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उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत

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

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SPIRITUAL DISCOURSES OF SWAMI VIJNANANANDA

Allahabad Math, March 22, 1932

It was 'Holi' that day. Devotees started coming from early morning with offerings and *abir* (coloured powder) in their hands with which they first worshipped the Master and then came to Swami Vijnananandaji for his blessings. A monk, too, sought his blessings. He blessed them all from his heart, and after a few minutes' silence, said: 'People very often are saved if they live in the proximity of spiritually developed souls. Once, on Dussera day, we were staying with Swamiji in Nilambar Mukherji's garden house at Belur. It was the monastery then. Swamiji was in those days on a very high spiritual plane. That day when I touched his feet in obeisance, I received a strong shock like that of electricity. Anyone going near such persons would feel as if a spiritual zone had been created round about them. Whosoever entered that zone could feel as if an electric force was entering into him from outside and he would have a spiritual experience.

'Latu Maharaj (Swami Adbhutananda) on

his first visit to the Master had come with Ram Datta as his servant. But just as the Master saw him, he asked Ram Babu who that boy was, and the latter introduced him as his servant. Then, one day, the Master asked Latu Maharaj: "Will you stay with me?" The latter immediately agreed. Look at the effect of spiritual power. Latu Maharaj felt himself electrically charged; there was no escape for servant Latu.'

A devotee: 'Are the *guru* and the chosen Deity one and the same? The scriptures identify the *guru* with the divine trinity (Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Maheśvara).'

Maharaj: 'Yes, they are the same. But so long as you are in the region of name and form, you have got to accept them as separate entities. When true vision comes, you discover they are one and the same. But a true realization of this entails a good deal of spiritual effort. The *guru* then merges in the Deity.

'On being asked about caste distinctions, the Master once said: "When you place some

dry logs of wood over the weak flame of a match stick, will they burn at all? And when you throw a whole plantain-tree into a blazing forest of dry wood, will it put out the fire or will the fire burn the plantain-tree and all?" When you begin with only traces of religious experience within you, you have got to observe the distinction between the *guru* and the Deity, the distinctions of castes, customs, and conventions, etc. Otherwise, the little divine inspiration which you have gets confused and lost. But when divine fire rages within, all these differences vanish. The fire of Brahman-realization constantly burnt in the Master. He used to see the Universal Mother in every created being. That is why he said: "There was a time when I would even take the leavings of a dog's food in the garden (at Dakshineswar). The same eternal presence was everywhere; it was as if a storm was blowing all over."

Allahabad Math, April, 1932

A number of devotees came to Swami Vijnananandaji in the evening. There was also a professor from Sarnath who, during the Swami's visit to Sarnath, had shown him round there. In the course of talk, there was reference to the excavations at Sarnath. The Swami said: "After the first excavations, when the images were kept in different places, they appeared to be living deities, full of a serene gravity and softness. But when they were removed inside the museum, the figures appeared to lose their solemnity. But the figures or pictures of great souls, wherever and however they may be placed, are always alive and inspiring."

'Sometime about 1918, while in Varanasi, one morning at about seven o'clock, I went to Sarnath walking. I had made no definite plans; only after coming out for the walk, did I think of going to Sarnath. Reaching there I was going round, when a guide told me that there was a stone containing carvings of the entire life story of the Buddha. I went to see it, and while gazing at it in

speechless wonder, I had a strange supernatural vision, the like of which I had never before, although I had some visions previously in temples and pilgrim centres. It was something inexpressible, a formless ocean of light. By and by, the entire universe disappeared from before my eyes, and I found myself standing like a tiny speck on the edge of that bright ocean, gazing speechlessly at that blissful effulgence. I had lost all self-consciousness. Gradually there came into view a lovely image of the Buddha in all his benign sweetness, giving me a feeling of intense joy. Even now, as I speak about it, I get that delightful sensation. I had remained thus for a long time when I heard a voice coming from afar telling me to move on. It was the guide speaking. He thought I had fallen asleep. On hearing his voice I came back to myself. When, in the evening, I returned to the Sevashrama, they all enquired where I had been and said that my meal had been kept for me. I didn't tell them where I had been, but only said that I did not feel hungry and would not take any food. I went quietly to bed, still full of the divine joy that I had experienced. The effect of it lasted for three days.

"Tradition has it that Lord Buddha came to Prayag (Allahabad) also. He walked along the road where the clock tower now stands, and even grazing cattle gazed at his benign countenance in speechless amazement. All this because he had perfect peace within. Mark, what tremendous power he had! Even animals were attracted and charmed! What to say of men?"

'Buddhadeva was a unique personality. He was the son of a king, and therefore, had a very large heart. His mercy, too, was infinite. Anybody who had been guilty of wrong-doing would, on asking his forgiveness, be immediately pardoned. A man was once abusing him in foul language for no reason whatsoever. The Buddha listened in patience without making any kind of protest. Afterwards, he asked that person: "Well, if any-

body goes to a person with a quantity of presents and they are not accepted, what happens to those presents?" The man replied: "They are, of course, taken back by the person who brought them." Then Buddhadeva said: "I have accepted nothing of what you were offering all this time. You please carry them all back." The man was very much embarrassed and asked his pardon.

'Swamiji (Swami Vivekananda) used to say that very few persons like the Buddha have been born in the world. Such souls do not want to be born.'

With regard to God's creative sports, Maharaj said: "This universe—the entire creation and all living beings—have been there from the beginning of time. Nothing new is happening; the same process has been going on in different ages, just like a lump of clay being made into a particular image and then broken and made into another image. This is how the creative process has been going on; nothing new, only a repetition.'

Talk on the Master led to the topic of Dakshineswar temple. Maharaj said: "Yes, nowadays various shops have sprung up round about the temple and all sorts of people come there. The old serenity is no longer there. That has been the state of affairs in more or less all the centres of pilgrimage and famous temples. You will find that, while on the one hand, there are monks and holy men, there are, on the other hand, people of an entirely different category. Everyone, certainly, is not religiously inclined. Many people come to do business there. The South Indian temples are also in the same condition. You have to cross many shops and stalls before you can find the house of God.'

A devotee: "What is the significance of the disgusting erotic carvings that you find on the walls of the Jagannath temple? A sight of these gives rise only to evil thoughts.'

Maharaj: "What you see on the walls is only an expression of worldly affairs. That is the sort of thing in which the world is

engrossed. You have got to transcend all these and enter the temple; and only if you can see and touch Him with a pure and sincere heart, can you hope for God's everlasting peace. Outside the temple, it is worldliness; inside it is God.'

In connection with his visit to the temple of Jagannath, Maharaj said: "After entering the temple, I embraced the Lord Jagannath; He seemed to be soft like a doll of butter.'

Allahabad Math, July 14, 1932

It was about 8.30 p.m., and all the visitors had left with the exception of one who humbly said to Swami Vijnananandaji: "I desire, Maharaj, to hear something about the Master. Will you tell me how you were attracted to him?"

Maharaj: "I was then living at Belgharia, studying in class nine or ten. One day, at about four o'clock in the afternoon, I was playing in Sarada's house with only a dhoti on, when one of our playmates came and said: "Will you go to see the Paramahansa?" We said: "Where is he?" He replied: "Just there, in Govind Dewan's house." I didn't know what a Paramahansa was. To tell the truth, I was rather awed by the ochre-coloured cloth. But we went. On going there, we found the Master clad in a white dhoti. Everybody was like that, there was no one in saffron clothes. The Master was standing and it was a wonderful sight. His facial expression was somewhat unique, as if bursting with joy. It was not by any means distorted. All his physical energy seemed to have gone upwards and he seemed to be overwhelmed with a feeling of intense delight. His teeth could be seen in a smile and his eyes seemed to be riveted on something and were spellbound. He had lost all outward consciousness. Someone was standing by and holding him to keep him from falling. Another was singing a hymn. Near me sat Rajen Sarkar, one of our playmates. I told him: "Look, the man seems to be overwhelmed with delight. His gaze is not fixed

on anything outside, but on someone whose vision has filled him with intense joy." When we went there, the hymn, *Jaya Dayāmaya*, was being sung. When the hymn was over, the Master himself sang an invocation to the Goddess—a song by Rāmprasād. When he was singing, it seemed as if he was seeing Her just in front of him and was enraptured. Rajen just said: "Yes, yes, that's so." I have no idea as to what Rajen felt about it.

I saw there another person in a trance whose name, I learnt later, was Nityagopal. His face, eyes, and chest had turned crimson. He was close to the Master. After a while, the Master sat down and started speaking to Nityagopal in an ecstatic mood. To me, their talk was incomprehensible; only some indistinct sounds were being heard. In such ecstatic moods, people can't talk properly. When the Master was standing, his mood was that of Mother Kālī; but when he sat down, it was that of Lord Kṛṣṇa. It might be that, because Nityagopal had the bent of his mind towards Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Master was talking to him in that way. Another thing that I saw then in the Master has remained imprinted on my memory for all times. From the base of the spine right up to his head, the whole column had become inflated like a thick rope. And the energy that rose upward towards the brain seemed to be spreading its hood and swaying its head like a snake dancing in joy.

It became evening now. After *bhajanās*, Govinda Babu took the Master and his companions upstairs and we returned home. My mother enquired about the cause of my being late; I only gave an evasive reply. That was my first meeting with the Master. I think I saw the Master in Belgharia on another occasion also.

Two or three years went by. I was a second year student in St. Xavier's College with Sarat Maharaj (Swami Saradananda) as one of my classmates. Another classmate was Barada Pal—a nice boy. Once there was a talk among us of going to see the Para-

mahamsa. Soon after, one day we three went to Dakshineswar by boat and arrived at Paramahamsa Deva's room. We found the Master preparing to go to Calcutta. The carriage was at the door and the Master's destination was Mani Mullik's house at Sinduriapatty. He was asking Ramlal and others to make haste and told us to go to that house. He said that if we only mentioned his name, there would be no difficulty about our admittance there. We bowed to him and returned to Calcutta. I remember it was very late when I came back home from Mani Mullik's house that night and got a scolding from my mother. When she heard that I had been to see the Master, she said: "You went to that mad Brāhmaṇa who has made 350 boys crazy?" Yes, crazy, indeed! And the craziness continues even now. And what a severe scolding it was! Like this I went to see him at Dakshineswar on five or six occasions, and twice or thrice I even spent the night there. One night when I was there, Girish Babu came with his friends. Mahapurush Maharaj also I met somewhere about that time. He also recalls it. Even now he remembers the Master's words of encouragement to him: "Yes, you will succeed."

Devotee: 'We have heard that the Master used to put all his disciples through a test. How did he test you?'

Maharaj: 'Well, nothing much. ... He did it that way!' And after some pause, the Swami continued: 'The Master used to test everyone in a state of nudity, and in my case also, it was the same. It didn't matter at all; I was a mere boy at that time. He told me to massage his feet which I did with some vigour, and he told me to do it gently. I remember his telling me: "I see within you a small flame like a burning match stick." I didn't, of course, understand then what it all meant. Now, after studying the fifth dimension, I can understand the meaning of his words. He could see into hearts of men like things inside a show-case.'

'The last night that I spent at Dakshi-

neshwar was the one on which the Master's throat trouble started. In the morning, he told Ramlal that his throat was aching. A boy who was there advised the use of a certain medicinal plant named "Tejbal" and that "Tejbal paste" would cure the pain. The Master asked Ramlal to get it. Ramlal was well aware of the Master's nature and he promised to obtain it. That was the last I saw of him.

'Then I came to Patna. The rented house where I lived on Govinda Mitra Road is now the Mission Ashram. (The Ashram has since been shifted to its own ground.) There I saw in the paper the news about the Master's passing away. I had a vision of the Master the previous night. I saw him standing before me. I thought: "Why should the Master be here? Why did I see him standing like this?" The next day the papers brought me the news of his demise.

I had a similar strange vision when Swami-ji Maharaj (Swami Vivekananda) passed away. I was meditating in the Brahmavadin

Club at Allahabad when I saw Swamiji on the lap of the Master. I was puzzled. Subsequently, I got a wire from Belur Math that he had passed away.'

After keeping silent for some time, he again said: 'A question that arises in my mind is, where shall we be after giving up this mortal frame? I asked Mahapurush Maharaj who told me that we would be in the Ramakrishna world where we would be keeping company with the Master. But I have decided not to go anywhere. To contemplate on the Master all the time and not to forget him even for an instant is to be in his company. That is the Ramakrishna world—to think of him all the time with heart and soul, never losing him even for a moment. To the extent that a person is sincere and pure, the Master will reveal himself to him. My only prayer is that till my last breath, I may retain my purity and sincerity unsullied. I say, he only is free who has gained mastery over his passions; and one who is a slave to them is bound in chains.'

SWAMI BRAHMANANDA : OUR HOMAGE

[EDITORIAL]

Along with Swami Vivekananda, in the year eighteen hundred and sixty-three, was ushered into the stage of the world another significant character who was to play an important role in the divine drama that was being enacted on the banks of the holy Gaṅgā at Dakshineswar, with Sri Ramakrishna as its central figure. This character was that of Swami Brahmananda, known in his pre-monastic days as Rakhal Chandra Ghosh. He was born on January 21, at Sikra Kulingram in the 24 Parganas, a few days after Swami Vivekananda was born in Calcutta. Rakhal's father, Ananda Mohan, a rich zamindar of the place, was a kind patriarch, and mother

Kailash Kamini was a very pious and devout lady; and the boy had, from his very childhood, an atmosphere which helped him become what he was to be in his later life. A healthy, intelligent, and loving boy, he had varied interests of life. Physical culture, love for music, interest in the well-being of his fellow playmates, desire to know the why and how of many things, and above all, his religious tendencies and devotion towards gods and goddesses marked him out as one distinct from the common boys of the village. He would often retire, either alone or in the company of a few selected friends, to some solitary place and would sing devotional songs,

very often losing his outer consciousness in the process and remain absorbed in himself for long periods of time.

After finishing his primary education in the village school, which his father had started particularly for him, Rakhal was sent to Calcutta, where he came in contact with Narendra Nath, known later as Swami Vivekananda. Narendra Nath was a dynamic spirit and a born leader. Rakhal, who was meek, gentle, and very soft-hearted by nature, came under the spell of Narendra Nath, and a deep friendship grew between the two which was to transform itself into the unbreakable bond of spiritual brotherhood and bear fruit in so many ways, of which we all are aware today.

It was by a strange coincidence of family connections that, one day in 1881, a few months earlier than Swami Vivekananda, Rakhal came into contact with Sri Ramakrishna. It was a significant meeting; for the 'father' found his sought for 'son' and the 'son' found the stage to play his destined role. Sri Ramakrishna later on said: 'Before Rakhal came here, I had seen in a vision that the Mother of the universe suddenly brought a boy and, placing him on my lap, said: "Here is your son". I was startled in terror to hear it and exclaimed: "What is that? How can I have a son?" She smiled and explained: "He is not a son in the ordinary worldly sense of the term, but your all-renouncing spiritual son." Thus assured, I was consoled. Rakhal came immediately after I had had the vision, and I recognized him at once as that boy.'

II

Rakhal, drawn by the divine love of the Master and charmed with his sweet personality, started frequenting Dakshineswar as often as he could. He also used to stay there at times, which later on consummated in his leaving the house finally and coming to live with the Master permanently. Though grown up into a young man of eighteen or nineteen

at that time, he, in the presence of the Master, felt like a small child and actually behaved that way. In Sri Ramakrishna, he had found the combined love of his father and mother who had died during his childhood—only infinitely more intensely. The Master, also, treated him very affectionately, just as a loving father treats his helpless infant child. And there was so much naturalness and sincerity about all this that those who saw this strange relationship between the two in all its actions and reactions would enjoy and feel the sweetness of it, rather than be scared away or take it in a wrong light. But it was not only the tender affection of a father that Rakhal received from the Master, but also the guidance of a spiritual preceptor; for the Master was very keen with regard to the spiritual training and development of his disciples. Rakhal was no exception to this and the Master would not hesitate to admonish his loving child if that was found necessary. One day when Rakhal came before the Master, the latter asked him why was there a film of darkness over his face. Had he done anything wrong? Rakhal gaped in wonder, for he could not remember anything of the kind. But when cross-examined, he recollected that he had told a fib in fun. The Master cautioned him not to tell a lie even in jokes.

Under the benign care of Sri Ramakrishna, Rakhal's spiritual life began to progress rapidly. There would be many occasions when his mind would go into deep meditation and he would lose all consciousness of the sense world. It would become necessary for the Master then to come to his aid to bring his mind down to the ordinary plane. He was saturated with the thought of God and his mind would constantly be in communion with Him. Though Rakhal hated publicity in these things, his moving lips, his self-forgetfulness, and his vacant looks would often betray what was going on inside, and the Master, who watched all these things, was beside himself with joy at the knowledge of

the spiritual transformation his beloved child was undergoing, and often, he gave expression to this joy. The life at Dakshineswar was thus going on in the midst of an atmosphere of holiness and hard religious practices, and all who were there floated, as it were, in the stream of spiritual current that the Master had set in motion.

The illness of the Master, however, in 1885, brought about a drift in the current which now wended its way to the city of Calcutta, particularly the garden house of Cossipore, where the Master was brought for better treatment and care during his last days. But, this change, though it looked then to be a break, was really an intensification of the Master's work in a greater degree, as is now acknowledged by all. The last few months at this place were really the seed time of all that was to burst forth in the mighty tree that we see today—the shady, flowery, fruitful movement working itself out in the name of the Master and giving peace and solace to numerous souls all over the world.

The illness of Sri Ramakrishna brought more closely round him his disciples, particularly the younger ones, who were later to renounce the world and found the holy order of monks in the name of the Master. Narendra Nath was the leader of this group. The young disciples threw themselves heart and soul in the devoted service of their *guru* as well as in strenuous spiritual disciplines. Rakhal and others would work hard during the day and would take to harder spiritual practices at night. They knew no fatigue. The Master watched all these and encouraged the boys in their spiritual endeavours. He also knew very well the potential powers of his respective disciples and would guide them accordingly. One day, the Master took Narendra Nath aside and slowly told him: 'Rakhal has the wisdom and capacity to administer a vast kingdom.' Narendra Nath understood what it meant and, when time came, he demonstrated what he had understood. It was he who had made Rakhal

their 'Raja' and it was he who made Rakhal, then Swami Brahmananda, the first President of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, which he founded then in the year 1898, after his triumphal return from the West. Swami Vivekananda had thoroughly understood Swami Brahmananda—his loyalty to the cause of the Master, his love for the leader, and his innate spiritual power and administrative capacities. His great faith in Swami Brahmananda is reflected in his statement: 'Others may desert me; but Raja will stand by me till the last.'

III

Unfortunately, however, Swami Vivekananda did not live long to witness the great efficiency and tender care with which his beloved 'Raja' 'ruled' over the spiritual 'kingdom' put under his charge and how this 'kingdom' expanded into an 'empire' and how the loving 'Raja' became the revered 'Maharaj'—the great king—to the numerous 'citizens' of his spiritual domain. Swamiji left his mortal coil in 1902. But to Swami Brahmananda the word of the leader was the law and behind the leader's mission, he saw the will of the Master. So with his normal calmness, deep insight, and rare capacity of understanding of men and matters, Swami Brahmananda set himself ardently to the task he was given to perform, in spite of the great shock and the sad feeling of personal and organizational loss he had sustained at the demise of his beloved 'elder brother' whom he looked upon as 'father'. The method of work of Swami Brahmananda was wonderful. Whatever the situation might be—and there were quite difficult ones at times—and however hard labour a work might need for its execution—and his responsibilities were quite too many and too heavy—he would never lose the calm of his mind and the sweetness of his nature. Even in his later days, when he had to bear the heavy burden of the vastly expanded activities of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission and the delicate responsibility of

the spiritual and temporal welfare of a large number of monastic workers and the guidance of numerous lay disciples, his equanimity of mind and magnanimity of character were never seen to be disturbed. And not that he was indifferent to things and people round him. Though his mind was set firmly on God, he would not neglect the work of the Master for, to him, the work was nothing short of the worship of God. His keen observation, his deep understanding, his able direction, and his practical suggestions were all reflections of the rare traits of his character and personality and people wondered how a man of God could, at the same time, be a man of such high efficiency and so many varied interests. But there was a secret. And about this secret of work, which he had so successfully mastered in his own life, he would say: 'Give the whole of your mind to God. If there is no wastage of mental energy, with a fraction of your mind, you can do such work that the world will be dazed.'

The sweet aroma of his highly spiritual personality spread its irresistible charm over one and all who came within its orbit. His presence was enough to solve even the most intricate problems either of the organization or of individual life. His decisions and solutions would invariably be correct. Once Swami Saradananda, who was the lifelong secretary of the Ramakrishna Mission, had said to a certain worker: 'When I say a thing, you should judge and discriminate whether I am right or wrong; but when Maharaj (meaning Swami Brahmananda) says a thing, you may safely accept that as true without the slightest doubt.' And this was said by one who had varied experience of organizing big works and handling large undertakings.

The activities of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, under the able stewardship of Swami Brahmananda, grew steadily and spread considerably. He, as his leader had wanted, raised the humanitarian work of the Mission to a spiritual level. Welfare activ-

ities and philanthropic works without a spiritual background lead to egotism and pride and become a hindrance to one's real progress. But the work done with a selfless spirit in a mood of humble dedication and resignation to God conduces to one's spiritual welfare and leads to blissfulness. And Swami Brahmananda saw to it that this spirit of dedication and devotion permeated the entire work that was being done under the banner of the Master. The motto of the Ramakrishna Mission set forth by Swami Vivekananda—'*Ātmano mokṣārtham, jagad-dhitāya ca*'—actually came to be translated in the lives of its workers, and the credit for this difficult achievement goes to the rare genius of its first President Swami Brahmananda, who guided its activities for nearly a quarter of a century.

As the President of this vast organization, Swami Brahmananda had to attend to many duties and make long tours. As a young monk, he had travelled fairly wide to many pilgrim centres and other holy places; but as the President Maharaj of the Math, he had to move about much more. Wherever the Swami went, there was unusual enthusiasm and people showed spontaneous expression of devotion to him and earnest interest in the work of the Mission. He himself generally avoided telling people much about the organizational matters asking for their co-operation expressedly. But his very presence at a place was enough inspiration for the better consolidation of the existing activities or for laying a firm foundation of the future work of the Mission. He simply depended on the will of the Lord and felt glad to see that the Master's message was spreading, bringing peace and solace to numerous afflicted souls.

It has been truly said: 'To see Swami Brahmananda was to feel tangibly that he did not belong to this world. He belonged to a separate plane of existence. He was in a class by himself. He was far above the level of humanity, but still he lived and moved with it as if to fulfil a divine purpose. Even

a sceptic would feel this, and even a person knowing nothing about him would realize it. Those who had known both Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Brahmananda used to say that Swami Brahmananda represented some of the characteristics of the Master.' All who had the rare fortune to come under his benign grace, felt that they were under the saving shadow of a big banyan-tree and that they had nothing to fear from.

But the law of nature acts upon all who fall within its jurisdiction, and therefore, 'no body lasts for ever'. Revered Maharaj's body, also, came under its sway and he entered *mahāsamādhi* in 1922—looking blissfully at a vision in which he saw himself playing with his beloved Kṛṣṇa on a full-blown pink lotus floating on the placid waters of the blue Yamunā, as Sri Ramakrishna had once seen about him. The 'bridegroom' was taken away, but the divine joy and spiritual fervour left behind by him still sustains and inspires so

many souls aspiring for god-consciousness. We believe that such spiritual personalities, as Swami Brahmananda was, cannot and do not die. Death has no power over them; their entrance into the stage of the world is only to fulfil a divine purpose, and when it is done, they make their exit. Sri Maharaj came to play the part the Master had allotted to him. He played it well—really very well—and went back to the realm whence he had come—the son back to the Father. But the spiritual current set in motion by him is gathering momentum and producing immense power to lead many an ardent soul to the sea of eternity—the Bliss Supreme—the joy of Brahman, which Swami Brahmananda himself represented. And we, who are left behind to look up to him for inspiration and guidance and fill our cups with his benign blessings, pay our humble tribute of love and respect to his revered memory and bless the year which saw his advent a hundred years ago.

'Everyone must have an ideal firmly established in his life. This ideal must never be lowered. The supreme ideal of human life is to know God—God, "who is smaller than the smallest, greater than the greatest". He shines forth always and everywhere. He dwells within you, He dwells within me. He dwells within all creatures, and in the plants and herbs as well. He dwells everywhere. The only difference is that in some He is more apparent, while in others, He is more hidden. The one supreme Spirit pervades everything. Make Him your ideal, Him and Him alone. Make a little effort to realize Him and then you will see what fun it all is; what an inexhaustible fount of joy He is. You have seen enough of the world, now see the other side of life, the real side. "Knock and it shall be opened unto you." There is only a screen hiding the Reality. Remove it, and you will find Him. Apply yourself to the attainment of this ideal and the whole world will be transformed before your eyes.'

SWAMI BRAHMANANDA

MEMORIES OF SWAMI BRAHMANANDA

By SWAMI NIRVANANANDA

I met Maharaj (by which name Swami Brahmananda is known) for the first time in the Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama of Varanasi, which is a hospital for the suffering and destitute. The monks and novices of the Ashrama serve the patients with devotion as manifestations of God. Inspired by this noble ideal of the Ramakrishna Order, I joined the Ashrama with an ardent desire to become a monk. I had corresponded with Maharaj before our first meeting, and I had read about him in the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*. Besides Maharaj, I saw two other disciples of Sri Ramakrishna in Varanasi, namely Swami Turiyananda and Swami Shivananda. They impressed me as being the very guardians of spirituality.

In the midst of the busy programme of the Sevashrama, the thought would linger in my mind, 'When shall I go and see Maharaj?' His eyes always revealed sympathy and other-worldliness. Sri Ramakrishna had said about him that he had 'the vacant look of a hen hatching her eggs'. His radiant smiling face and the sweetness of his child-like simplicity attracted me to him more and more. At the end of my daily routine, whenever the opportunity presented itself, I never failed to be near Maharaj and to wait on him, just to be permitted to do some personal service. Graciously, he at times bade me prepare food for him or massage his body. I was indeed blessed, although the opportunities were but for very short spans of time. Through such service, sometimes I felt flashes of joy within myself. I was firmly convinced that it was essential for me to have the company of this blessed soul, without whose light I felt there was no way for me to understand or conceive Brahman, Ātman, God, and other entities that exist beyond sense-perception. When Maharaj went elsewhere after having stayed

at the Varanasi Ashrama for some time, I had a strong desire to be with him. The prayers of the heart are always answered by God, and so it was with me.

Maharaj had the power to change the atmosphere of a place and to make it vibrate with his spirituality. In his company he could make everybody roll with laughter, and then suddenly, when he became silent, the place would be surcharged with a divine presence. Swami Turiyananda once remarked that Maharaj used to create such an atmosphere around himself that everyone present would be filled with some of his spiritual mood. Many people used to come to Maharaj for the purpose of seeking advice about their problems. But once they were near him, they felt no necessity to ask for any solution. Problems solved themselves in his presence, and people would forget themselves, their egoism, temporal pleasure and pain, and be filled with intense divine bliss.

Whether in the forest or in the city, Maharaj led a very simple life. Wherever he stayed, monks and devotees flocked around him. Those who came to see him went back overwhelmed by his piety and his pure and unselfish love toward all. By a glance or a touch or his mere presence, he could raise the minds of others to a high level and change their very lives. This will be apparent from the following incident in his life which we will mention here.

Devendranath Bose was a devotee of Sri Ramakrishna and friendly with all his direct disciples, particularly with Swami Akhandananda. After the passing away of the Master, Deven Babu became the estate manager of the Maharaja of Kashim Bazar, and for many years, he did not come to see the monks.

One day, Swami Akhandananda met Deven

Babu by chance and brought him to the Belur Math. Maharaj was at the monastery at the time. On seeing Deven Babu after such a long interval, he was particularly gracious to him. Afterwards, Maharaj said to Swami Akhandananda: 'Well, Gangadhar, what has happened to your Deven? He has changed very much—in movements, manners, everything. His face has a worldly expression, and he dresses like a dandy. Has he forgotten the Master and all of us?'

Swami Akhandananda did not know what to say. But the next time he saw Deven Babu, he told him in the course of conversation what Maharaj had said about him.

'I don't know what has happened to me. I am not happy', said Deven Babu.

After a few days, Deven Babu came to see Maharaj. I was sitting in front of Maharaj's room. Deven Babu asked me: 'Where is Maharaj?'

I said to him: 'Please take your seat. Maharaj is in his room. I shall inform him of your arrival.'

Deven Babu's great restlessness was clearly visible, and he was unable to sit still. He was so anxious to see Maharaj that he would not wait for him to come out of his room. He rushed in, just as Maharaj was preparing to meet him. Seeing Deven Babu, Maharaj silently went to him. He placed his hand on Deven Babu's chest, stroked it several times, and said: 'What has happened, Deven Babu? Everything will be all right. Think of the Master!'

Immediately there was a complete change in Deven Babu. He bowed down before Maharaj and said: 'Maharaj, all my worldliness is wiped out. How far I had fallen! But your grace and blessings have lifted me up. Now I have no more sorrows and troubles.'

Maharaj came out to the portico with Deven Babu and asked me to give him *prasāda*. From that day on, Deven Babu used to come quite often to see Maharaj. The experience he had had on the occasion

left a lasting effect on him.

Long after the passing away of Maharaj, I requested Deven Babu to write an introduction to the original Bengali edition of the *The Spiritual Teachings of Swami Brahmananda*. The following portion of what he wrote is especially significant: 'Those who came in close contact with the spiritual son of the Master say that Maharaj was endowed with immeasurable spiritual splendour and that his spiritual energy flowed like torrents of rain in a hundred directions. But nobody knew how so much power, so much energy, could remain so quietly in this mortal frame.

'The latent power of an electric wire is known only on touching it. We hear that the body of a realized soul is not made of matter, but Spirit. But that truth could not be understood even while coming in touch with this divine man. With what heavenly love he kept us deluded!'

Deven Babu asked me: 'Do you remember the occasion when I went to see Maharaj? When he touched my chest with his hand, I felt a sudden shock. Immediately I remembered my past; love for God and yearning for realization filled me, and all the memories of the Master came alive again in my mind. As a result, the course of my life was altogether changed.'

An example of Maharaj's child-like simplicity and his sense of humour is given in the following story.

At Belur Math, one day, Maharaj had a little indigestion, so he told me that he would not eat anything that evening. I reported this to Swami Premananda when he asked about Maharaj's dinner.

Maharaj went to bed. There was a cooler in the room next to his, and many kinds of sweets were stored in it. At four o'clock in the morning Maharaj felt hungry, went to the cooler, and ate all the sweets. It was quite a quantity.

Later in the morning, as usual, Swami Premananda came to pay his respects to

Maharaj. He inquired about his health, and Maharaj complained like a little boy: 'Oh, I am hungry, and they haven't given me anything to eat yet!' Hearing this, I ran to the cooler to find something for him to eat—but it was empty.

Swami Premananda asked me: 'What happened? Did you leave the cooler open so that a cat may have gotten in and eaten all the food? Were you so careless?'

I answered: 'I can't understand it! When I looked just now, the cooler was still closed, and yet the food has been taken; so I can't see how a cat could have entered.'

Then Maharaj smiled and said to Swami Premananda: 'Yes, Brother Baburam, a big cat came and entered the cooler; in fact, it was so big that it was able to open and close it!' And he pointed himself out as the 'big cat'.

Maharaj laid much stress on the significance of the Master's advent. When such an incarnation comes to earth, much power is manifested, and with little effort a spiritual aspirant becomes illumined.

One day, Maharaj said to M., the recorder of the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*: 'The Master came this time to make a bridge between *jīva* and Śiva (man and God). See how easy it has now become to realize the Lord!'

Maharaj used to tell us: 'Don't waste this opportunity! Be up and doing! Once you lose this chance, you will regret it. Sri Ramakrishna was the epitome of truth. Mould your lives according to this ideal. Those of you who are working in the hospital will also be able to reach the goal and realize the Reality through the practice of pure, unselfish work.'

MRS. BLODGETT'S REMINISCENCES OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA*

BY SWAMI ATMAGHANANANDA

From the first time Miss Josephine MacLeod heard Swami Vivekananda speak, she recognized that she was in the presence of a unique personality. That she also began to sense, very early, his importance as a figure in the history of man's spiritual evolution is evident from the fact that she preserved a number of documents which give insight into important phases of his character and work. One of these is a long letter from the now

well-known Mrs. Blodgett who heard Swamiji at the Parliament of Religions and who later was his hostess when he visited California. Interesting as the letter is in itself, it becomes even more so when we read it in conjunction with what Swamiji himself wrote about its writer and what Miss MacLeod tells us of her in her own vivid reminiscences.

I

On the 27th of December 1899, Swami Vivekananda wrote a letter to Miss Mary Hale from Los Angeles. In the course of it he remarked: 'It is exactly like northern Indian winter here—only some days a little warmer. The roses are here and the beautiful palms. Barley is in the fields—the roses and many other flowers round about the

*The letter of Mrs. S. K. Blodgett containing her reminiscences of Swamiji has not previously been published in full, though a good portion of it has appeared in *Vedanta and the West*, November-December 1953 and 1962 (pages 176-77 and 41-43 respectively) and a few sentences have been used even earlier in *Vivekananda: A Biography*, by Swami Nikhilananda. For its use here and its arrangement in this article we are indebted to the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center of New York.

cottage where I live. Mrs. Blodgett, my host[ess], is a Chicago lady. Fat, old, and extremely witty. She heard me in Chicago and is very motherly.'

How Swamiji came to meet Mrs. S. K. Blodgett has been told by Miss Josephine MacLeod in her reminiscences of Swamiji, dictated, a number of years before her death. The time she speaks of was during the first half of November 1899 :

'It was while the Swami was at Ridgely Manor that a letter came from a lady unknown to us to say our only brother was very ill in Los Angeles and that she thought he would die and we ought to know it. So my sister said to me, "I think you must go". And I said, "Of course". Within two hours I was packed, the horses were at the door, we had four miles to drive to a railway station, and as I went out Swami put up his hand and said some Sanskrit blessing and then he called out: "Get up some classes and I will come."'

'I went straight to Los Angeles and in a small white cottage covered with roses, on the outskirts of the city, lay my brother, very ill. But over his head was a life-size picture of Vivekananda. I had not seen my brother for ten years, so I had an hour's talk with him, saw he was very ill, and went out to see our hostess, Mrs. Blodgett. I said to her; "My brother is very ill." She said: "Yes." "I think he will die", I said. She said: "Yes." "May he die here?" I asked. She said, "Oh, yes." Then I said, "Who is that man whose portrait is over my brother's bed?" She drew herself up with all the dignity of her seventy years and said: "If ever there was a God on earth, that is the man." I said: "What do you know about him?" She answered: "I was at the Parliament of Religions at Chicago in 1893, and when that young man got up and said, 'Sisters and Brothers of America', seven thousand people rose to their feet as a tribute to something they knew not what. When it was over and I saw scores of women walking over the

benches to get near him, I said to myself: 'Well, my lad, if you can resist that onslaught you are indeed a God.'" Then I said to Mrs. Blodgett: "I know him." "You know him?" she asked. I said: "Yes, I left him in a little village of two hundred people in the Catskill Mountains in New York." She said: "You know him?" I said: "Why don't you ask him here?" She said: "To my cottage?" "He will come", I told her.

'In three weeks my brother was dead, and in six weeks Swamiji was there and began his classes on the Pacific Coast.

'We were Mrs. Blodgett's guests for months. This little cottage had three bedrooms, a kitchen, a dining-room, and a sitting-room. Every morning we would hear Swami chanting his Sanskrit from the bath, which was just off the kitchen. He would come out with tousled hair and get ready for breakfast. Mrs. Blodgett made delicious pancakes and these we would eat at the kitchen table, Swami sitting with us. And such discourses he would have with Mrs. Blodgett, such repartee, she talking of the villainy of men and he talking of the even greater wickedness of women. Mrs. Blodgett seldom went to hear him lecture, saying her duty was to give us delicious meals when we got back.'

II

It is not until 1902 that we hear of Mrs. Blodgett again. But evidently Miss MacLeod had been in touch with her during the intervening years, for on September 2 of that year we find Mrs. Blodgett writing a touchingly graphic letter to the younger woman who had stayed so long with her in 1899 as her guest :

My Beloved Girl,

Today your letter from Messena Springs came, giving your address. How I wish you were here with me. I have so often wished to be near you in these first sad days, when a loss complete and without remedy has so suddenly fallen upon your heart in the passing

away of a loved and rare companionship. I am ever recalling those swift, bright days in that never to be forgotten winter, lived in simple freedom and kindness. We could not choose but to be happy and good. And now while I share with all who knew and loved him a deep sense of loss, it would be an impertinence to measure your sorrow and loss by my own, so closely have you been associated with him in his intimate friendship with your family. I knew him personally but a short time, yet in that time I could but see in a hundred ways the child side of Swamiji's character, which was a constant appeal to the Mother quality in all good women. He depended upon those near him in a way which brought him very nearly one's heart. I think the Mead sisters must have remarked this side of Swamiji. Possessing as he did an almost inexhaustible knowledge of things old as the world—a sage and philosopher—he yet appeared to me to lack utterly the commercial knowledge which so distinguish[es] men of the Western world. You were constantly rendering him some apparently trifling service in the everyday homely happenings of our daily life, he in some small way requiring to be set right. That which we mother and care for in little, seemingly inconsequent ways must through the very nature of our care weave a world of tenderness around the object of our love—until in some sad day we are robbed of the divine privilege of loving service and are left like 'Rachel mourning for her children because they are not'. Thus I know, aside from the loss of a delightful and rare companion, the fact alone of your generous service brought him very near to you. One day busy with my work, Swamiji absorbed with his curries and *chapattis*, I spoke to him of you, when he said: 'Ah, yes! Jo is the sweetest spirit of us all.'—He would come home from a lecture where he was compelled to break away from his audience, so eagerly would they gather around him—come rushing into the kitchen like a boy released from school, with,

'Now we will cook'. The prophet and sage would disappear, to reveal the child side or simplicity of character. Presently 'Jo' would appear and discover the culprit among pots and pans in his fine dress, who was by thrifty, watchful 'Jo' admonished to change to his home garments. Ah, those pleasant 'Tea Party' days, as you termed them. How we used to laugh. Do you remember the time he was showing me how he wound his turban about his head and you were begging him to hasten as he was already due at the lecture room. I said, 'Swami, don't hurry. You are like a man on his way to be hung. The crowd was jostling each other to reach the place of execution, when he called out, "Don't hurry. There will be nothing interesting until I get there". I assure you, Swami, there will be nothing interesting until you get there.' This so pleased him that often afterwards he would say, 'There will be nothing interesting 'til I get there', and laugh like a boy. Just now I recall a morning quite an audience had gathered at our house to listen to the learned Hindoo, who sat with downcast eyes and impenetrable face while his audience waited. His meditations over, he raised his eyes to Mrs. Leggett's face and asked, like a simple child, 'What shall I say?' This gifted man, possessing the subtle power of delighting an intellectual audience, to ask for a theme! There appeared to me in this question an exquisite touch of confidence in her judgment in suggesting a subject suitable to the occasion. A most interesting portion of the day you lost. In the early morning when you and your sister would be sleeping, he would come in for his morning plunge in the bath. Soon his deep, rich voice would be heard in something resembling a solemn chant. Though 'Sanskrit' [was] an unknown tongue to me, I yet caught the spirit of it all, and these early morning devotions are among my sweetest recollections of the great Hindoo. In the homely old-fashioned kitchen you and I have seen Swamiji at his best. He could let his thoughts have untrammelled [s]way.

Do you remember how interesting and instructive one morning he was in one of his inspirational moods? Something in the paper, an abused wife or maltreated child, had aroused my ire, when I vehemently protested against the utter abomination of a system of laws which permitted the indiscriminate production of a mongrel race of children who through heredity and environment were prenatally doomed to be paupers, lunatics, and criminals to prey upon the better born. My plea was for the enactment of a law to save the wretched from themselves by preventing worthless characters—'boozy' fathers and fool mothers—from forcing upon the world a blasphemy against God and a shameful profanation of His 'image and likeness' in [the] shape of half-born children. Swamiji replied by taking us back to the time when a man's choice of a wife was emphasized with a club, step by step down through the ages showing the gradual amelioration of the condition of women. The evolution of thought had been broadening and developing for them greater freedom and happiness. The central idea in this morning's talk was that all great reforms had been developed slowly; otherwise, the order and equilibrium of the universe would be disturbed and result in chaos. Of course, I cannot follow him in detail or give his words. I can only give his idea. A curious thing to me, while I lost not a word [n]or failed to grasp the point he would make, [I] have yet found it impossible to repeat but fragmentary utterances of his. I question if one could repeat him in his inspirations. At such moments, one gave oneself up to the joy of listening. I heard very few of Swamiji's public lectures. My age and household duties gave me no choice but like Martha to sit in the house. To follow in detail our pleasant hours at that time would be like one[s] repeating a dream from which one awoke too soon. Were you present at a lecture when one of those ladies who love to make themselves conspicuous by some ill-timed remark asked: 'Swami, who is it who support the monks in

your country? There are so many of them, you know.' Like a flash Swami replied: 'The same who support the clergy in your country, madam. The women!' The audience laughed. Madam was for the time effaced and Swamiji proceeded with his lecture. Another time I was at a lecture of his in the Masonic Temple in Chicago. A noted clergyman present said: 'You believe in creeds, do you not, monk?' 'Oh, yes,' said Swami, 'while you need them. You plant an acorn for a tree and build around it a little fence to keep away the pigs and goats. But when your acorn has grown to a tall, spreading tree, you do not need your little fence.' He was never at a loss—always equal to the occasion. And now 'after life's fitful fever he sleeps well', never to be awakened to the discords and tumults of this life, or to be reclothed with an earthly body (in my belief), since this is true that we shall see him no more. Let us hope that in some distant star, above a world of separation and pain, his gentle spirit may again lead and influence the spirits of men. India has sustained a great loss in her Americanized son, who while he sacrificed no essential feature of their faith, yet saw things undreamed of by them, to their betterment and happiness. Nivedita, what will she do without the inspiration of his presence? My letter has grown to such length I have no time to ask many questions I would like [to]. Did Mrs. Bull return to America with you? You speak of returning some time to Japan. Are you so enamored of the East that you cannot bide a wee with us? How I would love to see you some day in the future. I will tell all about myself—a most interesting theme. I trust you may be benefited at the springs. I so much wanted you to go to Heidelberg or some of those German springs. Yet we may have healing waters too.

Miss Spencer telephoned for your address. She remembered 'Hatfield House' but lost the rest. Write me when you can. Now more than ever I want to keep in touch with you.

Remember me most kindly to your sister. She has been dear to me and all who love you. Loving you always, I am sincerely,

Mrs. Blodgett

This I know will be an unsatisfactory letter. I have written in such rushing haste. Kate

and me [sic] are again alone. I am *washing*, ironing, cooking. A large yard running over with *bloom* to care for and water. And my recreations I must catch on the wing. For an aged lady I [am] being put through my paces, but we are very pleasantly located and I am a great housekeeper.

AJĀTAŚATRU'S INSTRUCTION TO BĀLĀKI

BY SRI M. K. VENKATARAMA IYER

This instruction is set forth in the first section of the second chapter of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*. It is widely known as 'Ajātaśatru Brāhmaṇa'. It consists of twenty brief passages of which the first twelve mention Bālāki's notions of Brahman which are shown to be inadequate by Ajātaśatru. The remaining eight passages are the really important ones from the standpoint of philosophy, especially Advaita Vedānta. They make an approach to the highest reality from the epistemological standpoint and seek to ascertain the ultimate subject of all experience. *Dr̥k* and *dr̥śya*—subject and object—are two fundamentally different things having nothing in common. In ordinary experience, they are given in close association with each other, and the task of philosophy is to show that the relationship is not inevitable and that *dr̥k* can be separated from *dr̥śya*. One and the same entity, the *jīva*, cannot be both subject and object. The subject can never be the object and the object can never be the subject. The section of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* that we have set out to study seeks to show that the Acosmic Absolute is the only ultimate subject, and consequently, the only experienter. It analyses the states of dream and dreamless sleep and shows that the subject which responds to sound, touch, and other stimuli from the external world is neither

the physical body nor the sense-organs nor the mind nor the vital force. It is not even the individual self, but the Supreme Self, the Unconditioned Brahman. From the ontological standpoint, Nirguṇa Brahman is ascertained to be the highest reality; from the epistemological standpoint, the same Nirguṇa Brahman is ascertained to be the ultimate subject of experience. There can be no final rift between being and knowing. That the two merge in the final stages is taught in various sections of the Upaniṣads. That is exactly the significance of the *mahāvākyas* like '*Tattvam-asi*' and '*Aham Brahmāsmi*.'

The analysis of the three states (*avasthā traya*) yields very useful results and we find that the Upaniṣads frequently employ this method to great purpose. It roughly answers to J. S. Mill's conception of the 'Method of difference'. The essence of the method is to establish causal relationship between two given facts by eliminating one by one all the adventitious circumstances. The success of the method will obviously depend on our ability to separate the attendant circumstances and eliminate them one by one and watch the result. Under laboratory conditions of study, it will be easy to vary one circumstance at a time and note down the result. But not all subjects can be made to submit to laboratory conditions. Where that

is not possible, we may rely on certain favourable circumstances which turn up in the course of nature and seek to ascertain real causal connections. In Western logic, this method is known as 'Natural Experiment', and students of astronomy generally fall back on it to study heavenly phenomena. When a total solar eclipse occurs, it provides specially favourable conditions to study the planetary positions in the heavens during day time. To the student of philosophy who seeks to ascertain the true nature of his self, such a favourable situation is furnished by the three states, that of waking, dream, and dreamless sleep, through which all of us pass almost every day. Western philosophers have not evinced much interest in the metaphysical study of these states, though Sigmund Freud has studied the phenomenon of dreams from the purely psychological standpoint. Bosanquet, however, has said in one place that, if we analyse properly the experiences of a normal individual lasting for a single day, we could securely establish that the highest reality is the Absolute as the Idealistic school of philosophers understand it. In the Upaniṣads as well as in Advaita Vedānta, the analysis of the experiences of a normal individual is done in a thorough-going manner and with very good results.

The instruction takes the form of a dialogue between Bālāki and Ajātaśatru, King of Kāśī. Bālāki is the son of Balākā and a scion of the Garga family. He is therefore known as Gārgya also. He was a scholar, or, at least, thought himself to be one. He was also a good speaker. Being self-conscious and proud of his learning and attainments, he went about offering to instruct people in *brahma-vidyā*. On one occasion, he went to King Ajātaśatru and said: 'I will teach you about Brahman.' The latter seized the opportunity and said that he would make a gift of a thousand cows for the mere offer. That is because he, too, wanted to show himself to be a patron of learning and eager to learn as well. Scholars were in the habit

of flocking to the court of King Janaka and it was widely known that King Janaka was both benevolent and eager to learn. Ajātaśatru was a little jealous of the reputation that Janaka had earned for himself and, in the desire to acquire a similar reputation for himself, made large offers to scholars who came up to him. He was pleased to note that at least one scholar of some eminence turned up at his court and undertook to instruct him.

Straightway the instruction begins and, as Bālāki unfolds his conceptions of Brahman one by one, the King contradicts him at every step saying that he is already aware of these notions, that they are only fit supports for meditation, and though they may be useful in that sense, they can never do justice to the true nature of Brahman. One who held such notions knew only the Conditioned Brahman which possesses attributes, and therefore, serves as an excellent aid for meditative exercise. As the King was thus actively participating in the instruction and not merely listening to it passively, the dialogue becomes lively and relieves the tedium and monotony which generally characterize expositions of high philosophical themes. As all the conceptions put forward by Bālāki fall short of the ultimate Truth, they only constitute the *prima facie* view (*pūrvapakṣa*) and what follows after Bālāki has had his say gradually prepares the ground for the conclusion that is to follow (*siddhānta*). It is condensed in the 'secret name' (*upanīṣad*) which is 'Truth of truth' (*satyasya satyam*). The method of developing a theme by first stating the *prima facie* view and the conclusion later has the great merit of establishing the latter after a fair and full consideration of all possible objections from diverse points of view. When Bālāki discovers that he has yet to learn about the true nature of Brahman, the conceit falls from him and he unhesitatingly offers to sit at the feet of the King as any other student would do. His willingness to take lessons from Ajātaśatru is an object lesson in regard to the behaviour of students.

One who is athirst for knowledge, specially the saving knowledge, must cast off pride and the sense of superiority based on birth and approach the teacher, whoever he may be, in all humility. Arrogance ill accords with the desire to learn. We witness therefore the strange spectacle of a Brāhmaṇa who came to teach sitting down to learn from a Kṣatriya.

Ajātaśatru, however, realized that it was contrary to accepted practice that a Brāhmaṇa should become his disciple. To save himself the embarrassment and also to put Bālāki at his ease, he adopted a somewhat novel mode of instruction. He took Bālāki by the hand and both went to a part of the palace where a man was fast asleep. The King tried to wake him up by calling him by certain names, but since he did not wake up, he resorted to physical pressure and pushed the man by his hand this side and that. Then the man woke up. The King put two questions to Bālāki: 'Where was this man when he was asleep and whence did he come?' Bālāki did not know the answer. That provided the occasion for the King to expatiate further on the theme. Thus there was accommodation on both sides and it created the right kind of atmosphere for the instruction that was to follow.

Bālāki's knowledge of Brahman was confined to the Conditioned One, which in its unmanifest state is known as Īśvara, in its partially manifest state as Hiranyagarbha and Sūtrātman, and in its fully manifest state as Virāt or Vaiśvānara. This conception admits of Brahman being viewed as an object in relation to a subject and as possessed of attributes. As an object it becomes an aid or support for devout meditation. One may meditate on Saguna Brahman in its real nature as the Creator, Sustainer, and Destroyer of the universe. The formula for worship laid down in the Śāṅḍilya-vidyā¹ has reference to this notion: 'With a calm and composed mind, one must meditate on Brahman (*tat*) as the origin (*ja*), the ab-

sorber (*la*), and sustainer (*an*) of the universe.' This cryptic formula is set forth more fully and commended for meditation to Bhṛgu by his father Varuṇa.² Occupying a slightly lower place is the mystic formula 'Om', whose importance as an aid to meditation is set forth in many Upaniṣads.³ The whole of the *Māṅḍūkya Upaniṣad* is taken up with the description of the details of meditation on 'Om'. In several contexts, Śaṅkara has stated that the syllable 'Om' is the nearest equivalent of Brahman. Those who are unable to rise to this level of meditation may concentrate their minds on some concrete object like the sun. Bālāki's twelve notions of Brahman, as sun, moon, lightning, and so forth, are such tangible aids for worship. Each of these conceptions of Brahman has its own special attributes, and he who worships Brahman as possessed of particular attributes gets appropriate rewards. He will be endowed with health and strength, become powerful, live for the full term, get name and fame, and his progeny will never become extinct. There is close correspondence between the attributes meditated upon and the results that follow.

Though these conceptions of Brahman, the attributes which they possess, and the rewards which the meditation brings, all belong to the sphere of ignorance, they are not without their use. They provide excellent discipline to the mind in concentration, not allowing it to turn this side or that, but to be solely occupied with a steady stream of like thoughts. Śaṅkara has defined meditation (*dhyāna*) as 'the process of concentrating the mind on some resting place (*pratīka*) or support approved by the scriptures and giving rise to a chain of homogeneous thoughts without the interruption of anything of a contrary nature.'⁴ Worship (*upāsanā*) is the same as meditation and it has also been defined

² *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, III.1.

³ *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, I.2.15; *Praśna Upaniṣad*, V; *Muṅḍaka Upaniṣad*, II.2.4; *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, I.8.

⁴ *Memorial Edition of Śaṅkara's Works*, Vol. VII, p. 431 and Vol. XIII, p. 255.

¹ *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, III.14.1.

in almost identical terms.⁵ These definitions make it clear that meditations are excellent mental exercises. They purify the mind of its age-long impurities and make it fit to receive the highest knowledge when it comes. They clear the mind of all hatred also and prepare it for extending its sphere of love. Unbounded knowledge and unlimited love raise the human being to the level of Īśvara. That is the real purpose of the meditative exercises laid down in the Upaniṣads. The variety of conceptions prescribed as aids to meditation is intended to suit different tastes and temperaments. Ānandagiri, commenting on *Māṇḍūkya-Kārikā* (III.16), writes: 'Men of poor understanding worship the Kārya Brahman (Virāj), those of average intellect worship the Kāraṇa Brahman (Īśvara), and men of the highest intellect worship the non-dual Brahman.' Even idol worship has its place. By gradual stages, worship must learn to do without concrete aids and substitute the recitation of *mantras* and *stotras* in place of idols. Deep concentration is for people still higher up. Meditation on the formula 'I am He' (*So'ham*) is for the highest. That King Ajātaśatru treats Bālāki's notions of Brahman as fit aids for meditation is clear from his question: 'Do you know only this much?' It only means that there is something more than what Bālāki knows and not that what he knows is absolutely useless. If he had intended the latter, he would have said: 'You know nothing.'

From the conception of the Absolute as the object of worship to the conception of the Absolute as the ultimate subject of all experience is not a far cry. The transition takes place by gradual and almost imperceptible stages. From the worship of the sun, for example, we are asked to rise to the realization that the Person who animates the sun and the Person who is dwelling in the inmost depth of our hearts is the same.⁶ From the worship of the gods who are supposed to

be outside of us, we are asked to rise to the notion that the real object of worship is within us and not without.⁷ We are told that, if we worship God with a sense of difference between the worshipper and the worshipped, we are no better than beasts.⁸ Worship, therefore, is at its best when the worshipper feels his identity with the Brahman he is worshipping. It must cease to have anything to do with material gains, but become the prayer of the spirit which is eager to be led 'from unreality to Reality, from darkness to Light, and from death to Immortality'.⁹ Thus worship, like all things finite, transcends itself and points to something higher. In deep communion, the difference between the worshipper and worshipped is lost and only the consciousness which lights up both remains.

This is the light which illumines all the states of our mind whether they relate to worship or the acquisition of knowledge. It is the subject of all experience. It reveals the objects of the real world when we are awake and also the presentations of the dream state. When we pass to the state of dreamless sleep and nothing is presented to the mind, consciousness still remains to show that nothing is perceived. It is the presence of consciousness as the constant witness (*sākṣin*) that enables us to explain when we wake up that 'we slept well and that we saw nothing'. Since the falling away of the presentations does not affect the underlying consciousness, but leaves it untouched, we have to conclude that there is no vital or organic connection between them. Just as bubbles, foam, and waves rise on the calm surface of the water and finally subside therein, even so these presentations are mere appearances of the consciousness which is their substrate. In the final analysis, these states of the mind (*vṛttis*), including worship, are only superimpositions on Pure Consciousness.

To demonstrate that the real Self is the

⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. VI, Part 2, p. 9.

⁶ *Īśā Upaniṣad*, 16.

⁷ *Kena Upaniṣad*, I.A-8.

⁸ *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, I.4.10.

⁹ *Ibid.*, I.3.28.

ultimate experiencer, the condition of sleep is more helpful than the waking state where there are complicating factors which are difficult to eliminate. For one thing, the sense-organs are in intimate touch with the objects of the external world and are, so to say, in their grip. The Upaniṣad speaks of the former as 'grahas' and the latter as 'atigrahas'.¹⁰ For another, there is the light of the sun which may lead us to think that objects are revealed by that light. These two factors are absent in the dream state, and consequently, it is easier to separate the subject (*dr̥k*) from the object (*dr̥śya*). 'Dream exhibits the self-luminous nature of the self which is not quite manifest in the waking state owing to the contact of the sense-organs with objects as well as the presence of the light of the sun.'¹¹ Śaṅkara explains why Ajātaśatru took Bālāki to a man who was asleep and not to one who was awake: 'In the waking state, the Being whom Bālāki put forward as Brahman (the individual self), which is the agent and experiencer, is in touch with the sense-organs, so also is the Being put forward by Ajātaśatru (the Supreme Self). The grounds of differentiation between the two are, therefore, hard to determine as they are mixed up. The experiencer and the experienced, being closely bound up in the waking state, cannot be shown separately.'¹²

The sleeping man was called by the names of the deities which preside over the sense-organs, mind, and vital force. The point in addressing the man by these unfamiliar names is that the divinities cannot be asleep though the sense-organs and the mind may be quiescent and hence they must respond to the sound, if they are the real experiencers. Since there was no response, it was conclusively proved that the sense-organs and the

mind are not the subject of experience.¹³ It cannot be even the vital force, for in the Upaniṣads it is said that it never goes to sleep, but keeps watch without intermission.¹⁴ Hence it should not fail to respond if it were the subject. Since there is no response, we have to conclude that the vital force (*prāṇa*) is not the real experiencer. Śaṅkara gives another reason also. Since the sense-organs and the mind are absorbed in it in the state of sleep and come out of it in the waking state, we must suppose that it is a complex entity. Since it is itself differentiated five-fold, it becomes still more complex. What is made up of many elements must necessarily serve the purpose of some other entity. This other entity must be the conscious Self. By this process of gradual elimination, Ajātaśatru conclusively demonstrates that the body, the sense-organs, the mind, and the vital force are not the experiencers. They belong to the category of the experienced. The object can never become the subject. In answer to the two questions, 'When this Being, full of consciousness, was asleep, where was it then and whence did it come?', Ajātaśatru states further: 'When this Being, full of consciousness, is asleep, it absorbs at the time the functions of the organs through its own consciousness and lies in the *ākāśa* that is in the heart. When this Being absorbs them, it is called *svapiti*.' The '*ākāśa*' in the heart is no other than the Supreme Self. The individual self in the state of profound sleep comes to its own place. It does so through the seventy-two thousand arteries which branch out from the heart and pervade the entire body. Resting in its own place, the Self then does not know anything. It has no particular experiences. Hence it is in the enjoyment of perfect

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, III.2.1.

¹¹ *Memorial Edition of Śaṅkara's Works*, Vol. III, p. 566.

¹² Swami Madhavananda's translation is adopted throughout this paper.

¹³ Śaṅkara adds another reason to show why the sense-organs cannot be the subject of experience. The sense of sight, of hearing, and of touch are all separate organs. In the absence of another entity which could connect and co-ordinate the separate impressions, memory and recognition would become impossible.

¹⁴ *Praśna Upaniṣad*, IV.3; *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, IV.3.12.

bliss for which the nearest parallel is the happiness of a baby or of an emperor or of a noble Brāhmaṇa.

Through these arteries the finite self may come down a bit and rest in the intellect which is located in the heart. It then experiences dreams, 'becomes an emperor, as it were, and attains states high or low, as it were'. 'As an emperor, taking his citizens, moves about as he pleases in his own territory, so does it, thus taking the organs, move about as it pleases in its own body.' In this condition, the intellect is functioning, but not the sense-organs which are all absorbed in it.

One step lower down brings the finite self to the state of waking, wherein the intellect expands and the sense-organs which were latent begin to function. The world of objects makes its impact on them and the resulting sensations are worked up by the mind into judgements such as, 'this object is a tree', 'that object is a man'. These are the three states through which the finite self passes owing to its identification with the intellect. When the intellect expands, the finite self comes to the waking state and when it contracts, it finds itself experiencing dreams. When it ceases to function, there are no particular experiences and that is the state of profound sleep for the finite self. It is like the image of the sun expanding or contracting according as the water in a lake is much or little and the same image disappearing altogether when all the water gets dried up. Just as the reflected image of the sun goes back to its source when there is no water in the lake, even so, the finite self, shedding all its adjuncts in the state of dreamless sleep, rises to its true stature and shines in its native splendour as the Supreme Self. Just as the water is the reflecting medium for the sun, even so, the intellect is the medium for the Supreme Self. Like the water, the intellect is an adventitious adjunct (*upādhi*). The three states, therefore, do not really belong to the Self. They are superimpositions on it.

The statement that the sleeping man wakes

up when he is pushed this side and that and the further point that he passes from one state to another appear to make out that the experiencer is the individual self. The statement in the last paragraph, 'as from a fire tiny sparks fly in all directions', lends further support to this view. But it does not square with the assertion that 'from this Self emanate all organs, all worlds, all gods, and all beings'. In a previous paragraph (17), it is stated that the self in the state of profound sleep 'lies in the *ākāśa* that is in the heart'. The '*ākāśa* in the heart' means the Supreme Self, as is borne out by several Upaniṣads.¹⁵ The individual self does not rest there as in a place different from itself. The *ākāśa* is not the container and the individual self what is contained in it. It is to dispel such wrong notions that Ajātaśatru addressed the two questions mentioned above. The second question, 'Whence did it come?' looks redundant because, ordinarily, a man who wants to go somewhere starts from the very place where he has been resting and from nowhere else. But the question will cease to be redundant if we realize that the Self was not in any place different from itself and that it did not come from any place different from itself. It was in its own place, absolutely untouched by experiences of every kind. Its utter purity and transcendence are brought out by the two questions.

The example of tiny sparks coming out of fire should not be pressed too far. It is only intended to elucidate a transcendental truth by means of the nearest possible analogy. But these analogies should never be taken literally, for they will never prove adequate to the truths of a higher plane. Just as sparks get separated from their source, even so the finite selves get separated from their source and, forgetful of their real nature, they imagine themselves to be agents and enjoyers, to be transmigrating, subject to birth

¹⁵ *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, VI.8.1; *Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad*, IV.3.21.

and death, and so forth. When their eyes are opened by a competent *guru*, they realize their true nature and pass beyond all the pairs of opposites.

It is nowhere stated in the Upaniṣads that the finite self is either a modification of Brahman or that it is one of the things created by Brahman. Nor is it possible to establish any kind of intelligible relationship between Brahman and the individual self. Śaṅkara examines several possible relationships such as whole and part, organism and constituent members, cause and effect, and shows that they are all ridden by inner contradictions. Even the category of identity and difference fares no better. It is not necessary to summarize the reasons adduced by Śaṅkara to show the inadequacy of these conceptions to the relationship between Brahman and the individual self. The failure of all attempts to relate them only proves that the initial assumption is wrong. If we create a difference where, in reality, there is none, it is no wonder that all our efforts to bring them into

relationship prove infructuous.

Since we are unable to relate them, can we admit that they are two independent entities? No, for the human mind refuses to accept two ultimate realities. The Upaniṣads are unequivocal on this point. They maintain that reality is one without a second. They add that he who sees difference, as it were, goes from death to death. Nor can one of them be made subordinate to the other. Both are sentient principles and hence both have equal status. Hence we have to conclude that there is only one sentient entity and that is the subject of all experience. Viewed ontologically, it is the Acosmic Absolute and viewed epistemologically, it is the ultimate experiencer.

It is therefore that Śaṅkara says: 'There are two things—the Seer and the seen (Subject and object)—different from each other; (of these) the Seer is Brahman and the seen is Māyā—thus trumpets all Vedānta.'¹⁶

¹⁶ *Brahmajñānāvāṇī*, 17.

ECHOES OF VEDĀNTA IN THE POETRY OF ENGLAND

BY PRINCIPAL JOGIRAJ BASU

In this essay we shall make an attempt to show how some doctrines of Vedānta have been unwittingly expressed and confirmed by some of the poets of England.

The Upaniṣads assert in unmistakable terms that the whole universe of names and forms, the world of being and becoming springs from the supreme Godhead, the eternal existence, consciousness, and bliss, and at the time of dissolution returns to its fountain-head. Says the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*: 'All these beings spring from the supreme Being, are sustained by it, and return to the same supreme Being at the time of dissolution.' Our life on earth is, in fact, a sojourn. The

senses cloud our vision and lead us further away from our spiritual mooring as we come of age. The senses dupe us and turn us into worldlings. The eternal and boundless supreme Soul is, as it were, limited by the sense organs and the body. The Universal Soul shackled by the body becomes the individual soul; the Paramātman becomes the *jīvātman*. Because of the presence of the Soul, the spark of the Divine, the senses or the attractions fail to dupe man fully from his divine mission. This metaphysical conviction finds expression in the poems of many English poets. Wordsworth, for example, in his famous 'Immortality Ode' sings in mystic

rapture :

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting
The soul that rises with us, our life's star
Hath had elsewhere its setting
And cometh from afar :
Not in entire forgetfulness
And not in utter nakedness
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God who is our home.

Our life on earth is a preparation for the life hereafter ; it is a quest after the source of our being. Notwithstanding the worldly comforts and carnal pleasures, there is a sense of discontent and dissatisfaction. Matthew Arnold, the noted English bard, calls it 'divine discontent.' According to him, though man moves further and further away from his source as he comes of age, still this 'divine discontent' keeps up the spiritual urge in him, and ultimately turns his mind to God. Though man moves away from the shore of the Eternal Ocean of Divinity, and walks into inland, still from time to time, in Arnold's language, he is visited by the 'scents and murmurs of the infinite sea'. Francis Thompson, the mystic poet, calls this divine discontent or divine urge in man 'hound of heaven', in his well-known poem similarly entitled. Here 'hound' is symbolic of divine presence or love of God. In this poem, he describes in wonderful language how the urge for God haunts man in every walk of life from birth to death and beyond. Man falls a victim to the lure of the flesh and hears not the call of the Spirit; but the Spirit, the love of the Almighty, follows him day and night throughout his life, and ultimately leads him on to the realization of Godhead.

Vedānta holds that the world is not real ; it is an appearance, not a reality. It appears to be real, but it is not the permanent all-abiding Absolute Reality. It is a fleeting show, an ephemeral entity, having phenomenal reality alone. Not only does Wordsworth embody this truth in some of his poems, but he also actually experienced this illusory nature of the world in his life in states of

mystic trance that often visited him since his boyhood. In his introduction to the 'Immortality Ode', he records this experience in clear and unambiguous terms : 'I was often unable to think of external things as having external existence, and I communed with all that I saw as something not apart from, but inherent in my own immaterial nature. Many times while going to school have I grasped at a wall or tree to recall myself from the abyss of idealism to the reality.' He calls the earth 'an unsubstantial fairy place' in his popular piece 'To the Cuckoo'. Vaughan, the devotional poet, foreshadows these metaphysical convictions of Wordsworth in his famous poems 'Retreat', 'Childhood', 'Eternity', etc. He calls the world 'a shadow, not substance', 'time, not Eternity', and describes human life on earth as only an arc of the complete circle preceded by the antenatal and followed by the post-mortem existence of the soul; and that complete circle represents the Universal Soul which has no beginning, no middle and no end. The statement that life on earth is only an arc of the circle, an expression or manifestation mid-way between two unmanifested and unknown phases is reminiscent of a *śloka* of the *Gītā*, wherein the Lord says :

'O Bhārata, beings are unmanifest in their origin, manifest in their middle, and again unmanifest in the state of dissolution. Hence there is no cause for lamentation' (II.28). The conception of the Absolute as a circle reminds me of the saying of my Master Sri Om Baba, 'When beginning is the end it is a circle', i.e. no more beginning, no more end. In the eulogy of *guru*, recited by a devout Hindu daily, God is described as '*akhaṇḍa-maṇḍalākāra*', i.e. an endless circle.

Long before Vaughan and Wordsworth, the great Shakespeare described the illusory character of phenomena in superb language through the mouth of Prospero in his famous comedy, *Tempest*, as follows :

The cloud-clapped towers, the gorgeous
palaces

The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve
And, like this unsubstantial pageant fades,
Leaves not a rack behind—we are such stuff
As dreams are made of.

Crossing the bounds of Platonic idealism, these lines savour of the Vedāntic doctrine of *Māyā* or illusion. The great Victorian Tennyson, also, affirms this fact when he sings :

The hills are shadows and they flow
From form to form and nothing stands.
They melt like mist, the solid lands,
Like clouds they shape themselves and go.
(*In Memoriam*, cxii)

Everything vanishes, but the substance remains; the form passes away, the spirit abides. To establish this truth, in the very next line following the above stanza, Tennyson says: 'But in my spirit will I dwell'. The poet thinks that he will dwell in his spirit eternally, though his physical form may undergo transformation and crumble down.

In the excerpt from Wordsworth's introduction to 'Immortality Ode' cited above, the poet makes an important observation that external objects are not different from the mind; they are not 'apart from but inherent in' man's 'own immaterial nature'. This observation has the sanction of his personal mystic experience, and as such, carries conviction to the mind of the readers. His mystic realization proves that there is no fundamental difference between so-called mind and matter; in reality, both are the expressions of the supreme Spirit. The Absolute has assumed all these different names and forms. The *Upaniṣad* says: '*Rūpam rūpam prati-rūpo babhūva.*' After creating the different objects, the Absolute permeates and pervades them through and through: '*Tat sṛṣṭvā tadevānuprāviśat.*' In the words of my Master Sri Om Baba: 'Just as waves, foams, bubbles, ripple, vapour, etc. of the infinite ocean are nothing but water in reality, likewise trees, earth, man, the sentient, the

insentient, knowledge, nescience, the visible, the invisible—all objects, whether perceived or imaginary, are but the manifestations of that one infinite Being.' Blake strikes home this great truth when he sings in the following strain :

Man looks out in tree, herbs, fish, beast
Collecting up the scattered portions of his
immortal body

Wherever grass grows or a leaf buds
The Eternal Man is heard, is felt.

He calls the supreme Spirit 'Eternal Man', i.e. *Paramātman*, whereas personal man is *jīvātman*. In heavenly strains does Wordsworth codify this truth in his 'Tintern Abbey' in inimitable words :

Whose dwelling is the light of the setting
suns

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

Shelley, also, lends support to this Vedāntic truth when he sings rapturously in his 'Adonais' about the Eternal Spirit :

The one spirit's plastic stress
Sweeps through the dull dense world. . . .
And bursting in its beauty and its might
From trees and beasts and men into the
Heaven's Light.

Thus these poets conceive the universe as the expression of pure thought wiping out the line of demarcation between mind and matter, the sentient and the insentient. From this ultimate standpoint, all created beings are charged with consciousness, existence, and bliss of the pure Spirit; hence nothing is mean or trivial. Every object is a manifestation and souvenir or the supreme Beloved. Hence Robert Bridges calls the world the 'Testament of Beauty' in his famous poem of the same caption. Hence it is that Vaughan, the great mystic, maintains that even the dust or dirt of this earth is not to be ignored, because it is instinct with the glow of divine warmth

and reminds the seeker of God :

And here in dust and dirt, O here

The lilies of His love appear (*The Revival*).

According to Vedānta, this 'one Spirit' is eternal and unchanging; it remains one and immutable in the midst of all changes; it is the unity underlying the apparent diversity, the Eternal One in the midst of the fleeting many, the Concord in discord. Shelley utters this Vedāntic truth all unawares when he writes :

The one remains, the many change and
pass ;

Heaven's light forever shines, Earth's
shadows fly (*Adonais*).

Tennyson goes further and asserts :

That Infinite

Within us, as without, that All-in-all
And above all, the never changing One
And ever-changing many.

In these lines, Tennyson depicts the supreme Soul as simultaneously immanent and transcendent. It is, to use his words, 'within us, as without'; again, it is 'all-in-all' and 'above all'. The Upaniṣads describe Brahman, the Absolute Reality, as at once immanent and transcendent. It is the soul of the universe, soul of man, and transcends the limitations of time and space. Śrī Śaṅkarācārya, while commenting on the Upaniṣads in general, and *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* in particular, repeatedly stresses this simultaneous immanence and transcendence of the supreme Spirit.

Tennyson is also right in his observation that the ever-changing many is not independent of the never-changing One. In fact, the never-changing One, the Eternal Spirit has assumed the diverse forms of the ever-changing many. He who realizes this truth perceives the One and not the many. This perception of one Reality and not diversity, this realization of concord in apparent discord is the bed-rock of mysticism. Such perception is termed mystic vision. The Lord states in the *Gītā*: 'Know thou that knowledge to be pure by which the one indestruct-

ible Being is perceived in all beings as unity in diversity.'

In the words of my Master: 'Realization of Brahman consists in establishing unity in diversity, in doing away with the many: visualizing One and not many.' This realization of One and not many, unity and not multiplicity is, in fact, self-realization, and this is the purport of the Vedāntic injunctions of '*Tattvamasi*' and '*Aham Brahmāsmi*'—'Thou art That' and 'I am Brahman.' 'I' in the highest sense is the supreme Soul; due to nescience it appears as an individual entity. In his book, *What is Life*, observes Schrodinger in the concluding chapter on 'Determinism and Freewill': 'I, in the widest sense of the word, that is to say, every conscious mind that has ever said or felt 'I' am the person, if any, who controls the motion of the atoms according to the laws of nature. Consciousness is a singular of which the plural is unknown.' This God-realization is really the realization of the Self by the self, in the self, and it strikes out duality as the personal 'I' is lost in the Eternal 'I'. The Upaniṣads hold that the knower, knowable, and knowledge,—seer, object of sight, and vision, all merge into one indivisible entity in the act of self-realization. In the language of the renowned philosopher Eckhart: 'God and I are one in the act of my perceiving Him.' Sings the Sufi poet of Persia, Fariduddin Attar, 'Pilgrim, pilgrimage, and road were but myself towards myself.'

The Vedāntic doctrine of the post-natal existence of the soul after it had run the race of life on earth and the absorption of the individual soul into the All-Soul finds expression in the writings of several English poets of whom Shelley and Tennyson stand out pre-eminently. In his '*Adonais*', Shelley describes the mutability of the body and immortality of the human soul which resolves back to its fountain, the supreme Soul while shuffling off the mortal coil:

Dust to dust, but pure spirit shall flow

Back to the burning fountain whence it
came,
 A portion of the Eternal, which must glow
 Through time and change, unquenchably
the same.
 Freed from the trammels of the body, the
 individual soul loses itself in the All-Soul, he
 is no more a visible physical entity, but in
 the words of Shelley:
 He is a presence to be felt and known
 In darkness and in light, from herb and
stone
 Spreading itself where'er that Power
may move
 Which has withdrawn his being to its own:
 Which wields the world with never-wearied
love
 Sustains it from beneath, and kindles it
above.

Shelley, an ardent follower of Plato, surpasses Platonic idealism in the above two stanzas and unwittingly reproduces the Vedāntic doctrine of the transmigration of the Soul and metempsychosis. He describes the disembodied soul of Keats in these stanzas. But Shelley's statement does not clarify the point as to whether the individual soul completely loses its identity or individuality after expiry and whether a man should undergo successive births to attain final liberation termed *mukti*, *mokṣa*, *kaivalya*, etc. in our scriptures. Shelley does not point out the difference between death and emancipation or salvation. There must be some difference in the post-mortem state of a soul which is not liberated and that which has attained final liberation. The pertinent question of rebirth crops up in this regard and Christians, like Mohammedans, do not admit reincarnation. We do not know whether Shelley believed in the doctrine of rebirth. If he did not, it is hard to explain how a man can attain liberation in one single birth. There is reason to believe that Tennyson believed in reincarnation. In his famous elegy, 'In Memoriam', on his deceased friend Hallam, he clearly states in un-

ambiguous language that man has to undergo a cycle of births to attain final emancipation. The soul of a person who has not attained liberation retains its individuality though merged in the All-Soul when disembodied:

That each, who seems a separate whole
 Should move his rounds, and fusing all
 The skirts of self again, should fall
 Remerging in the general Soul.

The line 'should move his rounds' refers to the series of births he undergoes till he attains his goal. Individuality lasts after death and the soul is not fully absorbed into the God-head. After several births and deaths when man is spiritually fit for final liberation, his soul finally shakes off the body, the 'skirt of self', and is wholly absorbed in the All-Soul.

An awakened soul has to wait so long as his body persists to be absorbed into God-head, his supreme Beloved. Hence he regards his body as a barrier, a veil that curtains him off from his God. Hence he, intolerant of the delay of union, prays for the annihilation of his physical existence. Down the ages, this prayer, this cry is heard amongst apostles, aspirers, *yogins*, and mystics. This cry is heard in the poems of devotional poets of England as well such as Vaughan, Donne, Grashaw, Herbert, Bishop King, and the like. Couched in beautiful language, Vaughan sends forth the passionate cry of his soul to his beloved Lord:

This veil I say is all the cloak
 And cloud that shadows Thee from Me:
 This veil Thy full-eyed love denies,
 And only gleams and fractions spies
 O take it off, Make no delay
 But brush me with Thy light.

Only the rapt mystic, an apostle can send forth such a prayer which springs forth from the innermost recesses of his heart in the highest flight of devotion.

Instances of such unwitting acceptance and confirmation of various tenets of Vedānta by different English poets may be multiplied, but due to the prescribed limit of this article I must round it off here. The above discussion

proves that the doctrines of Vedānta or Upaniṣads are eternal truths; this is why crossing the geographical bounds they reverberate in the hearts of saints and poets of

the West as well and find expression in their writings. This fact also proves that truth is not the monopoly of any time or clime; it abides in all ages and all lands.

GURU-ŚIṢYA TRADITION

BY SRI M. P. PANDIT

The importance attached to the institution of the *guru* and *śiṣya*, guide and initiate, in the spiritual tradition of India—as indeed in most of the esoteric disciplines all over the world—may well provoke the sophisticated modern philosopher to ask, where is the necessity of accepting another as *guru*? Is not man endowed with sufficient intelligence to see what is good for him and what is not? Can he not choose his course of life, in whatever field, on his own? Surely, man has a mind and a will to determine and shape his own destiny. More than that. If it be true, as is declared in the scriptures and testified by so many in all ages, that in the heart of each one there is the Divine, the *antaryāmin*, who is the innate guide of each man, then, where is the need of a human *guru*? One has only to listen to the voice of this Leader within oneself instead of subjecting himself to the will and control of another man who is, after all, as fallible as any human being cannot but be. There are not a few instances of *yogins*, saints, and mystics who have had no *guru* save this Inner Guide, and by following Him, they have arrived at their destination. The indispensability of the *guru-śiṣya* system is nothing more than a superstition that is better discarded in this rational age of development.

It is certainly true that in each man there is the Divine stationed in the innermost recesses of the heart, He who is not only the Lord of his own existence, but who is, indeed, spread everywhere and rules the universe,

the Jagad-Guru, World-Teacher. But the question is, how many can feel and realize that Presence? How many can open to and receive guidance from Him? Man, as he is, is severely limited in his vision and audition by the several folds of ignorance in which he is steeped, and he cannot normally reach very far, either upwards or inwards. Besides, the falsehood which is a product of ignorance is so much intermingled with the functions of his senses that it is easy for him to mistake the voices of his own ego or desire-self to be the dictates of the Soul. Theoretically, indeed, it is possible to awake to the Inner Guide and go ahead in one's spiritual journey, as has been demonstrated by rare men now and then in the history of man. But, by and large, this truth is limited in its application by reason of the immaturity of the human mind in its present state of development.

Further, it is by the senses that man knows and believes, and the senses are turned outward, *bahirmukha*. They do not report on what they do not see or sense in a physical way, and hence it is difficult for man to believe in a guide who cannot be physically felt or seen. An unseen guide cannot normally claim his faith. To meet this natural difficulty, the Indian tradition recognizes the fact of the *avatāra*, the Divine descending into the world of man in a perceptible, physical form, the Incarnation, the Divine Man who claims the allegiance of progressive mankind. Incarnations are, however, rare;

they come once in a way, only at crucial stages in the evolution of the universe. But there are lesser manifestations of the Divine, emanations that come for specific work, the *vibhūtis*, the prophets, men of God. These are the God-appointed *gurus* of humanity to lead men Godward. But they, too, are not born every day, and they are not many who can draw upon their word of teaching as a sufficient guidance for successful practice. A past personality, a past teaching is still a power, no doubt, but it has its limitations in application to a present, far removed from the age in which the message was delivered, and in a future, it is still further remote.

It is to meet such an unfilled need for adequate guidance and lead in the inner life that ancient Indian tradition holds up the ideal of the human *guru*. This *guru* is a human being, living, who has already trodden the path chosen by the seeker and who is in a position to show him the way. Not only to show the way, but he has also the power to transmit the truth of his experience or realization to the disciple. In fact, it is he who makes the spiritual ideal living and dynamic for the novice, by initiating him into the knowledge of its truth with a simultaneous impulsion into the practice for its progressive embodiment in his life. Without such a *guru*, it is well-nigh impossible to go far on the path. The spiritual domain is still an unfrequented territory to the normal human mind, and if one is not to lose one's way in the vasts and deeps that abound in its infinite spread-out, one has to have recourse to a guide who has known the terrain and who is competent to lead. Says the seer in the *R̥g-Veda*: 'The stranger asks the way of him who knows it; taught by him who knows, he travels onward. This is, indeed, the blessing of instruction; he finds the path that leads *directly* forward' (X.32.7). The Upaniṣads declare in one voice that only he who has a teacher can know, *ācāryavān puruṣo veda*.¹

Brahman is the object of the supreme quest.

and Brahman cannot be known by one's own mental effort. 'Unless told of Him by another, thou canst not find thy way to Him; for He is subtler than subtlety and that which logic cannot reach. This wisdom is not to be had by reasoning; only when told thee by another, it brings real knowledge.'² Even study of Śruti, scripture, works of authority, cannot give the delivering knowledge. Only by knowledge received direct from the *guru* does one attain to the most beneficent.³ It is only he, in whom that knowledge is alive, that can communicate to the seeker. The Upaniṣads record how even those who were teachers in their own right and were masters in their own fields of knowledge, had to go as disciples to other adepts when they sought to know the truth of other paths. Not that these seers could not grasp it intellectually by themselves. But there was something more that had to be imbibed, the *technique* to make that knowledge effective in themselves. 'We can give you the knowledge, even knowledge of the Ātman,' say the gods 'but only the Teacher can show you *the Way*.'⁴

If the Veda and the Upaniṣad testify to the advisability, even indispensability of the *guru*, and found a tradition of the *guru-śiṣya* axis,⁵ it is the Tantra that has given a firm shape to the tradition and worked out in minute detail the dynamics of the *guru-śiṣya* operation.

In the tradition of the Tantra, the *guru* is the central pivot on which every movement in spiritual life turns. He is not just a learned man who can teach. It is profane to look upon him as human. He is much more; in fact, he is looked upon as a representative of the Divine, even the very Divine Himself. The supreme Śiva who is formless, says the *Kulārṇava-Tantra*, appears to the seeker in

² *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, I.2.8-9.

³ *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, IV.4.3.

⁴ *Ibid.*, IV.14.1.

⁵ Of this axis, the master is the first form, the disciple the latter form, and their junction results in the *vidyā* (*Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, I.3.2).

¹ *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, VI.14.21.

the form of the *guru*. The *guru* is great because the First Lord, Mahākāla, is manifest in him.⁶

The Tantras declare unambiguously that no man can walk the path unaided. One may have read books, practised austerities, acquired amazing proficiency in the use of his faculties. But book-learning remains a mental knowledge, ritual becomes a mechanical routine, unless they are energized by the personality of the *guru*. It is only those acts that are inspired by the *guru* that yield *bhakti* and *mukti*, *gurumukhyāḥ kriyāḥ sarvā bhaktimukti-phalapradāḥ*. One may be qualified; but he still needs someone to launch him on the journey, to implant that power in him which would keep him moving and lead him aright through the regions that are beyond the limits of human capacity to negotiate. And this help is provided by the *guru*. Whatever the nature of the *sādhana*, whether it is the way of meditation (*dhyāna*), or ritualistic worship (*pūjā*), or *mantra-japa*, it is the *guru* who initiates, conducts, and leads to fruition. 'The form of the *guru* is the root of *dhyāna*, the lotus-feet of the *guru* is the root of *pūjā*, the word of the *guru* is the root of *mantra*, and the grace of the *guru* is the root of *siddhi*.'⁷

II

The *guru* is of two types: *śikṣā-guru*, one who expounds and teaches the Śāstra to the enquiring intelligence and equips the mind with an ordered knowledge, bearing on the meaning and goal of existence: *dīkṣā-guru*, he who initiates the seeker into the dynamics of the path that is to be followed to translate that knowledge in his own life. A more detailed classification is given in the *Kulārṇava-Tantra*, where the *gurus* are described as being of six different kinds: *preraka*, who creates an interest in *sādhana*, the practical discipline, by drawing attention to its beneficent results; *sūcaka*, who opens the eye of

the seeker to the vision of the *sādhana* and its objective; *vācaka*, who explains the method and the goal; *darśaka*, who shows them in convincing detail; *śikṣaka*, who teaches step by step the discipline and details of the ritual; and *bodhaka*, who endows the aspirant with the necessary understanding of mind and illuminates his being with his own spiritual light. Of these six kinds, says the *Tantra*, the last, *bodhaka*, is, as it were, the prime cause of which the rest are the effects: without the lamp of knowledge lighted by the *bodhaka*, all other steps remain without consequence.

What are the qualifications that are demanded of a *guru*? The *Tantra Śāstra* is very exacting on this point. He must be 'endowed with all auspicious features, graced with full limbs, knower of all Āgamic lore, knower of the course of all *mantras*, endearing to all, charming like a god, of happy countenance, easy of access, remover of delusion and doubt; who can read by signs and gestures, knows the pros and cons, wise, brilliant, with attention fixed within, though the gaze is outward (*antar-lakṣyo bahir-dṛṣṭiḥ*), who knows the right time and right place, whose command is self-fulfilling, knows the past, present, and the future; capable of control as of release, knows to impinge subtly, to illumine; serene, benevolent to all creatures, controlled in the movement of the senses, and victorious over the six enemies; premier, solemn, with discrimination between the deserving and the non-deserving ... pure, ever-contented, potent with *mantra-śakti*, lover of devotees, bold, kind-hearted, with smile before speech ... content with what comes unmasked ... identified with the one I in all, free from duality'.

In a more significant passage it declares: 'He is the *guru* whose vision is steady without object, mind steady without support, breath immobile without effort'; 'When he shows the Truth one becomes that Truth' (*Kulārṇava-Tantra*, XIII).

The *guru*, the *ācārya* is one who practises

⁶ *Yoginī-Tantra*.

⁷ *Kulārṇava-Tantra*, X.13.

himself what he preaches, and establishes the disciple in that practice, *svayam ācarate, śiṣyam ācāre sthāpayatyapi* (*Rudra Yāmala*). He is ever ready and eager to help and uplift those who come to him for aid. He is capable of assuming the burden of those who come under his care and ferries them across the ocean of existence like a hospitable boat. For the *guru* is, ultimately, the doer who works the *sādhanā*, *kartā*, saviour who protects from all dangers, *pātā*, annihilator who destroys all obstructions, *hartā*; he is the donor of liberation, *mokṣapradāyakaḥ*.

Such an inordinate importance given to the *guru* and power attributed to him would be, indeed, un-understandable were we to fail to note that, to the seers of the Tantra, the *guru* is not just the human personality that bears the name. In truth, the real *guru* is not visible to the physical eye at all. He is there seated in the upper reaches of the head, in the thousand-petalled lotus, the *sahasrāra*, the Eternal Guru, the Lord who rules the whole domain. 'There is only one auspicious *guru* and he is certainly Myself. He is to be contemplated, at times, in the thousand-petalled lotus, at times, in the heart-lotus, and at other times, as present before the eye (in human form)' (*Rudra Yāmala*). It is this Guru that is concentrated upon and invoked by the human *guru*, first in himself, and then communicated in His power to the disciple. Asks the *Kulārṇava*: 'If Śiva himself is not the *guru*, then who is it that gives the bliss and the liberation?' Another Tantra describes the *guru* as the grandsire of the deity invoked: *Mantra* is born of the *guru*, *devatā* is born of the *mantra*; and so, the *guru* is the grandfather of the *devatā*.

Thus it is the Divine who is present and active in the person of the human *guru* that is transmitted and implanted in the being of the disciple. It is the Divine that initiates the career of the *sādhanā* and conducts it. The *guru* is only the channel, the representative of the Divine. The disciple is enjoined

to keep this fact in mind and to have utter devotion to him as to the Divine, a firm faith in the *guru* as a front of the Divine, *yathā deve tathā gurau*.⁸ It is this fact of the Divine behind the *guru* and the faith of the disciple in the *guru* as the Divine that are of cardinal importance. The human personality of the *guru* does not count so much as this faith of the *śiṣya* in the *guru*. For that faith connects him with the Divine through the *guru* and whatever be the failings or limitations of the *guru*, the devotion and faith of the disciple do not go barren. While on the subject, we are reminded of Sri Aurobindo's authentic remarks in this regard: 'It is not the human defects of the *guru* that can stand in the way when there is the psychic opening, confidence, and surrender. The *guru* is the channel or the representative or the manifestation of the Divine, according to the measure of his personality or his attainment; but whatever he is, it is to the Divine that one opens in opening to him; and if something is determined by the power of the channel, more is determined by the inherent and intrinsic attitude of the receiving consciousness, an element that comes out in the surface mind as simple trust or direct unconditional self-giving, and once that is there, the essential things can be gained even from one who seems to others than the disciple an inferior spiritual source, and the rest will grow up in the *sādhaka*, of itself, by the grace of the Divine, even if the human being in the *guru* cannot give it.'

Thus, to the disciple, the *guru* embodies the Divine, he holds in himself the full knowledge and the central truth of the path that is sought after by the seeker and is in a position to communicate to him something of his own power of consciousness perfected in the *sādhanā* of the path. This is the

⁸ Spiritual knowledge comes to luminous fruition only when given to the high-souled one who has supreme devotion to the Divine and to the *guru* as to the Divine (*Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, VI.23).

sādhana-śakti that is alive with the *tapas* of the *guru*, and once it is entered into the being of the disciple, it commences his *sādhana*, takes charge, and leads him onward. Before going into the process of this transmission of *śakti*, initiation as it is called, let us see what the Tantras have to say about the qualifications of the disciple.

The *Gautamīya Tantra* says that the disciple should be 'born in a noble family, of pure spirit, seeking the fourfold object of life, learned in the Vedas, wise, devoted to the service of the parents, a knower of *dharma* and doer thereof, attached to the personal service of the *guru*, proficient in *Śāstra*, strong of body and mind, ever desirous of doing good to others, a doer of acts which bear good fruit in the next world, devoted to the service of the *guru* in speech, mind, body, and with his wealth, mindful only of acts which bear enduring fruit, possessed of control over the senses, free from sloth, free from delusion and vanity'.

The *Śārada Tilaka*, also, says that an aspirant should be 'of good family, pure of soul, set on reaching the supreme object of life, well versed in Vedic knowledge, skilful, free from desire, well-wisher of all, believer, devoted to the parents, and engaged in service to the *guru* in speech, mind, and body'.

Among the requirements laid down in the *Kulārṇava* are: faith, devotion, deep thought, discrimination, gratitude, zeal, freedom from poverty of mind or *mano-dāridrya-varjita*.

In other words, a disciple must have an earnest seeking. He should have a keen awareness of the futility of leading the ordinary animal life, and somewhere in him must burn the flame of aspiration to a life in Truth, in God, a constant urge for liberation from the human bonds into the freedom of the Infinite. He must have a strong will to persist in the face of obstacles, a central sincerity to the ideal that is chosen, to the *guru* who is resorted to, and to the *sādhana-śakti* that is involved and set active in him-

self. Once this sincerity is there in a sufficient measure, the rest is assured, whatever the shortcomings of the aspirant.

So equipped, the seeker approaches the teacher, the *guru*, 'fuel in hand', *samitpāni*, ready to catch the fire of Knowledge.

III

Thus approached in humility of mind and ardour of the soul, the *guru* receives the aspirant and puts him through a period of observation, during which he satisfies himself regarding the competence, the *adhikāra*, of the novice for the higher calling. He sees not merely the outer personality, but studies also the inner nature, the type of the soul, and the kind of development already undergone and the direction in which further growth is to be promoted, and also, whether there is the needed affinity of being between himself and the fresher. Once that is done, he decides on the nature of the discipline that is best suited to the aspirant and proceeds to instruct accordingly. Instruction, *upadeśa*, may enjoin the way of *karma*, works or ritual; or the way of *dharma*, faithful observance of the injunctions of the *Śāstra*, secular and religious; or the way of *jñāna*, illumination of the mind by the light of higher knowledge, knowledge of the real nature of oneself, the world and the Divine. In a picturesque imagery—which, however, need not be taken too literally—the first, *karma-mārga*, is compared to the course of the ant at the bottom of the tree starting out to reach the fruit at the top, the *dharma-mārga* to the progress of the monkey hopping from branch to branch on its way to the summit, and the *jñāna-mārga* is likened to the rapid movement of the bird which flies straight to its destination without any meandering or delay.

Whatever the path chosen and the discipline selected for the seeker, no real *sādhana* begins till a relation is established between him and the *guru*. And this relation starts

from the moment an inner connection is made between the two, as a result of something from the consciousness of the *guru* entering into the being of the disciple. This entry of the *guru* into the disciple is aptly described as the impact or descent of the higher Power, the conscious Power of the *guru* or of the very Divine through him, *śaktipāta*. Where this *śaktipāta* is not, says the Śāstra, there is no fulfilment.

The means of effecting this transmission of consciousness is called initiation, *dīkṣā*. *Dīkṣā* is what gives union with the Divine and sunders the knots that bind.⁹

Dīkṣā is either *bāhya*, external, effected through some outer means of interchange, *kriyā-dīkṣā*; or it is *ābhyantarī*, inner or subtly effected, the *vedha-dīkṣā*. It is called *vedha*, because like the hunter reaching his prey by sheer sound-direction, without even seeing his object, the *guru's śakti* strikes at the being of the disciple wherever he be, irrespective of any barrier or distance.

Initiation without any ritual or outer process is threefold: *spārśī*, based upon touch, which tends the disciple in the manner of a bird nourishing its young ones within the warm folds of its wings; *cākṣuṣī*, based upon sight, which acts like the fish that bring up their offspring by means of sight alone; *mānasī*, mental, which builds like the tortoise tending its infant by only thinking of it.

According to another classification, *dīkṣā* is of three kinds: *śāmbhavī*, *śāktī*, and *ānavī*. *Śāktī* is that in which there is no ritual or physical contact for purposes of initiation. It takes place when the *guru*, by his Yogic power, enters his own *śakti* into the being of the disciple, directly. The disciple may not be even physically present before the *guru*. The *guru* thinks of him and sends

⁹ *Dīyate śivasāyujyam kṣiyate pāśabandhanam* (*Paramānanda-Tantra*); *Pāśa*, bonds, are of three kinds: *sahaja* (natural), those with which one is born; *āgantuka*, those that come about by accident; *sāmsargika*, those that are forged by associations (*Prayogasāra*).

an emanation of his consciousness to enter and take charge of that disciple. *Śāmbhavī* is the contact that takes place by the mere sight of the *guru*, by just a touch, by an exchange of words, and brings about something like a revolution in the consciousness of the disciple, precipitating the advent of a divine pervasion. The third is the *ānavī* or *māntrī*, in which the *mantra* or a ritual, or any kind of perceptible means is used to forge the relations. This *ānavī-dīkṣā* is further subdivided into ten different categories: *smārtī*, where the *guru* remembers the disciple who is in another place and acts, in order to release him from the three bonds into the state of bliss; *mānasī*, where he beholds the disciple in his company and exerts himself mentally for his release; *yaugī*, wherein the *guru*, following the course of *yoga*, enters into the body of the disciple and joins his being to his own; *cākṣuṣī*, wherein poised in identity with the consciousness of the Lord, the *guru* gazes in compassion at the disciple and destroys his sins; *spārśī*, where the *guru* becomes the supreme Lord, and as Śiva, touches the head of the disciple; *vācīkī*, when the *mantra* is transmitted from the mouth of the *guru* to the disciple, along with *mudrā*, *nyāsa*, etc.; *māntrī*, where the *guru* assumes the body of the *mantra* and passes into the disciple, i.e. he energizes the *mantra* in his own consciousness and transmits the *mantra-śakti* to the consciousness of the disciple; *hautrī*, where *dīkṣā* is given through an elaborate ritual, *homa*, worship, etc.; *śāstrī*, where *dīkṣā* is given to the fit disciple in terms of the Śāstra (Veda); *ābhīsecīkī*, where Śiva and his consort are invoked in the sacred jars (*kumbha*), and *dīkṣā* is given through this *abhīseka* of the *śiva-kumbha*.

Whatever the nature of the *dīkṣā*, it is essential that there should be the *śaktipāta*. The *guru* enters into the being of the disciple, takes him up in this vaster consciousness, and—to use the significant symbolism of the Veda—keeps him in his womb for the significant period of three days (Mark the three

nights spent by Naciketas at the abode of Yama, before he was eligible for the secret knowledge of death) and then delivers him new-born. When the disciple is thus reborn into the second birth, the *dvija*, the very

gods, says the *Atharva-Veda*, hasten to greet the new comer.¹⁰

¹⁰ *Ācārya upāmayamāno brahmacūrinam kṛnute garbamantah, tam rūṛin tistrā udare bibharti tam jātam draṣṭum abhisamyanti devāḥ* (*Atharva-Veda*, II.5.3).

THE IMPORTANCE OF TAPASYĀ IN THE RĀMĀYANA

BY SRI K. E. PARTHASARATHY

The Upaniṣads, whose sole purpose is to bring us nearest to the unseeable, unthinkable, transcendental Brahman, form part of the *āranyakas* or forest books. They could be conveniently recited, heard, and expounded in forests. Holy persons, keenly desirous of *vairāgya* (dispassion) and *nivṛtti* (renunciation) and of immersing themselves in the knowledge and meditation of Brahman, resort to forests as suitable retreats. It is seen from *Āraṇyakāṇḍa* and other *kāṇḍas* in Valmiki's *Rāmāyaṇa* that Rāma felt exceedingly happy in the company of ṛṣis who are described by Vālmīki as seers of Brahman and immersed in *brahma-niṣṭha*. Temperamentally, also, Rāma preferred the life of a *tapasvin* (ascetic) with all its austerity and simplicity to the life of pomp and luxury in the capital of his kingdom.

The *Skānda-Purāṇa* says: 'When the supreme Puruṣa, who can be known only through the Veda, was born as the son of Daśaratha, the Veda took the form of the *Rāmāyaṇa*.' The *Rāmāyaṇa* may be considered as 'Rāma-brahma-jijñāsā-śāstra' or the scripture that deals with an inquiry into Rāma-Brahman. *Tapas*, *svādhyāya*, and *pravacana*—austerity, scriptural study, and teaching—are well-known spiritual practices enjoined for an inquiry into Brahman. The opening *śloka* of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, with the words '*tapas*' and '*svādhyāya*', is suggestive of the importance attributed to these aspects of *sādhanā* in that great epic.

The Śruti enjoins the aspirant after divine wisdom to learn it through the teacher, and it directs the latter to impart it only to him who seeks it with his heart and soul. Lord Kṛṣṇa has, also, pointed out in the *Gītā* that knowledge of Brahman should be obtained through reverence, inquiry, and service (IV. 34). Both Nārada and Vālmīki were great *tapasvins*. In accordance with the traditional practice, Vālmīki put questions to Nārada in the manner of the student's questions in the opening verse of the *Kena Upaniṣad*. The three attributes to Nārada in the opening *śloka* of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, viz. 'devoted to austerity and scriptural study', 'best among those eloquent', 'eminent among those given to meditation', are suggestive of *śravaṇa*, *manana*, and *nididhyāsana*—study, reflection, and introspection—which are important requisites for the realization of Brahman. Further, Brahman could be properly understood and realized in the light of knowledge imparted by *tapasvins*.

The term *tapasvin* means a person distressed in mind, and therefore, an object of compassion. Dispassion for worldly things and avidity for *Brahma-jñāna* are essential conditions for approaching a Brahman-seer or *guru*. Nārada described himself as one distressed when he approached his *guru*, Sanatkumāra: 'I am full of sorrow on account of my unsatisfied thirst for Brahman-realization. My Lord, let me be helped to cross the sorrowful ocean of *samsāra*.' The name of

Vālmīki is itself indicative of his unparalleled *tapas*. The attribute '*tapasvin*' suggests the *śoka* and *vairāgya*—sorrow and dispassion—in the mind of Vālmīki and thirst for the knowledge of Brahman.

The word *tapas* is indicative of austerities practised by *ṛṣis* and others in the epic. The poet compiled the epic sitting as a *tapasvin* on *darbha* grass. When Rāma was in the forest, Bharata did *tapas* by thinking of Rāma alone and yearning for his return. Lakṣmaṇa did *tapas* when he had no *kainkarya* (service) to do to Rāma and Sītā. Mārīca did *tapas* by thinking of Rāma and seeing him almost in every tree out of his fear for Rāma. Sītā did intense *tapas* under the *āsoka*-tree in Laṅkā. Even though she was surrounded by the cruel *rākṣasīs*, she was seeing Rāma and Rāma alone through her mind's eye. She could not see anything except Rāma. Rāma was ever in her mind, before her eyes, and everywhere. Hanumat did *tapas* for the achievement of success in his mission as Rāma's messenger. Vibhīṣaṇa did *tapas* from the time he came to the sea-shore until he was admitted to the presence of Rāma after prolonged discussions. The people of Ayodhyā did *tapas* ever since Rāma left the city until his return. At the end of the Yuddhakāṇḍa, Vālmīki has charmingly described that, after the arrival of Rāma, the entire kingdom became *Rāmamaya* or full of Rāma, and everyone became Rāma.

Rāma has been described as a *maharṣi* with the radiance like that of a great sage. In fact, he liked to be called a *ṛṣi*. He himself told Kaikeyī that he be looked upon as equal to a *ṛṣi*. He was happy at the opportunity afforded to him to enjoy forest life by Kaikeyī who insisted upon obtaining her two boons. As Bhavabhūti has observed, he took up his *āranyaka-vrata* in his young and tender age, unlike the old Ikṣvāku kings who observed it only in the evening of their lives.

It is worthy of note that Manu has influenced Vālmīki a good deal. References have been made to Manu in Bālakāṇḍa and

Aranyakāṇḍa. In his Dharma-Śāstra, Manu has stressed the importance of *tapas* as the sure means of attaining divine life. The sages have seen the entirety of creation only by its power. It leads to divine knowledge. It leads to *mokṣa* or liberation. Whatever is difficult of attainment can be easily and readily achieved by means of *tapas*. It alone enabled the Creator to create and the sages to obtain the vision of the scriptures. The fire of *tapas* destroys all sins. These aspects are well illustrated in the several episodes dealt with in the epic.

There are several other sages mentioned in the *Rāmāyaṇa* who are well known for their intense austerity, Vedic study, and Upaniṣadic meditation. They had transformed their life into one of spiritual discipline. Their bodies shone with their inner radiance and glory. They were high-souled, sinless, and free from all likes and dislikes. They were noted for being men of steadfast *yoga*, perfect mental equipoise, and concentration in meditation. On account of their austerity and righteousness, they had developed great yogic powers and nature was a slave in their hands.

The *ṛṣis* in the Daṇḍaka forest have been shown as pursuing their search for Truth through meditation on the lines taught in the Upaniṣads. They had visualized in their minds Rāma, about whose incarnation they had already heard of and whom they knew to be Parabrahman, now come in human form. It has been said that the habitation of the *ṛṣis* in the Daṇḍaka forest was like a Brahma-loka without Brahman. The void was filled up by Rāma who was no other than Parabrahman, coming in their midst. The main purpose of the incarnation was to afford protection (*paritrāṇam*) to the *sādhus*. The protection must be not only to the bodies, but also to the souls. It was but fitting on the part of Rāma to have spent the best part of his life in the company of the *ṛṣis*. Sītā was also so much attracted by the forest life in the company of the *ṛṣis* that she herself expressed her desire to Rāma to go to the

forest a second time. The *ṛṣis*, in turn, were blessed with the contact and enjoyment of Rāma-Brahman.

The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* contains instructions to look on disease and death as *tapasyā*: 'This, indeed, is excellent austerity that a man suffers when he is ill. . . . This, indeed, is excellent *tapasyā* that a man after death is carried to the forest. . . . This, indeed, is excellent *tapasyā* that a man after death is placed on fire.' This was exactly the attitude of the *ṛṣis* in the Daṇḍaka forest towards their body. The mortal frame was considered a hindrance in the attainment of Brahman. Notable examples are Śarabhaṅga Ṛṣi and Śabarī. Śarabhaṅga threw himself into the flames of the fire lit before Rāma, delightfully enjoying Rāma-Brahman as his body was consumed by fire. This is what was done by Śabarī, the jungle woman, engaged in remembrance of Rāma, expecting his arrival every minute. Both Śarabhaṅga and Śabarī had the highest Brāhmic enjoyment and eventually attained salvation.

The *ṛṣis* have been described by Vālmīki as *agnikalpas*. This suggests that their *tapas* had the power to destroy the demons and other evil elements, like a forest fire burning the trees. The *ṛṣis* themselves could have made short work of the demons with the fire of their *tapas*, but they could not do so as it was incompatible with their vow of *ahimsā*. Help of Rāma was, therefore, sought.

Sītā, the great *tapasvinī*, felt that with the fire of her purity, she could reduce Rāvaṇa to ashes, but she did not want to do so in the absence of a command from Rāma, because such an act like this would lessen Rāma's glory. Mandodarī had, of course, expressed that Rāvaṇa's glory had been burnt by the fire of Sītā's chastity. Similarly, Hanumat considered that Laṅkā was burnt by Sītā's glory.

India derived its greatness and glory more from its sages and *tapodhanas* than from others. It was from the *āśramas* and *tapovanas* that the stream of spiritual life flowed

into the life of the cities and villages. The *ṛṣis* associated themselves very closely with the welfare and happiness of the country. Their co-operation and guidance were sought for solving the thorny problems of the day. In the *Rāmāyana*, we find sage Vaśiṣṭha as Daśaratha's prime minister and spiritual guide. It is stated that he acted as the prime minister of the Ikṣvāku kings for twenty-seven generations. He was called a *brahmavādin*—a teacher of Brahman. The spiritual truths taught by him to Rāma are embodied in Vālmīki's *Yoga-Vāsiṣṭha*; and what a mine of good counsel and spiritual knowledge that book is! He was throughout the guide, philosopher, and friend of Rāma and looked after the administration of the kingdom, especially during the latter's absence, with great acumen and wisdom. It was only at his instance that Rāma placed his feet on the sandals and handed them over to Bharata for ruling the kingdom in his absence.

Viśvāmitra, Bharadvāja, Agastya, and many such sages play important roles in the epic either as advising Rāma and others in the performance of their different duties or offering assistance and guidance to the people around them. The existence of the *ṛṣis* was thus a cause of auspiciousness, as also a source of strength to all from all points of view.

The *Rāmāyana* begins with the word '*tapas*' and ends with the word '*pravardhatām*'. Both the words put together finely suggest the keynote of the epic, viz. 'May *tapas* increase more and more'. Sri C. Rajagopalachari, in the preface to his *Rāmāyana*, has aptly remarked: 'The real need of the hour is re-communion between us and the sages of our land, so that the future may be built on rock and not on sand.' This is the great need of the hour and it is fervently hoped that our land, which has the glory of giving to the humanity at large the inspiring message of renunciation and *tapas*, as contained in the immortal epic of Sage Vālmīki, will awaken to the importance and reality of this need.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

TO OUR READERS

Swami Nirvanananda is one of the senior Trustees of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission. He served Sri Maharaj (Swami Brahmananda) as his personal attendant between 1917 and 1922. His memories, which have been taken in parts from the *Vedanta and the West* (March-April 1960 issue), give some very intimate pictures of Sri Maharaj, which will be found interesting and elevating by our readers, specially in this year, the hundredth after his birth. ...

Swami Atmaghanananda of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, New York, has sent us for publication a letter of Mrs. S. K. Blodgett, who has also been introduced by him in the beginning of his article. We have no doubt that the article will be found very interesting, inasmuch as it brings forth a very homely side of Swamiji in America. ...

'Ajātaśatru's Instructions to Bālāki', by Sri M. K. Venkatarama Iyer, M.A., formerly Professor of Philosophy, Annamalai University, Madras State, is based on the episode in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, dealing with the conversation between Ajātaśatru and Bālāki. It is a fine treatise on the principles of Advaita Vedānta, explained in convincing terms by an adept in the philosophy of Advaita to one who had inadequate knowl-

edge of the relationship between the seer and the seen. ...

Principal Jogiraj Basu, M.A. (Triple), (Retd.) of Dibrugarh, Assam, is one of our old contributors. In his article, 'Echoes of Vedānta in the Poetry of England', he shows briefly how many of the great English poets, though unwittingly, have, in their works, given expression to some of the salient thoughts of Vedānta, which contains the eternal principle of truth behind all life in the manifested universe of our experience. ...

Sri M. P. Pandit, of Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, deals with the various aspects of the preceptor and disciple relationship in his article on 'Guru-śiṣya Tradition'. His article, which is informative and scholarly, will also be found illuminating and helpful in showing the relationship that should obtain between a spiritual guide and the aspirant. ...

Tapasyā or austerity of body, speech, and mind has been spoken of in our scriptures as a great aid to a life of true happiness and spiritual attainment. Sri K. E. Parthasarathy, B.A., of Madras, in his article, shows from the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa* the importance given to *tapasyā* and to the sages who practised it; he says that the need of its cultivation is as necessary today as it was then for a good life—individual or national.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

DEVELOPMENT OF MORAL PHILOSOPHY IN INDIA. BY DR. SURAMA DAS GUPTA. *Published by Orient Longmans Ltd., 17 Chittaranjan Avenue, Calcutta-13, 1961. Pages 226+index. Price Rs. 25.*

Indian ethical thought has so far been ignored by students of Indian philosophy. If at all it was taken up, there was a prejudiced angle from which this thought was surveyed. Some Occidental scholars have praised parts of it for its similarity with their religious ideas or condemned it for its dissimilarity. In such a context, it is heartening to come across Dr. Surama Das Gupta's work.

Action and knowledge have been the two principles that determined ethical thinking from the Vedic times onwards. After outlining these basic principles, Dr. Das Gupta proceeds to give an account of the ethical ideas found in the Vedas, the Upaniṣads, the Smṛtis and the *Gītā*. Then we come to have the ethical thinking according to the different systems of philosophy. This part of the book is more valuable since it gives a philosophical framework to ethical ideas. Greater attention is paid to the Buddhist thought and this is allowable when we consider the mass of available literature on the subject. She ought to have paid an equally greater attention to the *Śānti* and *Anuśāsanika parvas* of the *Mahābhārata* where we have the richest ethical thought and systematization. Equally at fault is her attempt to minimize the nature and role of *karma* and rebirth. This is not to minimize the value of an otherwise good dissertation which seeks to establish the freedom of the self as the goal of Indian ethical thought.

DR. P. S. SASTRI

THE SOMA-HYMNS OF THE RĠG-VEDA. A FRESH INTERPRETATION—PART III. BY DR. S. S. BHAWE. *Published by the Oriental Institute, Post Box 75, Baroda, Gujerat, 1962. Pages 228. Price Rs. 7.20.*

Utilizing the Pāṇinian rules of exegesis, Dr. S. S. Bhawe presents in this volume the interpretation and translation of the Soma hymns, IX. 51-70 of the *Rġ Veda*. Yet the author agrees that the results of the Pāṇinian method can be modified in the light of comparative evidence. The modification may, at times, involve radically altering the application of Pāṇinian principles. Thus, in IX. 53. 1., we find *parisprdaḥ* taken to mean 'strong combatants' and rendered as 'strengths'. Such difficulties apart, Dr. Bhawe presents a valuable work. The notes accompanying the rendering are really valuable. A wide acquaintance with the great work of eminent scholars, a rich scholarship, and penetrating exposition make the volume a *must* for every student of the *Rġ-Veda*. If only the Sanskrit commentary of

Pandit M. V. Upadhyaya were made available for the entire text, the worth of the volume would have been very high.

DR. P. S. SASTRI

THE SPIRITUAL HERITAGE OF INDIA. BY SWAMI PRABHAVANANDA. *Published by George Allen and Unwin Ltd., Ruskin House, 40 Museum Street, London-WC. 1, 1962. Pages 374. Price 35 shillings.*

Books on Indian philosophy and religion are not new to the West. Still various books on these subjects are being published there from time to time, proving thereby the sustained interest of the Western seekers of Truth in Indian philosophy and religion. Therefore, the present volume on Indian spiritual heritage by Swami Prabhavananda, of the Ramakrishna Order, will, no doubt, receive a warm welcome.

In India, religion and philosophy have always been interdependent. This does not mean that philosophy in India does not follow the rational method thoroughly. It has for its goal the ascertaining of ultimate truths, first through reasoning, and then, through direct intuitive experience. To fulfil this latter part—direct experience—is the role of religion. The greatest philosophers of India have also been its greatest spiritual men. Therefore, the book under review makes a brief but interesting survey of Indian religious literature and history, as well as of great philosophers right from the Vedic times to Sri Ramakrishna, the prophet of modern India.

One significant feature of the book is to supply 'sufficient quotation from the texts concerned as incidental illustration, and sometimes, also as appended passages to give body and force to the exposition'. Thus the volume can act as a compendium of India's religious books, besides being a brief history of Indian philosophy.

The earlier chapters on the Vedas, the Upaniṣads, the *Rāmāyana* and the *Mahābhārata*, and the *Bhagavad-Gītā* make a comprehensive review of these ancient religious books in a lucid and simple style that will kindle the interest of the reader to go through the original texts. It is needless to say that these books form the essence of India's spiritual heritage. Therefore, the first five chapters of the book bring to the reader the cream of these holy books within a short compass of 132 pages. Chapter VI briefly discusses the Smṛtis, Purānas, and the Tantras. Chapters VII to XIV give an exposition of the heterodox and orthodox systems of Indian philosophy, relating them wherever possible to modern thought. Chapters XV to XXIII briefly set forth the ideas of the greatest exponents of Vedānta—both dualistic and

monistic. The last chapter brilliantly tells the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna.

Thus the book, after presenting within a brief space the vast array of Indian thought, summarizes the fundamental ideas of India's religion in four cryptic sentences in the Epitome: 'God is; He can be realized; to realize Him is the supreme goal of human existence; He can be realized in many ways.' And the book rightly sums up India's spiritual efforts in the words: 'To bring together against rampant evil the great religions of the world is no doubt a gigantic task, but it is one for which India has the special qualification that she strives for unity, not by calling for a common doctrine, but only by pointing to a common goal, and by exhorting men to its attainment. The path, she assures us, matters little; it is the goal that is supreme.'

Throughout the book, the author emphasizes the one theme of India's religion and philosophy, namely, transcendental experience of religious truths. And this, the author explains, can be on all the three planes—dualistic, qualified monistic, and monistic. The book will be valuable both in India and abroad as a comprehensive and authentic guide to Indian thought and religion.

A useful bibliography and index at the end enhance the value of this excellently produced book.

S. S.

PUSHPANJALI. BY H. R. AKKEPEDDY. *Published by the Author, C/o Burma-Shell Depot, Bhimavaram, Andhra Pradesh. Pages 103. Price Re. 1.*

The book under review is a collection of 108 devotional poems composed by the author on different occasions and in different moods. Generally, the poems show the religious thinking of the author and are his own prayers to the Divine. Some of the poems are very good and touch one's heart as one goes through them. The sincerity and effort of the author are commendable and praiseworthy.

S. C.

GOD OUR CONTEMPORARY. BY J. B. PHILLIPS. *Published by Hodder and Stoughton Ltd., London, 1960. Pages 191. Price 3sh. 6d.*

It is a general demand that religion should recognize intellect as an adult with its right to question. Consequently, the need for presenting religion rationally so as to convince the questioning intellect is being increasingly felt by preachers of all religions. But the trouble starts when the intellect in its sweep ignorantly hopes to exhaust religion as an ant thinks about a sugar hill; and religion, on the other hand, with its age-old authority snubs the intellect as a nursery teacher does with her noisy kids. The solution lies in both intellect and religion trying to play their legitimate roles, conscious of their inescapable limitations.

Though paradoxical it may sound, the correct exercising of reason and intellect in regard to religion, with humility and sincerity, should serve as a builder and not an exploder of faith. Also, rational presentation of religious concepts backed by shining living examples should only inspire and not irritate the intellect to the validity of truth. Thus the widening gulf between reason and scepticism on the one hand and faith and truth on the other can be minimized.

Modern man feels God his contemporary only when he is convinced that the God of the ancient scriptures is available even at his own time and is more than adequate for his needs here and hereafter. Only a *contemporary religion* can help man to this conviction, and it is the job of the clergy to make religion contemporary. The attempt of the author is to call the attention of both the sceptic and the believer to these points, and he has succeeded to a large extent in doing so, as far as Christianity is concerned.

In Chapter VIII of the book, while referring to religions other than Christianity, the author takes pains to show their differences and inadequacy both in themselves and as compared to Christianity, and through this he tries to prove the futility of eclecticism. To believe that an amalgam of fundamental concepts of the major religions will find universal acceptance as a faith suited to the whole of humanity is to ignore the existence of various levels of intellectual developments and the consequent varieties of spiritual approaches and traditions. The incompatibility of such a belief with intelligent reasoning based on the history of religions is too patent to be refuted. If the author had refrained from ill informed observations about other religions, his call to a rational approach would have been stronger.

The book will be found useful to all those who care to recover intelligent faith in Christianity.

SWAMI PRANANANDA

A CRITICAL STUDY OF GANDHIAN ECONOMIC THOUGHT. BY S. N. JHA. *Published by Lakshmi Narayan Agarwal, Educational Publishers, Agra. Pages 276. Price Rs. 12.*

Any thesis about Mahatma Gandhi is rather difficult to evaluate. A clear and critical appraisal is rendered almost impossible because of the all too towering height of the person which dazzles us into a blind acceptance of every utterance of his, regardless of their scientific value. Even casual observations pass for a gospel truth. An attitude of worship is as much detrimental to an objective assessment as disrespectful levity and one has to steer clear of both the extremes in order to make a scientific evaluation of the economic musings of the Mahatma.

A thesis which purports to be critical must expose things to searching questions. The author has constructed a pretty little hold-all in which he has collected the

fundamental thoughts of the great soul, which ramify into numerous directions, covering a comprehensive compass spread over economics, political science, sociology, theology, and above all, an idealism of the highest order which aims at establishing a 'non-violent Rāu-rāj', whatever the connotation of the phrase may tend to be in accordance with the predilections of the reader. Herein you find a remedy for every conceivable disease, including the one which originates in the grinding poverty of the masses which ought to be the central theme of the thesis propounded by the author.

Given the fact of acute poverty, how can we escape the question when and how the Gandhian techniques of production are going to lead the masses to the much-coveted-for day of deliverance from destitution, let alone the Utopian possibility of a visible rise in their standard of living. The primitive plough and the age-old spindle have belied the hopes of men right from the days of Buddha whose sensitive soul could not stand the sight of the miserable plight of the masses. Increase in productivity is a 'must' if at all we attach any value to human existence and there is no possibility at all of any significant increase in the productivity of labour, unless labour is well equipped with refined tools. Why is it that the author does not ask himself the question as to how long we can carry on with our antiquated low-yielding techniques of production? What is the fun of repeatedly muttering that we are copying the Western modes of production, when we know it for certain that the alternative to Westernized techniques is stark poverty?

A 'critical study' cannot go on arguing in terms of a presumption of the very results to be achieved. Nothing could be more unreal than the Gandhian attitude to population. Adoration of the impossible has been the bane of India throughout the ages—self-control is no solution at all to the population problem of India. Reliance on self-control as a means to check the rapid growth of population is bound to intensify resistance to development in view of the almost certain failure of self-control and the resultant unchecked growth of population. By far the biggest hurdle to development in India is the enormous annual accretions to her population and with all our respect for the Mahatma, we should be constrained to observe that his attitude has been a dismal failure. Why should the author have drawn blinders to the facts of life, especially when he claims to be critical?

In the face of rank diabolism of the propertied classes as is evidenced by the ever-increasing rents, rates of interest, and profit, mercilessly exploiting the weaker sections of the society, how on earth can one regard the owner of property as a trustee for the welfare of the community? In order to induce a capitalist to donate a few thousands for a charitable cause, you have to allow him to make a few millions, and even then, you are never certain about the charity of the

multi-millionaires, save to escape income-tax. There would be nothing left in the world to achieve if man could effectively eradicate his own tiny self to merge completely with the interests of the society. We have to remember the saying of Lenin that this animal (the capitalist) is too naughty. The hoax of trusteeship can hardly deceive the masses in view of their own experience of the economic world as it functions under capitalism.

One fails to understand as to how one could advocate village self-sufficiency and a return to barter when it is pretty certain that progress entails increasing integration of the rural sector of the economy with that of the industrialized urban sector on the basis of a mutual give and take that is conducive to the development of both the segments. Agricultural development depends on the availability of water, better tools and implements, fertilizers, transportation facilities, scientific knowledge, etc., most of which require a good deal of assistance of the urban sector, and similarly, food for the urban population, raw materials for industries, supply of labour to the industrial establishments, etc. must come from the rural areas. What is required is increasing integration, and not self-sufficiency, in the interest of national progress.

All this does not mean that there is no point on which one could agree. Gandhian emphasis on a fuller utilization of man-power, restraint of consumption, decentralization of industry with a view to avoid unhealthy congestion in the urban areas, his emphasis on the village and cottage industries are certainly being given a due weightage with the necessary modifications in the interest of better productivity.

A comparison of Gandhi with the great economists of the world which the author attempts in the last chapter is hardly warranted. One can always show certain similarities of thought as between different thinkers. The impression that the author leaves is that the attitude of blind worship has done a considerable damage to what could otherwise have been a really critical appraisal.

H. G. KULKARNI

SĀDHANĀ IN AUROBINDO'S YOGA. By M. P. PANDIT. Published by Sri Aurobindo Ashram Press, Pondicherry, South India, 1962. Pages 100. Price Rs. 5.

Whatever may be one's reactions to the metaphysics of Sri Aurobindo, it is undeniable that Sri Aurobindo was a great *sādhaka*, a *yogin*. The systems of philosophy give us a theoretical knowledge only. The practical side of all systems involves a kind of *yoga*. Sri Aurobindo's *yoga* was directed towards the evolution of a new consciousness, of a diviner human life. It seeks to overcome ignorance, incapacity, and death by knowledge, power, and immortality. It can be defined as a human urge for self-perfection.

Sri M. P. Pandit offers in a brief compass a succinct account of the *sādhana* of a *yogin* and of the nature of this *sādhana* in Sri Aurobindo's *yoga*. Without any pedantry he takes us to the essentials embodied in *śāstra*, *utsāha*, *guru*, and *kalā*. The object of this integral *yoga* is to transform the normal limited human consciousness into a higher, diviner consciousness which,

in its turn, can transform nature into supernature. Though we may not agree with the facile transformation of the *Gāyatrī mantra*, yet Sri Aurobindo's ideal is worth realizing. And Sri Pandit has really done a good service in offering this outline.

DR. P. S. SASTRI

NEWS AND REPORTS

THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION, MANGALORE

REPORT FOR THE YEAR 1961-62

During the year under review, the activities of this centre were as follows:

Boys' Home: This institution provides free board, lodging, stationery, clothing, etc. to poor and meritorious students, irrespective of caste or creed. At the end of the year, there were 42 students in all, 10 belonging to higher elementary school, 21 in high school, and 11 in college. Of these, 38 were free, one concession holder, and 3 paying.

An important feature of the Home is that the boys are allowed to manage themselves the affairs of the Home, gaining thereby the spirit of self-reliance and co-operation and creative personal effort. They are also taught to chant the scriptures and *stotras*, and a weekly discourse is conducted for them by one of the Swamis.

The Charitable Dispensary: Number of patients treated: New cases: 8,026; repeated cases: 20,941; total: 37,967 (injection therapy: 2,047; dental extractions: 116; laboratory investigations: 399).

Needs of the Centre:

1. Endowment for the maintenance of poor students: Rs. 360 per boy, per annum.
2. A dormitory: Rs. 30,000.
3. Bedding and clothing for boys.
4. A permanent endowment procuring a monthly income of at least Rs. 500 for the maintenance of the dispensary.

THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION SOCIETY

RANGOON

REPORT FOR THE YEAR 1961

The following were the activities of the Society, during the year under review:

Free Library: More than 3,500 books were acquired during the year. The number of books at the end of the year was 34,150 in seven languages, namely, English, Sanskrit, Burmese, Hindi, Bengali, Tamil, and Gujarati. The number of books issued was 40,014.

Free Reading Room: There were twenty-eight dailies and 125 periodicals in the reading room. Average attendance: 375.

Scripture Classes: Classes were held on the *Bhagavad-Gītā* on three days in a week, and on the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* once a week. The teachings of some saints were also discussed. Total number of classes held: 255. Average attendance: 30.

Burmese Language Class: A Burmese language class was conducted, thrice a week, by an experienced teacher.

Cultural Study Group: Several discussions were held on educational, cultural, and religious subjects amongst small groups of people.

Celebrations: Social functions or public meetings were held to celebrate the birthdays of prophets of diverse faiths and festivals of different religions.

Public Lectures, Symposia, etc. In all, forty public lectures were organized on cultural and religious subjects, besides cultural film shows and musical soirees.