its ascent to the Paramātman, and the spiritual lure that the latter holds for the former. The Himalayan ascents and descents, to which the pilgrim piously applies himself, portray the unavoidable vicissitudes in the spiritual progress of the soul. Assiduous ascent brings one before Viṣṇu at Badrinath. It is verily the *vaikuṅṭha-dhāma* on earth. Viṣṇu is seated here in all his glory and magnificence. Lakṣmī is paying homage to him. Sages Nārada and Uddhava are adoring him. Garuda, the symbol of the *jīvātman*, is in blissful communion with him. Blessedness prevails within and without. Everything here betokens the *ājñā-cakra*.

The pilgrimage to Kedarnath and Badrinath is in itself a vivid proof of the unchanging characteristic of India. The entire nation moves on to God, this being its goal in life. This nation-wide march is a forceful display of unity

in variety. All the States of this subcontinent take their due share in it. Of course, no two States are identical in their externals. Each retains its individuality and exhibits its distinctiveness. In language, food, clothing, custom, and manners, each is a pattern. So also, each province has its peculiar mental make-up. The stern and the supple, the rational and the emotional, the sentimental and the scrutinizing, the credulous and the critical, the talkative and the taciturn—all these are firmly rooted regional traits, formed by age-long identity with the soil and surroundings. Behind these interestingly variegated characteristics of the States, there is an organic unity in India. For thousands of years, the entire land has been given to simple living, patient persevering, and spiritual striving. Godhead is the clear-cut goal of the Indian people, and the subordinating of their individuality to the cosmic will is their common trait. And this submissiveness to the Divine binds them all in a seraphic love. Tuned to this national ideal, the multitudes of India march on in their Himalayan pilgrimage.

Up above the *ājñā-cakra* is the *sahasrāra* in the cerebral lobe. It is the thousand-petalled lotus as the *yogin* styles it, and it is the topmost seat of consciousness. It is the seventh and the highest plane of awareness, the metropolis of supersensuous experience. In the full blaze of its illumination, all distinctions vanish; *mūlaprakṛti*, the primordial energy, transforms herself into Sadāśiva—the transcendental Consciousness. The nerve currents of *idā* and *pīṅgalā* merge into *suṣumṇā*, which opens and forms the *brahmarandhra*—the divine passage. The awakened *kuṇḍalinī-śakti*, which has ascended from the *mūlādhāra* through all the sacred seats of consciousness mentioned above, now enters this divine passage and joins her Lord Parameśvara in eternal union. In this great realm of Reality, which is the Peace that passeth all understanding, the *jīvātman* loses its individuality. This is in the manner of a salt doll never surviving a sea bath. Emancipation is reached and Absolutism realized.

The aptest and most inspiring earthly repre-

sentation of the *sahasrāra* is the holy Mount Kailas. It is situated in the Trans-Himalayas on the boundless plateau of Western Tibet. No territorial distinction ever made any difference between this hidden land and the ever-attractive and alluring Indian plains. There has been nothing but a perpetual spiritual contact between either sides of the heavenly Himalayas. Mount Kailas has ever been the source of attraction to the sages of India. All conception of limitation is blotted out at the approach to this heaven on earth. Here stainless space expands into infinity. A few days' movement on the extensive plateau brings the pilgrim, all on a sudden, into the midst of a great panorama. Towering majestically high up above the rest of the snow-clad peaks stands Mount Kailas, a perpetual source of inspiration. It is of the shape of a gigantic *śivaliṅga*. Snow-covered as it ever is, it is in contrast with the deep blue vault above at all times. With the changes in time and weather, it undergoes a magical transformation. When bathed in the beams of the rising sun, Mount Kailas is a mass of burnished gold. Neither word nor mind can fully enter into the glory of it then. On bright days, it is as if several suns have concentrated themselves there without their burning effect. At dusk, it is a heap of red lotuses. There cannot be a better semblance than this of the *sahasrāra*, the thousand-petalled lotus realized by the *yogin*. Myriad-coloured clouds gathering round Kailas resemble wreaths showered on it by the celestials. The sublime picture is complete with Lake Manasarovar on the southern side. The pilgrim wonders whether the lake is not, as its name suggests, more a projection of the mind than an external reality. With all the multitudinous details of its majestic formation, it seems as if some divine architect has planned this celestial spectacle. A vast square of crystal pure water, picturesque banks on all sides, Kailas to the north like a diamond crest, large tracts of sand with multifarious hues—all these put together make one feel whether one has not been brought to some super-mundane region. The pinnacle of perfection to which mind

can be raised is symbolized by the Lake Manasarovar, and the perfectly reflected replica in it of the sacred Kailas indicates the revelation of the Reality in the pure heart. The soaring crystal-like Kailas stands for Sadāśiva—the transcendental Consciousness. Here Śakti evolves into Śiva. *Jiva* loses his individuality in Śiva.

In all these ways has it been made evident that, from Cape Kanyakumari to Mount Kailas, India is one spiritual entity. The plan of evolution from the unconscious to the super-conscious has been best symbolized by the series of sacred spots lying right through the vast country. Each holy place is a symbol of some phase of the ultimate Reality, and is at the same time an indispensable stage in the course of spiritual unfoldment. Nature has abundant-

ly endowed the country in this manner, and the genius of the Indian seers has rightly utilized this endowment, and has further richly contributed to it by means of traditions, legends, and mythologies. The result of all this is that the Hindu is soaked in innumerable happy and holy ideas associated with these temples. He is constantly reminded of his link with and lineage from the Immortal. This idea has persistently goaded him on to pursue the path of immortality. It is no wonder that the Indian national resources and vitality have all been harnessed to the realization of this supreme purpose of human birth—the manifestation of the divinity inherent in man. So long as India holds fast to this great ideal, she will continue to be immortal, and she will ever be showering peace and benediction on mankind.



DIVINE GRACE AND THE LAW OF KARMA

BY DR. SHASHI BHUSAN DAS GUPTA

All the schools of Indian religion having a dualistic trend emphasize the element of grace or divine mercy, which, it is believed, works wonders in moulding the spiritual life of the devotee. Implicit faith in divine grace is a marked feature specially of Vaiṣṇavism, not only in the practical side, but also from the doctrinal side. This is so, probably because all the schools of Vaiṣṇavism believe in some sort of dualism, though they do not deny, in any case, that the supreme truth is ultimately one without a second. An emotional approach resulting in devotion—and sometimes in maddening love—is consequent on this ideal of duality, and a belief in divine grace develops gradually in the wake of this emotional approach. Though this emotional approach, based fundamentally on a belief in some sort of dualism, is a marked feature of Vaiṣṇavism, it can be traced as a distinctive feature sometimes also in popular developments of Śaivism and Śākt-

ism. Philosophical Śaivism and Śāktism (both being inseparably related philosophically) do not generally favour the idea of dualism, the ultimate tendency being always towards non-dualism; but in popular developments, where Śiva is conceived simply as God the Father and Śakti simply as God the Mother, the emotional approach of devotion and love dominates, and the question of divine mercy becomes prominent. It may, however, be mentioned in this connection that, apart from this popular approach to Śakti as God the Mother, there is a deeper significance in the conception of Śakti as the Mother and in taking shelter in Her infinite grace; to this, we shall have occasion to refer later on in the course of our discussion.

Belief in grace presupposes a belief in a personal God, who puts Himself directly in relation with man and follows and guides the whole course of his life. Judging on the whole, the idea of a personal God does not find much favour

with the Hindus. Even accepting the fact that the Sāṅkhya and the Yoga (as expounded by Patañjali) were not atheistic, the place of God in these schools seems to be rather unimportant. The Nyāya and the Vaiśeṣika should be considered more as systems of philosophy than schools of religion; but the Vedānta may be considered both as a system of philosophy and a school of religion. It is well known that non-dualistic Vedānta has consistently been opposed to the idea of a personal God directly related to man and the world. Śaivism and Śāktism also have not always favoured the idea of a personal God. It is dualistic Vedānta, or Vaiṣṇavism in all its aspects, that emphasizes the truth of a personal God. Naturally therefore, there cannot be any question of grace so far as the Sāṅkhya and Yoga schools are concerned; nor can it be in non-dualistic Vedānta. The idea of grace predominates in all the schools of Vaiṣṇavism (with slight variation in stress), and also in some schools of Śaivism and Śāktism.

What is grace? Grace may be defined as an act of favour done by a kind superior to a docile and dependent petitioner. When it is an act of favour on the part of God, it must be done without any consideration of merit; grace must therefore be some unmerited gift or favour from God. By merit, we mean 'that property of a good work which entitles the performer to receive a reward from him to whose advantage the work redounds'.¹ Had grace been merited, the receiver would have it because of his deserts; and in that case, it would not have been favour at all. This favour flows from God to man because of the very kind nature of God, and this kindness is inherent in Him because of His nature as infinite love. His nature as love makes Him necessarily drawn towards man, whose sufferings affect Him intensely, and the infinite and all-powerful mercy of God comes to his succour. Man suffers because of the sway *māyā* (or the principle of nescience) holds on him; man feels himself

helpless without the aid of God in combating the evil effects of *māyā*, and the best and surest way of combating *māyā* is to take refuge in the infinite mercy of God, who, through the power of His grace, comes to save him from the clutches of *māyā* and gradually brings him nearer to Himself to share His beauty, bliss, and glory. This principle of *māyā* presents in no way a limitation to the sovereign powers of God; *māyā* represents, according to the Vaiṣṇavas, an aspect of God's own power, and it (*māyā*) proceeds from and accompanies the creative impulse of the Lord. This creative impulse, again, proceeds from the eternal sportive nature of the Lord.

Complete surrendering of one's body, mind, and soul to the will of God and absolute dependence on the grace of God mark the religious endeavour of the devotional schools in general. In the spiritual march, the devotee feels himself bereft of any kind of agency; agency vests only in the Lord, the Saviour; and His will and power work throughout life in an incessant flow of grace. Various popular analogies have been drawn by different devotional schools to illustrate the relation between the Lord and the devotee. Of these analogies, two may be cited as typical, viz. the analogy of the monkey and that of the cat with reference to their young ones. In the case of the monkey, the mother carries the child herself wherever necessary, and does everything for its feeding and protection. Though everything is done for it by the mother, the baby monkey on its part has at least something to do, and that is to clasp the mother tightly with its own hands. So also is the case with the Lord and the devotee. Though the real agency vests only in the Lord, and He will be doing everything through His grace because of His inherent love for His creatures, the devotee also on his part has to exert sincerely to hold fast to the Lord, so that no adverse circumstances, no temptations of life, may shake his bond with the Lord and throw him away from His feet—the safest asylum for man. The other school that cites the analogy of the cat goes a step further and says:

¹ Pohle-Preuss, *Grace Actual and Habitual*, London, 1947.

'Behold the cat carrying the kitten from here to there; the kitten has absolutely nothing to do, but to surrender itself unconditionally to the will and power of the mother; all its hope and strength lie in this absolute and unconditional surrender to the infinite mercy of the mother, in whom it has the fullest confidence for its safety and well-being.' Exactly similar should be, they hold, the attitude of the devotee towards the Lord.

Innumerable hymns, prayers, and songs are to be found both in Sanskrit and the other Indian languages eulogizing the Lord in His glory and grace. Grace has been invoked both for natural life, i.e. to fight the trials and tribulations of life, and the supernatural life, i.e. to attain to a life of bliss and glory in the eternal bliss and glory of the Lord. Various episodes are found in the Purāṇic literature and in other types of Vaiṣṇava literature, as also in popular poetry, describing how devotees in all ages were saved from their worldly calamities by their faith in the grace of God, and how they became entitled to the highest spiritual experiences merely by their unconditional surrender to the will of the Lord, by their implicit faith in the mercy of God. A sincere devotee derives his spiritual strength and inspiration from the firm conviction that the all-loving and all-merciful Lord cannot allow His dear devotee to be led astray and led away from Him for long. The Lord is not less eager to have His devotee drawn near to Him than the devotee's being anxious to be drawn to Him. The spirit of surrender comes not from any sense of frustration, but from abiding faith.

But a serious problem of a fundamental nature arises out of this implicit faith in the grace of God. The philosophical and religious thinking of India has always been influenced by the theory of *karma* (action). Does this belief in divine grace mean a denial of the law of *karma*? Or, should we say that belief in grace marks a break in the law of *karma*? 'As one sows, so one reaps'—this has been the simple formula which has guided the Indian mind throughout the ages. In common belief, merit

and demerit accrue to a man from the actions done by him, and he cannot avoid the effects of his *karma*. Are we then to believe that, as grace means unmerited favour, the effects of *karma* are nullified in a most arbitrary manner by the mercy of God? So deeply significant has been the theory of *karma* in Indian thought that the law of *karma* has sometimes been equated with the laws of nature or the cosmic laws, and it has been held that the law of *karma* governs not only the individual life, but it also determines the social life, as also the course of physical nature. Law is the *vidhāna*, and God as the lawgiver is the *vidhātṛ*. The two are identical. That being so, should we think of grace as something which will induce God Himself to transgress every now and then, at His sweet pleasure, the laws which He Himself has ordained? Indian ethics, in all its main phases—Hindu, Buddhist, and Jaina—depends largely on this law of *karma*. Should we encourage a religious faith that will strike at the very root of our ethical structure?

It is difficult, indeed, to make any categorical answer to the question, if the belief in divine grace defies the law of *karma*. Whether we take them always seriously as philosophical or theological truths, or we take them as outbursts of emotional exuberance or poetic effusion, there are statements, hymns, prayers, and songs in the Vaiṣṇava scriptures and other literature which will tempt one to think that the law of *karma* has no sway over a devotee of the Lord. Devotion to the Lord has the power to counteract all the effects of *karma*. Apparently, however, the spirit of self-help, the law of *karma*, and the value of merit have all been decried by those who believe in the grace of God. Yet we think, so far as the Hindus are concerned, the idea of divine grace also thrives against the background of the law of *karma*. However slightly the great Vaiṣṇavas might have spoken of all human efforts in approaching God, and sharing with Him eternal life of light and bliss, almost all of them have betrayed their inherent belief in *karma* in their philosophical and theological discussions.

But to understand the background of Karma-vāda in the sphere of devotion and grace, we must clearly understand the great transformation that this Karmavāda itself underwent in course of time. We have said before that almost all the philosophical systems and religious schools of India accept the law of *karma* in some form or other. The Buddhists have accepted the law of *karma* almost on a scientific basis. The entire world process, including the physical and the moral processes, is explained with reference to this law of *karma*. This law of *karma* itself being all-powerful, and as such sufficient to explain all physical and moral phenomena, the Buddhists felt no necessity for postulating any other agency like God. In their zeal to pursue the law of *karma* to a logical extreme, the Buddhists became atheists. We may also refer to the law of *karma* as held by the school of Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā, whose greatest stress is on the performance of actions most fastidiously, in all the minutest details, as enjoined in the Vedic scriptures. Here, we have almost a mechanical view of the law of *karma*. Any *karma* done produces an invisible power, which determines the whole of future life. A better life of happiness is guaranteed only by the right regulation of *karma*. Non-dualistic Vedānta, which was uncompromising in its antagonism towards Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā, laid stress on spiritual knowledge, which is capable of burning away all the effects of *karma*. The non-dualistic Vedāntins believe in the law of *karma*; but the incentive to *karma* does not, according to them, proceed from Brahman, the Absolute; it proceeds from *māyā*, the principle of nescience responsible for the whole cosmic process. The illusory powers of *māyā* are to be counteracted by true knowledge; *karma* is therefore burnt away by the true knowledge of the Self, which is at the same time the true knowledge of the Absolute.

The Vaiṣṇavas, who stress the personal aspect of God and His close relation with man in love and sympathy, develop a new attitude towards the law of *karma*. *Karma* has its law, and this law operates in our life determining the course

of our life; but this law of *karma* is in no way independent of God. *Karma* proceeds from God, and is governed by the will of God. In other words, it may be said that the law of *karma* represents but the inviolable decrees of God both in the natural and supernatural planes. A devotee is raised and drawn towards God, not in violation of the law of *karma*, but God's will works in the natural as well as in the supernatural plane in such a way as would always safeguard in every way a pious man of discipline and devotion. The belief that 'God is good and kind to all', and that His will is working in our life and in nature for the gradual and sure uplift of man from his lower existence of temporal life to an eternal life of bliss and beatitude, is the real foundation of man's faith in the grace of God. Grace does not mean the arbitrary function of the will of God on the unmerited demands of man; grace is an attribute involved in the very nature of God, and exists in the very creative impulse of God. Belief in grace proceeds from a strong belief in a *telos* behind the cosmic process as a whole, as also behind the life process of the individual—a *telos* that aims at ultimate good, both individual and universal.

The true nature of *karma*, having its own laws and yet being ultimately governed by the will of God, has been well explained in the *Gītā*. There it is said that *karma* ultimately proceeds from the immutable One,² and that supreme One pervades or rather presides over *karma* at all times. We may remember here that, in the Upaniṣad also, the supreme One has been described as the director and controller of all *karma* (*karmādhyakṣa*). *Karma* has been described in the *Gītā* as the principle of sacrifice, i.e. the casting away of God's own self in and through the process of cosmic manifestation. *Karma* proceeds from the process of God's self-manifestation, and *karma* has always to be viewed as such. As the true nature of *karma* represents the process of God's self-sacrifice, every *karma* has to be taken by every

² *Gītā*, III.15.

individual in that spirit of self-sacrifice—sacrifice of the lower principles to the higher, on the one hand, and sacrifice of the individual to the community at large, on the other. *Karma* is therefore said in the *Gītā* to be co-existent and coextensive with the cosmic process. The right path is not in the avoidance of *karma*, but in taking *karma* in the right spirit. When one is thus well acquainted with the secrets of *karma*, and performs all *karma* with a deep God-consciousness and in a spirit of sacrifice, *karma* itself becomes transformed into the service of God. One feels at that time that in all one's doing and being, one but helps in the fulfilment of the laws of God in one's life. *Karma*, in such a stage, can never bind a man down to lower existence; it elevates him and brings him nearer and nearer to the realm of divine life. Devotion in the *Gītā* therefore means an unflickering God-consciousness in all the doings of man: 'Give unto Me all that you do, all that you eat, all that you sacrifice, all that you give in charity, and all the penances you perform.'³ This is the keynote of the spirit of surrender that is spoken of in the *Gītā*.

It has sometimes been questioned: Why this diarchy in the life of a man? Either say, like the Buddhists, that inexorable are the laws of *karma* which govern the process of the universe; there is no need for an all-powerful, all-loving, and all-merciful God. Or, say that the agency vests in God and God alone; there is no need of making a fuss over the law of *karma*. The answer of the devotional schools will be that the whole question is based on a misconception of the law of *karma*. The law of *karma*, as it has been already pointed out, does not represent any law independent of the will and the agency of God, but it merely represents the way in which the will and the agency of God function in the creative process. Everything is willed by God, no doubt; but the will of God has its own rimes and reasons. The law of *karma* marks the rime and reason of God's own will, and this law represents the im-

manent justice of God in the creative process.

That devotion to God and self-surrender do not mean a short cut in religious life, avoiding the risky and intricate path of *karma*, will be clear to everyone who closely follows the framework of the *Gītā* itself. The *Gītā* begins with the refusal of Arjuna to fight his most respected elders as well as his nearest and dearest ones. Arjuna was, indeed, a sincere devotee of the Lord—one of the dearest ones of the Lord. When such a devotee refused to fight, the Lord might have been pleased with him and instructed him to do away with all his works and duties and to take refuge in His mercy. But the Lord instead chastised Arjuna as a coward, and was instructing him to prefer a life of *karma* to a life of renunciation. The Lord then explained to Arjuna the secrets and mystery of *karma*; He explained how *karma* is antagonistic neither to knowledge nor to devotion, but itself leads man to the attainment of knowledge and devotion. Devotion is not merely an outburst of emotion; devotion presupposes a strong moral foundation, which is to be prepared through strict moral discipline and the performance of duties always in a spirit of service to God and God alone. It has to be noted particularly that the Lord spoke of self-surrender in the *Gītā* only in the last chapter; the previous seventeen chapters are devoted to instructions for the preparation of an integral life. Devotion in the truest sense is possible only after these stages. Of course, there are Vaiṣṇavas who would stoutly deny the necessity of the stages of preparation for developing love and devotion towards the Lord. They would cite innumerable cases where maddening love dawned in the heart of a man all on a sudden, without any long and arduous process of preparation. Such stories are described with poetic intensity and popular zeal, no doubt; but in philosophic reference, the mysterious accident has been explained with reference to the merits earned in previous life or lives. It will be interesting in this context to examine the position taken by some of the great Vaiṣṇava savants with regard to the law of *karma*.

³ *Ibid.*, IX.27.

There are a few verses in the Upaniṣads which are often quoted by the Vaiṣṇavas as having a direct reference to the grace of God. Of these, the most important is the following verse, which occurs both in the *Kaṭha* (I.2.23) and *Muṇḍaka* (III.2.3.) *Upaniṣads*: 'This self (self here means the supreme Self) is not attainable through much learning; neither through the powers of concentration, nor through much hearing; it is attainable only by him whom it chooses; to him only does the supreme Truth reveal its form and secret.' In explaining this verse, Rāmānuja, the great Vaiṣṇava saint and philosopher, says: 'Whom does God choose? Only those who deserve to be chosen.'⁴ The responsibility of the devotee is in making his heart absolutely clear and transparent; the truth of God reveals itself in such a heart. The position of Rāmānuja with regard to the question of *karma*, in view of the sovereign power and the all-loving and all-merciful nature of God, becomes clear from his commentary on the well-known *Brahma-Sūtra*. In commenting on the aphorisms II.1.34-35, Rāmānuja finds himself confronted with two problems. The fact being that everything is created by, and proceeds from, God, how to account for the differences in the creatures of the world? Unless it is otherwise explained, it may point to the partial nature of God. Again, how to explain all the evils and the consequent sufferings of creatures? This fact, again, unless it can be otherwise explained, may point to the cruel nature of God. The reply of Rāmānuja is that there is neither partiality nor cruelty in the nature of God.⁵ All differences and sufferings in the world are to be explained with reference to the law of *karma*. But, then, there arises another difficulty. If it be a fact that God alone was there in His perfection before all beings were created, and there was absolutely no differentiation as individuals among the uncreated beings, how could, then, the *karma* of creatures spoil them? When and how did

karma itself acquire this quality of differentiation? The answer to this question will be that *karma* does not originate at any point of time with all the principles of differentiation involved in it; it is eternal in its course. The import of this eternal nature of *karma* must be clearly understood. It has to be noted that the Hindus do not favour the idea of creation at any point of time. Non-dualistic Vedānta will brush aside the very possibility of creation from the Absolute. Vaiṣṇavism, as also Śaivism, will speak of the universe as eternal, in the sense that nothing new is created at any point of time; creation merely means manifestation in time and place of everything that lies dormant in the Lord as potency; dissolution means the contraction of the visible manifestation in the Lord again. *Karma* with its principle of differentiation must be coeternal with the uncreated and created universe; otherwise, there would not have been the world of diversity at all. The eternal universal process, including creation and dissolution, is involved in the very eternal sportive nature of the Lord.

Next, there may be the question: To whom does the real agency belong, to God or to *karma*? In answer, Rāmānuja would first point out that the question itself is misconstrued. There cannot be any question as to whether the real agency belongs to God or to *karma*, for, as it has already been pointed out, *karma* itself proceeds from God and represents merely the mode of operation of the will of God. So the real agency vests in God and God alone, and *karma* does not in any way interfere with the sovereignty of the Lord.⁶

It may be noted that there has been a tremendous influence of the Sāṅkhya system of philosophy on the other religious schools of India, and this influence is marked particularly in the belief that all activities in the form of cause and effect belong to Prakṛti (Nature) and not to the Puruṣa (the conscious Principle). All the schools of Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism have accepted in general the Sāṅkhya view of Pra-

⁴ *Varaṇīyam eva hi vivṛṇute.*

⁵ Cf. 'Equal am I to all the creatures; I have neither anyone to be hated nor anyone very dear to me'—*Gītā*, IX.29.

⁶ Cf. Rāmānuja's commentary on *Brahma-Sūtra*, III.2.37-40.

kr̥ti and Puruṣa; but they have accepted the view with substantial modification. The schools of Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism do not hold, like the orthodox Sāṅkhya, that Prakṛti and Puruṣa are separate and independent entities, but that Prakṛti belongs to Puruṣa—the supreme Being; Prakṛti is rather the mechanism through which the will of the Lord, the supreme Person, works. There is no question, therefore, of agency belonging to Prakṛti. This point has been made very clear in the *Gītā*, where the Lord repeatedly says that Prakṛti is 'His Prakṛti'. He is the indwelling principle working through Prakṛti. Similar is the case with every individual, where God is the real indwelling principle working in a specific way through the centre of the individual personality. But, then, what is this individual personality and where lies the scope for the free will of man? Non-dualistic Vedānta holds this individual as illusory, as it has no ultimate reality; but Vaiṣṇavism, or dualistic Vedānta, accepts the ultimate reality of the individual soul, as similar to sparks from fire, or rays from the sun. As being similar to sparks or rays, the individual souls derive their agency from God. The egohood of the individual, the Vaiṣṇavas will also agree, is a creation of the principle of *māyā*—cosmic nescience. It seems that the Vaiṣṇavas would accept the freedom of will only in a limited sphere, the sphere where the true nature of the individual soul as a mere servant of God, totally dependent on Him, is shrouded or forgotten due to ignorance caused by the cosmic nescience.

The problem of evil and the problem of the free will of man have been the most perplexing ones with reference to the idea of the sovereignty of God, and particularly of the grace of God. The position taken by the Vaiṣṇavas in these respects seems to be that evil has no ultimate truth in it; it emerges out of the creative process from the necessity of the principle of opposites involved in the evolution of the diversified world. Evil therefore belongs to the world of nature (*prākṛta jagat*), and not to the supernatural abode (*aprākṛta dhāma*) of the Lord. Free will is a truth of the *prākṛta jagat*, and it

is true only so long as there is on the *jīva* (individual soul) the full play of the principle of ignorance—only so long as there is no peep into the supranatural abode of the Lord, and only so long as the true nature of the individual soul as the servant of God has not been realized. When the veil of ignorance is torn aside, and the devotee realizes that he is not the doer, but that all works are being done by the Lord in and through him, free will loses itself after attaining its fulfilment in the all-good and all-merciful will of God. Rāmānuja shares this general Vaiṣṇava view along with the other philosophers of Vaiṣṇavism.

But this discussion on the views held by Rāmānuja may not satisfy all, for Rāmānuja may not be accepted as an ideal Vaiṣṇava so far as the question of divine grace is concerned. Let us then select Vallabhācārya, who laid exclusive stress on the grace of God. The path followed by Vallabha is called the *puṣṭi-mārga* or the path of grace. Vallabha has taken his idea from the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, where it has been said that all preservation and nourishment, all kinds of protection and progress follow from the grace of God (*poṣaṇam tad anugrahaḥ*, II.10.4). Vallabha has repeatedly said in his commentary on the *Brahma-Sūtra*, as also in other works written by him, that the grace of Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the only thing responsible for the well-being of man in this life and for his progress towards an eternal blissful life; it can stop even the course of time. It has been clearly stated that this path can be followed only by those who learn to depend absolutely on the mercy of God.⁷ Again, it has been said: 'There must be a complete cessation of all other efforts on the part of the devotee; all success will be attained through grace and grace alone.'⁸ The *puṣṭi-mārga* is not a path of reason or of proofs; it is a path essentially of faith.⁹ *Puṣṭi* or the grace of God has been explained as the power which is capable of counteracting all the adverse forces

⁷ *Puṣṭi-mārgo'nugrahaika-sādhyah—Aṅu-bhāṣya*, IV.4.9.

⁸ *Sarva-sādhana-rāhityam anugraheṇaiva siddhiḥ*.

⁹ *Pramāṇa-mārgād vilakṣaṇas tatra viśvāsas ca tatheti siddham—Aṅu-bhāṣya*, IV.4.9.

in the life of a devotee, and which enables him to attain God. As already pointed out, *pusti* or *anugraha* can bring gains both in the natural and supernatural spheres. Vallabha adds that grace has its function even on those souls that are liberated. Through the power of grace, the liberated souls will attain a divine body vouchsafed by God Himself, and then they will eternally enjoy the bliss derived from the love and service of God. Vallabha says that this grace of God can neither be understood nor demonstrated by reason or by direct proof; but it can well be inferred from an insight into the effects of grace in the life of man.

This much about the faith of Vallabha in divine grace; let us then discuss his views on *karma*. In explaining the individual differences in men, he falls in line with Rāmānuja and says that these are all due to the effects of *karma* done by the individuals. Vallabha has drawn another popular analogy in this connection. He says that, in this matter, God is like the shower, and *karma* is like the seed.¹⁰ The grace of God comes on us as a shower, irrespective of all our merits and demerits; but as the best seed profits most from the shower, so does the devotee who by his righteousness and good conduct makes himself the fittest instrument for receiving the grace of God. There is no scarcity of grace, but scarce is the man who makes himself fit to receive this grace and to profit by it to the maximum. Like Rāmānuja, Vallabha accepts the view that the question of the priority either of the differentiation in *karma* or the effects of *karma* does not arise at all, as they follow each other in an eternal flow like the eternal succession of the seed and its sprout. Like Rāmānuja, Vallabha agrees that the ultimate agency vests only in God, not mechanically in *karma* itself as some schools hold, nor in man as the doer of *karma*. Man has but a very limited agency as a part or particle emanating from God. The nature and sphere of the limited agency has already been discussed.

We have pointed out before that the belief in divine grace is not limited to the province of Vaiṣṇavism alone in the Indian religious schools. It is a marked feature also of some of the Śaiva and Śākta schools. In certain types of Tantra literature, much emphasis is laid on the element of *prasāda* (grace) of Śakti, without which success in the spiritual march is never possible. This theory of grace in Tantra has a technical aspect, which is called *śakti-pāta* or descent of Śakti. Before this *śakti-pāta*, the period is one of intense effort and endeavour on the part of the aspirant. He will have to purify his body, mind, and soul. Not only the mind and the soul, but the body also must be thoroughly prepared; otherwise, 'the descending influence may withdraw or be split up, because the nature cannot contain or keep it'.¹¹ But after the body, mind, and spirit have been made ripe for receiving Śakti, and after the descent of Śakti, the aspirant need not make any future effort. Śakti will herself work within and prepare the man for an immutable spiritual life. Sri Aurobindo has spoken of two aspects of Śakti. 'There are two powers that alone can effect in their conjunction the great and difficult thing which is the aim of our endeavour, a fixed and unfailing aspiration that calls from below and a supreme grace from above that answers.'¹² Both the powers are powers of God working within man; one comes down to the lower plane and works from below in the form of all our human urges for the highest spiritual life, and the other descends from above in the form of supreme grace in response to all our human aspirations. Tremendous is the impact of the power that descends from above. All our *karma*—all our efforts and endeavours—must be for the preparation of the field, so that the descending power may have its full and unobstructed play. If we do not allow the power to work from below—even from the lowest pole of our existence, to stimulate all our spiritual urges—we cannot receive the power descending from above and profit by its descent.

¹⁰ *Vṛṣṭivad bhagavān bijavat karma—Aṅu-bhāṣya*, II.1.34.

¹¹ Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*.

¹² Sri Aurobindo, *The Mother*,

In connection with grace, much has been spoken of self-surrender, which must be absolute and unconditional. It has been said that nothing remains to be done after such self-surrender; the grace of God will do the rest. This is a position which has been taken not only by the Vaiṣṇavas; this has been the position taken also by the well-known Śākta devotees. The 'I' and 'mine' must be completely substituted by the 'He' and 'His'. The whole of the being of man has to be realized as an instrument to be played on by the Lord at His will. Naturally therefore, there is no question of *karma* at this stage, for nothing remains to be done after absolute and unconditional self-surrender. This, however, does not seem to us to be a method, but a stage of very high spiritual realization attained by moral and religious efforts not only in several years, but, as the Hindus believe, in several lives. It is not so much a method to be followed as an ideal to be realized. It is not a thing of cheap emotional exuberance to be talked of in easy complacency. It is a thing that demands arduous efforts not only of years, but of lives.

Christianity, in all its phases, emphasizes faith in the grace of God as the most essential part of religion. A comparison of the Hindu position concerning grace with that of the Christian position may help us in understanding the Hindu position more clearly through points of similarity and contrast.

Christianity, as a religion, aims at obtaining the all-beautifying vision of God in the other life. Full vision of God is not granted to anyone before death, for this life is a life of sin—the sin that is derived from the original sin of man. But how to regain that full vision of God and to share in His eternal beatitude and bliss? Through the grace of God is the answer. This grace is unmerited, for mere nature cannot merit initial grace. There is no such naturally good work which, unaided by grace itself, could acquire an equitable claim on supernatural grace. God cannot be moved to the bestowal of supernatural grace by any positive disposition or preparation on the part of man.

He may, however, prepare himself negatively for the reception of supernatural grace by not putting any obstacle in its way. God therefore confers on fallen man unmerited interior assistance in the form of grace to remedy, on the one hand, his infirmity resulting from sin, and to raise him, on the other, to the supernatural order, so that he may be rendered capable of performing supernatural acts. Thus he may attain justification, preserve it to the end, and enter into everlasting life. God implants within man a 'seed of glory', which grows throughout his life, and has its fulfilment after death. The growing of the 'seed of glory' in man is called grace; the 'seed of glory' leads to the ultimate 'light of glory'. God grants man grace much in the same way as He grants him natural life and existence. Grace functions in the natural life, but is meant for a second and higher life—a supernatural life. God, however, ordains that the life of grace may be in harmony with man's natural life in society. Grace is to lead us to a goal that transcends our nature, while perfecting it. This element of grace, and its *raison d'être*, has been very briefly and nicely put in the following way: 'But to know God and love God, either occasionally or habitually, a special assistance is required on the part of God, an assistance which exceeds the ordinary care that God takes of His creatures, an assistance that is therefore supernatural—exceeding the dues of nature—an assistance that we are not entitled to, but is a mere favour—a grace.'¹³

How to be sure of this grace of God? Through revelation. Revelation comes from God who is truth; what revelation contains must therefore be true. The very fact that God sent His only begotten son Jesus Christ for the redemption of the fallen man speaks unmistakably of the original grace of God.

The Christians recognize two kinds of grace, viz. actual and habitual. 'Actual grace is a supernatural gift, by which rational creatures are enabled to perform salutary acts. Habitual,

¹³ G. Dandoy, *What Is Catholicism?* (Light of the East Series, No. 6).

or, as it is commonly called, sanctifying, grace is a habit, or more or less enduring state, which renders men pleasing to God.¹⁴ Whether actual or habitual, the function of grace is to strengthen the powers of the soul through which man is to work out his salvation, and through which he is to be finally justified. It creates inward divine impulses which bring about a gradual mutation from within.

From the brief exposition of the Christian conception of grace given above, it may be easy to see that there are many points of agreement between the Hindus and the Christians with regard to the nature and function of divine grace; but there is a fundamental difference in approach. The *raison d'être* of Christian grace is the *original sin* of man, which resulted in his fall from the supernatural life of perfect purity, beauty, and bliss. No amount of merit acquired by man in his natural life is sufficient to deliver him from sin and damnation and make him pleasing once more in the eyes of God. An unmerited assistance then comes down from God for his slow and gradual mutation in the natural life and for making him suitable for the permanent life of divine enjoyment after death. According to the Hindus, the world process is not caused by any original sin of man; it proceeds from the eternal sportive nature of God. Sin, as we have already seen, is an emergent factor in the course of the cosmic process; it arises out of the principle of cosmic nescience, *māyā*. The grace of God is to assist man in fighting the sway of *māyā* that obscures his true vision and also to enable him to enter the supernatural abode of the Lord and witness and enjoy His eternal blissful nature. There are two aspects of the sport of God. One aspect of it is His manifestation in the form of the natural life through one type of His infinite power; the other aspect is His internal sport with the help of His internal powers. Grace is an assistance in counteracting all the allurements of the natural life and in becoming a humble partner in the divine sport in the supernatural life.

We have discussed already the Hindu view of grace in relation to the law of *karma*. The Christians are unequivocal in their assertion that, so far as the individual man is concerned, grace is unmerited. Grace is not only unmerited, it is at the same time universal. Though God distributes His grace freely, He grants them to all men without exception, because He wills all to be saved. But wherein lies the justification of this universal grace of God? The justification is in the inexhaustible merits of Jesus Christ. Whoever takes shelter in him is allowed to draw freely from this store of merits and derive grace from them. So far as the individual man is concerned, all his merit lies in his faith in Jesus Christ. This faith entitles him to draw freely from the merits of Jesus Christ, which, in their turn, will guarantee divine grace for him. A Christian will not believe in the possibility of an individual acquiring any merit by himself without taking shelter in Jesus Christ; for it has been said in the Bible: 'As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abide in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit; for without me, you can do nothing.' Of course, taking shelter in Jesus Christ means imbibing his ideals in life and putting them into practice. Faith in him itself involves righteous conduct, salutary works, love of men, and works of charity. There must be preparation for the faith itself in God through Christ. This is confirmed by the following verdict of the Tridentine Council: 'If anyone saith that by faith alone the impious is justified, in such a wise as to mean that nothing else is required to co-operate in order to obtain the grace of justification, and that it is not in any way necessary that he be prepared and disposed by the movement of his own will, let him be anathema.'¹⁵ We may remember here also the Biblical 'Parable of the Talents': More will be given to the man who makes the best use of these talents, and what he has will be taken

¹⁴ Pohle-Preuss, *Grace Actual and Habitual*.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

away from the man who makes no right use of them.

Truly speaking, the question of man's free will, in view of the sovereign power of God and His universal grace, remains a stumbling block in Christianity, as it does in Hinduism and other religions that speak of the sovereignty of God and of faith in the abundance of His grace. The tendency in most cases is to explain

merit with reference to the grace of God, and evil and sin with reference to the free will of man. But that has always been felt to be a logical injustice perpetrated on man. There has also been a tendency to concede to the free will of man a limited sphere which may not interfere with the self-imposed limitation to God's sovereignty; but this, again, does not satisfy our reason in the same way as it satisfies our spirit of compromise with God.

TRADITION IN INDIAN ART

BY SRI AJIT MOOKERJEE

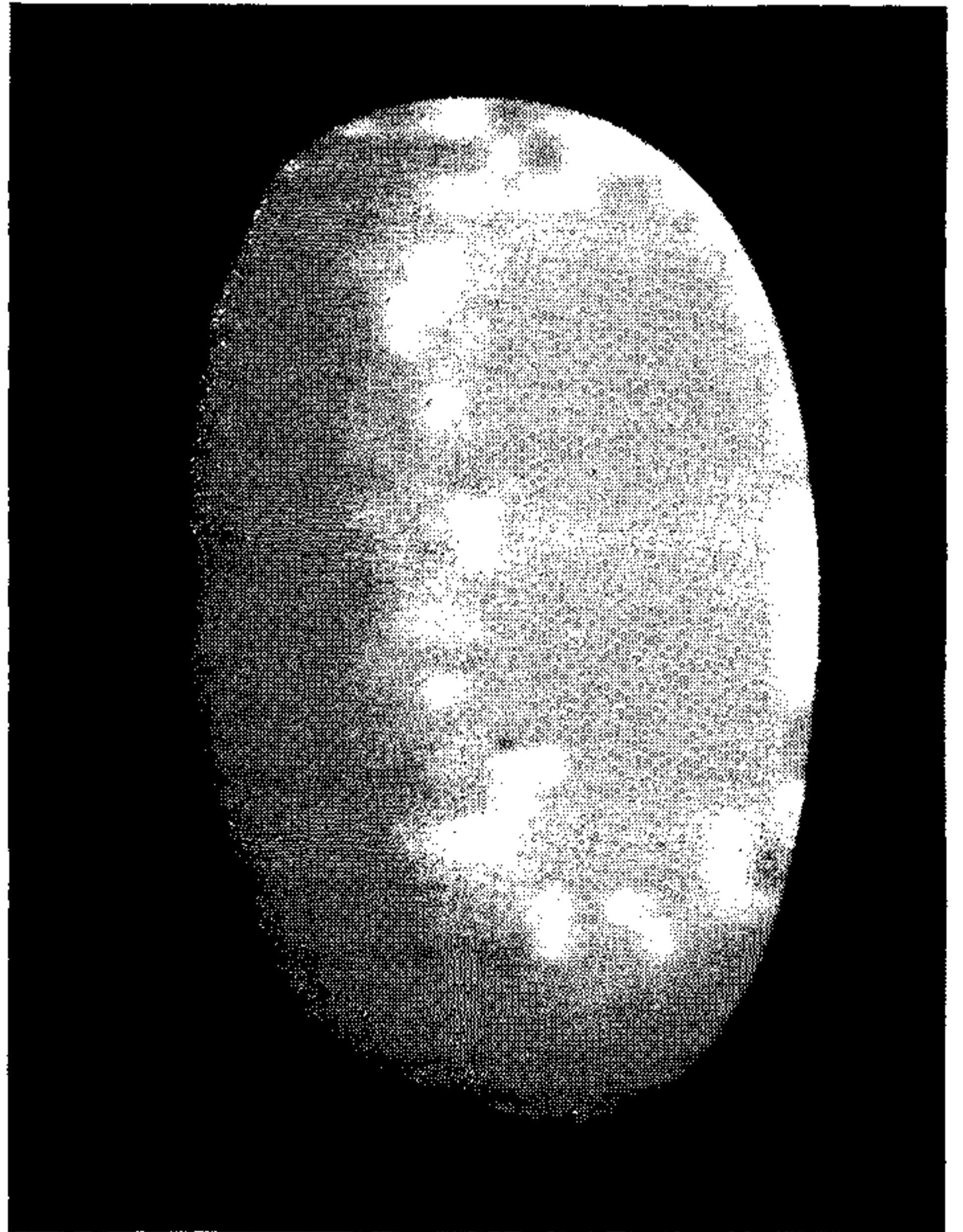
The universal adoption of an elementary formal idiom from time immemorial seems to be in conformity with India's abandonment of external reality for inner searching. In this spiritual process, a new sign language, symbolical of man's relation with the universe, was discovered and used throughout.

Indian artists, to be precise, *śilpi-yogins*, have conceived this realization in terms of dimensions—*śabda*, the primordial sound substratum, as a form of monosyllabic *mantra*, the *Om*, and *brahmāṇḍa*, the cosmic Egg, as the vital key-form of a supersensuous world. *Om* aims at the total elimination of 'sub-object' by the expression of sound-rhythms, while *brahmāṇḍa* epitomizes the eternal reality in an absolute form.

Śiva stands for Aśabda Brahman, the unqualified one, and Śakti for Śabda Brahman, the creative impulse in the cosmic process. *Liṅga*, according to the *Skanda Purāṇa*, is the name for space, in which the whole universe is in the process of formation and dissolution. *Śivaliṅga*, the all-pervading space, thus symbolizes a cosmic form, serenely detached and self-sufficient.

To enclose space is to create volume. The total effect is an overall compression which produces intensity. *Gaurīpaṭṭa* represents

ādyā-śakti, the energy quanta; *mahāmāyā*, the power of manifestation; *yoni*, the primal root or the source of objectivation. Hence *śivaliṅga* with *gaurīpaṭṭa* is the embodiment of both inaction and action, matter and energy.



I. BRAHMĀṆḌA (STONE), VARANASI

In the hands of the artist, this manifestation is expressed in the form of *liṅga-yoni* or vermilion daubs. The formless gets a time element, a dimension, a permanent shape, the abstraction of which is aimed at incorporating spatial values conditioned by sound and light.

In the egg-shaped *brahmāṇḍa*, in the globe-shaped *śālagrāma*, or in *śivaliṅga*, the artist tries to release the symbols imprisoned in stone by a reduction of the material to its absolute essence. Matter is made to yield its intrinsic nature, the inert becomes active.

Hence there is no flamboyance or associative corruption. Broad universality of impersonal form and content, and close relation to nature predestine this art to mass recognition and general acceptance. To give these figures depth and significance, they are still placed under the open sky, below the banyan-tree, that serene godlike perspective.

In its search for fundamentals, Indian art has always tried to integrate forms into geometrical and architectural patterns, the archetypes. The *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* says: 'He perceives through the geometrical lines the form he is to sculpture.' A modern critic notes the same thing: 'Geometry thus provides a plane of refraction, as it were, between the world of essential being and the world of formal manifestation.' A wide variety of geometrical shapes dominates the whole range of Indian symbolism, particularly in Vedic and Tāntric diagrams and formulae, in which the motifs have reached the goal of absolute 'geometrical purity'.

The mathematical zero, discovered in the yogic process, was born out of reduction, and it is with this number that duality comes into existence. Even the conception of the sound *Om*, which is the combination of the three *mātrās*, *a*, *u*, and *m*, presupposes geometrical patterns corresponding to a straight line, a semi-circle, and a point. Similarly, in the Vedic diagrams and Tāntric *yantras*, or in the Jain astral signs, geometrical forms and patterns are registered and are aesthetically vivid, while *mantras* lead the spirit lost in objectivation back to pure essence. 'An image or a *yantra*',

according to the *Divyāvadāna*, 'is a piece of psychological apparatus to call up one or the other aspect of divinity.'

Sanskrit texts emphasize the necessity of inner visualization and the hidden meaning of things. The vision which enables the artist to so visualize reality is a supreme form of concentration. Śukrācārya insists: 'There exists no form of concentration more absolute than that by which images are created. Direct seeing of a tangible object never allows of such an intensity.'

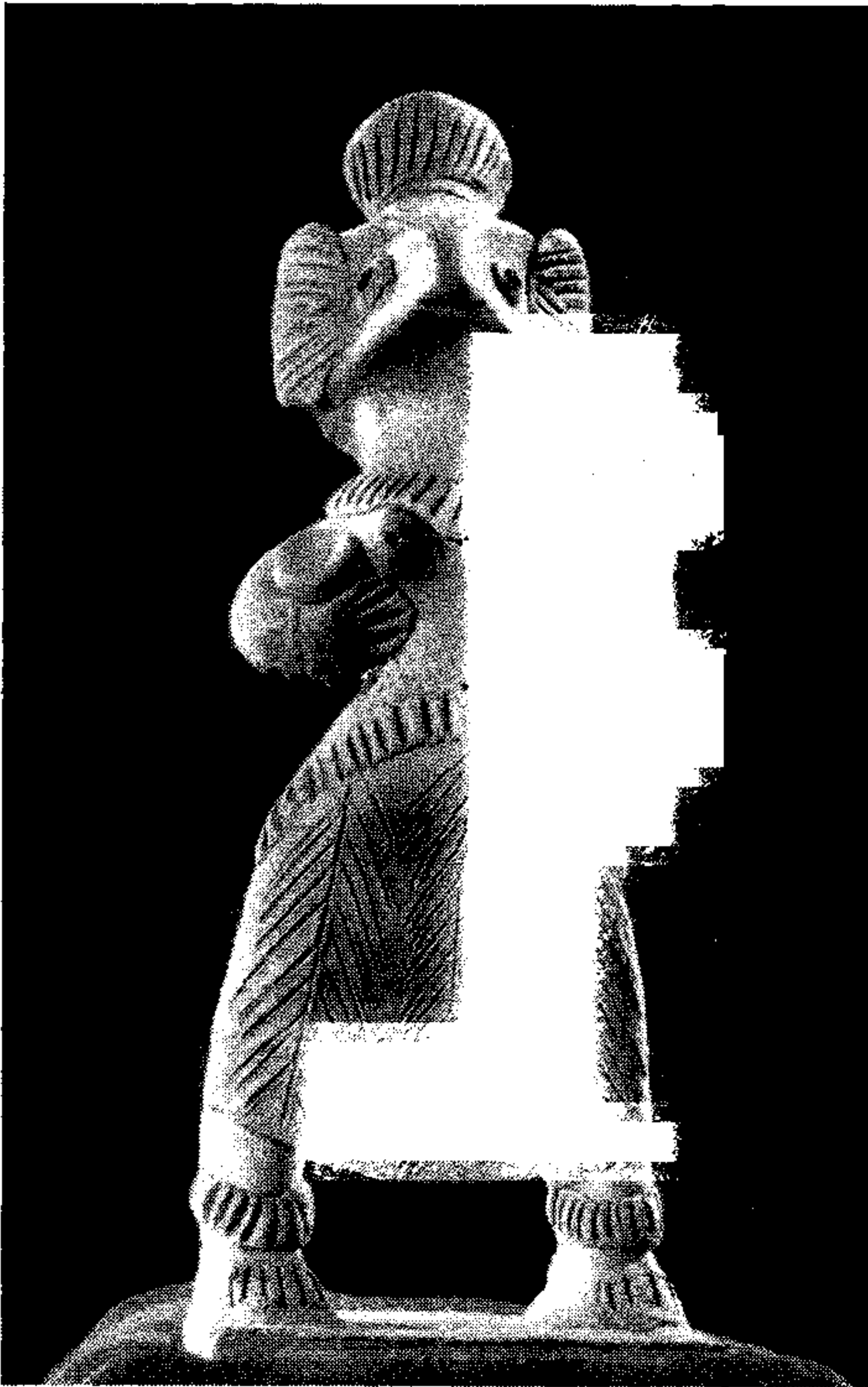
It is here that the methods of *yoga* assume a great importance in art; art itself can be considered one of the essential forms of *yoga*. To penetrate the enigmatic silence, the mystery of the universe, the *śilpi-yogin* employs his mental faculties—*manas*—though he sometimes



II. ŚIVA'S HEAD (CLAY), BENGAL

gets through to the latent meaning by intuition.

Both the *śilpi-yogin* and the surrealist strive towards the same thing—to unfold the secret world. The Tāntric symbols and patterns, the storehouse of which is yet little known, achieve a unique illumination of form and colour, because what the *śilpi-yogin* arrives at is related to his inner spiritual growth. But the dream world of the surrealist, its forms and fantasies, creates a sense of frustration and flux, because it is contingent on the passing, shifting moment.



III. MOTHER (TERRACOTTA), ASSAM

The underlying character in folk and primitive art traditions upsets the norm, because it throws up realities and symbols that are far removed from the commonplace and the conventional. It charges the apparent, the insignificant, with strangely evocative ideas and associations. It is drawn from a life that has

retained its ancient simplicity, despite time variations, like the mind of a child, which simultaneously lives both in the present and the primordial. And every artist who makes a real contribution to living art invariably shares this quality.

An artist is not an innovator in the crude sense of the term. He expresses something that already exists—*sarvam*—of which he is a part, and which he feels impelled to give back to the world. In this giving back, the process through which he realizes himself and the world is much more important than individual specimens. This process becomes a way of life that creates concepts and forms in which a particular age seems to crystallize and find itself.

Śivaliṅga, *brahmāṇḍa*, *sālagrāma*, Viṣṇu, Buddha, Naṭarāja, Kālī, each is such a concept, and a culmination. *Śivaliṅga* is an absolute form, whereas Naṭarāja is a total expression, and both dissolve in the primeval concept of Kālī.

Kālī, the black One, is *cit-śakti*, pervading the whole universe as pure consciousness. By her *māyā*, she is manifesting herself, renewing the cycles of inception and annihilation through never-ending aeons of time. Her form embodies the frozen darkness of the void, *mahā-śūnya*. She is *digambarī*, space-clad, full breasted; her motherhood is a ceaseless creation, rather, a state of continuous 'birthing', *ananta-prasava*. But in her womb are both creation and doom. With the sword of physical extermination, she cuts the thread of life, of bondage, and is relentless only to be benevolent, *karuṇāmayī*. Her white teeth, symbolic of *sattva*, the translucent intelligence-stuff, suppress the lolling tongue which is red, indicative of *rajas*, a determinate level of existence leading downwards to *tamas*, inertia. Her right hands dispel fear and exhort to spiritual strength. Her third eye looks beyond space and time. She is the changeless, unlimited, primordial power acting in the great drama, awakening the pent-up force of Śiva, while Mahākāla lies inert, a passive onlooker, destined to be dissolved in the great dissolution, *mahāpralaya*.

This tremendous conception of Kālī was again resolved by the *śilpi-yogin* into a simple geometrical pattern—a triangle within a circle. 'Hrīm', the *bīja-mantra*, almost an equation for this, was a further simplification in which the essence of the concept is latent.

It was this belief in a cosmic order, whose principles art tried to capture and communicate, that enabled the *śilpi-yogin* to make himself a part of the mystery, to live in it as well as with it. He knew that, without this complete identification of his being, there could be no revelation of the great secret.

Coomaraswamy notes: 'The practice of visualization, referred to by Śukrācārya, is identical in worship and in art. The worshipper recites the *dhyāna mantram* describing the deity, and forms a corresponding mental picture, and it

is then, to this imagined form, that his prayers are addressed and the offerings are made. The artist follows identical prescriptions, but proceeds to represent the mental picture in a visible and objective form, by drawing or modelling. Thus, to take an example from Buddhist sources:

'The artist (*sādhaka*, *mantrin*, or *yogin*, as he is variously and significantly called), after ceremonial purification, is to proceed to a solitary place. There he is to perform the 'Sevenfold Office', beginning with the invocation of the hosts of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, and the offering to them of real or imaginary flowers. Then he must realize in thought the four infinite moods of friendliness, compassion, sympathy, and impartiality. Then he must meditate upon the emptiness (*śūnyatā*) or non-existence



IV. HARI-HARA (TEMPLE BANNER), NEPAL

of all things, for "by the fire of the idea of the abyss, it is said, there are destroyed beyond recovery the five factors" of ego-consciousness. Then only should he invoke the desired divinity by the utterance of the appropriate seed-word (*bīja*), and should identify himself completely with the divinity to be represented. Then, finally, on pronouncing the *dhyāna mantram*, in which the attributes are defined, the divinity appears visibly, "like a reflection", or "as in a dream", and this brilliant image is the artist's model.

'This ritual is perhaps unduly elaborated, but in essentials it shows a clear understanding of the psychology of the imagination. These essentials are the setting aside the transformation of the thinking principle; self-identification with the object of the work; and vividness of the final image.'

The *Mānasāra* also emphasizes that 'the features of the image are determined by the relation between the worshipper and the object of his worship'. When, at the Viśvanātha

temple in Varanasi, the great *ḍamaru* begins to sound in the evening, it evokes a primal tone, a sound image, in which that pristine form almost becomes a living entity, and the communication of the worshipper with the worshipped becomes complete.

The temple *ārati*-dance was, perhaps, the supreme means to such communication with divinity. The abandon and identification of the *devadāsīs* was to be seen to be believed. In the trance-like silence of night, flickering lamps lit the dense darkness of the innermost chamber of the temple. And there, even a few years ago, the *devadāsī* danced nude before the Lord of the Universe, Jagannātha. Step after step, she became a symbol of surrender and fulfilment, a link between past and present, the visible and the invisible. No artifice, no conventionality, no histrionics; she was naked, truthful, sincere. Annihilating all traces of self, she found her Self in the image and also something more, for which the right word can never be found.

ŚRĪ ŚIVA-NĀṬARĀJA

BY SRI P. SAMA RAO

In every basic representation of Śrī Śiva-Nāṭarāja,* there is a glowing synthesis of creation, protection, and destruction of the worlds. He is a composite of the male and the female, and the harmonizer of all contradictions. The primal Lord, who is the soul of everything and the eternal witness, and who in His absoluteness is unconditioned and ineffable, delineates Himself into form and sound, weaving spells of beauty across the *cidākāśa*¹ of every true devotee. If *ṛta* (harmony) be the great 'plastic force' forging links between the Lord and His crea-

tion, and between being and becoming, then *ṛta* articulates itself, and becomes the be-all and the end-all, in the Lord's dance. It is not merely the dance of mortal life or death He depicts, but the birth, the continuum, and the finale of all life. Nāṭarāja is therefore the transfiguration of the dance of eternal Life, in an ever-flowing synthesis of the noumenon and the phenomenon, and of all contradictions.

Creation is an expression of bliss surging in the heart of the Lord. It is the deathless joy, which is selfless and consecrated, that creates, maintains, and destroys the worlds and their infinite contents. Every form, every hue, and every melody has its own glamour, which in

* The pictures included in this article are published by courtesy of the Archaeological Department of the Government of India.

¹ Pure and unsullied mind.

essence is creational. The melody of existence lies in a thing's being quite in its own place in the general scheme of the universe, and discharging its own function in accordance with its own *svabhāva*.

There is a system and an order in the execution of the Lord's dance. It illustrates rhythmically, step by step, the evolution and the dissolution of the worlds.² It is therefore of cosmic importance. The master of dance is also the master of form and grace, and so perfection in painting and sculpture cannot be achieved without mastery in dance.³ It is on this account that Śiva becomes the presiding deity of all arts, including music.⁴ The different *rāgas*, *dhātus*, *bhaṅgis*, and *mudrās* are all calculated to contribute to different *rasas*, which are but the different leaves, flowers, and fruits of one and the same tree of Life. They all glisten with a life of their own, and dance their irrepressible ways into the vast sky of our hearts, vaunting their own manifold glories. Our hearts, in effect, dance up and down in an existence that transcends all time and circumstance. All life, at whatever level or measure, is but a tangible expression of the primal joy surging everywhere in and around us. Thus the Lord of dance, who is the primal source of all life, is Life itself, and represents Life in its different aspects of *śṛṣṭi* (creation), *pālana* (protection), and *laya* (destruction). The Lord as Naṭarāja is the one cosmic Divine who is now refulgent (Mahāyogin), now terrible (Kālabhairava), now dark (Aghora), now benignant (Maheśvara), now preceptor (Dakṣiṇāmūrti), now finite, and now infinite, all in the interludes of His own being and in the interplay of one quality over the other, which we attribute to Him in our own finiteness.

Dance is therefore a rhythmic play of Life. Its steps change; its poses change; its melodies

change; and its tempo, too, changes, all in due reflection, as it were, of our own dispositions. Naṭarāja is the unique dancer who withdraws us all into himself, at the end of his play, in the peerless enjoyment of his own bliss.⁵ He is the most auspicious One, and the dance that imitates his dance is for the benefit of the world (*lokasaṅgraha*).⁶

Of the many Naṭarāja images in stone, metal, and paint now extant, the sublime cosmic types are found in South India.⁷ The sculptured ones in stone are mostly in bas-relief, and at best in the half round, accompanied always with the *āvaraṇa devatās*, like Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Gaṇapati, Śṛṅgi, Bhṛṅgi, Ṛteśvara, Nandīśvara, Pramaṭhagaṇas, etc. The *Agni Purāna* and other Śilpa-śāstras declare that this representation is the most auspicious. But in these, the Lord does not trample over either Andhakāsura or Mayūlaka or Apasmāra, all symbolizing ignorance. Andhakāsura-damana (Elephanta and Ellora), Gajāntakamūrti (Gajāha or Gajāri), Kālārimūrti, and Tripurāntaka, who cannot strictly be called 'Naṭarājas', are, however, exceptions.

The metal ones, in *pañcaloha* and bronze, are mostly in the full round, with their backs also fully carved; but they are not accompanied with the *āvaraṇa*. All of them, however, trample over demoniac creatures, variously called Apasmāra etc. as above.⁸ They are also surrounded by *tiruvāsi*.⁹ The Naṭarāja in relief is multi-handed (two to sixteen)¹⁰ and armed with weapons of power, such as *daṇḍa*, *pāśa*, *aṅkuśa*, *bāṇa*, *dhanus*, *ghaṅṭā*, *ṭaṅka*, *khadga*, *triśūla*, *khaṭvāṅga*, *kheṭa*, *vajra*, *kālakūṭa*, *sarpa*, *damaru*, *vaḍabhāgni*, etc. He also holds many em-

² *Śivānandalaharī*, 53.

³ Bharata's *Nāṭya-śāstra*, I.109-18; *Kāśyapīya*, LXV.3.

⁴ Elephanta, 6 C.; Badami 7-8 C.; Aurangabad, 6-7 C.; Ellora, 9-10 C.; Srisailla, 15-16 C.; Pallava and Chola tradition, 10-16 C.

⁵ Apasmāra, Andhaka, and Mayūlaka are one and the same in essence, for they are not conscious of the real godhead on account of ignorance.

⁶ Circle of flames, all miniatures of the seven-tongued *vaḍabhāgni*, the number of which varies from specimen to specimen.

⁷ Aurangabad 2; Elephanta and Ellora 8; Badami 16.

² *Kāśyapīya*, LXV, Stages of Dance.

³ *Viṣṇu-dharmottara Purāna*, Part III.

⁴ *Yājñavalkya Smṛti*, III.5, cited by Dr. V. Raghavan in his Introduction to *The Spiritual Heritage of Tyāgarāja*, where it is said that a special body of songs called the *gandharva*, resembling the Sāma-Vedic ones in notation, was specially enjoined for invoking Lord Śiva's grace.

blems—of *yoga*, like *akṣamālā* etc.; of beneficence, like the citron fruit; of purity, like *darpaṇa*, etc. He has his legs bent towards each other in an oval form (*kuñcitapāda*), and stands over *padmāsana* (lotus seat). But the metal Naṭarāja is usually four-handed. He is armed only with *ḍamaru* and *vaḍabhāgni* in his two back hands, and bears *abhaya* (protection) and *varada* (beneficence) *mudrās* in his two front hands; or the front left hand is dropped almost horizontally in *lola* or *gajahasta mudrās*. The

kaṭibandha, sometimes hanging loose,¹¹ and sometimes attached to the *tiruvāsi* or *prabhāvalī* to his left.¹² While the *varadahasta* is almost always present in the stone reliefs, it is not so in the metal specimens. This does not detract from the cosmic nature of the Naṭarāja type, for protection (*abhaya*) implies beneficence (*varada*).

The Aurangabad type is by far the best human representation, and the divinity there is marked more by grace than by weapons. The



I. NAṬARĀJA (BRONZE) MADRAS

metal Naṭarāja has one of his legs bent almost in half-circle (usually the right), trampling over *Apasmāra* etc., while the other is raised across the waist so as to form an obtuse angle at the knee, and with its toes pointing up at the *abhayahasta* or down at *Apasmāra*. This Naṭarāja is always solo, and almost naked but for the

employment of multi-hands and frightful weapons is no doubt expressive of the Lord's almightiness (*virāṭ-svarūpa*), but it detracts from his usual beatitude and beneficence. But the con-

¹¹ Madras Museum.

¹² Srisaila (A) and (B): Madras Archaeological Department Report for 1917-18, Plate VIII.

ception of the metal ones is more benignant and peaceful, and, from the spiritual standpoint, carries us far into knowing the root of all things. The symbolism utilized in the metal ones converges more tangibly towards the Lord's absoluteness.

The stone specimens seem to follow strictly the Śilpa-śāstras,¹³ and are generally of one and the same *parokṣa* tradition, while that of painting is *pratyakṣa*,¹⁴ modified, however, by local genius. According to the Indian conception, *pratyakṣa* is distinctly of a lower level than *parokṣa*. These styles of painting are sometimes influenced by the Jaina, sometimes by the Buddhist, sometimes by the Tanjorean, and sometimes by the pot-styles of Bengal.¹⁵ But there is an exceptional carved type of Nāṭa-

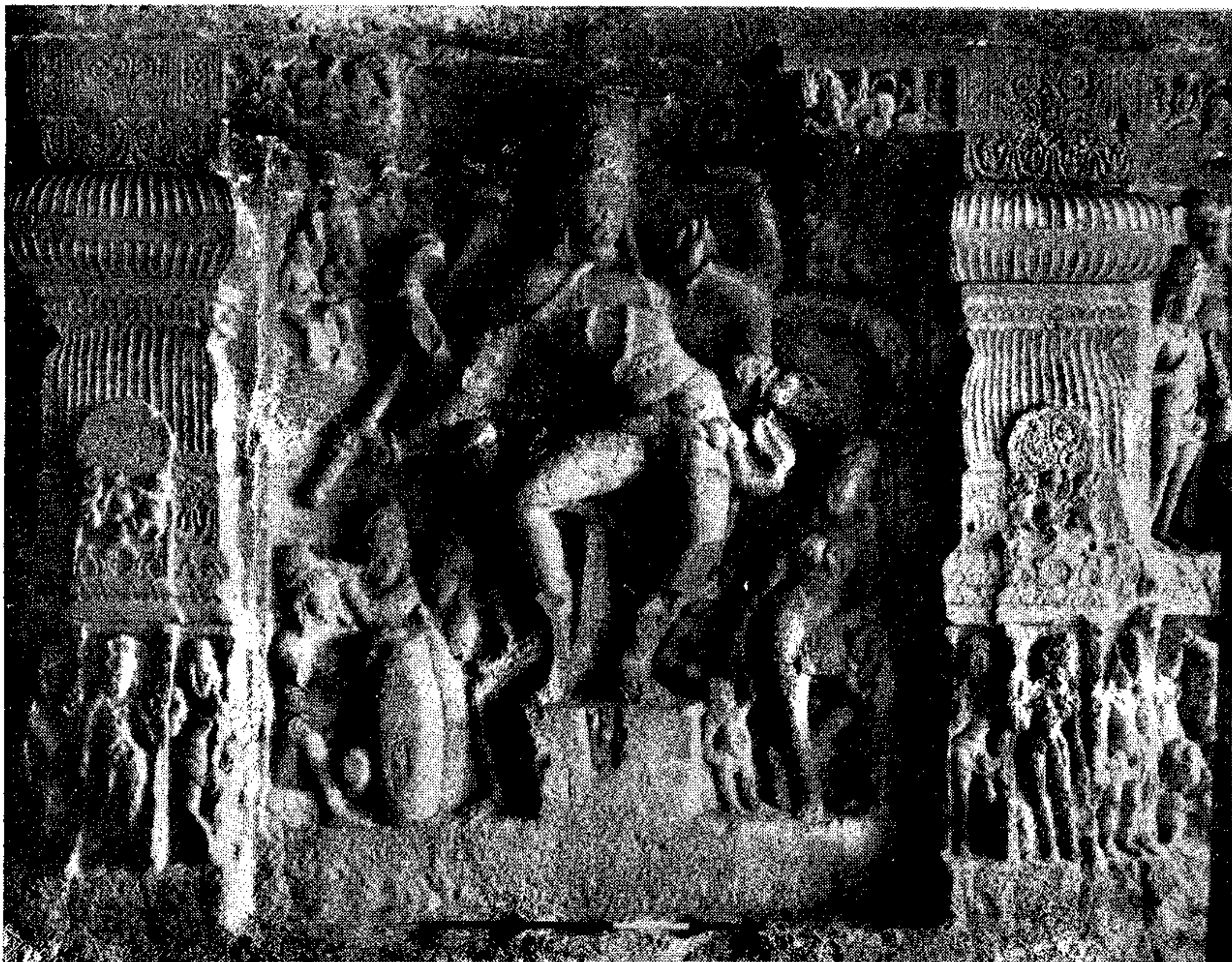
¹³ *Mānasārāgama*; *Aṃśabhedāgama*; *Kāśyapīya*; *Viṣṇu-dharmottara*, Part III; *Agni Purāṇa*; etc.

¹⁴ Buddhist and Jaina conceptions; Dr. A. K. Coomaraswamy's *Eastern Art*, III.

¹⁵ Ellora, Lepakshi, etc.

rāja,¹⁶ which is in the manner of the painted Ellora and Lepakshi types, and reminds us distantly of the Ajanta's best. The hand *mudrās* of the painted specimens are not so pure and idealistic as the sculptured ones, which conform strictly to the prescriptions in the Śilpa-śāstras and the *Nāṭya-śāstra* of Bharata. Further, the painted ones are all in *ati-bhaṅgi*, multi-handed like the cosmic Nāṭarājas of Elephanta, Badami, and Ellora. There is only a remote suggestion in them of the trampling of the demon. The sculptured ones (stone and metal) are certainly more robust, virile, and sublime than the painted ones, because the traditions of execution differed. But ideologically, they are all based on one and the same spiritual unity, that of oneness of everything, and the graceful beneficence and omnipotence of the Absolute. Thus the sculptured types differ from the painted ones only in contour and expressiveness.

¹⁶ *Vide* footnote 12 above, Plate XVI.



II. DANCING ŚIVA OF CAVE No. 14, ELLORA

The Naṭarāja types extant today portray his dance at different stages of its cycle.¹⁷ The first stage is that of *alaripu*,¹⁸ with the feet slightly raised and legs bent towards each other (*kuñcitapāda*). As the dance proceeds, its tempo increases, resulting in the poses of Gajāntaka, Andhakāśura-damana, Tripurāntaka, Kālāri, etc. These Naṭarājas are all in *tri-* or *ati-bhaṅgis*.¹⁹ Finally comes the Lord's *ūrdhva-tāṇḍava*, where the movement of his legs and eyes as well as his expressions are electric, and one

own spouse, Pārvatī—a peerless danseuse herself—could not achieve. *Ūrdhva-tāṇḍava* is the most ecstatic and tempestuous. In this, the *damaru* is seen flying in the air, with its hammer-string aloft in between the 'V' of his *kaṭakahasta*.²¹ While demonstrating his perfect ecstasy, this pose stands out as an emblem of highest dynamism tending to static stillness. There are only a few bas-reliefs discovered of this type of dance.²² It is said that Sandhyā-Gāyatrī was born during the execution of this type of dance.²³

The Lord is usually naked but for *candrakalā*, *brahmakapāla*, *mandāra*, *kalpaka*, and *nīpa* together with Gaṅgā in his *jaṭā*; *nāga*, or *makara*, or *ratna*, or *patra kuṇḍalas* in his ears; *keyūras* over shoulders; *hāras* round the neck; *bhujaṅga-valayas* on arms; anklets of bells round the feet; *nāga-bandha* round the waist; *kaṭi-bandha* round the abdomen; rings on all the fingers and toes; *kaṅkaṇa-bandhas* round the wrists; and *nāga-yajñopavīta* across the chest. His complexion, which is crystal pure, is enhanced in its shine by the dazzling *bhasma*, with which his body is smeared all over. Frightful cobras ready to strike sprawl all over his body, in and out of his *jaṭā*, and twist round the *mandāra*, *kalpaka*, and *nīpa* nestling in his flying tresses. Every item of his decoration speaks of the Lord's yogic power, omnipotence, benevolence, auspiciousness, and infinitude.

In the most ecstatic and auspicious examples of the Lord's dance,²⁴ he is always seen accompanied by the above-said *āvaraṇa-devatās*. His beloved always presides over the dance, and it is executed to delight her. But there the Lord is not showy or overdecked. The exquisite *tri-bhaṅgi* specimens²⁵ are without this *āvaraṇa*, and they are more composed and symbolic of the synthesis and balance of the *triguṇas*—*tamas*,



III. SIXTEEN HANDED NAṬARĀJA, BADAMI

of his legs (usually the left that is thrown across the waist) is spasmodically shot up vertically, with its foot spread out horizontally in the manner of Trivikrama,²⁰ to support the heavens. This is the dance-pose of the Lord which his

¹⁷ Vide footnote 2 above.

¹⁸ Invocation of *iṣṭadevatā's* grace for successful execution. Elephanta, Aurangabad, Badami, and Ellora.

¹⁹ Naṭeśa of Poruppumettupatti, and of Kalyāṇasundarēśvara Svāmī temple at Nallur, which illustrates the fifth stage of the dance of *Kāśyapīya*, LXV.

²⁰ Vāmanāvatāra: cosmic stature of Śrī Viṣṇu.

²¹ Made by the middle and ring fingers of the Lord's right back hand playing the *damaru*.

²² Afghanistan.

²³ Old painting of Kangra Kalam: Plate 15 of *Indian Painting* by Percy Brown. She is the cosmic spirit of Pañcānana Śiva.

²⁴ Elephanta and Ellora.

²⁵ Metal ones: specially Naṭarājas of Srisaīla and Tiruvengaladu, and Naṭeśa of Mayuram.

rajas, and *sattva*. The *ḍamaru* and the seven-tongued *vaḍabhāgni* are in his left and right back hands. The little drum is the seat of the primal *nāda*. On being played rhythmically in the time-measures of the Lord's steps, it issues forth the primal syllables of languages.²⁶ In beauty, he is nonpareil, being Rūpa-Brahman himself. The drum suggests his *nāda-brahmatva*, while the *vaḍabhāgni* stands for his destructive aspect at *pralaya* (dissolution of the worlds at the end of every cycle). His dynamism at dance, which is *rājasika*, symbolizes his creativeness, while his poise denotes the balance of the *triḡuṇas*. His *tāmasika* or destructive aspect is further set off by the spasmodic violence of his *ati-bhaṅgis*. His yogic calmness or beatitude is present in his front left hand, which is gently dropped in *lola* or *gajahasta*. While Gaṅgā in his head reminds us of his Gaṅgādhara emanation, and symbolizes his all-purifying power, the *candrakalā*, the *bhujāṅga-valayas*, and the serpents covering his body, together with the *nīpa*, *kalpaka*, and *mandāra* blossoms, stand for various felicities, temporal and eternal, like progeny, manifold riches, etc., of which he is the real home. The *nāga-yajñopavīta* points to his *brahmatva*, while the *brahmakaṇṭhala* centred in his *ruṇḍamālā*, or ensconced in his *jaṭā*, and the *rudrākṣa-valayas* stand for his peerless compassion. 'The orderly dance of the spheres, the perpetual movement of atoms, evolution and involution . . . have at all times recurred to men's minds, but to represent them in the form of Nāṭarāja's dance is a unique and magnificent achievement of the Indians.'²⁷

Nāṭarāja's dance over Andhaka or Apasmāra is a sublime symbol of the march of the *jīva* from the *tāmasika* to the *sāttvika*, and finally to the annihilation of all qualities, i.e. into the *nirguṇatva* of Brahman. This is like a speck dispersing into and outflowing all space in a dissipation, or rather a dissolution, of the finite into the infinite. The golden illusion²⁸ of materiality progresses step by step, on being trampled

over by the Lord, into the glitter of the bejewelled (*ratna*), then into the pale radiance of the silvern, and is finally transformed into the ineffable ethereality of the *cit*.²⁹

Śiva's *sthānīka* poses are never in *samabhaṅgi*³⁰ like Viṣṇu's, but are in *eka-* or *dvi-* or *tri-* or *ati-bhaṅgis*. They are all multi-handed (save the Nāṭarāja of Aurangabad), bearing the weapons mentioned already.³¹ But the little *nīpas*, *kalpakas*, *mandāras*, Gaṅgā, *candrakalā*, and the roseate radiance of the Devī on his left side, together with his *abhaya*, wipe out his frightfulness not a little. These suggest his greatest benevolence and solicitude for the welfare of the worlds. No other god of the Trinity is so free in giving his gifts and so uncircumspective in yielding his grace as Śiva.³²

In every depiction of the dancing Śiva, there are, either expressed or implicit, his other emanations, like Gaṅgādhara, Candraśekhara, Gajāha, Kālārīnūrti, Ardhanārīśvara, etc.³³ Candraśekhara (also called Somadhāri and Sandhyānṛttamūrti) and Gaṅgādhara resemble each other very much, as both have the same emblems on the head and in the hands (the back hands bearing *hariṇī* and *paraśu* or *hariṇī* and lock of hair, and the front hands in *abhaya* and *varada mudrās*). They are all in *eka-bhaṅgi*, and peacefully disposed³⁴ (Candraśekhara of the Tagore Collection, however, is exceptionally in *samabhaṅgi*). Gajāha is always in *tri-* or *ati-bhaṅgi*,³⁵ and rather violent in expression like the Andhakāsuramūrti,³⁶ bearing in his right hands *triśūla*, *khadga*, *gajadanta*, and in his left hands *kaṇṭhala*, *pāśa*, and shield, and dressed in *gajāmbara*. According to the *Kāśyapīya*, Gajāhamūrti's *tiruvāsi* is made up by the fringe of the elephant-hide, as already said.³⁷ But the

²⁹ *Śivarahasya Purāṇa*, XXXIII.

³⁰ Symmetrical.

³¹ Gaṅgādhara, Candraśekhara, Gajāśura-damana, Andhakāśura-damana.

³² Bhasmāsura, Raktabīja, etc. of *Durgā-saptaśatī*.

³³ *Vide* footnote 2 above.

³⁴ Candraśekhara of Madras Museum, and Sandhyānṛttamūrti of Colombo Museum.

³⁵ Bronze: Virāṭeśvara Temple Collection, Tanjore; Elephanta; Ellora.

³⁶ Elephanta; *Kāśyapīya*, LXX.4-12.

³⁷ *Kāśyapīya*, LXX.4-12.

²⁶ Pāṇini.

²⁷ Dr. A. K. Coomaraswamy.

²⁸ *Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad*, 15.

tiruvāsi of Naṭarāja is composed of a number of diminutive flames resembling the seven-tongued *vaḍabhāgni*. And Gaṅgādhara, like the Naṭarāja of the reliefs, is always accompanied by the *āvaraṇa*, while Candraśekhara and Gajāha are not. Besides, Gaṅgādhara is not armed at all in any of his four hands.³⁸ His back right hand bears a few of his tresses, suggestive of his having locked up Gaṅgā's turbulence in his *jaṭā*. His left hand caresses Pārvatī's chin, as she stands on his left.

Generally, the Śiva panels³⁹ at Elephanta and Badami are of the same sublime quality, while those at Ellora, though similarly patterned, mark decadence. But the Naṭarāja of Cave 21 at Ellora is far simpler and more dignified than the sixteen-handed, multi-weaponed one of Badami, where the omnipotence of the Lord as well as his beneficence are rather loudly stressed. This Naṭarāja of Badami seems to have been inspired by, and is a modification of, the prescriptions of *Viṣṇu-dharmottara* (Part III, Chapters 44 and 48). The cosmic nature depicted, or rather suggested, is that of Pañcānana Śiva, embodying the *pañcabhūtas*—earth, water, fire, air, and sky—in his facets, namely, Sadyojāta, Vāmadeva, Aghora, Tatpuruṣa, and Īśāna. The dancing Śiva of Cave 14 at Ellora resembles closely the Naṭarāja of Badami, while the one of Cave 21 resembles that of Elephanta. The traditional *āvaraṇa* is present in the bas-relief at Aurangabad as well as at Srisaila,⁴⁰ and in the painted specimens at Ellora and Lepakshi, but its details are differently disposed of, being arranged nearly alongside of the Lord on either side of him.⁴¹

Sometimes, the Naṭarāja of the full round is planted against the *āvaraṇa* of low relief sculptured on the wall at his back.⁴² Representa-

tions of Naṭarāja in painting are normally eight-handed and less virile than their counterparts in metal or stone. The painted ones are not usually naked, but are garbed in *pītāambaras*, instead of in tiger-skin or elephant-hide. The same terrible weapons remain, and the forms of the Lord are all in *ati-bhaṅgi*. There is a marked kinship in pose and disposal of limbs and striding between the bas-relief Naṭarāja of Srisaila and the painted one of Lepakshi. While the sculptured specimens are mostly in the manner of the best classical style of the Gupta art, the bas-relief at Srisaila⁴³ and the painted ones are mostly in the Tanjorean, modified, however, with the Jaina and Ajanta traditions (*pratyakṣa*), as said above.⁴⁴ Although Ellora is not so noted for painting as for its architecture and sculpture, yet its painted Naṭarāja, probably the handiwork of a South Indian, is the best of its kind for grace and luminosity of colouring. It forestalls the murals of Mattancheri palace and Śrī Padmanābha temple of Kerala. Besides, in these painted specimens, there is no indication of Ardhanārīśvara, and the moon crescent is not quite patent in the *jaṭā*. On the other hand, it seems to be in one of his right back hands.⁴⁵

Naṭarāja is thus the unique solver of all contradictions and paradoxes. He is reduced in the sculptor's hands to an atomic potency. Worlds and their contents heave up and down cataclysmically in the tornado of bliss awakened at his dance steps. They are all simply swept into him in utter forgetfulness of their being. At every step he takes, and at every gesture he makes, Life and Death espouse each other in an understanding of their common source, and begin their rhythmic round of an everlasting life in him—all free, all blissful, and all beyond the reach of mutability.

³⁸ Elephanta.

³⁹ Naṭarāja, Andhakāśura-damana, Gajārimūrti, Kalvānasundara, Ardhanārīśvara.

⁴⁰ Vide footnote 6 above.

⁴¹ Vide footnotes 16, 40 above.

⁴² Kālārimūrti of Mātrbhūteśvara temple, Tiruchirappalli.

⁴³ Vide footnotes 16, 40, 41 above.

⁴⁴ Painted Naṭarāja of Lepakshi.

⁴⁵ Painted Naṭarāja of Ellora.

POINTS OF CONTACT BETWEEN HINDUISM AND ISLAM

BY SWAMI TEJASANANDA

With the first glimmer of a new dawn that has broken upon the horizon of India on the achievement of Independence, she is pulsating with the vigour and freshness of youth, and her imagination has caught fire from the flame of her age-long cultural traditions to redeem her pristine glory and make her once again the mistress of the world. The banner of free India, symbolic of her spirit of renunciation, purity, eternal youth, and religion—the valued treasures of her cultural heritage—triumphantly flutters today over every home in India, from the humblest cottage of a peasant to the richest mansion of a prince, with the inspiring message of peace and goodwill to humanity. Indeed, the achievement of Indian Independence is a great landmark in the history of mankind. Nowhere in the annals of the world can be found an event of such momentous significance, an event that shows the triumph of the Spirit over the power of steel and gunpowder, a freedom wrenched from the hands of Destiny without bloodshed. The voice of India that has hitherto defied the oppression of centuries and spoken through her countless saints and sages, her prophets and incarnations, her holy men and women, has once again leaped into the full flame of life, and is being heard today with an appeal that is irresistible. The first message it brings to us at this hour of triumph is: Peace be unto all and to all religions. It is not a message of antagonism or hatred, but one of love and harmony—one of united pilgrimage of mankind towards self-understanding and peace universal.

PROBLEM OF HINDU-MUSLIM UNITY

For centuries together, the Hindus and the Muslims have lived side by side in India without detriment to their respective religious and cultural interests. Economically, no less politically, the destinies of the two sister communities are

so closely interwoven that they cannot be thought of as two diametrically opposite units in the large framework of Indian life. As a matter of fact, they stand bound to the Indian soil by identical interests. But it is really a painful phenomenon that, even in the new set-up of the Republic of India, the Constitution of which has provided for a secular government to accommodate all faiths and races within its catholic fold, occasions are not infrequent when misunderstandings occur due to an incorrect evaluation of the religio-philosophical systems of the various religious groups. The non-essentials and outward forms of every faith are so much accentuated and held to prominence that the very soul of religion is ignored and thrust into the background. True religion, says Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, is creative and life-giving, and has nothing in common with mechanism, the mechanization of mind, or dogmatism. It is time we get back to the roots and rediscover religion; for only those who rediscover religion in themselves will be able to reconstruct society. A serious attempt should therefore be made to go beyond the outer crust of apparently contradictory forms to discover the underlying unity and beauty of all the existing faiths of the world, and to point out the striking points of similarity, instead of wrangling over the non-essentials of different religions. The Parliament of Religions held in 1893, in the World's Fair at Chicago, was but a living expression of such an anxiety of the master minds to bring into closer relation the members of the different religious groups on a common platform of brotherhood. The Parliament of Religions held in Calcutta in 1937, under the auspices of the Ramakrishna Birth Centenary, was but a replica of the past. It is therefore meet and proper that at this hour avenues must be opened to ensure a speedy reconciliation of the faiths of the two communities of India, the

Hindus and the Muslims, for their mutual well-being as well as for the good of the country as a whole.

It would not be out of place to state here that a quarrel on religious grounds is exactly like the wrangle of four friends—a Rumi, an Arab, a Persian, and a Turk—over the purchase of grapes from their common fund without understanding one another's language. The Rumi wanted *astafil*, the Arab shouted for *enab*, the Persian for *angur*, and the Turk for *uzam*. To a linguist, these words convey the same meaning. But these friends fell out and came to blows simply because of their ignorance of one another's mother tongue. The fruit-vendor, who was acquainted with their languages, composed their differences by placing, in the hands of all, the selfsame fruit which was the cherished object of each, viz. grapes. At once, their passion subsided, their faces brightened, and they embraced one another in love and joy. They became friends as before. Such is the case with most of us. We fight over mere words without caring to know the real significance underlying them. What is needed is a respectful attitude towards the faiths and cultures of one another and, above all, an unbiassed study and appreciation of the essentials of every system of thought. We must not be guided and influenced merely by the seeming differences palpable on the surface. There is, after all, an underlying unity in the substance and soul of all the thought-systems of the world. A comparative study of some of the fundamental doctrines of Hinduism and Islam will corroborate the above statement.

UNIVERSALISM IN HINDUISM

A careful scrutiny of the scriptures of the Hindus and the Muslims discloses the fact that the points of agreement between the two are more pronounced and remarkable than those of difference. Hinduism, or Vedāntism properly so called, has always sung the immortal song of freedom and toleration, harmony and catholicity, inasmuch as it looks upon all faiths as but

varied readings of the same Reality. In the *R̥g-Veda*, it has been proclaimed: 'Truth is one; sages call It by various names.'¹ The *Gītā* also strikes the same note of universalism, when it says: 'Whosoever comes to Me through whatsoever form, I reach him, O Pārtha! All men are struggling through paths which in the end lead to Me.'² So does the *Mahimnah-stotra* sing: 'Like different streams coursing through straight or crooked channels, and losing themselves eventually in the one fathomless deep, men treading the various paths of religions according to their individual tastes and predilections ultimately reach Thee, O Lord, who art the resort of all.'³ In a South Indian folk-song also, we find embodied this very message of harmony:

'Into the bosom of the one great sea
Flow streams that come from hills on every
side,
Their names are various as the springs.
And thus in every land do men bow down
To the great God, though known by many
names.'

Even in Buddhism, which is but another aspect of Hinduism, we meet with the same emphasis on the spirit of toleration and catholicity.⁴ In recent years, the life of Sri Ramakrishna has also vindicated the glorious teachings of the great seers and prophets of the world. He has harmonized all faiths and shown through his unique spiritual discipline and realization that different creeds are but different paths to reach the one God: 'As one can ascend to the top of a house by means of a ladder, or a bamboo, or a rope, so diverse are the ways and means of approaching God. Every religion in the world shows one of these ways.'⁵ 'A truly religious man should think that other religions also are paths leading to Truth. We should always maintain an attitude of respect towards other religions.'⁶

¹ *R̥g-Veda*, I.164.46.

² *Gītā*, IV.11.

³ *Mahimnah-stotra*, 7.

⁴ Cf. Aśoka's Twelfth Rock Edict.

⁵ *Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna*, 720.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 723.

UNIVERSALISM IN ISLAM

Similar is the case with the teachings of Islam as well. If we read the *Quoran* between the lines, and with a mind free from all preconceived notions and prejudices, we will come across eloquent passages breathing a similar spirit of universal toleration and harmony. There is a good deal of truth in the laconic statement of Rev. G. Margoliouth that to speak of the *Quoran* is practically the same as speaking of Mohammed; for one is the testimony to the other, and the message embodied in this holy book is but revelatory of the rich contents of the Prophet's mind, as well as of the loftiness of his spiritual genius. It is really an insult to human wisdom to suppose that the Prophet of Islam did actually advocate compulsion in religion. The verses quoted below from the *Quoran* constitute proofs positive of his catholicity and friendly attitude towards the religions of others. The *Quoran* says: 'If thy Lord had pleased, verily all who are in the earth would have believed together. What! Wilt thou compel men to become believers (Muslims)?' 'Say thou: "I worship not that which ye worship, and ye do not worship that which I worship; neither shall I worship what ye worship; neither ye worship what I worship; to you be your religion; to me my religion."'⁷ 'Revile not those whom they call on beside God, lest they, in their ignorance, spitefully revile Him. Thus have we planned out their actions for every people; then shall they return to their Lord, and He will declare to them what those actions have been.'⁸ 'Verily, they who believe (Muslims), and they who follow the Jewish religion, and the Christians, and the Sabeites, whoever of these doeth that which is right, shall have their reward with their Lord; fear shall not come upon them, neither shall they be grieved.'⁹ 'And if God had pleased, He had surely made you all one people; but He

⁷ *Quoran* (Translated from the Arabic by Rev. J. M. Rodwell, Everyman's Library), Sura 10, verse 99.

⁸ *Ibid.*, Sura 109, verses 1-6.

⁹ *Ibid.*, Sura 6, verse 108.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, Sura 2, verse 59.

would test you by what He hath given to each. Be emulous, then, in good deeds. To God shall ye all return, and He will tell you concerning the subjects of your disputes.'¹¹ 'To everyone of you have we given a rule and a beaten track.'¹² 'Our God and your God are one God, and after Him we all strive.'¹³

Indeed, what stronger and more convincing testimony is needed to demonstrate the universalism in Islam—the freedom extended in the *Quoran* to every man to follow his own convictions in matters religious? The illustrious Persian poet Sanai has also sung to the same tune: 'Islam and the faiths other than Islam follow Thee, O Lord, when they declare that there is no god but God.' Even the beautiful song of the celebrated Urdu poet Zafar expresses the same sentiment: 'Angels and men, Hindus and Mussalmans, Thou, O Lord, hast created according to Thy sweet will. Everyone bows to Thee, for it is Thou who art worshipped everywhere—in the Caaba, in the mosque, or in the temple. Thou art omnipresent. Every heart is a dwelling place, and Thou art the dweller. There is no heart where Thou abidest not. Thou dost abide equally in all hearts, for Thou art all that exists in the universe.' So does another Urdu bard sing:

'Only names differ, Beloved!
All forsooth are but the same.
Both the ocean and the dew-drop,
But one living liquid frame.'

In the face of the illuminating passages adduced above, it would indeed be a sheer travesty of truth to brand Islam as a religion of intolerance.

FUNDAMENTAL DOCTRINES OF ISLAM
AND HINDUISM

We shall now take up for consideration the principal items of Islamic faith and practice, showing, as far as possible, their resemblance to those of Hinduism. No doubt, there are

¹¹ *Ibid.*, Sura 5, verse 53.

¹² *Ibid.*, Sura 5, verse 52.

¹³ *Ibid.*, Sura 29, verse 45.

sharp differences in respect of rites, ceremonies, and observances between religion and religion, between Hinduism and Islam. But these differences, when properly analysed, are found to be more apparent than real.

The religion of Islam, as is well known to all, is divided principally into two parts, viz. faith and practice, which are based on the fourfold foundations of (a) the *Quoran*, (b) tradition, (c) inference by analogy, and (d) consensus of opinion. So far as faith is concerned, it is distributed under six different heads: (1) faith in God, (2) faith in angels, (3) faith in scriptures, (4) faith in prophets, (5) faith in resurrection and final judgement, and (6) faith in predestination. As regards the practice of Islam, there are five main obligatory duties or ordinances, which comprise (i) recital of the *kalima* or the confession of faith, (ii) ablution and recital of prayers, (iii) fasting in the month of Ramzan, (iv) alms-giving, and (v) pilgrimage to Mecca in the month of Dhul-Hajji. There are, besides, a number of duties of lesser importance, which are said to be necessary without being obligatory, and there are some which are voluntary.

FAITH

(1) Faith in God

The unity of Godhead is the corner-stone of Islamic religion. 'There is no god but God, and Mohammed is the apostle of Allah' is its leading dogma; every Muslim is expected to subscribe to it. The doctrine of Trinity is denounced as an outrage on the unity of Godhead. Allah is described in the *Quoran* as immutable, omniscient, omnipotent, all-merciful, and eternal—without beginning and without end. The orthodox school holds that the sevenfold qualities of God, namely, life, knowledge, power, will, hearing, seeing, and speech, exist from eternity in His immutable essence. A few passages from the *Quoran* will enable us to form a clear conception of Islamic Godhead: 'Verily, God is Almighty. O men of Mecca, adore your Lord who hath created you

and those who were before you.'¹⁴ 'He is the First and Last, the External and Internal. He is not a body that space should bound Him, and of nothing can it be said that it is on this or that side of Him; yet He is closer to man than the artery of his neck.'¹⁵ 'He is eternal. He begetteth not, and He is not begotten. And there is none like unto Him.'¹⁶ 'This God is your Lord. There is no God but He, the Creator of all things. Therefore worship Him alone, and He watcheth over all things.'¹⁷ 'Dost thou not see that God knoweth all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth? Three persons speak not privately together, but He is their fourth; nor five, but He is their sixth; nor fewer nor more, wherever they be, He is with them. Then on the day of resurrection, He will tell them of their deeds; for God knoweth all things.'¹⁸

As a matter of fact, this conception of Godhead undoubtedly corresponds to the Hindu view of Īsvara (Saguna Brahman, i.e. God with attributes). So says the *Rg-Veda*: 'In the beginning, there existed that sole One (supreme Self) without stir or breath (action or change). There was nothing else but the One.'¹⁹ 'He who is the Father of us all, the Procreator, the great Providence, He who knows the whole universe, He is one, yet assumes many names of gods; about Him all people of the world become desirous to know.'²⁰ 'Thou art the limit of this limitless earth. Thou art the ruler of the adorable celestial ones. Thou, in truth, pervadest the whole of the eternal region with thy greatness. None, indeed, exists like Thee.'²¹ 'With hands and feet everywhere, with eyes, heads, and mouths everywhere, with ears everywhere in the universe—That exists pervading all.'²² 'The mighty ruler of these worlds beholds, as though from close at hand, the man who

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, Sura 2, verse 19.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, Sura 50, verse 15.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, Sura 112, verses 1-4.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, Sura 6, verse 102.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, Sura 58, verse 8.

¹⁹ *Rg-Veda*, *Nāsadiya-sūkta*, X.129.2.

²⁰ *Rg-Veda*, X.82.3.

²¹ *Ibid.*, I.52.13.

²² *Gītā*, XIII.13.

thinks he acts by stealth. All these the gods perceive and know. If a man stands or walks or moves in secret, goes to his bed or rises, or what two men whisper as they sit together, King Varuṇa knows. He as the third is present.²³ But the scriptures of the Hindus do not stop with this description of God with attributes only, but embody as well a sublime picture of the transcendent Reality bereft of all such limiting adjuncts.²⁴

It will not be out of place to point out here that there are certain striking resemblances in the utterances of the scriptures of the Hindus and the Muslims as well, which unmistakably demonstrate the kinship of thought and affinity of ideology existing in the two systems of religious speculations. The following parallel passages quoted from the authoritative scriptures of the Muslims and the Hindus will illustrate the point under consideration. The *Quoran* says: 'O Company of Jinn and men, if you can overpass the bounds of heavens and the earth, then overpass them. But by our leave only shall ye overpass them.'²⁵ The *Atharva-Veda* says: 'This earth, too, is King Varuṇa's possession, and the high heaven whose ends are far as under. . . . If one should flee afar beyond the heaven, King Varuṇa would still be round about him.'²⁶ The *Quoran* says: 'Seest thou not that God causeth the night to come in upon the day, and the day to come in upon the night? And that He hath subjected the sun and the moon to laws by which each speedeth along to an appointed goal?'²⁷ The *Upaniṣad* says: 'From Its (Brahman's) fear the wind blows, from Its terror rises the sun, and from fear of It, again, Indra, Agni, and the fifth, Death, proceed to their respective functions.'²⁸ The *Quoran* says: 'No vision taketh in Him, but He taketh in (attaineth to)

all vision. The eyes see not Him; but He seeth the eyes, and He is the subtle, the All-informed.'²⁹ The *Upaniṣad* says: 'It is the seer, but is not seen; It is the hearer, but is not heard; It is the comprehender, but is not comprehended; It is the thinker, but is not thought.'³⁰ The *Quoran* says: 'If all the trees that are upon the earth were to become pens, and if God should after that swell the sea into seven seas of ink, His words could not be exhausted.'³¹ The *Mahimnaḥ-stotra* says: 'O Lord, if the blue mountain be ink and the limitless ocean the inkstand, if the branch of the celestial tree be the pen and the earth the sheet of paper, if the goddess of learning writes for endless time with such a pen, even then the limit of Thy qualities, O God, will not be reached.'³²

The readers would do well to remember in this connection that Hinduism is not limited to any particular dogma or belief, but comprehends a sparkling variety of thoughts, viz. dualism, qualified monism, and transcendentalism, and thereby answers to the manifold types of mental developments and spiritual exercises of mankind. Needless to say, the sublime conception of God with attributes in Islam, corresponding as it does to the Hindu view of Saḡuṇa Brahman, finds a place of honour in the glorious spectrum of Hindu philosophy.

(2) Faith in Angels

The doctrine of angels, which is one of the most ancient of oriental creeds, is also found interwoven throughout Islamic thought. These angels are represented in the *Quoran* as the ethereal beings created from fire, perfect in form and radiant in beauty, free from all the appetites and infirmities of frail humanity, and existing in perpetual youth. In the Hindu scriptures also,³³ there is frequent mention of these angelic beings or gods. It should be borne

²³ *Atharva-Veda*, IV.16.

²⁴ Cf. *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, I.3.15; *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, II.4.14; *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*, 12; *Gītā*, XIII.14.

²⁵ *Quoran*, Sura 55, verse 33.

²⁶ *Atharva-Veda*, IV.16.

²⁷ *Quoran*, Sura 31, verse 28.

²⁸ *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, II.8; *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, II.6.3.

²⁹ *Quoran*, Sura 6, verse 103.

³⁰ *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, III.8.11; cf. also *Kena Upaniṣad*, I.4-8.

³¹ *Quoran*, Sura 31, verse 26.

³² *Mahimnaḥ-stotra*, 32.

³³ Cf. *Rg-Veda*, II.27.10; III.9.9; *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, IV.5.7.2; XI.6.3.5; *Brahma-Sūtra*, I.3.26.

in mind that both Hinduism and Islam have assigned to these gods or angels only a relative immortality. It is the supreme Lord, Īśvara or Allah, who is eternal, and without beginning and without end. Every thing else is subject to ultimate decay.

(3) Faith in Scriptures

In this respect also, we find similar notions obtaining amongst the Hindus and the Muslims. According to the Muslim creed, a scripture is treasured up in the seventh heaven, where Allah sits clothed in His transcendent majesty on the throne of effulgence. The Book exists from eternity and contains the decrees of God, as well as all events, past, present, and future. Transcripts from these tablets of divine Will were brought down to the lowest heaven by the archangel Gabriel and revealed unto Mohammed from time to time. Mohammed says: 'This *Quoran* is a manifesto to man, and a guidance, and a warning to the godfearing.'³⁴ 'To each age its Book.'³⁵ 'And thou shalt see every nation kneeling to its own Book. . . . This our Book' will speak of you with truth.'³⁶ It is pleasing to note that, in the *Quoran*, we do not meet with any word of condemnation for the revealed scriptures of other races. On the other hand, Mohammed specially refers to Abraham, Moses, David, and Jesus, and also to other prophets, who received Books for the guidance of their own people, and is thus completely exonerated from the charge of dogmatism, which is very often laid at his door. Though the *Quoran* is looked upon by the Muslims as the supreme authority in all matters of Islamic faith and practice, the other authorities, such as tradition, inference by analogy, and consensus of opinion, are also given their legitimate place of importance.

The Hindus, likewise, look upon the Vedas as self-revealed and eternal. In the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, it has been said: 'As from a fire kindled with wet faggots diverse kinds of

smoke issue, even so, my dear, the *R̥g-Veda*, *Yajur-Veda*, *Sāma-Veda*, and *Atharvāṅgiras* . . . are like the breath of this infinite Reality, the supreme Self.'³⁷ Ācārya Śaṅkara, commenting upon this text, says: 'It is the eternally composed and already existent Vedas that are manifested like a man's breath without any thought or effort on his part. Hence they are an authority as regards their meaning independently of any other means of knowledge.'³⁸ As regards the relative importance of the Vedas and the Smṛtis, it is held by the Hindus that, in the case of any difference between the teachings of the Śrutis and the Smṛtis, the verdict of the former is of greater weight and value than that of the latter.

(4) Faith in Prophets

The Muslims believe that Allah sends from time to time prophets and apostles with special missions on the earth to carry the erring humanity to the realm of everlasting peace and blessedness. It is really a mistake to suppose that the *Quoran* declares Mohammed as the only apostle of God. On the other hand, there are frequent allusions in the Book to many other apostles and prophets sent before him to various nations to fulfil the Divine purpose. So does the *Quoran* say: 'To every people have we sent an apostle saying, "Worship God and turn away from Taghout (Satan)".'³⁹ 'Then sent we apostles one after another. . . . Away then with the people who believe not.'⁴⁰ 'And we have already sent apostles before thee. Of some we have told thee, and of others we have told thee nothing.'⁴¹ Islam, however, makes a distinction between an apostle (Rasul) and a prophet (Nabi), in that an apostle is sent to a particular community or nation as the true representative of that people, whereas prophets are more numerous, and any nation may have many of them. Rasul is the word used for Mohammed in the credal formula of Islam,

³⁴ *Quoran*, Sura 3, verse 132.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, Sura 13, verse 38.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, Sura 45, verse 27.

³⁷ *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, II.4.10.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, *Śaṅkara-bhāṣya*.

³⁹ *Quoran*, Sura 16, verse 38; cf. Sura 10, verse 48.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, Sura 23, verse 46.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, Sura 40, verse 78.

though he is also frequently called a Nabi in the *Quoran*. Mohammed himself says that the number of such prophets comes to two hundred thousand, but only six of them are super-eminent, viz. Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Mohammed, as having brought new laws and dispensation upon the earth.

The Hindus also believe in the infinite possibility of such saviours' (messengers or prophets) appearing from time to time to restore religion to its pristine purity and to destroy evil on earth. So does the Lord declare in the *Gītā*: 'Though I am unborn and my nature is eternal, and though I am the Lord of all creatures, I employ nature which is my own, and take birth through my divine power. Whenever there is a decline of Law, O Arjuna, and an outbreak of lawlessness, I incarnate myself. For the protection of the good, for the destruction of the wicked, and for the establishment of the Law, I am born from age to age.'⁴² The *Sāṅkhya-Sūtra*,⁴³ the *Pātañjala-Darśana*,⁴⁴ the *Brahma-Sūtra*,⁴⁵ and the *Purāṇas*⁴⁶—all lend support to this theory of divine incarnation and hold that these liberated souls (incarnations) attain to lordly powers except the power of creation etc., which belongs only to the supreme Lord, Īśvara. Though Allah is not specifically mentioned in the *Quoran* as incarnating Himself in the person of an apostle or a prophet, but only as sending such highly gifted souls on earth for the well-being of humanity, the God of the Hindus is described in their scriptures as embodying Himself in various forms from age to age to rescue the suffering mankind from the untold miseries of existence. But this technical difference notwithstanding, the purport of both is almost the same, inasmuch as they point unequivocally to the advent of such godmen into the arena of human affairs with special missions to fulfil in the world.

⁴² *Gītā*, IV. 6-8.

⁴³ *Sāṅkhya-Sūtra*, III.54-57.

⁴⁴ *Pātañjala-Darśana*, I.18-19.

⁴⁵ *Brahma-Sūtra*, IV.4.17.

⁴⁶ Cf. *Bhāgavata*, *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, etc.

(5) Faith in Resurrection and Final Judgement

The Muslims believe that their deeds, good or bad, are kept recorded in the Holy Book of Allah; that on the Day of Judgement, all persons will be hauled up from the graves before the Tribunal of God; that their actions will be weighed in a mighty balance poised by the angel Gabriel; and that the nature of the sentence will depend on the preponderance of either scale. The trial of the balance will be followed by the ordeal of the bridge, which, fine as the edge of a scimitar, spans the huge gulf of Jehennam or hell.⁴⁷ The sinful and the miscreants will grope along it and fall into its abysmal depth, while the faithful and the virtuous, aided by a resplendent light, will cross it with the swiftness of birds and enter the *Vehesta* or the realm of paradise.⁴⁸

In the *Smṛtis* and the *Purāṇas* of the Hindus, there are frequent references to the Lord of Death (*Dharmarāja*) sitting in judgement over the actions of beings after death, as also to the sufferings of the sinful in hell⁴⁹ and the enjoyment of pleasure by the virtuous in heaven.⁵⁰ But unlike the Muslims, the Hindus consider these experiences of suffering and enjoyment in hell and heaven as but temporary, and not everlasting, phases in the career of the human soul.

(6) Faith in Predestination

The *Quoran* lays down: 'God misleadeth whom He will; and whom He will, doth He guide aright.'⁵¹ In other places, divine predestination and human responsibility are upheld together. For the *Quoran* says: 'God causeth whom He will to err; and whom He will, He guideth; and ye shall assuredly be called upon

⁴⁷ Cf. *Quoran*, Sura 44, verses 43-48; Sura 56, verses 40-56; Sura 67, verses 6-11.

⁴⁸ Cf. *Ibid.*, Sura 44, verses 51-56; Sura 78, verses 31-34; Sura 56, verses 22-36.

⁴⁹ Cf. *Bhāṣā-pariccheda*, 163; *Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa*, *Prakṛti-khaṇḍa*, Chapter 27; *Bhāgavata*, Skandha V.26; *Gītā*, XVI.16,21.

⁵⁰ Cf. *Gītā*, IX.20-21; *Manu Samhitā*, XII.20-21; *Nṛsimha Purāṇa*, Chapter 3.

⁵¹ *Quoran*, Sura 14, verse 4; cf. Sura 16, verse 39.

to account for your doings.'⁵² An attempt has been made by the Muslim theologians to reconcile divine predestination and human responsibility in the light of the following Quoranic statement, where the deeds of men are regarded as their own acquisition. The *Quoran* says: 'God will not burden any soul beyond its power. It shall enjoy the good which it hath acquired and shall bear the evil for the acquisition of which it laboured.'⁵³

The theory of predestination as propounded by the Hindus is a logical outcome of their doctrine of *karma* and reincarnation, according to which the human soul is to go round the cycle of births and deaths till the entire *karma* is worked out.⁵⁴ This inexorable law has been properly believed to be the decree of God, indelibly written on the tablet of human forehead by the Lord of Destiny (Vidhātṛ). In fact, the effects of all actions lie accumulated in the vast storehouse of the mind, and every individual, in whatsoever plane he may be born, is responsible for his own deeds, and has to work them out till the dawn of supreme illumination, when 'all knots of the heart are torn asunder, all doubts are dissolved, and the effects of actions are destroyed once for all'.⁵⁵ The human soul, freed from the tentacles of work, good or bad, shines forth anew in its own transcendent glory and majesty.

PRACTICE

Besides the sixfold items of faith as delineated above side by side with the doctrinal beliefs of the Hindus, the Muslims look upon the fivefold articles of practice also as part and parcel of their religion, viz. (i) recital of the *kalima* (i.e. confession of faith), (ii) ablution and recital of prayers, (iii) fasting in the month of Ramzan and on other special occasions, (iv) alms-giving, and (v) pilgrimage to Mecca. Needless to point out that these religious practices and rites, which are strictly enjoined on the Muslims, are intended as indispensable means to attain to

their mental and physical purification, so that they may get into an everlasting life in heaven after death.

In this regard, too, both the Hindus and the Muslims have much in common between them. For the scriptures of the Hindus, likewise, lay a great stress on such religious observances, and prescribe various courses of discipline for the purification of the mental stuff, which is the *sine qua non* of all spiritual progress and realization. In fact, in matters essential, both Hinduism and Islam stand closely knit together with the silken tie of love and harmony; for the spirit that informs them both is the same all through. It is only in the sphere of some outward forms and practices, into which the religions of different communities have crystallized through centuries in tune with their racial peculiarities, that the various religions appear, to the unthinking people, to be bundles of contradictions. But, in truth, to the clarified vision of a realized soul, the apparent differences melt into insignificance, and the underlying unity becomes quite patent.

IMAGE-WORSHIP

Idolatry or image-worship of the Hindus has been the target of relentless attack from the Muslims as well as from the Christians. Nothing has been so sadly misunderstood as this form of Hindu worship. The Hindus have nowhere been enjoined in their scriptures to pay homage to the idols as they are. For does not the Śruti say, 'What none can comprehend with the mind, but by which, the sages say, the mind is comprehended, know that as Brahman, and not this they worship here?'⁵⁶ In the *Brahma-Sūtra* also,⁵⁷ the very same fact has been emphasized. It is, in fact, the transcendent Reality that is invoked through these symbols or images, and not the idols as they are. Swami Vivekananda, one of the greatest exponents of Hinduism in modern times, pertinently remarked: 'The Hindus have discovered that the Absolute can only be realized or thought of or

⁵² *Ibid.*, Sura 16, verse 95.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, Sura 2, verse 286.

⁵⁴ Cf. *Kātha Upaniṣad*, II.5.7.

⁵⁵ *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, II.2.8.

⁵⁶ *Kena Upaniṣad*, I.5.

⁵⁷ Cf. *Brahma-Sūtra*, IV.1.4; III.2.14.

stated through the relative; and the images, crosses, and crescents are simply so many symbols, so many pegs to hang the spiritual ideas on. 'It is not that this help is necessary for every one, but those that do not need it have no right to say that it is wrong.' 'If a man can realize his divine nature with the help of an image, would it be right to call that a sin? Nor even when he has passed that stage, should he call it an error. To the Hindu, man is not travelling from error to truth, but from truth to truth, from lower to higher truth. To him, all the religions from the lowest fetichism to the highest absolutism mean so many attempts of the human soul to grasp and realize the Infinite, each determined by the conditions of its birth and association, and each of these marks a stage of progress; and every soul is a young eagle soaring higher and higher, gathering more and more strength till it reaches the golden sun.'⁵⁸ Dr. S. Radhakrishnan also brings out the very same idea, when he observes: 'Idolatry is a much abused term. Even those who oppose it are unable to escape from it. Religion cannot escape from symbolism, from icons and crucifixes, from rites and dogmas. These forms are employed by religion to focus its faith, but when they become more important than the faith itself, we have idolatry. A symbol does not subject the Infinite to the finite, but renders the finite transparent. It aids us to see the Infinite through it.'

In view of what has been stated above, it would be a sheer critical perversity and stultification of truth to call the Hindus idolators. Does not a Muslim also use the mosque and turn his face towards the Caaba during the time of prayers? Does he not make four prostrations opposite the Black Stone, kiss it with love and devotion during his pilgrimage to the holy land of Mecca, and offer sacrifices before the sacred mosque? These would remain a standing psychological puzzle, unless the whole thing is viewed from a higher altitude. For, if the Hindus are stigmatized as rank idolators, the

Muslims and the Christians will be equally open to this charge. In truth, both Hinduism and Islam stand far above this opprobrious epithet, when the real spirit and the objective of worship are taken into consideration; for it is the spirit, and not the form, that counts in the offering of our soul unto the highest Being.

SUFISM AND VEDĀNTISM

The growth of Sufism in the fold of Islam is a veritable landmark in the history of its progressive career. It not only shows the points of close contact between Vedāntism and Islam, but demonstrates as well the similarity of mystical experiences with the consummation of spiritual life. In the main, the essence of Sufism is the identity of the world with God, and the problem which it sets itself to solve is the discovery of a process whereby the human being may realize his own oneness with the divine Being. The Sufis hold that God is not only the sole object of love and adoration, but is the only Reality, and that the consciousness of individual selfhood is an illusion. The celebrated Sufi, Hallaj, is credited with the utterance: 'I am the Truth; I am He whom I love, and He whom I love is I.' So did Jami say: 'All is one; there is no duality, no pretence of "mine" or "thine".'

These spiritual experiences of the Sufi mystics bear a strong resemblance to those of the Hindu saints who have risen to the highest peak of realization through Vedāntic practices. The identity of the human soul and Brahman forms the very corner-stone of the mighty edifice of the Advaita Vedānta. Thus both the Vedāntist and the Sufi virtually meet at a point where all differences are harmonized in a uniformity of spiritual experiences. Towards the end of the year 1866, Sri Ramakrishna also intuited the profound truths of Islam. Eager to realize the underlying unity of all faiths, he got himself initiated into the mysteries of Islam from a Sufi saint living at the time in the temple-garden of Dakshineswar, and came to realize that the transcendental region of the Absolute, the One without a second, was the last halting place to

⁵⁸ *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. I. pp.14-15.

which both Hinduism and Islam equally led. 'Hence Advaita realization may reasonably be held to be the common ground between the two faiths, the common link that may be expected to bind together the two major communities of India and make them fraternize.' Needless to point out that this Vedāntic realization of the unity in diversity and the recognition of the fundamental equality of all from the highest to the lowest, coupled with the Islamic ideal of equality and fraternity as advocated on the social side, constitute the essential elements needed to build India into one of the most powerful nations in the world.

It is a remarkable phenomenon in the annals of modern India that the message of harmony of all faiths as preached by Sri Ramakrishna has found an eloquent affirmation in the new constitution of the secular government of India, which furnishes a broad forum for the peaceful coexistence of all religions and races. As already pointed out, the differences in the realm of religion are more fancied than actual. Every religion is quite sound at heart, though in external paraphernalia of rites and ceremonies each may differ considerably from the other. It is only when we shall turn to the soul, the hidden treasures of each faith, which are not diminished by sharing, that we shall begin to feel the kindred throb of each heart and become inclined to that understanding and sympathy which is the desideratum of the present day.

VISION OF A UNITED INDIA

It is time that the enlightened sections of both the communities should rise above all petty and sordid communal interests and make a common cause to restore among Hindus and Muslims peace and goodwill, which depend not so much on signed documents, paper conventions, economic adjustments, or party combinations as on the drawing together of the minds and con-

sciences of cultured men and women and exchange of knowledge and ideals. Dr. Syed Hossain, in his inspiring address to the Muslim students, rightly remarked a few years back: 'The religion you profess has emanated from the Arabs, and the Arabs, the torch-bearers of Islam, are your spiritual ancestors. But geographically, racially, and by heritage, you are Indians, and the great Aryans are your real and physical ancestors. India is our common motherland. Be you Hindus or Mohammedans, try to feel within yourselves that you are dispossessed of any separate entity and that you do not belong to any separate unit, that, economically, your interests are the same.'

The hierophants of Indian nationalism—those who have really the interests of the land at heart—should sink all their differences, sacrifice their petty personal prejudices, and make an earnest effort to establish fraternal relations between the two limbs of the same organism. If the combined genius of the Hindus and the Muslims had built the most beautiful edifice in the world, the Taj Mahal of Agra, there is no doubt that the consolidated and concerted efforts of the Hindus and the Muslims today can create a united India which will be the brightest jewel in the world, like the great Taj of old. Let the lessons of the past be not lost upon them, but serve as a beacon-light to inspire them with noble impulses for the realization of the lofty ideal for which the country stands.

'Assemble, speak together, let your minds be of one accord; let all utter the *mantras* in a common way. Common be their assembly, common be their mind, so be their thoughts united. . . . United be the thoughts of all, that all may live happily, that ye may all happily reside.'⁵⁹

⁵⁹ *Rg-Veda*, X.191.2-4.

THOUGHTS ON TAGORE'S PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

BY DR. SUDHIR KUMAR NANDI

The myriad-minded Tagore had a versatility rarely equalled by any of his contemporaries. The famed artist Leonardo could come very near Tagore, but could hardly equal him even with his wide creations. Tagore was an idealist, and he imbibed all the lofty ideals that the Upaniṣadic teachings contained. The great Maharshi, Tagore's father, initiated the poet at an early age to the *mantras* of the Upaniṣads, and this had a tremendous influence on his philosophy and outlook on life. This great idealist turned out to be an acute realist when working in the university campus of Santiniketan and Sriniketan. He aimed at an education that made a whole man, a man fit to discharge his social and economic obligations; at an education that was necessary to lift us to a level of spiritual kinship with the rest of the world. The prevalent system cared for neither, and, as such, a whole nation felt bewildered at the utter lack of usefulness of this type of education. The patriot and the educationist in Tagore came out with steady and slow footwork on the wilderness of Bolepur. The future of a great university was thus given shape to by a man whom destiny wanted to make into a great poet and philosopher. His system of education aimed at providing opportunities for material prosperity at the lowest level and for self-realization at the highest.¹

This self-realization of the youth meant a complete unfoldment of the capacities latent in them and a realization of their innate possibilities. By this, Tagore meant that the whole being of the student would come out in a blazing trail of fruition of his physical and spiritual possibilities. He would set himself free of all bondage. Education aims at that. The fruition of the latent capacities, both physical and spiritual, presupposed the fixation of the aim or ideal of life. Consequent upon the deter-

mination of such a high spiritual ideal of life, the student is imbued with hope and courage; and generally, they flow from a sound system of education. It was the business of good education to inspire the students with hope and courage, and Tagore wanted such a function to be performed by a sound educational system. Tagore found our boys and girls in the universities to be lacking in the essential qualities that make men and women good soldiers of life. Pessimism and a consequent fear for work were eating into the vitals of the nation. The educational system of the country was at fault, as it could not inspire confidence in anybody concerned. We lacked self-confidence and determination. They presupposed a degree of physical and mental energy in the taught, which the prevalent system of education failed to generate. Tagore noted this failure on the part of the system of education that was in vogue. So he wanted his pattern of education to generate self-confidence and determination amongst the taught, so that they could fulfil the mission of their life as valiant fighters in the great struggle.

Students live in a society, and they are the component parts of a vast world order. Man is not a moral Melchizedek. He must live, move, and have his being in a society inhabited by other monads. Constant conflict and conciliation, in a word, perpetual intercourse with other social beings, shaped and developed the personality of man. Man's inheritance was from his ancestry as well as from his society and race. Man is destined to give and take. He borrows from the social atmosphere unknowingly and unwittingly. He contributes to the social stock as well. This is also an unconscious act. This 'give and take' constitutes man's essential nature, and herein lies his superiority.² When we fail to maintain this constant communion with the rest of the society, we are cut off; and the

¹ *Viśvabhāratī*, p. 14.

² *Śāntiniketan*, p. 16.

source of our vitality, intellectual, moral, and spiritual, dries up. That happened with most of us. When we live a self-centred life, which in time becomes absolutely ego-centric, our life does not bear the fruits and blossoms of the toils of a vast multitude of men and women with whom we need to be linked up. That is why Tagore was insistent on the admission of students of all caste, creed, nationality, and colour into his Brahmacharyaśrama, as he thought this social equality to be the foundation of any sound system of education. Our society suffered from various types of artificial division, which resulted in a narrow outlook amongst the educated classes of his time.

A disciple of the Upaniṣads, as Tagore was, could not reconcile himself to man's isolation from contemporary life. The Upaniṣads taught him that God pervaded the whole universe; mankind was a superior type of medium through which He revealed Himself. So a sound system of education must leave room for man's constant communion with the rest of mankind, on the one hand, and with nature, on the other. He felt that nature was spirit in matter. Her form was material, but her content was spiritual. She talked to man in endless whispers, and they conveyed a message which crossed the bounds of time and place. The message of eternity was conveyed to the poet by the *sajinā* tree. The dance of the lilac in the autumn breeze enthralled the poet, and he was attuned to the music of the heaven. Man's self-realization was possible only when he felt himself one with nature. That is why, in the Brahmacharyaśrama at Bolepur, Tagore's main concern was not to isolate his students from nature, but to help, on the other hand, grow a relation between the two. Tagore's philosophy of life enunciates an ideal that warrants an identification of man's life and nature. And through this identification, man is related to Godhead. Self-realization means God-realization. If that is to be achieved in a series of lives, we need preparation here and now. Our present life must offer a comprehensive system of education, wherein we feel one with nature, on the one hand, and man-

kind, on the other. Self-realization or God-realization can be attained only when we feel one with the universe. That is the great teaching of the Upaniṣads: 'By the Lord (*īśā*) enveloped must this all be—whatever moving thing there is in the moving world. With this renounced, thou mayest enjoy. Covet not the wealth of anyone at all' (*Īśā Upaniṣad*, 1).

This great principle of enjoyment through renunciation is a corollary to man's sense of oneness with the rest of the universe. When we feel one with the universe, the laws of the universe become the laws of our reason and intellect. If we do not believe in the outer laws, we cannot possibly believe in the inner laws as well. If we do not believe in the inner laws, we fail to have faith in ourselves.³ In Tagore's philosophy of life, there is no isolation, no hatred and no delimiting of man's ever-widening spiritual frontiers of kinship. But this social amity and fraternity were not considered to be the ultimate aim of our educational system, as Tagore considered social relation to be not an end in itself, but to be a means to the salvation of the human soul.⁴ Tagore believed that this sense of universal kinship would ultimately lead man to God-realization. His poignant lines are:

'O Lord, where thou playest with the universe,
There I find my relation with thee.'

This idealistic philosophy of life inspired a philosophy of education, which is equally idealistic in character.

But Tagore's idealistic philosophy of education was not lop-sided. A system of education, in order to be fruitful, must have ready reference to practice. Tagore was not blind to this practical aspect. If the metaphysical aim of education, as advocated by Tagore, were union with the Godhead or self-realization, the practical end was to unravel the mysteries of nature, to help blossom forth the social qualities in men and women, and to generate in them a cultural outlook. Tagore was full of praise for the protagonists of scientific education. Science

³ *Sikṣā*, p. 246.

⁴ *Dharma*, p. 139.

dispels our slavery to brute material forces and enthrones man as their master. Scientific knowledge gives us mastery over the tyranny of matter, of poverty, and of men and animals. So scientific education ought to be incorporated in any sound system of education. That was Tagore's considered opinion.⁵ Mere book-learning was discouraged. Not only the intellect was to be trained, but a training of the sentiments was equally essential. Intellect was discursive. Feelings and sentiments were the easy bridge that spans the gulf of difference between man and man. Tagore's system of education took special care to boost up the steady growth and all-round development of man's sentient nature. That is why the different curricula at Santiniketan included training in dance, drama, painting, music, and other forms of fine arts. Like Plato, Tagore did not consider the so-called amusement arts to be harmful for the young minds. The kathartic theory had not much of appeal with Tagore. He admitted the different forms of fine arts in his educational system, for, according to him, man has not only intellect, but feelings and sentiments as well. Man's aesthetic sense had to be developed. He deplored the lack of trained aesthetic sense in the educated people of his time. He is a dead man, though physically living, whose heart does not leap up when he beholds a rainbow in the sky. Tagore's aesthetic idea had in it a place for the 'beauty of the dew drops on the crest of the rice-plant', as well as for the majesty of the vast oceans and the lofty mountain ranges. He stood for the aesthetic education of man. This was certainly a departure from the contemporary ideas on education. His concept of a 'total man', 'an integrated personality', led to this integration of fine arts to his educational curricula.

We have already discussed Tagore's sense of oneness with the rest of mankind. This profound sense of unity induced Tagore to incorporate in the routine of the taught some amount of social service. Universal fraternity, as advocated by Tagore, had for its negative teaching

the injunction not to hate, and for its positive teaching, service to mankind. If we consider all men to be our own kith and kin, we will not surely fail to effect compromise of our differences. The essential identity of man, when discovered, helps us to resolve our petty squabbles. That gives us a practical sense of effecting happy compromises in our difficulties. This capacity is very necessary to live a happy family life, and a social life equally happy. Tagore's system of education aimed at this ideal. This capacity to synthesize the conflicts and differences leads to the growth of other social virtues in man. These virtues, such as friendship, good-neighbourliness, amity, and charity, ought to be furthered by a sound system of education; and Tagore considered this to be one of the main ends of his educational system. Thus we may say that this capacity to effect a happy synthesis—to effect development of social qualities and cultural development in man, to generate a scientific outlook, an aesthetic sense, and a strong determination—is the goal to be attained by Tagore's system of education, which refers to the mental growth in man.

Apart from this mental development, Tagore's system of education also aims at man's physical growth and upkeep. 'A healthy mind in a healthy body', though an exploded myth of the Greek era, fascinated Tagore, and he made provisions for physical exercise in his school. Physical fitness in man gives him the capacity for hard work. This capacity is essential for the well-being of man, judged both by egoistic and altruistic standards.

We have already referred to man's innate spiritual kinship with God. This sense of identity and a pantheistic belief make our religious life prosperous. This religious life gives us self-confidence. When we know that we are not petty individuals, as it seems to be, but are the sons of the Immortal, we feel armed with a gigantic self-confidence, invincible to all physical assailings. This confidence in ourselves as immortal spiritual monads gives us a moral sense, so essential for

⁵ *Śikṣā*, p. 245.

any sound educational system. If we know ourselves to be spiritual and rational, we cannot perpetrate anything immoral. We would always be acting morally. This 'acting' is taken to include 'resisting' as well. Tagore's philos-

ophy of education aims at making us moral. This moral fervour flows from a comprehensive philosophy of education, which springs from a philosophy of life imbedded in the hoary traditions of the Upaniṣadic teachings.

IGNORANCE AND ITS INSCRUTABLE POWER

BY SWAMI NITYABODHANANDA

It is not comforting to be told that ignorance separates us from realization. For the word 'ignorance' immediately points the finger of responsibility to us. We are ignorant of something, in spite of the thing being present. It is not an illusion that we feel separated from realization. Besides, our attitude towards illusion is an attitude that diminishes our responsibility. It is comforting to be told that illusion separates us from realization, for illusion being non-existent, the separation is not real, and thus we are consoled. But philosophy is not there to console us. It does not make things easy, nor difficult, nor does it distribute prizes. It makes us stronger by awakening us to the great problems of life, and thus awakening our consciousness.

That we feel separated from realization is not an illusion. We make effort, we aspire, and we long for something better. All these we would not have done, if we did not feel separated from our 'better'. The feeling of separation is real. Evidently, these words are addressed not to those with whom aspiration was of the past, I mean the liberated; nor to those who have not yet tasted the aspiration or the urge for realization. Śaṅkara, speaking about the purpose of scriptures, puts it beautifully: 'The scriptures are not for those who do not feel the difference between what is known and what is yet to be known, or what is read and what is going to be read. When a student ceases to find the difference between what he

has read and what he is going to read, then he can stop or should stop.' Śaṅkara means thereby that two categories do not see the difference: the liberated and the unintelligent.

The word 'ignorance' poses a responsibility; for realization is there, and we have not taken notice of it. Or to put the same idea in another way, we have not yet become conscious that we are ignorant. So, then, the first thing is to be aware that we are ignorant. Ignorant of what? Ignorant of reality, ignorant of the possibility of realizing it.

It is not easy to be conscious of this ignorance, for it hides itself under its own dynamism. The ignorance under discussion hides under the dynamism 'I want to be spiritual; I am not spiritual; I want to realize the Self'. The dynamism which is the character of all spiritual aspiration gives us a positive feeling of accomplishing something. We are not in the habit of associating ignorance with a positive feeling. For us, ignorance is a simple absence. But the ignorance we are speaking of is a special category, which is more than a simple absence. It is positive, and hence has a dynamism of its own. This notion of a dynamic ignorance is not foreign to Western thought. Denys the Areopagite speaks of *agnosis* or ignorance as a necessary stage to come to God. St. John of the Cross was evidently influenced by Denys the Areopagite. St. John of the Cross's 'dark night' is comparable to the *agnosis* of Pseudo-Denys. He employs the expression 'ray of

darkness' and gives it a great importance as the condition precedent to illumination. The 'dark night' is a willing self-annihilation that opens our will to the Divine. St. John of the Cross insists on the value of the 'dark night', or what he calls the 'night of understanding', as the *sine qua non* of our awakening to God.

It is ignorance of the real; for, if I am conscious of the real, I would not say, 'I want to be spiritual'. All the same, it shows up the reality and dynamism of the spirit in me; for, if I have nothing of the spirit in me, I cannot feel that way. Matter, the opposite of the spirit, or the unreal, cannot push up an aspiration of the above type, as neither matter nor the unreal has any dynamism of its own. How can the unspiritual thirst for the spiritual? How can the unreal hunger for the real? Matter gets its dynamism from the spirit; the unreal owes its existence to the real. So the feeling 'I am not spiritual, I want to be spiritual' is the manifestation of the dynamism of the real, of the spirit in me. I am not conscious of the spirit behind this dynamism, and so the absence of the contact with the spirit manifests as a hunger for it. I am not altogether devoid of the breath of the spirit. The truth of the matter is that I am in touch with it through the form of the unreal. The moment has not come for me to realize that the unreal is an extension of the real. This unpreparedness on my part manifests as hunger, as aspiration. The whole of reality is in that aspiration, 'I want to be spiritual, I am not spiritual'. For the dynamism envelops the whole gamut of reality by the two poles of affirmation and negation. When a light sends out its rays, it is not illumining itself by its rays, as it is already illumined. Its rays penetrate and *accomplish* themselves in the darkness around. The quality of light manifests through darkness. So also the quality and dynamism of the real realize themselves in the domain of the unreal. This domain of the unreal, open to the power of the real, is all the same the domain of ignorance. If the light goes out, it is darkness again. We can even say that darkness serves as the raw material for

light. Herein is the freedom of light—if freedom it can be called—freedom to transform darkness into its own nature. The freedom of the real working in the domain of the unreal transforms ignorance into the real. The moment we feel the ignorance, it transforms itself into light and freedom.

This new vision of ignorance must change our attitude to, and understanding of, it. Now, we are not discouraged when we stand before ignorance. We see it transformed; ignorance is the positive dynamic force of the real working through us. The veins of ignorance pour themselves into the arteries of freedom.

The spirit or the real does not force on us a state of preparedness to recognize this freedom. Anything forced on us as an obligation or necessity does not make us free. We are free to feel freedom's presence or otherwise. To do things under duress or necessity is slavery. The spirit gives us freedom; it is freedom; it is love. All compulsion in love comes from possessiveness, and possessiveness in love is sure to bring about the destruction of love itself. The spirit, in its infinite love and freedom, gives us the liberty to ignore it, and that is the birth of our ignorance. It gives us the liberty even to negate it. In negation, the spirit lives all the more. In negation, the power of the spirit is at its zenith, much more than in affirmation. He who negates the spirit is the spirit, and that which is negated is also the spirit. In negation, the spirit assumes two dimensions, affirmation and negation. In affirmation, it has only one. In negation, reality is touched on the intuitive level. Negation is an affirmation on the intuitive level of reality and a negative affirmation on the perceptual level. For example, I expect the ink-pot to be on my table, and I don't find it there. There is the pen, the writing-pad, etc., but not the ink-pot. I take note of the presence of the pen etc. in and through the first condition, namely, the absence of the ink-pot. It is as though I am repeating to myself whenever I see any other object, 'Oh, this is not the ink-pot'. Here I am touching the ink-pot, which is always absent, on the essence level. I don't see it; but on the in-

tuitive level, I have it. Negation is an intuitive affirmation.

To put ourselves under a necessity, even under a spiritual necessity, is to eclipse our freedom. We do not meditate under necessity, nor do we love God under necessity. We are free to love God or not to love Him. If it is said that loving God is an inner necessity, well, inner necessity is freedom lived. Inner necessity does not compel us or oblige us to do something. It is there like a song in our hearts, like the love we feel for the dearest, never seeking compensations. Necessity presupposes a vacuum and works through expectations and enchantments. Freedom fills up all vacuum. When freedom is lived, how can it be a necessity?

The spiritual Being is not affected or mocked by our attitudes to it. Feeling its presence or absence is our attitude to it. Our attitudes do not determine Being, whereas its freedom is our freedom, our inner light, and our guide. Its dynamism is our dynamism. Its dynamism gives us the liberty to feel its presence or absence—to feel the opposites of knowledge and ignorance.

When I say 'I do not know the Self', I touch the Self by a negation; I intuit it. I have in me to the full the freedom given by the Self, whose two poles are negation and affirmation, ignorance and knowledge. The gamut of spiritual research is this freedom, a freedom to traverse between knowledge and ignorance. The negation of the spirit, when lived intensely, is a fully spiritual state. I am not speaking here of negativity which is dead and is an abstraction. I am speaking of negation as a moment of intense lucidity, when we feel fully the presence of the thing we are deprived of. It is lucid, because it *has* the object deprived of in a subtle form, not in a perceptual form. The vividness of a negative experience like chagrin is painful to us, as it transcends our usual powers of perception. This vividness is comparable to the vividness of dream experience. The dream experience is more vivid than that of waking, because dream enjoys the objects in mentalized form, or subtle form. In other words, in dream, we are the subject and the object at the same

time. In chagrin also, we are compelled to be the subject and the object. I lose a friend. He is in my heart; but I want to see him physically. In this I fail. I feel frustrated, and this frustration, combined with the force of circumstances that deprives me of my friend's physical presence, produces pain and chagrin.

Nostalgia is another form of negation in which the person or thing is intensely felt. In a moment of intense nostalgia, we have the thing fully in us in a subtle form, and we feel its presence as in a dream. Nostalgia is intensity of love in the state of privation of the person or thing. Indian thought considers this state of privation as the shortest cut to identification with that person. This approach to negation makes us better able to accept or face chagrin and negative states. A negative state or chagrin is absence of an expected material condition. But, then, it awakens in us a certain spiritual state, a state full of the object denied. Usually, we are stricken by the absence of the material condition and attach importance to it and ignore to profit by the spiritual state. This is how we are stricken by chagrin and calamities, and we are always scared of them.

If negation has equal or more status with affirmation, then the opposites are the whole of reality. If opposites are the whole of reality, why do we not feel the opposites at the same time? We answer: the moment we have an opposite like heat or pleasure, it solidifies into a feeling, a sentiment, and a memory. The effort of reality to awaken in us at the same time an openness to the opposite is always frustrated by this memory, to which we hold on. The opposites cannot be felt or seen by us at the same time because of our instinctive memory. The sages and the saints, who have destroyed their instinctive memory, are open to all things; they are open to the opposites at the same time, as they are not attached to the one or to the other.

Feeling things is a necessity of our lives, and in wanting to feel, we isolate one opposite from the other. Isolating the opposites is a necessity of our daily lives. Our perception cuts the opposites into two. Our behaviour before the

opposites refuses to recognize them as parts of one reality, and they become abstractions. Existentialist thought says that, in isolating opposites like Being and non-Being, we are making them into abstractions. 'Pure Being and pure non-Being will be two abstractions, whose union alone will be at the base of concrete reality.' Vedānta will say that this union will be at the base of absolute Reality, not of concrete reality. And the difference is great. In Vedānta, absolute Reality is neither Being, nor non-Being. It transcends both. Isolation is an empirical necessity, a permission or concession granted by ultimate Reality.

If we understand the above position, we can no more put the question, 'Can the opposites coexist?' Yes, the opposites can coexist at the same time on the essence plane, not on the existence plane or perceptual plane. If we accept that they can coexist, then we can easily understand the apparent contradiction presented in the feeling 'I know; I don't know'. We often feel this kind of intriguing situation. The basis of knowledge expressed in 'I know' is the Self. The basis of ignorance expressed in 'I do not know' is also the Self. Is not this contradiction 'I know and I do not know', which we often throw off as crazy, presenting us with the whole of the Self?

'I am not spiritual; I want to be spiritual' is an effort to unload the unspiritual in me. It is an effort to liberate myself from something with a positive content, which I feel heavy on me. When I am not conscious of the spirit, this unspiritual has come to sit upon me. This ignorance of the Self is a positive something. I insist on this idea that the ignorance here is positive; for we are in the habit of thinking that ignorance is a simple absence, and we are shocked when we are told it is positive. It is not a simple absence. It is the absence of the real and the presence of the unreal. The absence of the Self is felt as a positive negation, and a positive negation is not simply perceptual, it is conative. It pushes us to knowledge; it awakens the will in us and makes us go for-

ward. In short, it is a positive ignorance that makes us go forward.

To say that ignorance is positive does not necessarily mean that it is permanent or real. If ignorance is real, then all talk of freedom and liberation is useless. We know that we can be free; hence we feel the aspiration. All sacred books say so; all prophets say so. Ignorance is positive and real only for those who feel it. The man with jaundice sees everything yellow. It is so real to him, and not for others. Our dream experience is real and positive so long as it lasts. The case of liberated persons who have transcended ignorance gives us the certitude that ignorance can be defeated. This brings us to the conclusion that ignorance is both real and unreal, real when we feel it and unreal at other times. It is this contradiction that gives a positive content to this ignorance, that gives dynamism to it. When the contradiction intensifies to the zenith, consciousness breaks out and liberation results.

The positive character of ignorance pushes us to destroy the unreal in us. This push to destroy the unreal accomplishes itself in the realm of ignorance. All spiritual effort is to destroy ignorance and not to construct the real. The real cannot be constructed. It is there already. Witness the ancient Vedic prayer: 'Lead me from the unreal to the real, from darkness to light, from death to immortality.'

Usually, we have the notion that discipline will bring us unity. But, then, we do not ask the question, 'What are we disciplining?' Surely, we are not disciplining the real, the spirit. Nor are we disciplining the unreal, for it is a waste of energy to attempt to discipline something that does not exist. Well, it may be said that we are disciplining our tendency to foist our habit on reality. When we impose our habits and needs on reality, it falls into duality, and is cut off from us. Then we feel ourselves distant from it and ignorant of it. On the other hand, when we realize that the real has no need of discipline, that the unreal cannot be disciplined, being non-existent, and that all that we have to do is to discipline and dissipate

our tendency of conceiving a need for discipline, then unity or the real, which always existed, is realized. Thus, we have no journey to make from discipline to unity. Have we to make a journey to come to ourselves? Discipline is discipline because of the unity at its centre, which is its *raison d'être*. In conceiving discipline as a need, we break unity into two, and then make efforts to unify it. Let it not be thought that I am setting out a gospel against discipline. I am making an effort to put reality in the centre of discipline. Then discipline ceases to be discipline. It becomes a spiritual openness to the ever-existing reality in the heart. There is neither waiting nor nostalgia. It is an openness that is constantly flooded by the invading waters of reality in the centre.

The real, the spiritual in us, has no need. It is perfect and above want. We impose our habits of feeling some needs on it, and so it falls into duality. The integrality of Being is broken as a result of our imposing our nature on it. In our grasp, reality appears to need something, to desire to achieve something. From the state of desirelessness, it falls into desire; from unity, it falls into duality; from Being, it falls into thought.

In duality, reality becomes nostalgic for unity. It aspires for unity. All duality is the field where nostalgia for unity springs. Between darkness and light, there is nostalgia for unity. Between good and bad, there is nostalgia for unity. This is *māyā*. *Māyā* is the great nostalgia for Brahman, a nostalgia in which Brahman is brought in the present, in the centre of *māyā*. *Māyā* is the great dynamism in the centre of which Brahman stands immobile, converting *māyā* into Itself at every moment, by Its silent power. *Māyā* is activity, and Brahman is inactivity. In the centre of all activity, there is inactivity, calm. For in the centre is the converting power that is beyond all duality and language. In the centre is real power.

If India's spiritual teaching culminated in mere spiritual inactivity or meditation, it would not have attracted the West as it is attracting

today. The West is attracted by power; it is attracted by activity and the silent power in the centre of activity. Through the symbol of Brahman in the centre of *māyā*, India brings to the West the technique of realizing silent power and calm in the centre of activity. Every activity presupposes a calm in the heart and centre of that activity, which is the intelligent mover that remains unmoved. To be conscious of this centre is to be a master of calm and to conduct activity at the same time. This is India's contribution to world thought. That *māyā*, which is duality and dynamism while giving us the scope for effort and aspirations, has a centre, Brahman, where we can reap silent power and spiritual certitude; that the more we retreat into this home of certitude, the more capable we become to convert duality into certitude and yet be dynamic in action—this is India's contribution to world thought.

Māyā is a dynamism special all to itself; it consumes itself like fire deprived of fuel. The cure of ignorance that is *māyā* is not to be sought outside *māyā*, but in the centre of *māyā*, rather, in our own centre, in our hearts, where Brahman shines. Knowledge is to be sought in the centre of ignorance, for knowledge is covered by ignorance, even as fire is covered by smoke.

In traditional language, in *māyā*, there is a twofold function implicit—there is suppression and superimposition. The reality is suppressed or hidden, and in its place something unreal makes its appearance. The classical instance is that of seeing the snake in the rope, and silver in the mother of pearl. The reality of the pearl is not seen, and the silver is seen. Unity is not seen in the world; instead, multiplicity is seen. There must be something dynamic and powerful in the obscuring principle of *māyā* to cover something and project another. This dynamism makes us forget our real nature and make mistakes. Is it so malicious as to make us commit errors? it may be asked. Well, the answer is that no maliciousness is recognized by us when we commit errors. We commit errors because of the primeval error that is the cause

of all phenomena, the very stuff of our lives. Let Śaṅkara speak of this primeval error:

'Subject and object—the Self and the non-Self—are so radically opposed to each other in notion and in practical life that it is impossible to mistake one for the other; yet we find that mistake is universal, the mistake of superimposing one on the other, and we can never trace it to its source; for our common life cannot do without this initial error. Without identifying the Self (subject) with the non-Self (body, senses, and mind), we cannot describe ourselves in terms applicable to the latter, and say: "I am lean or stout. I am blind or deaf; I feel; I perceive." We unconsciously confound the pure subject or the witnessing consciousness with its object, and, conversely, we confound the ego with the witness. This confusion is a necessary basis or raw material of empirical life. This error is the parent of all other errors in daily life.'

Māyā, the positive ignorance, which separates us from a true vision of ourselves, has many children. Of them, the principal ones are three: doubt, error, and contradiction.

To sum up: Behind the aspiration 'I want to be spiritual, I am not spiritual' hides an ignorance which is positive, an ignorance that points the finger of responsibility to us, but which separates us from realization. The dy-

namism of this positive ignorance envelops in one moment between opposites the whole of reality, positing reality by an affirmation and intuiting it by a negation.

This positive ignorance is *māyā*, in the centre of which is Brahman, as the ever-present principal that converts activity (or *māyā*) into certitude and calm.

All effort to discipline ourselves or liquidate ignorance accomplishes itself in the realm of ignorance or *māyā*. To say that disciplining is in the realm of ignorance is not at all to discredit discipline or undervalue it. On the contrary, it is to conceive discipline as total, as total openness to the reality in us, to place reality in the centre of discipline. When reality, the centre of our being, is in an incessant dynamism to integrate the unreal in us, all that is required of us is to be aware of its presence and stop thinking and doing. There is no journey to make from discipline to unity, even as there is no journey to accomplish to come to ourselves. Perhaps, for many of us, the journey has to be made, because for some it is a fancy to make the journey. Whether we make the journey or not, *māyā's* power is at our disposal. *Māyā* is a great storehouse of power. It is there to be conquered. Ignorance is there waiting to be conquered. There is no conquest; there is only conquering.

KUNTI AND KARṆA

BY KUMARI NONIKA A. HANDOO

'The *Mahābhārata* is a collection of old tales containing diverse stories of seers and sages, of beautiful maids and dutiful wives, of valiant warriors, and of saintly kings. It is also a magnificent *kāvya* or poem describing, in inimitable language, the fury of the battle-field, the stillness of the forest hermitage, the majesty of the roaring sea dancing with billows and laughing with foam, the just indignation of the true

daughter of a warrior line, and the lament of the aged mother of dead heroes.'¹

This richly varied fabric is woven with every possible human situation, and encompasses, within its kaleidoscopic breadth, characters that are always true to life and human. There is so much in it to captivate the imagination and

¹*The Cultural Heritage of India*, First Edition, Vol.I. p.98.

move the heart that it is difficult to pick a few strands and deal with them alone.

One of the most tragic characters of this colossal epic is the lonely figure of Karṇa. Cheated by fate, denied the rights of his birth, he is singularly unfortunate. Forsaken by his family, he stands isolated in his immense and almost epic loneliness. His is a story of a man battling against an overpowering fate that offers only to deny, thus mocking him at every turn. Yet he meets the challenge without bitterness, with heroic courage and dignity that matches the grandeur of his destiny. Karṇa is a tragic hero, who is charged with idealism and nobility of purpose. He is widely known for his generosity; in addition, he is the personification of gratitude. He has been described by Śrī Kṛṣṇa thus: 'In lustre, equal to fire; and in speed, a rival to the wind; matching Yama, the god of death, in his wrath; and having the strength of a lion.'²

His life is intimately linked with that of his mother Kuntī, though ruthless destiny had separated them from each other, thereby rendering the few moments of their meeting specially meaningful and poignant. Kuntī is the embodiment of patience and fortitude. Not only does she accept suffering graciously, but she actually welcomes it. In a very unusual prayer, she says: 'Lord of the universe, may we always have misfortunes, for in suffering alone you are seen; and having seen you, this world is then not real; thus there is release from (the bondage of) birth and death.'³

Torn with doubts and fears, she often wavers in her mind; yet her reactions are so human that we cannot fail to sympathize with her. She is also in a sense lonely, because unshared she bears the burden of her guilt. And the torment that plagues her mind impresses her life with shadows of unspoken grief.

II

It was countless centuries ago that Kuntī and Karṇa lived and died. Far-off events are some-

times cherished by tradition, and they acquire a burnished brilliance of their own. The beautiful and talented Kuntī was the daughter of King Kuntibhoja, and an aunt of Kṛṣṇa. She had been granted a boon by Sage Durvāsas many years before she married Pāṇḍu. The sage had said: 'Fortunate one! by this *mantra*, whichever god you summon, (will come to you and) through his grace, you will have a son.'⁴

One winter day, this young princess felt a strange restlessness in her limbs, as the welcome warmth of the sun lay its caressing fingers on her. Being curious to test the efficacy of the promise, she looked at the ball of fire in the sky and felt irresistibly attracted to the Sun God. She decided that he would be the object of her concentration and prayer. According to the instructions, and with due ceremony, she meditated on this mighty being; and before long, the Sun God stood before her in his brilliant human form. Unable to endure the blinding light, she covered her eyes with her hands and trembled with fear. The epic describes the scene in the following words: 'The Sun God came close to her and spoke to her thus: "Beautiful dark-eyed Kuntī! I have come; say what work dear to your heart I can do."⁵

The alarmed Kuntī tried in vain to convince him that she had called him out of idle curiosity. It was impossible for her, unmarried and chaste as she was, to have anything to do with him. But the Sun God insisted that his visit could not be futile, for, if it was, great disaster would befall her father. Therefore the reluctant Kuntī relented to the uncompromising will of the shining One; and out of this strange union, a child was conceived, known to posterity as Karṇa.

On a stormy night during the monsoon, the shame-stricken and humiliated Kuntī gave birth to an infant in the quiet forsaken recesses of the royal palace. No trumpets heralded the birth of this royal prince; no songs of welcome filled the air; and no gay banners flew in the sky. He was greeted by ominous silence, darkness,

² *Mahābhārata, Karṇaparvan, LXXII.29.*

³ *Bhāgavata, I.8.25.*

⁴ *Mahābhārata, Ādiparvan, CX.7.*

⁵ *Ibid., Ādiparvan, CX.10.*

and thunder; the speechless walls of the labour room were the sentinels that guarded the secret. But the unwanted child lived on, oblivious of the crisis he had caused. The only human witness was a faithful nurse who helped Kuntī through her trial; only these two persons were awake at that hour.

Kuntī's heart leapt as she feasted her tired eyes on her superbly attractive child, born with a *kavaca* (an armour) and ears adorned with divine ear-rings. Karṇa was an unusually handsome child, the image of his resplendent father. He had an extraordinary glow on his body that seemed to lighten the dull walls of the room. Kuntī, in her rapture, lost touch with the sordid reality of the world. Proudly, she told her nurse: 'What a bonny child!' To which the practical-minded nurse replied: 'It is true, but what next?' She had forgotten the ugliness of fate for a moment or two, and this question brought her back to the reality of the situation. Her happiness was broken, and she began to weep. The whimpering of the newly born babe and the sobs of the mother mingled together into a wail of sorrow; but the world outside, heedless and unaware of the intense tragedy enacted within the silent walls of the palace, slept on.

Gradually, the night grew dark and fierce; the angry clouds thundered loudly; and it was raining heavily. Darkness was punctuated by flashes of lightning across the turbulent sky. On a night like this, Kuntī, stifling her maternal instincts, stood up bravely with the child in her arms. It was a bravado born out of desperation. The nurse told her that she must not suffer from guilt or be overcome by emotion, and that this was the time for action and any kind of procrastination would be disastrous. She had made all the necessary arrangements, and suggested that the child be placed in a boat-shaped wooden box skilfully and specially designed for this purpose. It was well ventilated, waterproof, and would float on water. The nurse assured her that, wherever fate would take him, he would achieve eminence and would always be protected and watched by his

all-powerful father, the Sun God. A stream of warm tears rolled down from Kuntī's eyes, as she placed a soft mattress in the box and velvet pillows on the sides. And, finally, with the child in it, she went with her nurse, out in the stormy night, to abandon her very own flesh and blood. The lightning was dancing fiendishly in the sky. Rain soaked, limp and heavy, they proceeded to the Aśva river that flowed near the town. When they reached the river, the nurse put the box down, and Kuntī lifted her sleeping child and hugged him to her bosom. The babe eagerly suckled till he was satisfied; he did not know that he would never again taste that honeyed milk of his mother.

Kuntī's heart was breaking into a thousand fragments as she put the child back into the box, closed the lid, and made a *svastika* sign on the top. Chastising herself, she said: 'Son, why were you born to a wretched woman like me, who is deliberately throwing you into the lap of death? Blessed will be the woman who will rear you up. May your father Sūrya Deva look after you; may you be protected from all quarters; may Varuṇa, the god of water, shield you from harm. Go, my son, go and add to the joy of a woman, and pride of a man.' With these farewell blessings, she put the box on the crest of the swollen river, and her hands trembled as she let it float. This sad scene has been described in the following words: 'Concealing her undesirable deed at that time through fear of family members, Kuntī threw her powerful son Karṇa into the water.'⁶

Kuntī's head reeled as she watched the fish-shaped box being rapidly carried away by the current, going to an unknown destination. She and the nurse returned to the palace, but Kuntī's heart kept following her son, buffeted by waves, to a destiny yet in the making.

Karṇa was picked up and reared to manhood by a feudal lord Adhiratha and his wife Rādhā, who, being childless, were delighted at their unexpected good fortune.

⁶ *Ibid.*, *Sambhava-parvan*, CX.22.

III

Many years passed. Karṇa befriended Duryodhana, his cousin; and in the rivalry between the Pāṇḍavas and the Kauravas, he became the most ardent enemy of his own brothers.

Fate had separated mother and son. Though they saw each other, yet the barriers of society kept them apart. There was no possibility of communication, no outward point of contact, between Kuntī, the Queen Mother of the Pāṇḍavas, and Karṇa, the son of a petty king. Though Kuntī's heart ached with love, she was unable to bestow any token of affection; she could only bless him in her heart.

IV

Thirteen long and anxious years Kuntī spent alone, waiting for her sons, the Pāṇḍavas, to return from banishment. She had grown old, and her patience was almost exhausted; yet sustained by the hope of meeting her sons, she lived on. Now, towards the end of this long separation, instead of tidings of joy, the venerated seer Vidura gave her the disastrous news of the impending war to be commenced in a week. Kuntī's grief knew no bounds. Her inability to see her sons, though they were in the neighbouring Upalava town, was indeed very distressing. Tortured by many doubts, she wondered who would be victorious in the ensuing war. Her heart palpitated to visualize the gruesome consequences of the war between the two branches of the same family. Who would fight against her valiant sons was a question that persistently recurred to her mind. At once, the images of the three bravest opponents came up—Bhīṣma, Karṇa, and Droṇa. Bhīṣma, the beloved grandfather, would spare her sons; and Droṇa, the skilful teacher of warfare, would certainly not soil his hands with the blood of his students. But Karṇa, the only one she really feared, would have no compassion for the Pāṇḍavas, for he would stake his very life to repay his gratitude to his friend Duryodhana. What a sad state of affairs! How repulsive that Karṇa should be so zealous for revenge and should enthusiastically wish to kill his own

brothers! Kuntī heaved a sigh. 'But he is blameless,' she thought, 'the entire fault is mine, for I suppressed the truth that he is my son. Therefore, he has emotionally identified himself with his foster parents Rādhā and Adhiratha.' She resolved that she would clear this tangled web of lies, abandon her natural dignity and reticence, and tell him the whole story. She would try to reunite him with his brothers. She got ready to meet Karṇa and stealthily crept away avoiding the servants and Vidura.

Dressed in severe simplicity, the majestic queen looked elegant and graceful. In joyful anticipation of meeting her eldest son, her hopes were soaring. Lost in her dreams, she walked briskly, but now and again looked surreptitiously to insure that no eyes were spying her. Her arms ached with longing to embrace Karṇa, her first born and abandoned child.

On the banks of the river, she saw Karṇa, the picture of radiance and effulgence. His powerful arms were adorned with gold bracelets. A shimmering yellow silk robe was on his virile shoulders, and a gold necklace glistened on his massive chest. Under the midday sun, his handsome face was a halo itself, and it seemed that another sun, as brilliant as the sun in the sky, was seated on a two-branched tree, shedding light in all directions. This soul of supreme excellence was worshipping the sun. Deeply absorbed in his concentration of the *Gāyatrī mantra*, he did not see his mother. Kuntī was overawed by the spiritual radiance and physical features of her son.

Kuntī wiped her anxious brow and rested in the cool shadow of her son, who stood with unwavering concentration facing the sun. The scorching sun first warmed his head and then his back. Then the afternoon was drawing close, and he turned his face, and was completely taken aback to see Kuntī. Assuming that her visit was for a selfish purpose, he spoke to her with apparent formality, but with obvious sarcasm. He said: 'Revered one, I, the son of Rādhā and Adhiratha, touch your feet. To gain what object, and to fulfil what purpose,

have you taken so much trouble (to visit me)?”

Kuntī could find no words to justify her conduct. Mastering her hesitation, she related the tragic circumstances of his clandestine birth, and said: ‘Dearest, it is unknowingly that you have started despising your brothers; give up this all-consuming hatred, and enjoy the pleasures of the kingdom. Let the world know that Karṇa is not the son of Adhiratha and Rādhā, but the illustrious son of Pāṇḍu.’ When she could not change him, she implored him, and finally appealed to his sense of duty, asking him to obey the request of his aged and suffering mother. Kuntī’s eyes turned misty as she spoke, and a voice was heard from the heavens, which said: ‘O Karṇa (son of Kuntī), the best amongst men, do as your mother bids you, for in the fulfilment of her request lies your well-being.’⁸

All the quarters resounded with the same request; and deep in Karṇa’s heart, he felt that they were voicing the truth. But the course of his life had already been determined, and all the pleadings of his mother, and the command of his father, could not deter him from his path, even though it led to inevitable failure. The resolutions of Kuntī were too late; the die had been cast.

Fate was trampling and weakening his will, but Karṇa gathered up his strength, and said to his mother: ‘I do not doubt your words; it is possible that I am your son, but were you not aware of it when a competition between the young princes was being held on the royal arena? Bhīma publicly mocked at me on the arena by calling me the son of a lowly one. You were present at that function, but you remained silent. Where was the Sun God then? Why did he not say I was his son? As far as you are concerned, I was dead long ago. Had you no compassion when you threw me, a helpless innocent infant, into the river? Do you seriously suggest that I should not call the woman who loved and cherished me Mother? What motherly acts have you performed to-

wards me? Like a piece of dirt, I was cast aside, forsaken for ever.’

One by one, the frustrations of his perverse destiny found expression; and he poured out the bitterness of his heart. He said again: ‘Today, for the first time, to suit your selfish end, you call me son and play the role of an affectionate mother. What right have you to preach what my duties are? Are there no obligations for a mother?’ ‘By throwing me into the river, you separated me from my community, stole my due honours. I would have had all the privileges of a Kṣatriya—married a princess, sat on the royal throne, and commanded prestige. But you have robbed me of all these joys.’

Karṇa’s face turned red with rage, and he added: ‘Now, on the eve of war, you have brought a degrading proposal of peace!’ Kuntī’s head hung low in humiliation, and she was terrified at the volcanic fury of her son; she wept. Undaunted by her tears, Karṇa said: ‘Should I be unfaithful to my friend, as you have been to me? You would like that very much! I have for many years enjoyed his patronage; and now, in his hour of need, I cannot betray him. The world would loathe me for this treachery. Arjuna, renowned for his prowess, is known to be jealous of my skill at war; and if I join him now, all the tongues will wag the ugly tale that Karṇa, the coward, yielded through fear and weakness. How many mouths will you be able to seal? May I be punished for disobeying you; yet, on no condition can I accept this proposition and forsake Duryodhana, nor will I spare your sons on the battle-field. I am irrevocably committed; and come what may, I must fulfil my promise to him.’ True, Kuntī’s mission was selfish to a great extent, but it was also prompted by the worthy motive of averting the impending catastrophe. It was her firm conviction that Duryodhana, being deserted by Karṇa, would make peace with her sons, and the two conflicting branches of the family would live harmoniously. In great despair, she said: ‘Son, must I return empty-handed? If this be the will of God, I humbly accept it.’

⁷ *Ibid.*, *Bhagavadyaṇaparvan*, CXXXXV.1.

⁸ *Ibid.*, *Bhagavadyaṇaparvan*, CXXXXVI.2.

The soft-hearted Karṇa's reserve broke down with pity for his mother, and he wept like a child. He said: 'Alas, my life is in vain. Why was I born? For I have not added to the happiness of anyone. I became a source of grief to my mother, and extenuating circumstances forced her to abandon me. I always depended on strangers and filled my empty stomach with the left-overs of food. Though born in a Kṣatriya family, I was bereft of caste and was insulted on my low birth. My own people became aliens; and my blood brothers, my greatest enemies. I even tried to poison my brothers, whom I should have protected and loved. I was fed on scorn by the elders of the family. My grandfather Bhīṣma rebuked me before everyone; and unable to retaliate, I had to endure the indignity. I was unjustifiably cursed by Paraśurāma. Though having a right by birth to become his disciple, I had to lie in order to acquire knowledge. I could not serve those who reared me. I was for ever cringing before my benefactors. Life has been a never-ending series of misfortunes for me.'

'My life has been wasted, because I have identified myself with an unworthy cause. Once again, by disappointing my mother and flouting my father's command, I commit a heinous crime. Though I am the son of the universally worshipped Sūrya Deva, yet society insults and shuns me. What can this be, but the hand of destiny? Forgive me for my sins, mother; and let it not be said that you returned without a gift from me, for Karṇa is known for his charity, and does not send away anyone empty-handed.'

'I have publicly taken an oath that I shall fight Arjuna. I know I cannot kill him, because he is protected by Śrī Kṛṣṇa himself, and his victory is certain. But if perchance I can lay my hands on him, I shall not spare him. For your sake, I promise not to kill my other brothers, even if it is in my power.' And he added: 'O glorious one, your five sons can never die. If I kill Arjuna, then, including me, there will be five; but if Arjuna kills me, then

your five sons are still there.'⁹ 'I can promise no more.'

Kuntī was relieved to hear this, and said: 'Son, remember your word.' The evening shadows lengthened as Kuntī walked back. Karṇa felt a gigantic destiny encircling him, and he was an insignificant helpless figure, dedicating his action to what had already been willed and planned.

V

War spells a grave calamity at all times, but a strife between the members of the same family has a particular poignancy added to the disaster. Thousands of warriors answered to the martial call on either side, participated in the war, and died in this devastating battle. Karṇa, the commander-in-chief of the Kauravas, fought valiantly and, like a true soldier, died bravely on the battle-field. As his death approached, his chariot got stuck in the soft earth, and with pathos that is truly heart-breaking, he said: 'I followed the path of righteousness as is laid down in the scriptures, but *dharma*, instead of protecting me, is killing me. Thus it is evident that *dharma* also is controlled by the deity of fate, and does not always protect its followers.'¹⁰

The nobility of Karṇa remained undiminished, though he allied himself with a less worthy cause. In spite of this, he crowned himself with the glory of dying at the hands of the hero Arjuna, with his acts of charity, and with his unfailing loyalty to Duryodhana; more so, by the respect he earned from the best among the enemy, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. This was by far his most splendid achievement. In the deafening clamour of the battle, Kṛṣṇa asks Arjuna not to treat Karṇa disdainfully, because 'Karṇa is strong, proud, well-versed in skilled archery, a famous charioteer, excellent in warfare, and a diplomat—one who understands time and place'.¹¹ Paying one of the finest tributes to Karṇa, Kṛṣṇa further said 'that he considered him (Karṇa)

⁹ *Ibid.*, *Bhāgavadgītā*, CXXXVI.23.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, *Karṇaparvan*, XC.86.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, *Karṇaparvan*, LXXII.26.

to be a great warrior equal to, if not better than, him (Arjuna)'.¹¹

Officially, war terminated three weeks after Karṇa fell, but, in a way, it came to an end with his death. The tempo and the fury of war slackened off considerably, and rapidly the Kauravas were swept away. The sky was rent by the cries of weeping widows and orphans.

For the peace of the departed souls, and for the consolation of those left behind, Yudhiṣṭhira performed the last rites of all the kings and soldiers on the banks of the Gaṅgā. To each one of his departed friends and kinsfolk, he gave the last offerings of water, lamenting over each individual; he did not omit anyone. When the ceremony was completed, Kuntī whispered to him that he had forgotten just one person, namely, Karṇa. Surprised and offended, Yudhiṣṭhira retorted: 'Why should I do that? Let a Brāhmaṇa or a Sūta perform his last rites.' To which Kuntī said: 'My son, Karṇa was one of our family; in fact, he was my son and your brother.' Shocked at this revelation, Dharmarāja collapsed. And when he came back to his senses, he could utter nothing but a piteous cry, saying: 'O brother Karṇa, where have you gone?' To think of Karṇa was an unendurable agony for him. He said: 'Having killed my brother, I am not worthy to live; I wish to die immediately and meet Karṇa in heaven and humbly beg his pardon for my sins.' Gradually, Kuntī unfolded the whole story, while Yudhiṣṭhira rebuked her for having been disloyal to Karṇa and himself. What severe injustice had been meted out! 'If only I had known,' he said, 'I would never have fought against him, and this dreadful war would not have taken place.' Dharmarāja sadly remembered how Karṇa could have killed him, but did not. He was truly invincible, and had to be killed by unfair tactics. Repenting for the events of the past, his heart was overwhelmed with remorse. Yudhiṣṭhira said that, strangely enough, he had hardly ever looked at Karṇa's face; somehow his eyes always gazed at Karṇa's feet. Whenever he saw the feet of his brother Karṇa, he thought of mother Kuntī.

He considered this resemblance rather inexplicable, but dismissed it as insignificant. He said: 'Surprisingly, I never felt any resentment against Karṇa; once, for a moment or two, my pulse was quickening to temper, but my anger melted away at the sight of Karṇa's feet, the replica of mother Kuntī's, and my heart overflowed with love.'

VI

Sixteen years after the war, Kuntī decided to retire into the Himalayas with Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Gāndhārī. She said she had enjoyed wealth enough, and it was time to take to a life of asceticism. Besides, the zest for living had been drained by the heavy losses of war; victory had been gained at a heavy price. All the same, to give up the comforts of her palace, which she well deserved after years of hardship, was indeed very praiseworthy; and withdrawal from the world at the time of success was highly admirable.

Once, Sage Vyāsa visited Kuntī in her forest hermitage, and she served him with respect and devotion. Unburdening her mind, she told him the tragic story of her life, how Karṇa was born and how she deserted him. Vyāsa listened to her with sympathy and granted her a boon. She said to him: 'You are (like) my father-in-law; I have related everything to you. Whether I sinned or not, I wish to see that first born child of mine. O Lord, please fulfil this desire of mine.'¹² 'So shall it be,' he replied, 'tonight, you will see your son in a divine body.'

The evening stretched into an endless space of time. Splashes of red were scattered over the sky. Finally, the sun set, bequeathing to the world a calm serenity. Peace pervaded all the quarters; and nature, breathless with expectation, did not rustle a single leaf. Kuntī, the five Pāṇḍavas, Gāndhārī, and Dhṛtarāṣṭra, all agog, waited for the memorable event on the bank of the Gaṅgā. Slowly the cloak of darkness covered everything. Then, all of a sudden, the clapping of hoofs was heard from the water; the placid river was astir. One by one, out of

¹² *Ibid.*, *Putradarśanaparvan*, XXX.18.

the water, all the dead warriors appeared in celestial bodies, identical to their former selves, riding on chariots. It was a long procession with all the pageantry and colour of imperial soldiers.

Kuntī rushed to embrace her long separated, beloved Karṇa. She wept with joy, for this was the happiest moment of her life; and unable to speak, her eloquence of love became one of silence.

Yudhiṣṭhira reverentially touched the feet of Karṇa, who was happily seated on his mother's lap. Karṇa embraced him, and kissed the foreheads of the other brothers. Again and again, he took them in his arms and lovingly asked them how they fared. Without a trace of resentment, Karṇa told Dharmarāja not to blame himself or reproach their mother for what had been destined. The night was sweet

and tender, and there was so much to talk about. But the time flew, and the moments of perfect bliss soon ended. All the dear ones disappeared one by one into the sacred waters of the Gaṅgā. Kuntī was left alone with her sons. The dream dissolved into nothingness, and all that remained was a memory of those rapturous moments. Kuntī had fondled and caressed her beloved Karṇa for the last time; the greatest yearning of her heart had been gratified. She spent the rest of her days in tranquillity, peacefully meditating in the sylvan forest, while Karṇa enjoyed the promise given to all brave warriors—bliss and happiness in heaven. With a note of reconciliation, the curtain closes on all the grand and noble characters of the epic; the fierce jealousy as well as the biting scorn ends, but something of the grandeur and poignancy still lingers on.



EXTRA-SENSORY PERCEPTION : ITS SIGNIFICANCE

BY DR. B. V. KISHAN

The sources of human knowledge are varied. If perception were to be regarded as the only source of knowledge, then human knowledge would have remained pitiably limited and sketchy. Next to perception, inference is an important source of knowledge. The religious scriptures enshrine the experiences of mystics and prophets. Experiences gained through ascetic and religious practices are regarded as holy and valuable. Through the ages, they have given solace and insight into the perplexing problems of life and destiny, and guided the formulation of ideas about the shape of things lying as real outside the reach of sensory perception and rational thinking. But the modern tendency has been to reject everything which is not based on empirical and positive grounds, and it has created a sceptic attitude towards the efficacy of knowledge and experience which are outside the reach of direct perception and

which defy the verifiability of scientific laws and techniques.

In order to comprehend the true value of mystic and spiritual experiences and formulate a correct and balanced idea about them, the scientific and experimental approach to understand the nature of extra-sensory perception and its different modes of expression in the form of telepathy and clairvoyance has proved to be of immense value, in spite of the fact that mystic experiences are regarded as radically different from, and higher than, telepathy and clairvoyance. The systematic exploration of the human mind and its working on the conscious, supra-conscious, and subconscious levels provided valuable information. The supra-conscious mind has been consistently analysed by psycho-analysts, and their attempts yielded significant results. The activity of the supra-conscious mind appears to remain beyond the

application of the concepts of space and time. The present knowledge of mind with its vast potentialities and unknown depths is too meagre. Sensory perception and cognition are no doubt essential and valid, but the possibility of other modes of perception cannot be ruled out completely. Besides the normal sensory perception, there may be other modes of perception. Extra-sensory perception appears to be one of these modes. Although the understanding of this mode of perception is not complete, its existence has been recognized by eminent psychologists and scholars. In the presence of the vast experimental data gathered in the course of thousands of experiments, in order to prove its existence and nature, the truth of its existence in man could not be denied. The experiments conducted have proved beyond suspicion that extra-sensory perception is not a myth. Hence the knowledge gained through extra-sensory channels, without the help of the sensory medium, as in mystic and other similar experiences, cannot be branded as hallucinatory and false.

Mystic experience is not within the reach of all men. But the inherent capacity of experiencing it is not denied to any individual. In the case of extra-sensory perception, we find, on the basis of reports from psychologists, that only in certain individuals the capacity of extra-sensory perception is present in a developed form, but this capacity is not absent in others. It lies dormant, and can be sharpened after rigorous practice. The presence of the capacity of extra-sensory perception in man is demonstrable. 'In our own species, however, extra-sensory perception occurs, and may be demonstrated, in many normal people in undeniable fashion. In the light of the foregoing observations, it seems to be a fairly dependable and persistent capacity, when it is given proper conditions for its functioning. These are facts which any comprehensive biology must face and study, if it is to treat faithfully of the natural history of our species.'¹ According to

¹ J. B. Rhine, *Extra-sensory Perception* (Faber & Faber), p. 220.

J. B. Rhine, the capacity of extra-sensory perception is an integral part of the biological equipment of man, and it is equally present in all.

II

The extra-sensory powers are diversified. But the chief modes of them, which have been scientifically tested by psychologists, are telepathy and clairvoyance, and along with them could be mentioned pre-cognition and retro-cognition. Telepathic communication functions between two minds, irrespective of the space separating the one from the other. One seems to project its thoughts towards the other, forming the other end of the line of communication, which, in turn, contacts the projected mind and deciphers the content and meaning involved in such communication. According to psychologists, the physical laws of radiation cannot explain this phenomenon, since the intensity of radiation declines with the square of the distance. And only the theory of the minds' projection proves successful.² The subject-matter of communication need not be limited to any current problem. Occurrences of the past as well as of the future could equally form the subject-matter of telepathic communication. Though the accuracy attained in telepathic communications is never hundred per cent, yet they have established beyond controversy the significance of extra-sensory perception.

Extra-sensory perception is understood as a mental process. It is not physical, and it is present in man. This force could well prove many things about man and his potentialities, and it can even become a medium of sublimation from the world of matter and objects into a different world of existence which is non-physical. It can even prove the existence of certain laws which are working in man and guiding him in a definite direction. In religion, the presence of such a power in man and the importance of its recognition have always been emphasized. Like telepathy, in clairvoyance also, the presence as well as the genuineness of

² *Ibid.*, p. 226.

extra-sensory perception becomes evident. In clairvoyance, the subject becomes aware of the things which are happening at a far-off place, outside the normal range of sight, hearing, and speech. Including other historical examples, the description of the incident of fire raging in Stockholm given by Emanuel Swedenborg in 1789, who at that time was hundreds of miles away, proves the presence of the faculty of clairvoyance in man.

III

The nature of extra-sensory perception as being essentially non-physical has been established by research: 'No one, not even a psychologist, can reasonably doubt that E.S.P. is a mental process; and that there seems to be a good ground for regarding it as a natural part of the endowment of mind. It is a more delicate mental process than most, suffering easily from dissociation or distraction, and returning again with reintegration of effort and improved attention.'³

The importance of extra-sensory perception, and how delicate and elusive it remains to all the efforts of psychologists, has been emphasized and accepted by them. In the presence of different theories about it, attempts have been made to solve the controversial issue of extra-sensory perception by the scientific study of data provided by reliable mediums and other instances of the occurrences of extra-sensory perception. In the course of these studies, it became clear that even a mild vacillation on the part of the subject produces its effect on extra-sensory perception. It 'is inhibited, too, by conflict, as in self-doubt (Linzmayr), doubt as to the possibility or wisdom of a procedure (Cooper and Pearce) or in conflict of desires (Linzmayr). It requires with most subjects rather good abstraction and close attention to the task in hand. It is less resistant to dissociation than sensory perception or even than simple reasoning.'⁴

³ *Ibid.*, p. 194.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 194.

Extra-sensory perception has been compared with other creative and productive faculties of man, in order to assess the nature and content of it. Extra-sensory perception is 'more like creative intellectual or artistic synthesis; yet it is not so fatiguing as these; and, unlike these, can be speeded up rapidly (faster than I can record); and it is not learned or developed, as far as we know yet, as are these; it is unanalysable introspectively as are these mostly. But it substitutes for other forms of cognition, for visual or auditory perception, rational judgment or recall. It inter-operates with them, combines in any way, and works from a wide range of motivation, for money or for kindness, for play or for display, for science or for courtesy. It is like the sensory functions rather than rational cognition in its lack of development (if this is actually a fact, as it seems). But it is not like them in localization, feeling of real contact experienced, need of orientation to function, resistance to distraction, and dissociation. It is simple cognition, so far as subjective analysis goes yet; but it uses memory, visual or other imagination—in fact, all of mind that is needed—in its functioning'.⁵

IV

The strength or weakness of extra-sensory perception is related to the mastery attained by the individual over his mind. Extra-sensory perception, to be intense and powerful, seems to need the medium of a disciplined mind, because only a disciplined mind can attain the power of concentration. The element of concentration has been much emphasized by eminent modern psychologists, including J. B. Rhine. 'The most important mental condition associated with success in E.S.P. is one that the popular mind has long recognized in such connections, though it needs some technical refinement for the purpose here in mind; I refer to "concentration". It is not a technical term in psychology, to my knowledge, but it refers to a mental condition that most people fairly well

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 195.

understand and agree upon. Obviously concentration of attention is implied, and, if one is trying to perceive by a non-sensory mode, concentration of attention would mean withdrawing attention from the sensory fields and directing it into another route. Hence we should have relaxation of all sensory functions and abstraction from all sense stimuli. This would necessarily accompany the concentration of attention upon a special extra-sensory function.⁶

The power of extra-sensory perception seems to be deep-rooted in the make-up of man, and it has been regarded as a biological phenomenon, having tremendous value to the human species.⁷

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 180-81

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 220.

V

Different extra-sensory powers point towards a realm where physical laws are not enforceable, and where concepts of space and time are no more effective. This may be a pointer that the revealing of a new phase of reality and existence through the medium of extra-sensory perception of a superior kind is, in fact, real. Even if few were able to penetrate the higher phases of life and reality, does it not become evident that a *higher type* of extra-sensory perception is possible, which is very subtle and powerful? Such an extraordinary perception could be nothing other than yogic perception, which is based on scientific grounds. But the attempts of modern psychologists to prove the existence of extra-sensory perception should not be regarded as insignificant.

HOW BEAUTIFUL THE GIFT!

BY PRINCIPAL B. S. MATHUR

Rabindranath Tagore writes:

One morning in the flower garden,
A blind girl came to offer me a
Flower chain in the cover of a lotus leaf.
I put it round my neck, and tears came to my
eyes.
I kissed her and said, 'You are blind even as
flowers are.
You yourself know not how beautiful is your
gift'.

Here is a simple incident, imagined and put in words of simplicity and sincerity. But there is something significant, really something of penetrating importance, behind all this simplicity. There is a philosophy deep as life itself, calculated to communicate the meaning of life as it is to be lived, so as to give us plenty of joy, consolation, and strength. Life might look a tale of sorrow, but it is not to be taken as such. It is to be considered an experience of joy, an

experience that is to ring out all that is inside and that may encompass man with sorrow. Man is not a small thing; there is substance inside, divinity in its essence. This divinity is to fulfil itself, as it is to culminate in courage and ability on the part of man to face life's complications. Man has to rise; he has to complete his story of achievements; he has to overcome difficulties. He has to write his 'progress', his liberation from ignorance, from darkness that makes him appear small in the world. That is the real emergence of man, placed in a happy position to reveal his inner sacredness in his deeds, dreams, and visions. This is to live in the image of God, with a message of happiness and of no fear to all.

A blind girl to Rabindranath Tagore, indeed, to all thinking men with sympathy, penetration, and understanding, is not ugly. She is like the flowers she carries. Her worth she seems to communicate to her gifts, and they are the flow-

ers, beautiful and touching. Such a beauty only the eyes that see can see; blind eyes that most people have cannot be near realizing this beauty. The eyes that see this beauty cannot be with us for the mere asking. Much effort is needed. Right type of education, training of mind and heart, and also of hand, is urgently needed. That education which teaches us discrimination to draw a line between the right and the wrong, and which enables us to see the dark things of life and the gifts behind darkness, is what really matters.

Rabindranath Tagore developed a mind, a philosophical outlook, steeped in realism and sacredness because of his constant adventure of light and learning. He had eyes to see beyond things, behind things as they appeared to the world. Naturally, tears came to his eyes; and he could imagine a blind girl kissed by him for her gifts of flowers.

In the world, there are so many 'blind girls' to be kissed—such a fund of beauty and wealth of joy behind the unhappy and dismal things of life. This world of beauty and sacredness, of joy unspeakable, of adventures unheard of, indeed, of vast possibilities of achievements, is all meant for us; it cannot be a monopoly of a few minds. Here is God's plenty, God's freedom; and it can be our own to enjoy and share, only if we get into a proper frame of mind. This is Tagore's philosophy of life.

Tagore is keen on a mental attitude that can transform life into a sweet experience. When this mental attitude becomes fully developed, then this world of darkness, of mystery difficult to penetrate, resolves itself into a perennial harmony and rhythm. A new music, divine and earthly alike can be heard in a tremendous measure. Tagore sings:

The morning sea of silence broke into
Ripples of bird songs; and the flowers
Were all merry by the roadside; and
The wealth of gold was scattered through
The rift of the clouds, while we busily
Went our way and paid no heed. . . .
At last, when I woke from my slumber

And opened my eyes, I saw thee standing
By me, flooding my sleep with thy smile.
How I had feared that the path was long
And wearisome, and the struggle to reach
Thee was hard.

Here is the consummation of Tagore's philosophy, and also of his desires; they have culminated in fulfilment. Silence—call that darkness—has ended; and there is unlimited joy—there are, it looks, endless songs.

We have here a philosophy of hope and achievement, of real progress, that can put round our neck a flower chain, delicate, sweet, and evergreen. In Tagore's own words, out of the depth of one's heart, one can say: 'More flowers will come to you with perfume and pride, O World!'

Tagore thinks plainly from a simple experience—that experience may be real or imagined—but from experience, he passes on to an idea of universal application, an idea that can soon pass into reality, into a life of joy and fulfilment. That is how he combines imagination with reality. He might appear to escape from life, but, ultimately, he escapes into life, comes to embrace and touch life. He is one with life ultimately. He is not a philosopher or a poet of escape, but of life itself. He is essentially a man with a message. That he has a message does not detract from the value of his art. Reality has passed into his thoughts, into his feeling, and into his earnest heart. And as it comes out from his mind, from his heart, it becomes transformed into a thing of literary and artistic value. It is always a thing of beauty and of joy for ever. There is beauty born of reality in his art or in his compositions, and this beauty delights and instructs simultaneously for all time. What he says or writes is the near thing, an ideal imitation, an embodiment of life, communicated most artistically.

Tagore shows how sublimity and depth can be wedded to simplicity. He seems to take us back to pristine glory—glory untouched by snobbery and sophistication; yet he is essentially modern in his appeal.

Time with Tagore is continuous, and so is his appeal to us. He is with us, and will be with us for ever. One cannot imagine Tagore being blind of his gift. He lived in beauty and communicated it to us. He has thrown a shroud round us, not to shut us out, but to shut us in. What a fountain of joy, beauty, and sweetness! One has just to dip in to be with Tagore, to be with life itself.

Tagore's idea is to eradicate ignorance. It is ignorance that puts us away from reality. Life is real, and it is to be lived. There might be sorrow, but it can vanish the moment we behave and think as we should—people of light and illumination. There is beauty, and it is hidden from us. We have to train our eyes to see beauty in apparent ugliness. This is Tagore's philosophy.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

TO OUR READERS

Swami Vivekananda's lecture on 'The Soul and God', delivered on March 23, 1900, in the San Francisco Bay Area, was published for the first time in *Vedanta and the West*, No. 135 (January-February 1959). Releasing the lecture for publication, its editor says: 'Swami Vivekananda's lecture was discovered in one of Ida Ansell's notebooks shortly after her death in January 1955. She had evidently recorded it in shorthand at the time of its delivery, as she did the other fifteen lectures of Swamiji published in this magazine during the past three years. Omissions in the text because of missing phrases are indicated in the printed version of the lecture by three dots. Matter added for the purpose of clarification has been placed in square brackets.' We are reproducing this lecture for the benefit of our readers with the kind permission of Swami Prabhavananda, Head of the Vedanta Society of Southern California, Hollywood, U.S.A. The copyright of this lecture belongs to the Society. ...

In recent years, the country has been helplessly witnessing separatist tendencies among different linguistic groups, which completely ignore the national unity of India that has existed for centuries. The editorial this month lays special emphasis on this concept of national unity, which was based on spiritual ideals. It is these spiritual ideals which held the coun-

try together as one unit, despite diversity in language and dress, customs and manners.

The same theme has been presented in a graphic way by Swami Chidbhavananda, Head of the Ramakrishna Mission Tapovanam, Tirupparaiturai, Tiruchi District, Madras State, in his article on 'India: The Symbol of Spiritual Unfoldment'. The readers will find his comparison of some of the well-known sacred spots of India with the yogic *cakras* of the human system highly interesting. The Swami also points out the similarity between the physical positions of the yogic *cakras* and these sacred spots, lying right through the vast country from Cape Kanyakumari to Mount Kailas, and explains the profound spiritual significance of each one of them. ...

'Divine Grace and the Law of Karma' is an important problem that engages the attention of all the philosophical and religious schools of India. The article by Dr. Shashi Bhusan Das Gupta, M.A., Ph.D., Ramtanu Lahiri Professor of Bengali Language and Head of the Department of Modern Indian Languages, University of Calcutta, makes a detailed survey of the problem, particularly from the standpoint of the dualistic schools. ...

The Indian tradition holds that the subjective attitude and approach of the artist are similar to those of a devout worshipper. This

point is well brought out in the illustrated article entitled 'Tradition in Indian Art' by Sri Ajit Mookerjee, M.A., F.R.A.I., Director of Crafts Museum, New Delhi. Sri Mookerjee is an authority on art, and has written several books on Indian art. The pictures appearing in this article are from Sri Mookerjee's own collections. . . .

Among the popular deities of the Hindu pantheon, Naṭarāja, representing 'the orderly dance of the spheres, the perpetual movement of atoms, evolution and involution', occupies a unique place. The illustrated article on 'Śrī Śiva-Naṭarāja' by Sri P. Sama Rao, B.A., B.L., of Bellary, makes a comparative study of some of the well-known images of Naṭarāja in stone, metal, and paint now extant. . . .

In his article on 'Points of Contact between Hinduism and Islam', Swami Tejasananda, formerly Editor of *Prabuddha Bharata*, and now Principal of the Ramakrishna Mission Vidyamandira, Belur Math, District Howrah, West Bengal, makes a devout study of the fundamental doctrines of Islam and points out their close similarity to those of Hinduism. He also makes an earnest plea for the mutual understanding of the essential religious ideas and ideals of the two communities with sympathy, love, and respect. . . .

Rabindranath Tagore, whose birth centenary is being celebrated this year, had a comprehensive philosophy of education, which aimed at an all-round development of the human personality—physical, mental, moral, and spiritual. Dr. Sudhir Kumar Nandi, M.A., D.Phil., Lecturer in Philosophy, Maulana Azad College, Calcutta, offers in his article some 'Thoughts on Tagore's Philosophy of Education'. . . .

The Vedāntic concept of *māyā*, or *avidyā*, or ignorance is unique. The power of ignorance is positive and dynamic; yet, in the ultimate analysis, it is unreal. Hence it is said to be inscrutable. The article on 'Ignorance and Its Inscrutable Power' by Swami Nityabodhananda, of the Ramakrishna Order, is based on a speech he gave at the Sorbonne University (France) some time back. The Swami has organized a Vedānta centre in Geneva, Switzerland, where he stays, and carries on the Vedānta work in other parts of Europe as well. . . .

The story of Kuntī and her son Karṇa, whom she abandoned as a mere babe under extenuating circumstances, is one of the most touching tragedies of the *Mahābhārata*. Kumari Nonika A. Handoo, B.A. (Hons.), of Bombay, narrates this story succinctly and feelingly in her article on 'Kuntī and Karṇa', which has been translated and adapted from the Hindi life of Karṇa by Sri Prabhu Datta Brahmachari. . . .

While modern psychology is conducting experiments to prove the existence of extra-sensory perception, the yogic spiritual discipline in India has always recognized and accepted it as true and valid. The article on 'Extra-sensory Perception: Its Significance' by Dr. B. V. Kishan, M.A., Ph.D., of the Department of Philosophy, Andhra University, Waltair, is a brief but lucid exposition of the subject. . . .

In his brief article 'How Beautiful the Gift!', Principal B. S. Mathur, of M. M. H. College, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh, brings out the essence of Tagore's philosophy, viz., 'to see beauty in apparent ugliness'.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

MAN IN SEARCH OF IMMORTALITY. By CHARLES R. SALIT. *Published by Philosophical Library, 15 East 40th Street, New York-16. Pages 185. Price \$3.50.*

Though man is mortal, there is ever present in his heart a longing for immortality. But in his ignorance, he seeks this immortality in physical terms. He little realizes that life itself is one and immortal. In the continuum of life, various forms make their appearance. After a certain duration, depending on many factors, they disappear or die. Death does not make for the end of life. In fact, what becomes discontinuous in finite space of our universe becomes continuous in the infinite space of Eternity.

This all-important and vital subject has been discussed by the learned author, Dr. Charles R. Salit, in the book under review, in a manner remarkable for clarity of thought and refreshing candour. His thesis may briefly be summed up in his own words as follows.

'It is said that the only permanent thing in the world is "change" itself. . . . Change is synonymous with danger or even death, while stability is synonymous with peace, well-being, or even life itself. . . . All things in motion seek rest. And all things are in motion, and there is no rest. . . . The search must go on seemingly for ever. In seeking rest, we seek life, not death.'

'In our daily lives, we are in perpetual quest for greater security. We save money, accumulate wealth, in order to purchase greater security. We forgo immediate security for a better one. We all try to ameliorate our condition, whatever that may be, as we see it.'

'This urge for rest, stability, permanence, security is fundamental, so broad, so universal that very often we lose sight of the forest for the trees.'

'The truth of the matter is that life can never be reconciled with death; we all want to live for ever! And that spells immortality in any language. The object of life is to survive death, to achieve immortality. There is no other aim or goal than this.'

'The instinct in man to survive death is so persistent, so intense that he projects life beyond the curtain of death through the instrumentality of God. God never dies. He is the constant in the world of change. . . . The concept of God as a constant, which man approaches as a limit, is the fundamental principle in man's evolution. This sets his direction; this sets the pace of his progress.'

Dr. Salit is endowed with a rare insight and, in dealing with the subject, he goes straight to the fundamentals of life and living. The book will amply repay a devout study by the philosopher as well as the layman.

J. S.

TWO THOUSAND TONGUES TO GO. (THE ADVENTURES OF THE WYCLIFFE BIBLE TRANSLATORS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD TODAY). BY ETHEL E. WALLIS AND MARY A. BENNETT. *Published by Hodder & Stoughton Ltd., London E.C. 4. Pages 319+32 pages of photographs. Price 16s. net.*

The missionary's zeal is proverbial. When it has for its basis a simple faith in the power of Christ's message to do good, and is inspired by Christian charity, it becomes beautiful indeed and merits admiration. In the book under review, such a story of a band of selfless workers dedicated to the task of giving the 'word of God' to every tribe in the world in its own language is told in a fascinating manner.

The book is developed from an article of the same name in *The Reader's Digest*, April 1959. It all began in 1917, when Mr. Cameron Townsend, a frail-looking undergraduate from California, went to Guatemala under the auspices of the Bible House of Los Angeles, as a salesman of Spanish bibles. Here, he made the discovery that the Red-Indian tribes could not receive Christ's word unless it was given in their own language. This meant the colossal task of learning their dialect, inventing a script for it, and then translating the Bible in the new language thus created. Townsend was undaunted. He undertook the work with his characteristic faith in Lord Jesus and found that it brought in its turn rich dividends. The adamant wall of the native's unsociability was broken. Townsend had found that love and sympathy was the only language understood by every human being.

It is an absorbing story—how from this humble beginning the later Wycliffe Summer Training Camp for Prospective Bible Translators was started in 1934, at Chicago, and, still later, the world-wide Wycliffe Bible Translators Inc. Today, Wycliffe translators are working in five continents, even in the remotest jungles of Peru, Brazil, and New Guinea. At least, five persons laid down their lives for the cause. More than 1,000 volunteers, men and women, all inspired by a dynamic faith and enthusiasm, have brought to these long-neglected tribes literacy, health, and civilization

along with the ennobling message of Christ. Mr. Cameron Townsend is still its honoured founder-leader, loved and respected by the members of this world-organization. So far, he and his evangelical army has entered 175 different language groups ; but he feels that they have before them still 'two thousand tongues to go'.

One significant feature of the book is that it is free from all bigotry. To the agnostics of the world today, the work of Wycliffe Bible Translators is a refreshing reminder of the fact that even now religion is the most potent force in raising man to heights of nobility and humanism.

S. S.

THE MIRAGE OF A CLASSLESS SOCIETY.
BY M. V. PATWARDHAN. *Published by Chetana Ltd., 34 Rampart Row, Bombay-1. 1959. Pages xxxiv+335. Price Rs. 12.50.*

The Mirage of a Classless Society is a book that has come into existence as a strong reaction to a biting stimulus. It is quite creditable that Sri Patwardhan should have pursued the subject to its logical conclusion, being provoked seriously by the stinging remarks of one of his Harijan students that Hinduism is the worst of all religions. Many a time, remarks are made and bypassed without any serious effort to discover the truth of the assertions, either positive or negative, made on the spur of the moment due to deep-seated individual prejudices, but seldom do we come across a person who would push the matters to their eventual conclusions on a scientific basis. Sri Patwardhan's analysis, however, seems to take him to the other extreme of an assertion that the establishment of a totally classless society is a mirage, and hence, by implication, he seems to justify the present stratification of Hindu society on the basis of the caste system. After an elaborate analysis of the functional division of societies in accordance with the 'law of action', which he claims to have discovered for the first time, he arrives at the following conclusion: 'Every functioning social unit, therefore, must possess four classes if it is to work at all. No society can exist if any one of these classes is absent. A social functioning unit with one class is an impossibility. It is Utopian. It is no more than a crowd and, for all practical purposes, a dead society' (pp. 180-81).

An elaborate cogitation and ratiocination seems quite unnecessary to come to the commonplace conclusion, which could be arrived at purely on a *priori* grounds, that every society which does actually function in practice must necessarily have some divi-

sion or the other into a few classes. The Hindu society has been divided into the four well-known *varṇas*. That some division of labour is natural and necessary goes uncontested. It is well realized that classes arise out of the different functions of society, which are performed by different groups of people because of their peculiar inherited abilities and the particular sort of training which they come to acquire in formal educational institutions, apart from the influence of a conjunctural environment. To say that the classes are unavoidable and, hence, to identify a class with a caste is the height of absurdity. We do have casteless societies, though not classless societies. And it makes all the difference in the world not to have the caste.

It is an undeniable fact that many Hindu practices are at variance with the loftiest principles of their philosophy. It is really amazing that Sri Patwardhan has nothing to say on the Hindu practices, especially in relation to the treatment meted out to the Harijans by the caste Hindus, when he has copious arguments in defence of the traditional mould of our society. To contend that the caste system of the Hindus is a vindication of the Marxian principle 'from each according to his capacity and to each according to his needs' (p. 326) is against all evidence. In fact, we have had the evils of a capitalist society superimposed on the evils of a caste-ridden structure, which assigned, until recently, a status and a position to every individual merely on the basis of birth, regardless of personal merit. The tall claim that Hinduism combines and synthesizes the merits of capitalism as well as communism is far from the truth. No doubt, Hinduism, as an organized system of thinking about the mundane and spiritual ideals of man, far excels many a religion of the world, but the real point to discuss is the consequences of the actual course of history of Hindu society based on the caste system.

The Mirage of a Classless Society is a mixture of religion, economics, political science, sociology, and other allied sciences, blended into an awful looking pseudo-scientific thesis. All the same, one cannot but admire the intellectual courage of the author in making a bold defence of the caste system. One of the chief ingredients of his thesis, namely, that the progress of any society depends on the exploitation of the Śūdras, has unfortunately been a fact of history both in the capitalistic and the communistic societies of the world, especially in the early phases of development. This, however, does not prove his contention that the Śūdras are destined to the same inexorable fate in the future as well. It is high time that a new vision dawned on humanity.

H. G. KULKARNI

TRIPURA-RAHASYA OR THE MYSTERY BEYOND THE TRINITY. TRANSLATED BY SWAMI RAMANANDA SARASWATI. Published by Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai, Madras State. 1960. Pages 224. Price Rs. 4

The volume under review is a good and readable English translation of an important Sanskrit classic which has been claimed alike by the Śākta and Advaita schools of philosophy. Some scholars claim this work as expounding the Tāntric view of Reality. The author of this great work describes the ultimate Reality under two aspects, namely, Śiva and Śakti. The translator explains, in detail, that there is no fundamental difference between the tenets of Advaita Vedānta and this work. The Advaita tradition regards that the world of things and souls is the result of *māyā*, and that *māyā* is in no way connected with Brahman. *Māyā* is looked upon by the Śāktas as Brahman's power. Śrī Śaṅkara emphasizes that Brahman is a homogeneous, non-composite consciousness, that it is indeterminate in its essential nature. But tradition also holds that Śaṅkara was a Śākta. There are interesting parallels between the two systems. Sri Ramana Maharshi loved *Tripura-rahasya*, and he often referred to it in the course of his teachings.

The present work was originally published as articles in the pages of *The Mythic Society Journal*, and it is now issued in a book form. The book is divided into twenty-two chapters. Practically no topic treated in the Vedānta texts is left out. The scope of the work is comprehensive. It is not merely a philosophic system, but also a systematic spiritual guide for realization. Some of the important topics discussed in the book are: On Bondage and Release, The Harmfulness of Dry Polemics, The Goal, Appearance and Reality of the Universe, Wakefulness and Dreams, etc. The volume carries a thoughtful introduction and a useful index for reference.

DR. P. NAGARAJA RAO

PHILOSOPHY OF PROGRESS AND PERFECTION. BY SWAMI PRAJNANANDA. Published by Ramakrishna Vedanta Ashrama, Darjeeling. Pages 276. Price Rs. 8.

From a perusal of the book, it appears that the author is quite conversant with the intricate philosophical problems of the East and the West. This book is more a compilation than an original work. Some of the views of different philosophers—ancient and modern—having a direct bearing on the questions of progress and perfection have been included in it.

Most of us, specially in this age of materialism, have reasoned cogently that life is a march without purpose through a world without design. The ignorance of the modern man, or his indifference, regarding the ultimate goal of human life, his concern

for progress and not for perfection, and his passion for change and not for changelessness are at the root of the growing menace of the materialistic civilization that he has built. The author has emphatically shown the supreme need of 'divine rest' or perfection in order to enjoy perfect bliss. 'In restlessness, there is no permanent peace and solace.' The author rightly says that 'the prime aim and object of all living organisms are to reach the ultimate end of their purposive and meaningful marching, and that end is the highest realization of the innermost Self or Ātman, which animates them and inspires them in their way of strivings'.

KESHAVA CHAITANYA

SANSKRIT-HINDI

ŚRĪPADYĀVALĪ. SANSKRIT ORIGINAL COMPILED BY SRI RUPA GOŚVAMIN. TRANSLATED INTO HINDI BY VANAMALI DASA SASTRI. Published by Raghava Chaitanya Das, Giridhari Kunj, 18 Gopinath Bag, Vrindaban, U.P. 1959. Pages 243. Price Rs. 2.25.

Śrī Rūpa Gośvāmin, an ardent devotee and follower of Śrī Caitanya, is famous for his theory of *bhakti rasa*. His view is that the poetic *rasa* is ephemeral like the flash of lightning, whereas *bhakti rasa* is a unique experience, which pervades the soul completely and continuously. He says that God is the source of all *rasas*, of which love is the most predominant. In order to have the experience of the aesthetic pleasure of love, God incarnated Himself as Śrī Kṛṣṇa, whose love with Rādhā, the dynamic source of delight, *hlādinī śakti*, affords exquisite pleasure to the devotees and transforms itself into that unearthly experience which is called *bhakti rasa*, otherwise known as *madhura rasa*.

Rūpa Gośvāmin's book *Padyāvalī* represents his theory of *bhakti rasa* in action. The book deals with the life of Śrī Kṛṣṇa from his childhood to the episode of his vernal sports with Rādhā. The poetry develops in such a way that the emotional play between Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā takes the form of *bhakti rasa*, which consequently leads the reader to feel the sentiment of *bhakti* as propounded by the author in his *bhakti rasa* theory. Besides its poetical value both technically and emotionally, the book gives expression to a phase of the medieval *bhakti* movement, which was prominently emotional and known as *madhura bhakti*.

The Hindi translation of this book, as done by Vanamali Dasa Sastri is good and clear. Sastriji has proved his worth and ability by keeping the spirit of the original intact, even though the translation has been done in prose. Except at places where he has been a bit pedantic in translating just literally, his translation is chaste, crisp, and exceptionally interesting.

MISS USHA ARYA

NEWS AND REPORTS

THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION CEYLON BRANCH

REPORT FOR 1958-1959

The activities of the Mission in Ceylon during the years under review were as follows:

The Colombo Centre: The Colombo centre, which is the headquarters of the Ceylon branch of the Ramakrishna Mission, carried on its varied cultural and religious activities during the years under review. Besides the regular *pūjā* and prayers at the Ashrama shrine, the centre conducted weekly religious classes in English and Tamil, Sunday religious classes for children, and Sunday religious classes for the juvenile delinquents of the training school at Wathupitiwela, a distance of 30 miles from Colombo. The centre also observed the birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi, Swami Vivekananda, and other great religious leaders. The centre has a library and a free reading room. The library has 2,150 books, and the reading room receives 25 monthly and 4 weekly magazines, 5 daily and 2 fortnightly newspapers. The centre published the book *Kataragama, the Holy of Holies* in Sinhalese, Tamil, and English.

The foundation-stone of the proposed international cultural centre was laid by Dr. Rajendra Prasad, President of India, on the 17th June 1959. The governments of India and Ceylon have, respectively, given grants of Rs. 1,50,000 and Rs. 25,000 towards the cost of construction of the proposed building.

The Kataragama Madam: This is a pilgrims' rest house, constructed in 1953 at Kataragama, a place of pilgrimage, situated at a distance of 175 miles from Colombo and equally respected by all religious denominations. On an average, the Madam catered to the needs of 100 pilgrims on week days and 500 pilgrims on week-end days. During the annual festival in July-August, the Madam supplied free meals daily to 5,000 people, on an average, for 16 days.

Educational Activities: The educational activities of the Mission are spread over the districts of Batticaloa, Badulla, Jaffna, Trincomalee, and Vavuniya. In all, the Mission provides for the education of 8,676 students, through its 26 schools. It also maintains a students' home (orphanage) for boys and two students' homes (orphanages) for girls, with a total strength of 101 students; and two students' hostels

for boys and one students' hostel for girls, with a total strength of 234 inmates. Special emphasis is laid on the study and practice of religion.

Relief Work: During the heavy floods in 1957, the Mission undertook relief work in the affected areas. During the civil disturbances in 1958, the Mission made arrangements for the feeding of refugees, numbering 10,000 a day, for ten days.

THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION ASHRAMA KANPUR

REPORT FOR 1959

The activities of the Ashrama are as follows:

Spiritual and Cultural: Regular worship, prayer, and meditation at the Ashrama shrine; religious classes held on Sunday evenings in the Ashrama premises and on week days in other parts of the city; occasional lectures at the invitation of outside educational institutions and cultural bodies; observance of the birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi, Swami Vivekananda, Bhagavān Buddha, Śrī Śaṅkara, and Jesus Christ, and other festivals, like Śrī Rāmanavamī, Śrī Kṛṣṇa Janmāṣṭamī, Divālī, and Kālī Pūjā.

Educational: The Higher Secondary School: The school is housed in its own spacious building. Besides imparting thorough general education, the school aims at bringing about a balanced physical, mental, and moral development of the students. Towards this end, the institution has provided the students with ample opportunities for physical training, games, and moral and religious education. There is also provision for many extra-curricular activities. There is a library, which contains 5,220 books, and also a reading room. Total number of books issued during the year: 3,144; average daily attendance at the reading room: 100.

Medical: The Charitable Hospital: Total number of cases treated in its allopathic and homoeopathic departments: 1,18,151. Details of treatment: operations: 1,277; injections: 1,817; laboratory tests: 92; electro-therapy: 108; eye operations: 36.

Physical Culture Institute: The Vivekananda Physical Culture Institute, located in the Ashrama, and the Harijan Akhara, located in the city, carried on their activities as usual.