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APRIL 1966

# Prabuddha Bharata

OR  
AWAKENED INDIA



By Karma, Jnana, Bhakti, and Yoga, by one or more or  
all of these the vision of the Paramatman is obtained.

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# PRABUDDHA BHARATA

APRIL 1966

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# PRABUDDHA BHARATA

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# PRABUDDHA BHARATA

Vol. LXXI

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No. 4



उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत

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

—:o:—

LETTERS OF SWAMI SHIVANANDA

( 93 )

Sri Ramakrishna Math  
Belur, Howrah  
25 March 1921

Dear Sriman —,

I learn everything from your letter. Maharaj has returned to the Math. Currents of great joy flowed during his two months' stay at the holy Varanasi. He is not keeping well since he returned. It has been decided further that he will be going over to Madras. I too may accompany him perhaps.

To remain firm in a particular place in the company of a few of liking is the thing what it should be. It is not at all feasible to stay alone anywhere. To live in company of the Master's devotees is quite a necessity. As one meditates on His gracious divine form, which is the saviour of the fallen, the past tendencies do gradually wane down. Renunciation and non-attachment automatically flow in. His worship is but the only means and there is no other way. One can benefit much in the company of His devotees. When the mind does not feel like meditating, one benefits to a great extent by having discussions on Him or by the study of books about Him. The mind cannot take any adverse turn and at all if it takes, it returns in no time. By His grace it will not be going any further even in future. Do not be afraid, the Master is looking after you always in all conditions. When engaged in the service of the *daridranārāyanas* in far off village much did you suffer physically and great was the hardship that you had to endure in respect of food and shelter. But the Master was gracious enough to look after you even during that state. Now on an exclusive spiritual quest (of course that too was spiritual) you are



staying at Rishikesh. Know for certain that He is looking after you even now. He is graciously giving your mind a gradual upward lift and will be giving so. Be sure that the Master is always behind you.

What to write more? My heartfelt blessings, love and affection to you and all. Stay on there as long as the Master wishes. May you become full with faith, devotion, love, discrimination, non-attachment and renunciation.

Well-wisher,  
Shivananda

( 94 )

Sri Ramakrishna Math  
Mylapore, Madras  
11 May 1921

Dear Sriman —,

I am happy to receive your letter. It is well that you are staying at UttarKasi. That is the most favourable place for spiritual pursuit in the whole of Uttarakhand. May Sri Guru Maharaj make your whole being completely absorbed in Him—this is the prayer of my heart. Lord Mahādeva is specially manifested there. He bestows His grace there on the *yogins* and devotees. A few *sādhus* of advanced state used to stay there earlier. Probably they might have cast off their bodies by now. The rainy season is not perhaps so suitable there as the water becomes unhealthy. Any way let it happen as the Lord wills. It is doubtlessly the Lord's particular grace that you find pretty joy in spiritual practices. Dive deep.

What more to write? My heartfelt love and blessing to you. May Lord Viśwanātha be gracious on you and Mother Gaṅgā be merciful. This is the innermost prayer of my heart.

Your well-wisher,  
Shivananda

( 95 )

Sri Ramakrishna Math  
Mylapore, Madras  
22 May 1921

Dear Sriman —,

I learn all from your letter. I am happy to note that, by the grace of the Master, you are keeping well, having spiritual practices of your might and also find the convenience of *bhikṣā* and stay. May you remain full with faith, devotion, love and purity and let your health too be fit for the spiritual practices. This is what I pray. Have a visit to the Sevashrama whenever you feel like

going. It is not necessary, of course, that you will have to visit everyday. You need bear in mind that it is also the work of the Master and those staying there are all but His devotees, dedicated to Him. It would be enough if you can keep it in mind that the work they do, is but His work. I pray from my heart that you make much progress.

Physically we do not feel unwell in any way. The climate here is not so congenial. It is very hot too. People carry on because of the sea breeze. And it is reported that this breeze too will stop after a few days when it will be terribly hot. Perhaps we will be going over to Bangalore or to any cooler hill that time.

My heartfelt love and blessings to you. Do not be in a hurry. By His grace the mind will slowly be absorbed at His feet. The past tendencies will gradually die out and you will feel serene joy in mind. Everything depends upon the mercy of the Master. Always pray for His mercy for, there is no other way. May Master have mercy on you.

Well-wisher,  
Shivananda

( 96 )

Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama  
Bull Temple Road  
P.O. Basavangudi  
Bangalore City (Mysore)  
20 June 1921

Dear Sriman —,

I received your letter and also the one-rupee note enclosed with it. I am very much delighted to learn that, by the grace of the Master, you have recovered yourself from the attack of chicken-pox. The Master is always looking after you, at all times and at all places. This is what we believe. You have been blessed with the grace of the Holy Mother, and have renounced the world. The life has become blessed. You are living with the *sādhus* at Kasi of Mahādeva in the silence of the sacred Himalayas where the holy stream of all-merciful Mother Gaṅgā flows on. This is indeed a great fortune for anybody. Does anybody feel like living in those places unless one has the renunciation and discrimination within? That you definitely possess that renunciation and discrimination is beyond any doubt. May you be firm in your devotion, faith, knowledge and love day by day. May your mind become pure like the snows and the Himalayas and you realize Brahman. This is the innermost prayer of my heart.

We arrived at this branch centre of the Master seven or eight days ago. We are keeping well. The money had better been given to any poor person instead of being sent to me. There are many in the hills who are poor. Anyway, I myself shall give that to any poor person. My blessings to you again.

Your well-wisher,  
Shivananda

PS. I feel great joy to learn about the compassion of Kalyanananda and Charu. It is very assuring too. Such is the fruition of love in the hearts of the devotees of the Master that we like to see. Very magnificent indeed ! Such are the ideas which Swamiji Maharaj did disseminate in this world by his advent. Love and sympathy must have to be manifested in the world by any means. *Sa Īśo'nirvacanīya-premasvarūpah*—the more you realize the Brahman, the more you feel like having compassion and love for the world and doing service to it. Never be a dry Vedāntin—be careful about it. There is nothing of dryness in the domain of the Master. Know that to be different from our ideal. That is not the ideal of ours—never indeed.

( 97 )

Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama  
Bull Temple Road  
P.O. Basavangudi  
Bangalore City  
27 June 1921

Dear Sriman —,

I received your letter here. I am happy to learn that you all are keeping well. It is a matter of joy that Suddhananda etc. are there and they are happy at your company. May the Master fulfil the longings of your heart. May you have much faith, devotion, knowledge and love. This is what I pray from my heart. The Master will surely see that you find a place favourable to you. That is not so bad a place for rainy season ; only during September or October one may get a bit fever and the like. Do as you think proper. Always moving from one place to another is not very helpful for spiritual practices. Of course, do according as the situation demands.

Maharaj (Swami Brahmananda) is keeping well. All others too including myself are well. My heartfelt blessings love and affection to you and all. I learn that Sitapati is going to visit holy Amarnath. Quite good indeed. May Master bestow love, faith, knowledge and devotion on them and make their lives blessed. This is the aim of life and not the one of merely wandering at the holy places. Be certain about it. Always remember the life of the Master and His teachings. What more to write ? May your devotion increase much and you become completely absorbed in Him. We cannot understand the *sādhus* outside so much. Many have we seen but mostly they do not come to our liking. One or two rarely appeared to be good.

Well-wisher,  
Shivananda



# CHALLENGE OF THE NEW AGE

[ EDITORIAL ]

There goes the English proverb—

‘When Adam delved and Eve span,  
Who was then a gentleman?’

But the human history has gone a long way since the days of Adam and Eve and great changes have taken place. The world today is a fast changing drama of a grim struggle for existence. Men, at least the majority of them, now try to discover the world through a fact of life where glamorous pleasure of the body is purchased at the cost of the abiding peace of the mind. To modern man traditional value is a concept which is to be given a good bye, reverence for life is an obsolete phrase, idealism, an old superstition and culture, no more than a cheap rhetorical flourish. The entire human race has been as if, thrown into a melting pot where men remain boiling and seething but never uniting. Such is the uneasy epoch that has been let loose by the twentieth century science and it throws a challenge to the age-old norms of life and culture of India which have survived the ravages of time.

It has been said that the history of civilization is the mirror upon which the aspirations of the people become fully reflected. It is nothing but the actualization of an ideal in the lives of the individuals—science, politics, and economics are but accessories through which this actualization becomes possible, philosophy being the motive force behind all these. Therefore, every civilization must have a philosophy of its own. In the words of Hegel: ‘A civilization without philosophy is like a temple without the holy of holies.’ The new age has unfortunately failed to provide mankind with a philosophy to help it grow and develop properly in a balanced

way. Delightfully indulged in some fantastic imponderables it gives no support to the theory of life, commonly called a perennial philosophy. Instead of dwelling on the brotherhood of man we are now directed to procure the extermination of the unfit. In the last twenty years the West, placed at the height of its material greatness, has witnessed ghastly tragedies and holocaust of endless human lives to which the history has no parallel. In the words of Pascal, ‘It is the nature of man to believe and love, if he has not the right object for his belief and love he will attach himself to wrong ones.’ Are we today providing our citizens with worthy objects of love and belief? So says Geddes, ‘This is an age of unbelief. It is an age not so much unlit by belief as lacking the very capacity to believe.’ We have very little faith in moral discourse but we do talk too much about moral education and moulding of the character. We have much less faith than our forefathers had in the ability of individual man to arrive at sensible decisions but we do think a great deal more than our forefathers did about what techniques can be adopted to sway public opinion in this direction or that. We believe in the modern materialistic shibboleth that man is the product of his environment, and thereby try to attain a sort of rationalized self-sufficiency. To repeat the remark of René Guénon, ‘Nineteenth-century materialism closed the mind of man to what is above him; twentieth-century psychology opened it to what is below him.’

There is no dearth of the novelties of themes today and no lack in their being rivalled by the ingenuities of executions in decorating and pampering the floats of our



outer life where we are made to direct all our efforts to ostracize the complex of an ingrained frustration afflicting our inner soul in general like malaise owing to a growing imbalance in the realm of our right thinking. In the present decade we even talk of the colonization of other planets as a solution to our population problem. Scientist like Dr. J. Robert Wilson of Michigan University, U.S.A. has even calculated that at the current rate of growth we would have to dispatch seven thousand people per hour at a cost of five hundred billion dollars per day to maintain a stable population in the world. Another Californian physicist has gone to the extent of visualizing a trip beyond Milkyway to Andromeda galaxy and back—a journey at nearly the speed of light involving a period of three million years during which the astronaut will be in a state of suspended animation induced by deep freezing drugs, although through a trick of time he will age only fifty-five years. (*The Hindusthan Times*, December 19, 1965) Yet inspite of these fabulous developments of twentieth century science we cannot possibly forget that man is a 'fragile hot house flower that was nurtured in the shelter of the earth's atmosphere'. He cannot continue to remain in his soaring sojourn for ever leaving the disorderly planet of ours behind.

We should do well to remember that matter is matter and spirit is spirit. Any void in the realm of spirit could never be filled in by the matter. Today when we direly need a spiritual recovery, we want ourselves to be cured by more politics, more science, and more doses of economics. Mere inventions of science do never raise man much above a savage. If economics and technology were all that we needed, there would have been nothing wrong with Europe during the last war. Since nineteen hundred and fourteen we have fought two

destructive wars but the central issue remains still undecided as to how to make man peaceful. We foresee tremendous prospects of a science of human possibilities but an uncomfortable twilight of hope and despair continues to persist in the path of human destiny all the more. We have more mathematical calculations to guide our rockets in the space but we have failed miserably to rehabilitate our own fate. Man continues to be the same old problem. Adam may wear fascinating new dresses of politics and economics now and then but Adam remains the same old Adam and nothing else. Mounting tensions of politics, and muddle of conflicting ideologies in the recent world are the unmistakable signs of a besetting social instability and spiritual homelessness. In the midst of these bewildering confusions we find no moorings of belief whereby we can tug the drifting boat of our life. The scriptures say, 'Your old men shall dream dreams and your young men shall see visions.' Science too has taught us not to live on dreams no doubt but do our younger generations see the vision of any radiant and blissful watershed across this dry and dreary desert of the confused present? The forces released by this new civilization have thrown men overnight into a dark valley of uncertainty where we jostle together and groan for a way out. If our present age is to be aptly termed as a melting pot where we have been thrown in, indeed we miserably lack the necessary fire of faith underneath to make us united into one organic whole. The wars on the battle-fields were begun and ended but the inherent struggle of sense hunger and ethical denial has not been stopped and unless we can recommission ourselves for further battles in these fronts of human needs, where is the promise for true peace? Before the wounds of the last war are completely healed up, the world has again



been divided into several hostile camps and mankind has again been dragged down the edge of a smouldering crater wherefrom the rumblings of unrest could be heard. We are thus passing through one of the most critical periods of human history where we fight on many fronts—social, political, economic, and psychological. The vagrancy of material thoughts poses the pertinent question before us whether man as an individual with his dignity and freedom can have a place in this gigantic society of conditioned reflexes, whether the light of the spirit could ever be lit amidst this all-encircling gloom cast by the forces of matter. And for this man himself has to be remade. His chief enemy is his own unruly nature. Whether it will be a leap forward to unmeasured prosperity or a plunge backward to barbarism depends on man himself, on what he makes of his own developing desires and starving purposes. We await the verdict of history whether the world will blow up in flames or it will herald the dawn of an era of peace and blissfulness.

Against this background of the twentieth century civilization, India meets the Greeks and the Romans of old. The Greek view and the modern western view of life about man and his destiny do not differ much. They are practically the two versions of the same one view. To the Greeks the human power itself was God and man as the highest known being was the king of the universe. The Greeks had their religion in the worship of the human ingenuity as expressed, not in individual man, but in societies like small city states. The power and the talent of the Athenians for example came to be worshipped as the Goddess Athene. This liberation of the human mind from any superhuman commandment in one way helped the wonderful realistic fruition of the human energy in manifold creative activities; whereas on

the other hand, the so-called sovereign Greek mind, notwithstanding its unparalleled gifts of potentialities, came to be marooned in a world of meaningless and merciless creations of which it was not the master. The pseudo gods installed in the image of the city states in the later phase were engaged in endless rivalries among themselves which began to put out the lamps of Greek culture one after another. Like the gigantic social order brought into being from the womb of such a materialistic philosophy, the engines of the Greek city states were steamed into speed and momentum for eighteen hundred years from the twelfth century B.C. upto the seventh century A.D. only to prove themselves as lifeless as the machines. The image of man painted by the Greeks failed to withstand the test of history. 'The same Greek idea of man', says Arnold Toynbee, 'which accounts for the Greek civilization's rise and culmination, is also the explanation of its strange and tragic fate. Hellenism was betrayed by what was false within it. The Greek idea of man was proved by the test of experience to be, not merely inadequate, but positively mistaken and untrue.' (*Man's Right to Knowledge*, Columbia University Press, 1954, p. 3) In its encounter with the Indian view of life the Greek view was defeated both in India as well as in Central Asia for, the Indian ideals 'were found to answer better to human needs. They gave man greater help for living his life, and they also gave him more convincing answers to questions about the meaning of life by which man is always haunted.' (ibid.)

After the Greeks came the Romans who shared the same Greek view and were the most celebrated converts and disseminators of the Greek way of thinking. In this phase too, the Indian philosophy and its ideal of man as the spirit free far over-



shadowed the grandeur and glitter of the Romans. The voice of Asia has always been the voice of God. That man is essentially a spiritual being and that physical possessions and physical satisfactions, i.e. *artha* and *kāma* do not exhaust all possibilities in him and that he has also to acquire *dharma* and *mokṣa*, i.e. moral and spiritual fulfilment of life, was first discovered in Asia. All the inquiries into the real nature of man were first started on this soil,—Confucianism and Taoism in China, Islam in Arabia, Judaism and Christianity in Palestine, and Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism in India. Of the Asian countries it is more particularly in India which has been the most ancient land where wisdom made its first home. It is the Indian culture which by virtue of its deeper and nobler outlook on life made a clear headway into the large part of Asia and the world. At a time when the present western world, steeped in deep darkness of ignorance was groaning like the fabled 'Tithonus' under the weight of the age without hope for any succour, when the valiant Greeks and the chivalrous Romans could see nothing of a sustaining value of life other than the crumbs of mere material prospects and comforts, it was India which was bold enough to declare that man is not the uprooted insignificant speck governed by the conditions of instinctive animal life; he is much more and has a mission to fulfil. Beyond the trivialities of the workaday world he has dark continents to conquer as well as the bright new worlds of truth to map. Man has a book of life which he has to read and unfold. He is actuated by an impulse which ultimately culminates into a higher inspiration. He is not merely the fabled 'Tithonus' to vegetate and groan, but he is also a manly Columbus bent on the voyage of the discovery of the efflorescent Unknown. Man is human as

well as divine at the same time. He is not merely to fight the devastating Peloponnesian wars but he has to refight the formidable battles of this mortal life to become a Buddha, or a Christ, or a Rama-krishna. Life, in the view of India, is a pilgrimage from the frontiers of this known physical consciousness to the realm of the spirit unknown. And this is possible. The sages of India addressed man as the children of immortal bliss and declared with full-throated voice :

*Vedāhametaṁ Puruṣaṁ mahāntam*

*ādityavarṇam tamasaḥ parastāt—*

'I know the great Puruṣa, who is luminous, like the sun, and beyond darkness.' (*Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, III. 8) This sense of unity, this anxiety to find harmony in the apparent opposites is the keynote of Indian culture. The Upaniṣads of ancient India also emphatically aver :

*Asuryā nāma te lokā andhena*

*tamasāvṛtāḥ ;*

*Tāmste pretyābhigacchanti ye ke*

*cātmahano janāḥ—*

'Those worlds of devils are covered by blinding darkness. Those people that kill the Self go to them after giving up this body.' (*Iśā Upaniṣad*, 3)

India did never consider it sufficient to keep her philosophy within the safe ramparts of theoretical idealism. Wherever there has been a call, whenever there has been a challenge, she has put her faith to the fire-bath of reason and test of practicality. The history of India is the history of the luminous galaxy of saints whose contributions in the realm of human thought are still the wonders of the modern world. It has been quite peculiar in the annals of the land that whenever there had been a spiritual vacuum, the soul of India quivered into endless expression and kept the lamp of knowledge ever burning. The epic notes of the *Rāmāyaṇa* are still sources of unfailing inspiration to the



millions all over the country. The invincible army of Śrī Rāma did not only fight for the vindication of the eternal religion of India but it also carried the message of justice, equality and brotherhood to all,—the high and the low. The advent of Śrī Kṛṣṇa was a bold challenge against the perpetration of vice and vandalism during the days of the *Mahābhārata*. The long standing animosity and struggle for supremacy prevailing among the then ruling kings threw the land of synthesis and harmony into a hotbed of horror, bigotry, and fanaticism and Śrī Kṛṣṇa foresaw the incoming Armageddon and thundered in the battle-field of Kurukṣetra with his immortal message to restore the lost glory of the *Sanātana Dharma*. What Śrī Kṛṣṇa told about the duties of life, of the essence of religions, of the essential unity amidst the apparent diversities in that historic theatre of war would ever inspire men of all times and climes to make for a flight of higher and nobler life. The perverted modernity may find an incredible mass of myths in the life and teachings of this great prophet but Kṛṣṇa, the celebrated charioteer of the Kurukṣetra will be regarded as the eternal charioteer of all the right-thinking minds all over the world.

But the human history does not move always in a straight line. Mankind, at times, becomes as if, intent on letting it incur the full odium of a moral and spiritual chaos, generating out of its own perversion of ideals. With the passage of time the Indian culture again began to show signs of degeneration. The cogent fact that religion is 'being and becoming' came to be altogether forgotten by the subsequent diehards. As a result dogmatism and ritualism gradually began to creep in. The grand philosophy of the Upaniṣads and the *Bhagavad-Gītā* dealing with the ultimate reality of soul turned itself to be a meaningless jargon to the common run of man,

and Buddha, the prophet of immeasurable radiance, flashed with his message of love and compassion. The gyrations of the repellent molecules of the body politic of India were once again checked and welded together into a harmonious whole. In the words of Swami Vivekananda, Buddha was the 'sanest philosopher of the world' and his democratic message opened the flood-gates of spirituality. The new religion was held with universal acclamation for many centuries but as it began to be expansive it lost its inherent intensity by being divided into a number of sects and sub-sects. This further set the stage ready for the advent of Śaṅkarācārya, the grandest exponent of the Advaita philosophy. Śaṅkara appeared like a great challenge against the inhuman practices running rampant in the then deteriorating Buddhist India and put the compass of Indian life towards the traditional direction of *tat tvam asi*. Every knowledge in order to become dynamic must be relived and re-interpreted in the life of every individual. Soon after the exit of the great teacher, his grand philosophical dissertations lost the depth of profound realization upon which those were built up. Turmoil and confusion, faithlessness and jugglery of intellect began to prevail all around and a mighty cultural crisis set in. Invaders began to knock at the frontiers of India and ultimately swept the whole country. However the forces of synthesis did not die out completely. There was still the fire of unity burning within to absorb the hordes of alien culture. During the days of subsequent Muslim invasions three great teachers from the three corners of India entered into the arena of Indian life—Rāmānuja in the South, Nānaka in the North-West, and Śrī Caitanya in the East. They lit the lamp of traditional faith and refurbished the scale of traditional values once again by extending the perimeter of



the ancient religion. Śrī Caitanya's doctrine of unbound love, the catholic message of Rāmānuja, the synthetic harmony of Nānaka came down like a deluge upon the sinful accretions of the centuries and served as a barrage of defence for the ancient culture against the aggressive Islam for a period of next three hundred years till the onslaught of the material western thought-currents. The struggle that set in during the nineteenth century, was not merely a clash between two countries—India and Europe but rather a conflict of two ideologies—the Greek and the Hindu, as we detailed earlier. To repeat the words of Toynbee again, 'In the course of the last four or five centuries this modern revival of the most perverse element in the Greek idea of man has already carried the modern world very far down the road that once led the Greek world to ruin. Shall we be able to bring ourselves to give up this fatal Greek form of idolatry before it is too late? The tragic history of the Greeks gives us fair warning of the probable consequences if we continue to commit the Greek sin.' (*Man's Right to Knowledge*, Columbia University Press, 1954, pp. 7-8)

If it is a fact that 'history repeats itself', the forthcoming regeneration of a new age is not too far to come. But will the spirit of Indian culture go in vain and the divinity of man be defeated? Highlighting the historic role of India Swami Vivekananda observed, 'We have thrown the challenge to the world—"Not by progeny, not by wealth, but by renunciation alone immortality is reached." Race after race has taken the challenge up and tried their utmost to solve the world-riddle on the plane of desires. They have all failed in the past,—the old ones have become extinct under the weight of wickedness and misery, which lust for power and gold brings in its train, and the new ones are tottering

to their fall.' '... every educated person knows that whenever the empire-building Tartar or Persian or Greek or Arab brought this land in contact with the outside world, a mass of spiritual influence immediately flooded the world from here. The very same circumstances have presented themselves once more before us.' (*The Complete Works*, Vol. IV, pp. 314-5)

It would be of interest to observe that schools of materialistic thoughts were not altogether absent in this land. Vedic India is not to be known only by its Vedic hymns and the flames of sacrificial fire. There were also the Cārvāka and the Vārhaspatya philosophers who had their philosophy of 'eat drink and be merry' but the prevalence of these philosophies however did never disturb the keynote of the Vedic life in any way. To the Indian eye the world has always been reckoned as a totality and man has been studied in his integral wholeness. Racial variety, creedal plurality, and sociological diversity have all been woven into the life texture of the full man, groups and nations having been regarded as the connecting links between man individual and the man universal. Every involution has its evolution and every transcendence has its corresponding immanence. Therefore, world material is but the shadow of the spirit eternal and the being human is the veritable manifestation of the being divine. Secular is but the echo of the Real. It is man's intimate love of truth that created the modern science and scientific inventions are the fruits in the tree of that human knowledge. The fruits may be new and novel but the tree indeed is something more than the fruits themselves. The study of science and technology is therefore significantly illuminating in so far as it develops the attitude of open-mindedness to newer and broader dimensions of human civilization hitherto undiscovered. Educa-



tion in ancient India too included within its fold both the spiritual and secular branches of study. Ancient scriptures declare *jñāna vijñāna sahitam*.

It is undeniable that the science-oriented new civilization has opened new horizons of our social life. There has been physical mobility of men from farms to flats and from fields to factories, and from this physical mobility there has emerged a mobile society with a new sense of social rationality. Social future is now manipulable rather than ordained and the calculus of choice has largely conditioned the pattern of individual life. Yet the individual man has got to respect the claims and rights of others in the society. This is indeed something different from the rationality and the ethics of the man who lives in isolation. The century of ours has definitely given an exhilarating boost to the growth of a world consciousness in all its aspects. Geographical frontiers are gradually disappearing and the historical perspectives are fast shifting. The whole world in its entirety, the humanity in its wholeness could now be visualized at a glance. We need to realize today that in this new world all must swim or sink together and all must share the benefits of the society together. The 'haves' cannot enjoy a permanent paradise while the 'have-nots' continue to starve. 'Our age', emphasizes Toynbee, the eminent historian of the century, 'will be remembered not for its horrifying crimes or its astonishing inventions but because it is the first stage since the dawn of history in which mankind dared to believe it practical to make the benefits of civilization available to the whole human race.'

Revelations of modern science are also moving fast to confirm the oneness of this vast universe. The latest evolutions prove unequivocally that matter is not so material as it was thought to be. The

devil is not so dark as it was painted. Material particles do not behave in a way which the classical conception could account for and there is something of the so-called 'spiritual' present there which the moralists insist upon, assuming it to be inherent in the operations of physical man. To Niels Bohr, the reputed scientist of the age, 'We are both spectators and actors of the great drama of existence'; in the language of Lincon Barnett, 'One fact has been impressively clear that there is no mystery of the universe which does not point a mystery beyond itself'; to echo the words of Einstein, 'The advance of knowledge is at present reduced to extracting one incomprehensible from another incomprehensible'; and to borrow the words of Eddington, 'We are a bit of machinery, puppets that strut and talk and laugh till time turns the handle beneath.'

The foregoing observations significantly conclude that science today is engaged in not inventing something new but in the rediscovery of the something old, somewhat ancient and some form of the Real. Yet it has to discover more. We have the world at our door, we have enough of politics, and enough of the dynamics but the fusion of the new world is still to become a reality. We have enough of peace commissions and conferences but the armies of the different nations still stand unbuttoned for a final showdown. This shows that there is an inherent underdevelopment in the economy of our civilization where we have lop-sidedness in one sector and stagnation in the other. We have our new Galileos and Newtons in the present age but we do not have new Shakespeares and Homers to make the circle complete. We must not be forgetful that as we need daring Columbuses so do we require saintly St. Francises to balance our civilization.

A man is what he wants to become. Our present age is engaged in painting a



picture which is nothing but the design of a new world civilization. Brushes, pigments, and painters we have all but we have no clear idea of the subject which we are to draw. The picture is the work of innumerable craftsmen working together and in some way or other they must have the idea of what they paint. This is the central problem over which we still hover round. What the new world wants are universal ethics, universal religion, and universal characters. Diversities could only be fused together with the spirit of unity and for this we need the master-minds of Buddhas, Christs, and Ramakrishnas in our world today. No magic of

material science, no sophisticated rhetoric of politics can be of any avail to the modern man pandering to his peculiar fanciful doctrines and wallowing with the obese assurance of a false and imaginary paradise. It is here that India is called upon to meet the challenge and fulfil the task. She had stalwart characters in the past and she must have blazing new ones in the present too. She must not only remember the old but should also determine the new. India must bear the cross manfully. The polemical verbes and casuistry of the present age should never be allowed to blur the vision and stand in the way of her onward march to the destined goal.

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## SRI RAMAKRISHNA: THE WIT—I

DR. S. P. SENGUPTA

'Let me not be a saint, gaunt and puckered, with a dry and arid soul,' cried out Sri Ramakrishna in the temple of Kālī, 'Let me be, on the contrary, full of sweetness and joy.' On another occasion he said, 'I have two ambitions. First, I should be the greatest of the votaries and secondly, I should never be a saint, lean and emaciated with hungry looks.' Sri Ramakrishna was a symbol of joy. He radiated sweetness and light. Who can forget his inimitable quips and jests? Bubbling with life and gusto, Sri Ramakrishna laughed and made people around him laugh. One cannot count the innumerable references to his laughter, recorded in the *Gospel*. He laughed and laughed. Once a votary read the Bible to him. He did not relish it, although he had the profoundest regard for Jesus Christ. Religion to a medieval Christian or even a Jew was an object of fear. The 'Original Sin' of 'Adam is

visiting upon his countless children. And 'inferno' is all the while yawning before them with a dismal message, 'Abandon hope ye, all who enter here'. Sri Ramakrishna said, 'Abandon despair, you are all the children of Bliss. There is nothing called sin. Once you utter the name of God, all the sins are washed away.' He brought the message of joy and let in the freshness of the April morning.

Swami Vivekananda was once asked in America, 'Swamiji, why do you laugh so much?' The enquirer thought that all spiritually advanced persons should be always grave and solemn, and deliver their discourses with pontifical solemnity. 'I laugh', Swami Vivekananda replied, 'because I am the child of Bliss.' Spiritually advanced persons can look upon life with sufficient objectivity and disinterestedness. The world, it has been said, is a comedy to those who think, and a tragedy to

those who feel. Sri Ramakrishna and his disciple could both feel and think. Yet they did not look upon life as a grim tragedy. In one of his letters Swami Vivekananda wrote: 'I am sorry because inspite of monastic training the heart lives on.' Yes, the heart of Sri Ramakrishna lived on, and the heart was transmitted to the disciple. Before Swami Vivekananda had come in contact with his Master, he was guided by the head rather than the heart. Later, however, he felt the sufferings of man; and he could love man. Without love no laughter is possible. True humour springs not more from the head than from the heart. Humour is not contempt. Its essence is love. Sri Ramakrishna had a large and expansive heart, and it was always dilated with the most unbounded love.

The medieval clergy could not love. They encouraged the repression of the body and the mind. They believed in the mortification of the flesh. And they did not attain the beatific vision. They hated their body; they hated their mind; they hated the earth. And Sri Ramakrishna loved the human face divine. This ineffable love is the source of his wit and humour. He could love all creatures. Because he was love incarnate; His laughter owed its origin to a natural gaiety of disposition, that was incompatible with contempt and indignation.

Sometimes, it must be conceded, Sri Ramakrishna's laughter was a bit satirical. There was, however, no avowed intention to humiliate anybody. Satire, a critic has said, borrows its weapons from the humorists; yet the laughter which satire provokes has always malice in it. Sri Ramakrishna's satire had no malice. Apparently he was cruel, but he was cruel only to be kind. Two illustrations may be given to substantiate our point. Naren (Swami Vivekananda) lost his father and

found himself in a quandary. His younger brothers and sisters were starving, and he did not know what to do. Almost crushed, he came to Sri Ramakrishna for a little relief. Naren thought, he would leave some money for his family and then renounce the world for spiritual salvation. The anomaly of the thing shocked Sri Ramakrishna. He said, 'If one has genuine spiritual hunger, one cannot calculate that way. You cannot think of the petty domestic troubles, if you have a genuine spiritual urge.' With amused laughter he recalled how one 'Gossain' (a Vaishnava) was determined to scrape up a sum of ten thousand rupees, and then devote himself to God with a carefree mind. Sri Ramakrishna told this, and his audience laughed. The only man, who did not laugh was Naren; for he could not laugh. The arrow was aimed at him. Sri Ramakrishna continued his discourse. A woman lost her husband. It was a staggering blow. She must cry; and therefore she removed the nose-ring first and lay prostrate on the ground and lamented loudly, but was at the same time very careful so that her nose-ring might not be lost or broken.

When everybody enjoyed the stories, Naren was touched on the raw. His face was pale, and the pain was too deep for tears. Sri Ramakrishna was demonstrably cruel only with a view to leading Naren along the right track. Naren became what he was only because the Master could at times leaven his genial humour with a little satire.

Sri Ramakrishna loved to name the people about him. Naming or re-naming itself became a source of laughter. The Holy Mother was at *nahavatkhāna*, attached to the temple of Dakshineswar. Her companion was Sri Ramakrishna's niece Luxmi. Whenever any devotee would bring fruits and sweets for the Master, he



would like some of them to be given to 'Śuka' (male parrot) and 'Sārī' (female parrot). People who did not know the ways of the Master, thought that the fruits were being given to a pair of parrots. And the parrots were the Holy Mother and the niece. Surendranath Mitra (a devotee) was renamed Suresh, and the original name was lost. Viswanath Upadhyaya (another devotee) became the 'Captain' for reasons, not known to us. Prankrishna Mukherjee (a devotee) was a little bulky, and hence Sri Ramakrishna called him the 'Fat Brahmin'. Later 'Fat Brahmin' became a proper noun. Totapuri, one of his early associates, chose to have no more clothes than a newly born child. He therefore, came to be popularly recognized as 'Nyāngtā', the naked one. Jogeshwari who had initiated him into the mysteries of Tantra, was named 'Bāmnī', the female Brahmin. Chota Gopal, i.e. Gopal junior was called 'Hutko'. Naren had a number of names. Since he had no worldly attachment, he was called a male pigeon; while others are jars, pitchers or pots, Naren is a 'jālā' a large vessel; amidst small ponds, Naren is a 'dīghī', a tank; while others are lotuses with ten, sixteen or even a hundred petals, Naren is a 'sahasradal', a lotus blooming with a thousand petals. Tarak (Swami Shivananda) is a 'mrgel', a fish slightly smaller than a 'rui'. Girish became 'Bhairava'. Latu (Swami Adbhutananda) was originally Rakhturam; Sri Ramakrishna called him Latu, which subsequently degenerated into 'Neto.' Ramlal (the nephew of Sri Ramakrishna) became 'Ramnelo'. The temple of Dakshineswar was jocularly called 'Mā Kālīr Kellā', the fort of Kālī, the Mother; and Balaram Basu's (a devotee) house at Calcutta is 'Kalkātār Kellā', the fort of Calcutta. He was also amused at certain names, and would readily endorse them. Mahendra Gupta, himself an ardent disciple, brought

a good number of his own students to the Master; and they in their turn were completely changed by the divine touch. Mahendra was henceforth jocularly called 'the child-lifter'. Sri Ramakrishna laughed and said that the name was quite appropriate.

Naren must have inherited this knack for naming from his spiritual guide. Kali (Swami Abhedananda) became 'Keluā'; Latu (Swami Adbhutananda) became Plato; Baburam (Swami Premananda) for his devotional nature became 'bhempu' or an oboe of Rādhārānī; Gangadhar (Swami Akhandananda) was 'Ganges'; Pratap Hajra was 'Thousandā', i.e. 'Thousand' plus 'a'. Haramohan (a devotee of Sri Ramakrishna) became a musical 'harmonium'; and the Japanese artist Okakura was christened 'Akrur khura', or Akrur, the uncle. The Master and the disciple had the same gusto for naming.

The eternal child that Sri Ramakrishna was, there was nothing much sophisticated in his humour. It did not smack of the gaudy, perfumed drawing room; it had all the sweetness and freshness of nature. His humour and wit were fed by nature. It used to draw substantially on the rich soil. Sri Ramakrishna while a boy of thirteen or fourteen, was the idol of his villagers. He would often put on the clothes of a girl or even a married woman, and even his close associates failed to recognize him. Sitanath Payne, a well-to-do villager would often invite Sri Ramakrishna to entertain him with his histrionic talent and melodious voice. It was not confined to the members of his family alone. Even neighbours would come and feast upon his words and music. Everything was innocuous. And there is nothing good or bad, but thinking makes it so. Durgadas Payne, another villager, did not like a boy in his adolescence to have an access into his house. As a matter of fact he threw



a challenge to Sri Ramakrishna, and the latter readily accepted it. One afternoon a poor woman called at Durgadas's house. She said that all her companions had left, and she, therefore, sought shelter for the night. Durgadas asked her to go inside. All the female inmates of the house cordially welcomed her. The first watch of the night was over. Rameswar, Sri Ramakrishna's elder brother, did not know what had happened to him. With a heavy heart, he was moving about in search of his brother. He went on shouting, 'Gadai, where are you?' Ramakrishna in the guise of a woman, heard the frantic cry of his brother and readily responded; 'I am here, brother'. Durgadas, at first exasperated was later amused. This story is revealing. It shows beyond doubt that Sri Ramakrishna was a wit not in words alone, but in practice as well.

Padma Lochan was a Vedāntist of repute. Sri Ramakrishna once played a small trick with him, and the Vedāntist fell at the feet of the 'Master-magician'. Whenever he would be drawn into a religious controversy, he would wash his mouth with a little water, kept in a font for the purpose. Sri Ramakrishna, who was omniscient, hid the font, and Padma Lochan was struck dumb. Padma Lochan had no difficulty in recognizing God, embodied in a frail frame.

Even when very young, Sri Ramakrishna would amuse his pals with mimicry. The poor and uneducated people of his village sometimes asked a Brahmin to read out the *Rāmāyana* or the *Mahābhārata*. Conscious of his superiority, the Brahmin rhapsodist would sit solemnly and read out as if from the pedestal. The tone, gestures and antics would all be distinctive. Sri Ramakrishna detested this pontifical tone. At the request of his friends he used to imitate the ways of the rhapsodist and provoke their laughter and merriment.

Gaurikanta Tarkabhushan (a great scholar and a *sādhaka*) before participating in a polemical discussion would cry out in a stentorian voice, and this struck terror in the opponent's heart. Gaurikanta, buoyant and confident, entered the temple of Dakshineswar and cried out, 'hā re re re', and all who heard it, were almost petrified. Sri Ramakrishna shouted out in a louder voice still. The porters and servants rushed in. They thought it was the Doomsday. Gaurikanta accepted his defeat, for so long the shouting was the source of his strength. He submitted to the Master. All his ego shed away, he learnt at Sri Ramakrishna's feet with sweet humility. And Sri Ramakrishna's witticism worked this miracle.

One day while at Kamarpukur, Sri Ramakrishna and his nephew Hriday were having their lunch. Rameswar's wife and the Holy Mother were the cooks. The former was an excellent cook, while the latter was still a novice. Sri Ramakrishna, a connoisseur of food, at once reacted, 'These courses, I am confident, are cooked by Ramdas, the good physician, and the other courses are by Srinath Sen, the quack'. Rameswar's wife is Ramdas, and the Holy Mother is Srinath Sen. A little uncharitable no doubt, but the witticism was immensely enjoyable.

Sri Ramakrishna never spoke with pontifical solemnity. Even while teaching abstruse philosophy, he could be unimaginably simple. His predecessors had often given their discourses in a language, the common man could not understand. It was orotund and caviare to the general. Sri Ramakrishna stooped, and therefore he conquered. While discussing Sāṅkhya philosophy, Sri Ramakrishna spoke of the function of Puruṣa and Prakṛti. Puruṣa is passive, while Prakṛti is active. Puruṣa watches all her actions with utmost disinterestedness. Yet they are all the

while interdependent. The audience could not understand the inner implication, and Sri Ramakrishna realized that. And readily came an illustration. 'Have you not seen this in a bridal ceremony? The master of the house is tugging at his hubble bubble, and the mistress with her unkempt clothes on, is constantly on the move. She has to look after all the works; she has to welcome the guests, and occasionally she comes to her husband to tell him, "This is how I have done it". The master nods his head and in all cases gives his assent with a "hump".' The abstruse philosophy was watered down to everybody's enjoyment.

Sri Ramakrishna, we have said, always laughed, and the world laughed with him. He could never be grave and solemn. We only regret that a full-length biography of our Master has not been written. Only a Boswell could perhaps reproduce all the gems. Yet what Swami Saradananda (author of *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Līlā-Prasaṅga*) and Mahendranath Gupta (author of *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathā-mṛta*) have culled for us, is worth a king's treasury. The Master could amuse others with his genial humour. It has been said that humour is a blending of laughter and tears. Sri Ramakrishna's humour had, however, no touch of tears. It was always sunny. With his humour was mixed wit, which sometimes appealed to the intellect.

Wit is humour with a sting added to it. In Sri Ramakrishna's wit the sting was missing. His wit was sparkling and scintillating, neat, nice, intellectual, occasionally broad and emotional, but always cheerful and jolly. Were it not so, all the intellectuals of the late nineteenth century would not have veered round him. They were Keshav Sen, Pratap Majumdar, Vijoy Krishna Goswami, Michael Madhusudan Dutta, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Girish Ghosh, Dr. Mahendra Lal Sarkar, Narendra Nath Dutta (Swami Vivekananda), Aswini Kumar Dutta and a host of others, who feasted upon his words. There was no monotony in Sri Ramakrishna's expressions. His speeches were all unpremeditated; and they were uttered with the first fine careless rapture of a bird.

Often Sri Ramakrishna would compare God with 'chāndā māmā', the moon, who is every child's uncle. Sri Ramakrishna was 'chāndā māmā', who amused all. You are highly educated, and Sri Ramakrishna has a rich fare for you; and for others who are unlettered, Sri Ramakrishna has a repast, no less rich and entertaining. God is a wonderful actor, and his stage is set everywhere. Sri Ramakrishna, the God in human form, was also an actor of considerable skill. A female votary narrates how Sri Ramakrishna once dressed like a woman behaved exactly like one; and it roused everybody's laughter.



# VEDĀNTA MEMBERSHIP IN AMERICA

DOROTHY F. MERCER

The first member I talked to, after deciding to collect material, was a *brahmachārin*. An open, intelligent, well-educated man with a nice sense of humour, he had, so he told me, wanted to be a minister after he left college. But the ministers teaching at the seminary he attended were, he felt, unintelligent, and pious without holiness. They suggested no method by which he might 'know' the spirit. Consequently, he left the seminary and was married and divorced before he heard about or turned to the Vedānta. He has been a 'brother' for about twelve years now and is happy and contented; perhaps not 'knowing' God—none I interviewed or sent questionnaires to acknowledged a 'knowledge' of God—, but apparently secure in faith as evidenced by the constant work he does 'for the Lord.' He was drawn to the Vedānta on hearing the head swami lecture. 'The Swami,' said he, 'spoke from experience, not from theory. I had had enough and too much of theory.'

Happiness was my general impression of the monks, nuns, probationers, and devotees (lay members) with whom I had an opportunity to talk. Most of them carried heavy work burdens, and most were cheerful under the regimen. Of course, some of the probationers, concerned whether they were fit for religious life, were restless; but within the total of eight months extending over four years I have been able to observe personally the only American convent and one of the American monasteries, but two out of the ten men and three out of the eighteen women found themselves unfitted for the religious life.

By and large, the monks, nuns, and probationers are young. The turn-over rate

appeared to be low. Even those who decided they were not suited for monastic life usually kept up their adherence to the Vedānta after leaving the monastery or convent. They still attended services, came to the temple to pray, and contributed their time, after secular working hours, to assisting in the many labours necessary to keep the large establishments going.

Only one of the monastic group has taken his final vows. This is natural because the first vows are taken after five or six years of probation, and the final vows, by which an individual officially renounces the world, follow after another five to ten years. Moreover, the final vows can only be taken in India. It is evident that the Rama-krishna Order is in no great rush to bestow *sannyāsa*.

This American *sannyāsin* is a remarkable man in his self-abnegation. Refusing any recognition at all, he seems to the observer to have taken a vow of silence. But he will answer if addressed, laugh at the odd situations which arise and at odd comments sometimes made, and apply himself to jobs disliked by others, such as dishwashing. He is in constant attendance on the head swami, and is so devotional in his attitude that I, before I 'knew' him, felt no one could go so far in perfect honesty. I could not have been more wrong. If consistency in action is any criterion, he is a truly devotional religious. I do not know how or why he became interested in the Vedānta: he is not the type one questions.

One of the nuns, originally a Presbyterian New Englander, came to the Vedānta as a consequence of searching. She had had a



hard life of nursing relatives; had, at the time of joining the Vedānta, a good position and husband; and had always from childhood rejected certain dogmas of her church, particularly original sin, damnation, and exclusiveness. She had also been so opposed, even when a child, to racial discrimination that one of her first friends was a Negro. She had married a Chinese-American and had, through him, been introduced to Buddhism and, of course, the doctrine of reincarnation. The idea of reincarnation appealed to her because of its inherent justice. She was a 'natural' for the Vedānta.

None of the other twenty-five members of the Vedānta to whom I talked before making up a questionnaire seemed quite so naturally oriented toward Vedānta. None of the others had such an exotic background. All the rest, except for one Hebrew who had had to face Hitler's Germany and who was displeased with Zionism, were Americans of long standing and from orthodox Christian families. The conventionality of their backgrounds rather surprised me. The one thing 'different' about them was their adherence to the Vedānta. This was an avid adherence; there was nothing lukewarm in their faith.

Besides talking to some twenty-five members of the Vedanta Society of Southern California to acquaint myself with the reasons Americans give for turning to the Vedānta—pursuant to making up a questionnaire—I also read a series of articles entitled 'What Vedānta Means to Me' which have been running for a number of years in *Vedānta and the West*, a magazine published by the Vedanta Press of Southern California. From these personal statements I gathered that the American members before joining the Vedānta had been searching for a philosophy or faith to which they could conscientiously adhere.

They had been troubled by the exclusiveness of orthodox Christianity; by, what seemed to them, unacceptable dogmas such as those of everlasting hell and original sin; by the too often secular emphasis of the church's activities; by the possible lack of actual, spiritual attainment of its leaders; by the amorphous, emotional call to Jesus without specific discipline to maintain spiritual awareness. Like Thoreau, these people sought—because of their reading, disillusionment with ordinary life, personal problems, and plain practicality—to live life on a more satisfying level.

The majority of them had tasted Christian orthodoxy, a few bitterly. They were intelligent and well-educated, of varied ages and both sexes, and dominately middle-class. As I talked to them, I was struck by their common sense, honesty, and humour. They had not seen God, but they had a contentment and at the same time an ardent hope for greater spiritual knowledge. They could humorously discuss their relatives' warnings of hell, for instance, or their colleagues' supercilious intellectualism. They had a loyalty to and a faith in the Vedānta born of what seemed to me experience. I was convinced that they were neither theorists nor dogmatists. They were living their philosophy, not arguing it.

Had I, by chance, talked to a particularly select group of members? Or was I to find that the reasons these few gave for turning to the Vedānta and the consequent result were typical?

Five of the twelve American centres (two in California, one in Oregon, one in Missouri, one in New York) sent to a selected group of their members a total of two hundred and twenty one questionnaires based on my conversation and reading. Ninety-five questionnaires were returned filled out. The basis of selection was in general 'a cross section of older and younger people, newer and



older devotees, fairly even number of men and women proportionate to our membership', as one centre advised me.

The percentage of men and women answering was approximately the same as that of the membership—37 per cent men, 63 per cent women. The median age was fifty-one and the median years of membership eight. The range in age was from sixteen to eighty, and in membership from three months to fifty years. Except that more men than women were married, no particular difference, either geographically or sexually, was discoverable.

The total approximate membership of the centres which sent out questionnaires were five hundred and seventy. This means that only some 16 per cent of the centres' membership is represented by the returned questionnaires. Consequently, the validity of the findings is indeterminate.

Too, the validity of the questionnaire itself is indeterminate for several reasons. Some of the questions asked were statistically valueless, some unintentionally leading, and some based on an unstated, unintentional assumption of value. The second question, for instance asked: **WHY DID YOU TURN TO THE VEDĀNTA?** Bracketed were the following:

- Personal Problems such as Temperamental Difficulties
- Divorce
- Disillusionment with Worldly Values
- Death of a Beloved
- Serious Shock
- Paucity of Spiritual Instruction Elsewhere
- Nondogmatic Universality of the Vedānta
- Character Appeal and Example of Swami in Charge of Your Centre
- Reading in the Vedānta
- General Searching in Various Philosophies
- Other

The suggestions were a result of my conversations with the members and reading their articles. I should have realized, judging from the conversations and articles, that the intelligence and educational background of the membership was good and therefore that suggestions were unnecessary. I was surprised to learn how good the members' educational background was. Ninety per cent of the men answering were college-bred; and sixty or two-thirds of all the people answering had college training of some sort. Thirty-seven had degrees ranging from A.B. to Ph.D. and from universities and colleges ranging from Kansas State Teachers to Harvard, Yale, and the University of California. Very few—ten—were foreign-born; the vast majority stemmed from rather usual American homes.

Of the ninety-five who answered why they had turned to the Vedānta, thirty-seven underlined 'General Searching in Various Philosophies,' thirty-six 'Nondogmatic Universality of the Vedānta,' thirty 'Character Appeal and Example of Swami in Charge,' fourteen 'Paucity of Spiritual Instruction Elsewhere,' seven 'Disillusionment with Worldly Values,' and six 'Reading in the Vedānta.'

The Choice 'General Searching in Various Philosophies' could be interpreted in several ways. The most obvious and the one most frequently given was dissatisfaction with the faith into which the members were born. Of the ninety-five who answered the questionnaire, only ten had no prior religious affiliations, and only seven had been affiliated with other than Christian denominations. On the whole, however, the affiliation had not been ardent; they had been members but not active. Dissatisfaction with the original faith had set in early; and church-going had been reduced to a passive habit or given up altogether long before they had



heard of or had become members of the Vedānta.

The predominately orthodox Christian and American background and the median years of membership and age might mean several things: that the Vedānta, contrary to what is often supposed when the popular notions about *yoga* and swamis are considered, makes little appeal to searchers after the occult; that its holding power is relatively good when the searching characteristic of the membership is considered; and that maturity and judgement are necessary for its acceptance. That the Vedānta is most attractive to 'good' Americans suggests that the idealism of Emerson, *et al*, has never completely died down in the United States; that there is something indigenous in transcendentalism which the exotic Vedānta satisfies.

Another interpretation of the underlined 'General Searching in Various Philosophies' could be a dominant desire to seek answers to serious questions in some form of religion rather than in the more intellectually acceptable field of philosophy divorced from religion, or in the not only intellectually acceptable but also popular field of academic psychology.

A third interpretation, a corollary as it were of the second, could stem from simple habit. Although the membership is on the whole college trained, the religious habit of childhood reasserted itself when serious searching began.

Thirty-six of the members underlined as their reason for turning to the Vedānta its 'Nondogmatic Universality.' Except for the exotic quality of the Vedānta, this is not surprising for at least two reasons: the American is not, on the whole, religiously intolerant. The separation of church and state at the very beginning of American history meant that multiplication of churches was inevitable, and the declared legitimacy of one church over another was

not only illegal but also contrary to the expression of individualism to which each American had a moral right. The exclusiveness which many denominations of Christianity claim is not within the American liberal-democratic tradition. Although the tradition is always in danger, it is also always being defended.

There was, for instance, in 1957, a series of articles published in *The San Francisco Chronicle*, a liberal, Catholic owned newspaper, on 'Faiths of America'. The articles were written by prominent members of the faiths being explained and for the purpose of helping 'to clear up misconceptions held by persons who never understood the faith of their neighbours.' The articles were presented alphabetically: first Baptist, then Catholic, then Congregational, and so forth. Only two of the sixteen represented—Catholic and Jehovah's Witnesses—had an unequivocally stated article of faith that theirs was the only true religion. But only one, Jewish, was non-Christian. So although a dogma of the Vedānta is its 'non-dogmatic universality', its acceptance within certain limits of every religion as true and efficacious, the Vedānta is outside the general American religious stream.

On the other hand, two or three years ago on the occasion of a memorial tribute to the United Nations in San Francisco, the Vedānta was represented along with Buddhism, Judaism, and Protestantism. Catholicism paid a separate tribute. In its nondogmatic universality, therefore, the Vedānta expresses an aspect of Americanism so deeply rooted as to be almost a religion in itself.

But there is a deeper reason for emphasis on nondogmatic universality. Universality is of the very essence of mysticism. Few lands or ages have been without their mystics: even England's Age of Reason had its two Williams: Law and Blake. Nor can orthodoxy be considered either an aid



or a hindrance to mysticism. Plotinus and Jacob Boehme are cases in point. Two of the greatest western mystics, Plotinus was before any orthodoxy and Boehme revolted against one. So influential that their power has not yet been measured, Plotinus and Boehme evidence because of their unorthodoxy, their divorcement from any theological dogma, an assurance which possibly vested interest orthodoxy does not have. They stand as witnesses to the importance of nondogmatic universality in mysticism.

The next most frequently underlined reason for turning to the Vedānta, namely the 'Character Appeal and Example of the Swami in Charge' is also directly connected with mysticism in general as well as with American attitudes. Americans typically are attracted to leadership and habitually do not weigh the principles advocated by the leader. Politicians understand this tendency too well, and American political history is a sad commentary on it.

Practicality is another American attribute. William James gave name and argument to a point of view widely held in the United States long before his advent: from transcendentalist to frontiersman, the standard of measure was workability. One reason today why so many Americans are turning to the church is their doubt in the efficacy of science, mass production, prosperity. Faced with, for instance, rising insanity, juvenile delinquency, divorce, educational inadequacy, inflation-deflation-depression, war, bombs, uneasy peace, and automation, the American is no longer charmed by Freud, Ford, Dewey, and Einstein. Maybe God (any God as long as he is workable) will give a security which these prophets of what are now frequently considered false causes do not give. The Vedānta is not only nondogmatic and universal but it works: witness the swamis.

Again, however, there is a deeper reason. The swamis of the Ramakrishna Order in the United States are mystics; they understand spiritual life through their experience of it. Their appeal, therefore, does not stem from demagoguery or pragmatic sanction but from their being. Philosophical mysticism, par excellence, Advaita Vedānta stands behind the swamis, giving them argument and method. But a sweep of God-consciousness cannot be attributed solely to the power of a philosophy. The *sādhana* of their great Master, Sri Ramakrishna, revitalized the Vedānta, gave life to the word, and with a touch swept God into consciousness. The swamis partake of that dispensation. Making the spirit come alive by their being, the character appeal and example of the swami is an intuitively felt rather than rationally arrived at reason for turning to the Vedānta.

I am reminded of a story told by a Hindu scientist and mystic who was taught by one of Sri Ramakrishna's direct disciples. In his early teens he met Swami Brahmananda and was so irresistibly drawn toward him that he was bothered. 'Why,' thought he to himself, 'should I be so attracted to this man? Does he say anything that I have not heard before? No. Is he handsome? He does not even have a good nose. Yet he means more to me than my own parents. What is his attraction?'

The answer he gave himself is perennial; so answered Socrates' followers and Christ's and Buddha's disciples. 'He is love', answered the boy who was to become Sir J. C. Bose's foremost assistant and who at sixty-eight (when I heard him tell the story) embodied in himself the love he found so irresistibly attractive in Swami Brahmananda. Such is the power of being. Mysticism is very concrete.

Under the heading 'Other,' sixteen people



who responded to the questionnaire listed Vedānta's intellectual appeal. Far from accepting without question the swamis' leadership or registering philosophical naivety, these members as well as many more, who, because of the phrasing of the question, did not list the intellectual appeal, appeared to be serious thinkers.

Some, indeed, seemed more interested in scientific verification than in mystic depth. This interest took various forms from a bitter criticism of Christian miracles to a scientific defence of the Vedānta by a research scientist, one M.D., who noted that the 'Vedāntic concept of the universe fits perfectly in the frame of the up-to-date scientific concept.'

Modern Vedāntists, from Vivekananda on, have insisted on the scientific quality of the Vedānta. Their arguments rest on the Hindu pre-Christian *kalpa* theory of evolution and involution; on the doctrines of reincarnation and Karma which, at least superficially, satisfy the human sense of justice better than any other ideas I know of but which are not, so far as I can determine, scientifically verifiable; and on the principles of *yoga*.

I do not pretend to know what the M.D. had in mind nor, indeed, why the famous biologist J. B. S. Haldane supports the Vedānta, nor the reasons the geophysicist, Joseph Kaplan, gives for his support. But that *yoga* is objectively demonstrable I doubt because of its nature. Questions of epistemology are involved which do not lend themselves to physically controlled calculation, observation, and demonstration.

The peace that passeth understanding is not amenable to laboratory method, and a disservice is done to it when it is coupled with science. Especially is this true in the present climate of opinion. On one level science is a term of popular approbation, applied to everything from an eyebrow pencil to a deep-freeze, and on another

level science is a betrayer rather than a saviour. To call mysticism scientific now is the coup *de grâce*.

At the turn of the century, when Vivekananda and Abhedananda were lecturing and writing, the climate of opinion was such as perhaps to warrant emphasis on analogies. Whitman had written some forty years before: 'Hurrah for positive science! long live exact demonstration!' But he had ended his peroration with the remark, 'Your facts are useful, and yet they are not my dwelling, / I but enter / by them to an area of my dwelling.'

Mystical modification, however, was unusual. Tennyson had said earlier, 'Eye, to which all order festers, all things here are out of joint, / Science moves, but slowly, slowly, creeping on from point to point.' By the middle of the century, prosperity repudiated Tennyson's 'slowly' in popular judgement, and Herbert Spencer seemed to give scientific justification to inevitable, evolutionary progress. Spencer's vogue in the United States had not entirely died down when Abhedananda's *Reincarnation* was written in 1899. Perhaps the earliest of the modern Vedāntists to make an effort to interpret the Vedānta in the light of current opinion, Abhedananda allied reincarnation to evolution. But since evolution was nothing new in India, the alliance for him was not iconoclastic.

Abhedananda, like Whitman, was a mystic: unlike Whitman he was a Hindu. In explaining the limits of evolution, he depended on Advaita Vedānta: 'For want of true knowledge [the individual] identified himself with each stage [of evolution] successively . . . . He thought by mistake that he was affected by the changes in each stage. . . .' Evolution functions: changes are effected. Abhedananda indicates. But the spirit which is eternally whole and complete goes through no change, and the individual, seemingly caught in the modi-



fications of evolution, simply needs to correct his mistaken judgement.

That this correction in judgement follows logically from the primary premise of the Vedānta does not give the judgement scientific validity because there is no way to measure such judgement. Each for himself must be the oracle. 'Wisdom is of the Soul, is not susceptible of proof, is its own proof,' as Whitman says. That mystics of diverse times and climes have seemed to agree, even though their terminology is different from age to age and from cultural pattern to cultural pattern; or that, at least in the Vedānta, mystic experience which has not had prior reporting or is not substantiated by works is held up to careful scrutiny and testing, does not lift the onus, scientifically considered, of individual, immeasurable experience.

The continuity of evolution from undifferentiated mass to more and more differentiated form, the lack of basic distinction between mind and matter, the knowledge that man is not an island but a part of the main are both implicit and explicit in the concept of Prakṛti. Hence, a partially scientific support of the Vedānta is discoverable, as a contemporary Vedāntist, Swami Prabhavananda, notes. But bringing a particular cosmological religious concept into an agreement with a particular scientific one, as the M.D. did, is no more novel or convincing than an attack on Christian miracles.

From another point of view, however, the term "science" may be used perhaps to describe *yoga*. A scientific method is to retrace the steps of the initial experiment; if the same result is obtained from the same steps, there is a verification of the method. *Yoga* has been the method used in India from prehistoric times 'by which an individual may become united with the Godhead, the Reality which underlies this apparent, ephemeral universe,' to quote

from Swami Prabhavananda's readable translation of *Patañjali's Yoga Aphorisms*. Every orthodox Indian system of thought makes use of these *yoga* aphorisms, because *yoga* has been proved efficacious by the individual for so many thousands of years. The burden of proof, however, is still subjective as it is, for instance, in the case of love or aesthetics. So to call *yoga* scientifically verifiable is to use the term 'science' rather loosely.

That the Vedānta does not stand in opposition to science, that each scientific discovery makes more physically valid the intuitive conclusions of the ancient seers, or *ṛsis*, is one of its powers. But the Vedānta, like all religions, stands on spirit. The laws of matter and of spirit are different: the more I give of love, the more love I have; the more I give of money, the less money I have. To say that bread cast on the waters will be returned ten-fold is a spiritual, not a material, law. The spirit can function in matter, being its master; but matter cannot change spirit.

Not only is the coupling of science and mysticism unconvincing, but so also is the uncritical attitude toward Christian 'miracles'. When textual study of the Bible, as well as a knowledge of evolution, brought about a difficult period for Christian churches in the nineteenth century, 'miracles' became suspect. They have been relatively suspect ever since. Perhaps the church over-emphasizes them, antagonizing a congregation which is sincerely interested in spiritual values. To make Christ a material healer—a precursor of medicine or psychology—rather than a spiritual preceptor, is so to shift religious position as to be heretical in any religion. Such a position would not only be considered heretical in the Vedānta but also a barrier to mystical experience.

To doubt the physical fact of the 'miracles' would not have occurred to the



early Christians who had a tradition of miraculous healings. Nor would doubting the miracles occur to the Vedāntin. He would, however, place them within matter and give them small emphasis. Within matter they could very well be masterly manifestations of extrasensory perception. The Hindu as well as the Christian has a tradition of miracle. But the Hindu believes the miracle to be within matter and subject to material law.

Did not Patañjali and others discover 'laws of the mind which explain such extraordinary occurrences? Extrasensory perception or occult powers are not miracles nor are they accidental; they are governed and controlled by subtle mental laws. . . . Western psychology, by ridiculing and ignoring these facts, is losing an opportunity of studying some interesting mental phenomena,' to quote Swami Akhilananda's *Hindu Psychology*.

But continues Swami Akhilananda, 'Patanjali in his description of the various extrasensory powers and methods of attaining them states definitely that they are great obstacles to higher spiritual experiences and mystic realizations.' This too is the warning of the less naive in the Christian church. Clairvoyance, clairaudience, telepathy—all the phenomena now being studied as extrasensory perception—are condemned as hindrances to Christian living. The healing of diseases caused by hysteria—leprosy was a very loosely used term—also has no need of a Jesus for explanation. Resurrection is slightly different, but today the medical profession would not need divinity for elucidation.

That many of these healings are not miraculous, that is, beyond natural control, does not weaken their power in Biblical context. It would have been strange indeed if, having a tradition of miraculous healing, the early Christians—those who formulated and wrote the

Gospels—did not have something in mind over and above the healings themselves: these alone could not mark the Christ.

The 'miracles' have a potent symbolism. Not only are the physically blind made to see, but a warning is given that 'if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out.' The emphasis is not on the physical wonder but on the spiritual lesson which is thereby conveyed. In context the 'miracles' are not simple. After the feeding of the multitude, for instance, there is the admonition to 'labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life. . . .' That many murmur and turn away from Jesus at this point underscores their physical thralldom and Jesus' difficulty in reaching them. The fault, therefore, is not in the 'miracles' but in the church's too frequently literal interpretation. Therefore either to doubt the 'miracles' or to support spirit by matter as in scientific analogy is to lose the mystical profundity of Vedānta.

In fact, the questionnaire was of particular interest because it brings out so very well the nondogmatic characteristics of the Vedānta. A man of fifty-seven and a member for 'approximately five years,' he 'was attracted by the swamis [he] met while teaching in India [and] by the personality recorded in the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*.' Besides underlining many of the suggested reasons for turning to the Vedānta, he said, 'It seemed to me obvious that the individual's chief obligation and privilege is to "glorify God and enjoy Him forever." Protestant Christianity over-protests the incidental miracles but sidesteps the big and one-and-only Miracle.'

To the question **DO YOU STILL, WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE VEDĀNTA, ADHERE TO YOUR ORIGINAL FAITH? EXPLAIN.** He gave the following answer, 'Well, I make a stab at practising it—participation in the Sacra-

ments, etc.—and financial contribution with the permission of my very liberal Rector who knows pretty well where I stand.' He listed the following mystical works as having personal meaningfulness for him: Old and New Testament, *Gītā*, *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*.

Here, it seems to me, the best of both religions meet: a 'very liberal' Christian rector understanding one of his flock, and the Vedānta 'filling many gaps in [the searcher's] Christian experience.' A professor by occupation and a possessor of a Ph.D. from Harvard, this member of the Vedānta lives 'happily in an anti-religious community, no more intolerant of Vedānta than of Christianity, and a little too sophisticated to be misled by rope-trick nonsense.'

He 'periodically visits Vedānta centres for two to five days of intensive meditation, instruction, etc.—perhaps five times a year. [He] tries to meditate and read for forty-five minutes early every morning and to participate in Holy Communion every week or two—oftener in Lent.' To the question: **ARE YOU OBTAINING FROM THE VEDĀNTA WHAT YOU ANTICIPATED?** he said, 'No complaints, except the inevitable failure to make more visible spiritual progress, and the inevitable mild disillusionment with Vedānta's saints, prophets, and priests.' An earnest, temperate, intelligent man, the respondent shows how two religions can live peaceably together; nay, can augment each other. This type of happy co-operation was the exception rather than the rule.

On the other side was the one-time Judaist and then atheist who had nothing good to say about his great religion. He was glad to escape from what he called 'an arbitrary' God. Remembering Jonathan Edwards, I cannot help feeling that this member had missed something precious in Judaism, that his rabbi had had

inadequate understanding of spiritual travail.

In the present climate of opinion, it is comforting no doubt to escape from 'a Jewish God who is partial, tribal, revengeful ... and above all arbitrary' into the 'Vedānta ... that is strictly based on empirical data—and not on dogma, belief, revelation, etc.', as he said.

Because so many unsolicited answers were given for turning to the Vedānta because of its intellectual appeal, this reason for turning to it must weigh as heavily as its nondogmatic universality or the character and example of the swami in charge.

The third question asked was: **WHAT PARTICULARLY DISTRESSED YOU IN YOUR ATTITUDE OR IN THE PRESENTATION OF YOUR ORIGINAL FAITH?** Bracketed were:

No Deep-Seated Convictions

Exclusiveness of Nominal Faith

Dryness

Emphasis on Sin

Possible Lack of Spiritual Attainment of its Leaders

No Definite Spiritual Training Offered

Too Much Attention on Secular Subjects

General Dissatisfaction

This third question was, of course, partly a check on the second. But as it happened no check was needed; the members repeated themselves.

Twenty-one underlined 'Exclusiveness of Nominal Faith,' twenty-one 'No Spiritual Training Offered,' seventeen 'Sin,' seventeen 'General Dissatisfaction,' sixteen 'Possible Lack of Spiritual Attainment of its Leaders,' fifteen 'Too Much Attention to Secular Subjects,' fifteen 'Dryness,' five 'No Deep-Seated Convictions.' Ten volunteered 'Irrationality,' four 'Hypocrisy,' and two 'Materialism.'

Of these, the ten who volunteered 'Irrationality' were simply pointing up in re-



verse the rational appeal of the Vedānta, the sixteen who underlined 'Possible Lack of Spiritual Attainment of its Leaders,' the five who underlined 'No Deep-Seated Convictions,' and the four who volunteered 'Hypocrisy' were in reverse showing approval toward the character and example of the swami. The twenty-one who underlined 'Exclusiveness of Nominal Faith' were pointing up in reverse the nondogmatic universality of the Vedānta.

There remain the twenty-one who underlined 'No Spiritual Training Offered' and the fifteen who underlined 'Dryness' and 'Too Much Attention to Secular Subjects.' The secular emphasis in churches indigenous to the United States is so evident as to be proverbial among churchmen: church sponsored dances, charity bingo games, socials, sermons entitled 'Capital Punishment' and 'Man and His Role in Evolution' and the very heavy ministerial community duties not directly connected with spiritual training are examples.

Apparently 'Dryness' results from 'Too Much Attention to Secular Subjects.' Its remedy is in spiritual training. The Vedānta emphasizes spiritual training and, as a consequence, dryness is negligible. This is perhaps best evidenced by the time the members spend in spiritual endeavour and its result. The fifth question was: **ARE YOU OBTAINING FROM THE VEDĀNTA WHAT YOU ANTICIPATED? EXPLAIN. GENERALLY HOW MANY HOURS A WEEK DO YOU DEVOTE TO SPIRITUAL ENDEAVOUR IN THE FORM OF RITUAL, MEDITATION, READING, ATTENDING CLASSES, LECTURES, OTHER? SPECIFY.**

The weekly time spent in ritual was so little as to be unimportant, although rather surprisingly more men than women listed ritual as one of their endeavours. But the time spent in meditation was astounding.

The median was seven hours a week, ranging from none to twenty-eight. The relation between meditation and peace is well exemplified in the member who listed twenty-eight as against one member who listed none.

A man of twenty-five, Catholic by birth but agnostic through study in psychiatry, and a member of the Vedānta for only one year, the man whose response was 'none' is 'sorry to say that spiritual endeavour leaves [him] cold at present. [He] is concentrating on a woman [he] cares for very much and is progressing in business.' To the question: **ARE YOU OBTAINING FROM THE VEDĀNTA WHAT YOU ANTICIPATED?** he gave the following answer: 'Yes. I did not expect much so I was not disappointed. My curiosity was satisfied; I learned a little. I may learn a lot more. I very much admire the warmth and sincerity of Swami—'.

The woman of thirty-four who meditates twenty-eight hours a week has been a member for seven years. In addition to the twenty-eight hours of weekly meditation, she also does *japa* (repeats the name of the Lord) 'at various times, perhaps eight or ten hours' a week, reads one hour, and attends two hours of classes. She also carries a full-time job.

Coming to Vedānta through Gerald Heard, a disciple of Swami Prabhavananda, she had already a liberal background in Christian mysticism interpreted from the standpoint of Vedānta. She had never been affiliated with any orthodox church. 'Before turning to spiritual life,' she says, 'I had no idea that God could be realized and that there were spiritual practices conducive to this.'

To the question: **ARE YOU OBTAINING FROM THE VEDĀNTA WHAT YOU ANTICIPATED?** she gave the following answer: 'What I am obtaining is far beyond my highest hopes. To me the



Vedānta is the most beautiful and profound philosophy in the world. On its theoretical side it satisfies my intellect entirely.' (She holds an A.B. in philosophy from one of the best, scholastically considered, universities in the United States.) 'In its practical aspect, the Vedānta gives perfect peace to my heart and a joy which I myself cannot fully understand or explain. I think that in addition to all this, there is the inestimable blessing we have of associating with the Swamis of the Ramakrishna Order—that is, with men who have actually realized God and who are giving away their lives in the loving service of humanity.'

These two examples are extremes. But they attest to the great importance of practice in spiritual life. Without practice curiosity may be satisfied and 'something' learned; with practice grace comes, the peace which passeth understanding, and a joy not dependent on external good or ill.

The weekly reading median of the members was three hours, and attending classes and lectures two hours. This means that a median of twelve hours a week is devoted to spiritual endeavour. Then, depending on the centre, many of the members attend *pūjās* (ritual worship on certain holy days throughout the year), *Rāmanāma* (occasional congregational chanting of the Lord's name), vigils, and informal readings of various scriptures. In addition, there are private interviews with the swami.

In the Vedanta Society of Southern California, the centre with which I am most familiar, it is possible for the members to devote all of their time except what is given to earning a living to spiritual endeavour. In addition to the lectures, classes, readings, *pūjās*, *Rāmanāma* worships, vigils, and, of course, of more importance, private interviews with the swami, *japa*, and meditation, the members of this centre

may work for the Vedānta—'for the Lord,' as they would say. They can help in the extensive gardens and buildings, assist in the bookshop, write for the magazine, clean the Temple, send out booklists, contribute to the cooking on the occasion of *pūjās* and other celebrations. Organized by the monks, nuns, and novices with the ever-attendant, detailed regard of the swami in charge, the activity of this centre can concentrate the entire energy of its membership on God.

Nor are respondents ladies and gentlemen of leisure: only nineteen of the ninety-five answering were housewives, if keeping house may be thought of as a leisure occupation. All the rest of those answering the questionnaire, with the exception of two novices and two retired persons, are working full-time.

It is no wonder, therefore, that the answer to: **ARE YOU OBTAINING FROM THE VEDĀNTA WHAT YOU ANTICIPATED?** was so affirmatively wholehearted. If for eight years (the median years of membership), these people have been spending twelve hours and more a week on spiritual endeavour, it would be strange if they were not growing spiritually.

This was a poorly phrased question, as many brought to my attention, because they did not know what to anticipate. However, the response is still valuable. Of the eighty-six who answered this question—not all the questionnaires were completely filled out—fifty-three answered, 'yes and more,' twenty-five 'yes,' and eight 'yes and no.' Of these last eight, one answered 'no' because he had 'not yet seen God,' another 'no' because she wanted to be a nun, one 'no' because 'fault is within self not in the Vedānta,' and one 'no' because the Vedānta was 'not what I expected, but I do not blame the Vedānta.' As is apparent from these answers, the standard of spiritual success among Vedāntists is high.



Of those who answered 'yes and more,' the 'more' was accounted for most frequently by 'peace'; particularly 'peace of mind,' although there were many who registered 'ecstasy,' 'joy,' 'love of God,' 'spiritual fulfilment,' 'delight.' Of those who answered simply 'yes,' the explanation was, for instance, 'I have learned much about spiritual life from the swamis. Any failure is that I still permit worldly affairs to absorb too much of my time.'

The members know the relation between spiritual practice and spiritual progress. There is no backsliding without its consequent loss, and no going forward without its consequent gain.

Some other cases will make this clear; there is no paucity of material from which to draw interesting material. The returned questionnaires were all stimulating, most showed the relation between practice and fulfilment, and some were unintentionally amusing.

There was, for instance, an eighty-year-old man, educated at McGill University, who felt that I had been remiss in my question about educational background. He gave 'hard knocks' as part of his educational preparation. Too, he did not want me to 'imagine that so-called Vedānta has a monopoly on the road to understanding Reality.' He meditates 'five minutes-plus' a week, and although baptized and confirmed in the Church of England, has no faith in it. He had lived with Buddhists and Hindus at Ceylon and India, more specifically at Buddh-Gaya and Benares. To make sure that I would not be impressed by his McGill training, he said that his occupation was 'lumber-jack, etc., retired.' Certainly an interesting man to know, he did not divulge anything at all about his spiritual life, even though the questionnaire was indicated as being strictly anonymous.

Another response was on the pathetic

side. A woman of twenty-eight and a member for two years, she constantly 'experiences the sweet peace that passes all understanding.' Her 'tense nature is changing into something resembling patience.' But her husband, being intolerant, 'can cause quite a break in any desired routine' of meditation. 'Prejudice is something that one cannot battle with words, but rather by good example. This is my way of proving that Vedānta has 'something'.

Because mysticism is frequently believed to be an 'escape,' one of the questionnaires was of special interest to me. A businessman of fifty-one, three years a member, he turned to the Vedānta 'because of a hunger not satisfied by catering to worldly appetites, and though not disillusioned nor bitter and cynical, [he] yet felt a need to satisfy this hunger. . . . The Vedānta seemed the logical answer because of its nondogmatic universality, and character and appeal and example of the swami.' This member had also read in the Vedānta and had been searching generally. He had been a 'casual' Presbyterian but 'no definite spiritual training was offered' by the church, and it 'seemed to lack vigour and a positive attitude toward spiritual life.'

He still adheres, within the framework of the Vedānta, to his original religion because he 'feels the Christian faith holds truths buried in the fear and dogma preached. This intuition [of his] has been verified and is being strengthened by daily spiritual effort which,' he says, 'at my level at this time, seems to be the only spiritual progress I have made.' He devotes twenty-one hours a week to spiritual endeavour: two hours to ritual, eight to meditation, eight to reading, and three to lectures and classes. He is obtaining from the Vedānta what he anticipated because 'I am becoming more convinced of its soundness in developing one's spiritual life without



closing one's eyes to the responsibilities of the world.'

One rock does not make Gibraltar, but this evidence, multiplied by my observation and by the lives of mystics generally, persuades me that mysticism is not an 'escape.' It fosters rather, a more complete acceptance and a more intelligent handling of worldly duties. It frees the mind of extraneous material, such as ambition; and sloughs off encumbrances, such as jealousy and envy.

Another questionnaire which was of special interest to me was that of a married man of thirty who had been a member for three years. A nominal Methodist, but also a searcher in other denominations before becoming a member of the Vedānta, he had 'found the very tolerance to all religious orders very stimulating. . . . Also [he] found the personal aspect of the perfection of the swami showed this method to be valid. . . . In general [in other churches] all practices offered (and they were not many) were for attainment of success, money, etc.' 'I found no one,' said he, 'to really follow, and this seemed to show an inadequacy of method. The exclusiveness of these Orders, and the constant "You are a sinner" soon drove me to seek somewhere else.' To the question whether he still, within the framework of the Vedānta, adheres to his original faith, the answer was 'No, the break has been complete. There is more tolerance within myself for different faiths (including the previous ones of membership), but there is no desire to return to them *as they stand*. Basically, I'm still convinced of the validity of Christianity but not in its present state.'

He devotes between nine [and eleven] hours a week to spiritual endeavour: two hours to ritual, five to seven to meditation, and two to reading. He does not, generally, attend lectures or classes because of his position with a philharmonic orchestra.

He is obtaining from the Vedānta what he anticipated because, as he says, 'I've had several "experiences" which have proven (to me) the validity of this system, as they have raised my personal integrity and spiritual level.'

The question which critics of mysticism can never answer is why the mystic, having 'escaped from the world,' is, when he 'returns,' a better man. The evidence for this moral improvement is so overwhelming that critics of mysticism either do not mention it or pass it over. They are very vocal in their explanation of the mystical experience, attributing it to physiology—mental hallucination brought on by fasting and so forth, by self-hypnotism, by general abnormality. But the reasons they give for the experience cannot explain the moral effect.

No mystic, of course, would say that he 'escaped' and then 'returned.' (Plato uses the terminology, but with an entirely different connotation than do the critics here being discussed.) The Vedāntin would probably say that the experience gave him a glimpse of Reality; the Christian, probably, that now we see as through a glass darkly, then we shall see Him as He is. Both would agree that our present insight is faulty and that mystical experience corrects the faulty vision. In neither case is it a matter of 'escape' and 'return.' It is a penetration which in the great mystic modifies his whole life thereafter. He has visioned divinity, and the sight has made him complete—consequently, good. Because this particular respondent—the thirty-year-old orchestra member mentioned above—with a, what seems to me beautiful naivety, mentioned almost as an afterthought, that spiritual endeavour raised his personal integrity, I considered his questionnaire important. Too, his casual mention points to the very thing being described: no mystic is 'proud' of his



personal integrity : he does not give it any thought. An adept in the ways of the spirit, he is 'naturally' good.

This was not the only questionnaire which indicated moral improvement : the tense woman of twenty-eight who is developing patience, the members who blame themselves for absorption in worldly affairs, the businessman who realizes that the 'responsibilities of the world' are not antagonistic to 'spiritual life'—all these and many more who cannot be discussed because of space limitation, indicated that a by-product of spiritual practice is moral improvement.

The reading of the members was different from what I had anticipated, not only because the Vedānta is nonsectarian in theory, but also because the swamis often lecture on texts drawn from the Bible, on Buddha and Christ, on purely mystical subjects not peculiar to any single faith or holy scripture. It is impractical to list all the mystical books that the members named as meaning something to them personally. The range was wide although, in general, books universally acknowledged to be mystical were dominant. Taking the first three listed (the works were to be in the order of personal meaningfulness), I counted forty-five listing the *Bhagavad-Gītā*; thirty-five the writings of Swami Vivekananda (eighteen specified *Karma Yoga*, five *Rāja-Yoga*, three *Bhakti-Yoga*); twenty-nine the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*; ten the Bible; ten the Upaniṣads : eight *The Eternal Companion*; six *The Imitation of Christ*.

There are several possible reasons for the listings. Most of the centres sell the works of Vivekananda, the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, the Upaniṣads. None that I know of, with the exception of the Vedanta Society of Southern California, has a bookstore in which all, or practically all, mystical works translated

into English are available. Too, turning from Christian orthodoxy, the members are more naturally interested in Hindu scriptures. Even though many went out of their way to say that the Vedānta had helped them to understand Christ, they seemed, judging by their reading, to have found Hindu scripture more satisfying.

Christopher Isherwood in his article 'What Vedānta Means to Me' gave a very good possible explanation. The nomenclature of the Vedānta has not been 'contaminated by use in bishops' sermons, schoolmasters' lectures, politicians' speeches.' I find one of the most difficult texts to teach as literature is the Bible. The students either cannot separate their theological beliefs from their aesthetic appreciation, or they have such deep-set prejudices that they spend their time thinking up arguments to refute or make nonsense of the text, or they are so bogged down by recognition that they cannot rise to aesthetic apprehension. Hindu works are relatively fresh.

Closely allied to the question about the members reading was the question : **DO YOU STILL, WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE VEDĀNTA, ADHERE TO YOUR ORIGINAL FAITH?** Predominately the answer was 'No', although many explained that for the first time they understood Christ's teaching. But by and large respondents had made a clean break with their original faith and appeared to have no inclination to return. The following is a typical answer : 'I am a Vedāntist and respect Christianity as a path to realization of God which I have *not* taken.'

To the question : **WHAT, IF ANY, FAMILY, FRIENDSHIP, OR BUSINESS PREJUDICE DID YOU HAVE TO FACE WHEN YOU TURNED TO THE VEDĀNTA? WHAT WAS ITS NATURE?** answers were given that pointed to no great prejudice on the



part of Americans. Twenty-nine faced no prejudice; twenty-six some; eleven did not discuss their faith, possibly in order to avoid argument; and thirteen faced a strong prejudice. The brother of one respondent wrote her on the subject of continence: 'Continence means, at face value, that the Schweitzers, Pasteurs, Edisons, Bachs, the roses that bloom, the birds that sing, all cross the Jordan downstream; while mules, monks, old maids, and corn that doesn't pop, go across up-stream. . . .' Not intended to be humorous, this comment shows total misunderstanding of continence and its relation to spiritual life. It also confuses ethics, aesthetics, science, and technology. They were all brought together because in the mind of the critic, they all make contributions to men's general well-being. The critic did not understand how continence, too, makes a contribution. Even so practical a man as Francis Bacon in listing the advantages and disadvantages of marriage and single life, said, 'A single life doth well with churchmen, for charity will hardly water the ground where it must first fill a pool.' No one, I think, will accuse Bacon of mysticism, yet as a man of the world he understood the relationship between continence and charity: man has just so much energy; if he wishes to help his fellow man, he must not dissipate that energy.

This critic, obviously a good man, emotionally stirred by a concept of life he believes barren, can be excused on the grounds of simple ignorance. Another, an ordained and practising minister, cannot be so lightly passed over. Belonging to a very old Protestant denomination in which ritual is important and education emphasized, this man let his purported education, his candles and gown and altar and pictures, go by the board: 'The Vedānta philosophy is an absolute hoax. . . . It is in every way a heathen religion. It is nothing more than the

worship of idols. . . . By their [sic.] strong mental persuasion, they lead men and women to eternal destruction.'

These prejudices make easier to understand the member who cannot return to a Christian faith. Even though convinced of the validity of Christianity, he cannot bring himself to return to any of the Christian churches 'as they stand.' Whether the minister who believes that the Vedānta is a 'hoax', so expresses himself from the pulpit, I have no way of knowing; but that such bigotry, insularity, and intolerance could be expressed at all in the year of Our Lord 1957 is cause for concern far beyond the restraint which should be expected from a minister of the Gospel. He is fanatically criticizing religion of a nation with whom it behoves the United States to be friendly, and a nation which has, unfortunately, experienced exactly what Christianity means as a political weapon. I can find no excuse for such an outburst.

Fortunately, this type of criticism is the exception rather than the rule. Only a little over 13 per cent of those answering the questionnaire experienced strong prejudice, and over 30 per cent no prejudice of any kind. The members themselves, through the medium of the Vedānta, gained a tolerance for the denomination which had disappointed them and learned the greatness of Christ's teaching. They read naturally more Hindu mystical works than Christian or other; they experienced moral improvement, realized that spiritual endeavour does not interfere with worldly responsibility, and found that there is a direct relation between spiritual practice and the 'peace which passeth understanding.'

They found the Vedānta intellectually satisfying as well; that it does not repudiate science but rather is, so far as matter is concerned, in agreement with it. They found the Vedānta congruent with 'Americanism.' They were not ignorant people



but well-educated, balanced members of the community. They had come to the Vedānta as a result of general searching, the Vedānta's nondogmatic universality, and the character appeal and example of the swamis. They were, for the most part, mature men and women with a fervent adherence to and practical attitude toward the Ramakrishna Order.

Of the approximately 57 per cent who did not answer the questionnaire, I know very little. These may have been disappointed in the Vedānta. On the other hand, they may have been busy, may have changed their address, or been generally lax. It so happens that in my position I am asked to fill out a number of questionnaires—they seem to be one of the American pastimes—and I, more often than not, let them rest on my desk until 'I have time.' Frequently, I never 'have time,' so the questionnaire is never filled out. My not filling out the questionnaire has very little to do with my interest. It is usually a matter of procrastination.

For what it is worth, then, the ninety-five who filled out the questionnaires, the twenty-five with whom I talked, the ten who had written in *Vedanta and the West* on 'What Vedānta Means to Me' at the time I was collecting material, were satisfied with the Vedānta: they had experienced 'delight,' 'love of God,' 'peace of mind'; they were better men and women for being Vedāntins.

I should like to close this paper by quoting at length from a member's letter to one of the swamis, which happened to arrive when I was at a centre. It was given to me by the swami to use if I wished and had nothing to do with questionnaires, interviews, or articles:

I keep and cherish a letter you wrote me just four years ago, in which you said I must hold on to the pillar of God patiently and perserveringly—and above all to keep

recollectedness. And, Swamiji, I do believe I have managed that!

Everything here appears to conspire against one, the special Māyā that is—seems at times insurmountable—yet, it is as nothing—for slowly I am gaining my equilibrium, a sense of contentment; I even find myself surprisingly happy—although no outer activity or circumstance would seem to warrant such an exalted state.

I remember, so clearly, friends teasing me after my initiation, saying that the struggle was only starting. Only now do I understand those words, only now do I have some comprehension of how far I still must go.

Yet three things stand out vividly, three methods that have preserved, not only my recollectedness, but my very sanity.

First, when meditation was utterly out of the question, when even the shortest prayer would not pass my lips, I would go to my then dusty shrine and simply light the candles—no prayer, no ritual, no obeisance, seemingly nothing at all. But then, the flickering candle light on the Master's face, and beside him, my *guru*, smiling at me in the ruby red glow would serve, inevitably, to calm me and to sustain me.

Secondly, the *mantra* itself would always serve—fantastically and magically!—if one would only remember to say it, and later, even *if one did not say it!* I recall one graphic illustration—spiritually, it had been an overlong dry period. I was in the—playing a big shot, working at a fantastic fee, for a worldly, dishonest, and evil man, just one of many who flocked there to cash in on the type of set-up that could only be spawned in a—. We had reached a crisis—every kind of integrity I'd ever believed in was involved. The situation was explosive—I was ready to commit an act of violence—I hung in the balance between this evil entrepreneur and cunning—. What should I do? Then suddenly came my *mantra*—I didn't say

it—it was just there! Instantly I became calm and collected—knew exactly what to do. The next morning I was flying back to —, somewhat the poorer, but certainly the wiser.

And finally, and certainly the most important, the growing awareness that I could not possibly fail, for this, of course, I can only humbly thank my *guru*. Again and again, in thought or meditation I would be transported back in time to that moment when, closeted with my *guru*, I received my initiation—it is difficult to put these words on paper, to express this in prosaic, earthly terms, for even as I write this—the very centre within becomes activated and I am suffused with a glow, a paradoxical radiance that is both exuberant and at the same time one of utter contentment. Again and again I am made aware that this momentary flash of realization—partial though it may be—is but a hint of what is, a hint of what will be.

I recall, somewhat later, sitting at your

feet in the living room, and you summed it up for all of us, saying something to the effect that inasmuch as we had reached initiation, we were bound to succeed, somewhere, sometime. Through the grace of the *guru* each of us would achieve realization.

The ritual, the *mantra*, and the *guru* have preserved me in times of stress, and brought me back to the path; now I look to the future, expecting and hoping for deeper realization—secure in the knowledge that the Lord is ever-present. God is!

I do not know what your other disciples who are scattered throughout the world may say to you, I know the only adequate gift one can make to the *guru* is to carry out what he would wish, without his having to ask—and this, Swamiji, I am endeavouring to do. For this moment I would like to be before you so that I might prostrate myself before you, take the dust of your feet, and say, 'Jai Sri Guru Maharaj ji ki jai.'

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## AN EXAMINATION OF ARISTOTLE'S VIEWS ON PROPOSITIONS

SRI R. D. MISRA

Aristotle thinks of a proposition as 'a form of speech which affirms or denies something of something.' (*Prior Analytics*, I, I, 24a, 16f.) In making of a statement, thus, what is asserted is a proposition, and it is to them that the predicates 'true' and 'false' apply, fundamentally. But in order that these words should have application, it is not necessary that any particular sentence should have been written or spoken, nor yet that any statement should have been made previously. Both sentences and clauses, which express propositions, therefore, may be described

as propositional-signs. Aristotle considers, thus, like Plato, both the spoken words and the mental experiences, or thoughts, of which they are said to be symbols. He implies that it is the thoughts to which the predicates *true* and *false* primarily belong, apparently on the ground that while the spoken words are different for different people, the thoughts of which they are copies, are the same for all alike. The truth or falsity of spoken words is, therefore, only derivative.

All propositions, for Aristotle, are divisible into simple and composite. The



simple ones, called 'categorical', either affirm or deny something of something, while composite propositions result from conjoining simples. Further restricting the subject to the treatment of simple propositions, Aristotle recognizes three forms of them: Singular, Particular and Universal. There are, of course, instances where Aristotle did recognize another category of indefinite, or as Hamilton suggests 'indesignate', propositions, which do not have any mark of universality or particularity attached to the subject, e.g. Pleasure is not good. But in practice, throughout the whole systematic exposition of his logic, Aristotle treats them like particulars, without explicitly stating their equivalence. In fact, these propositions are of no importance in his system of logic and it was but right that they should be dropped by latter logicians.

Singular propositions, e.g. 'Nehru was a great politician', are not much discussed by Aristotle, although it would be going too far to say, with Lukasiewicz, that Aristotle does not introduce singulars in his logic and applies it only to universals like 'man' and 'animal'. In the *Prior Analytics*, he regarded it as one of his first tasks to explain the universal proposition in terms of the singular ones. In its last chapter, he gives examples of inferences, including a syllogism, using singular propositions, and he notes in the *De Interpretatione* that the contradictory of a singular proposition is another singular proposition-of 'Socrates is white', 'Socrates is not white'. In the *Categories*, it is said that the relation between the individual thing and the species, to which it belongs, is the same as that between species and a wider genus. On the other hand, he insists that singular terms, by contrast with general ones, can only be subjects, never predicates, and that when they appear to be predicates, as in 'A white man is Socrates', this is only

a rhetorical version. It seems, then, that Aristotle was ambiguous regarding the status of singular propositions, and when his followers interpret him according to their own whims, they only take advantage of their master's ambiguity. (Keynes J. N.: *Formal Logic*, p. 102)

When the subject of a proposition is a general term, the proposition is said to be general. But since in these propositions, the predicate is affirmed or denied either of the whole or of a part of the subject, definiteness of meaning requires that the subject be introduced with a sign of quantity, normally 'Every', 'No' or 'Some'. Propositions introduced by 'Every' or 'No' are said to be Universal, while those introduced by 'Some' are called Particular. The universality or particularity is the quantity of propositions. A combination of this distinction with the distinction already noted, between affirmative and negative, i.e. the quality of propositions, yields a fourfold classification of general propositions. A proposition introduced by 'Every' is Universal Affirmative and one introduced by 'No' is Universal Negative. 'Some X is Y' is a Particular Affirmative and 'Some X is not Y' a Particular Negative. These forms may also be expressed in alternative ways. However, one thing must be noted here that 'Some', as used by Aristotle, means 'at least one'; it neither excludes nor implies more than one, and neither excludes nor implies all. Thus all universal propositions agree in quantity, as also all Particulars; while both are said to differ in quality, and similarly all affirmative propositions agree in quality, so also all negatives, while both differ in quantity.

In the Middle Ages, the Universal and Particular Affirmatives were called A and I propositions, respectively, while the Universal and Particular Negatives were respectively termed as E and O. But, these



are no part of Aristotle's own works. Following Lukasiewicz, we may use here small letters *a*, *b* for term-variables and the traditional letters *A*, *E*, *I*, *O* to indicate the four main operations by which propositions are formed from these. We have thus: 'Aba' for 'Every B is an A', 'Iba' for 'Some B is an A', 'Eba' for 'No B is an A' and 'Oba' for 'Some B is not an A'. Regarding the internal structure of these propositions, Aristotle regarded the following four forms of expression as equivalents. The expressions (i) A is predicated of B, (ii) A belongs to B, (iii) B is A, and (iv) B is in A as in a whole, are used interchangeably in the *Prior Analytics*, although the first one predominates.

Taking pairs of propositions with the same terms in the same order, let us see what inter-relations subsist between these four forms. Such pairs in which the members differ both in quality and quantity—Aba & Oba, Iba & Eba—are called 'contradictories'. Universal Propositions differing in quality—Aba & Eba—are called 'contraries'. Particular Propositions differing in quality—Iba & Oba—are called 'sub-contraries', and propositions of the same quality but opposed in quantity—Aba & Iba, Eba & Oba—are called 'subalterns', the Universal being 'subalternant' to the corresponding Particular and the Particular 'subalternate' to the corresponding Universal. However, the theory of subalternation, although anticipated in his earlier writings, is only a product of Aristotle's later thought, and even there he did not make it very explicit. The figure, commonly called the 'Square of Opposition' is also a discovery of Medieval logic, and it is not to be found in Aristotle's texts.

There has been a long-drawn controversy regarding the existential import of the categorical propositions. Taking Universal Propositions 'All A's are B's' first, if its logical meaning is graphically represented,

we find that there are two possible meanings of this statement. These may be called the wider and the narrower meanings, or to use the modern terminology, Aristotelian and the Boolean meanings. The meaning which this proposition is always supposed to take in Aristotle, is 'All A's are B's and there are A's'. This fact is expressed generally by the statement that the Universal Proposition always implies existence, and thereby a Particular, since the latter are always existential. Indeed, Aristotelian logic can retain the principle of conversion by contraposition only if this rule holds good. In terms of the logic of classes, it means that Aristotelian logic does not work with the notion of 'empty classes'. The Boolean interpretation, on the other hand, is 'All A's are B's and there may or may not be B's'. However, Aristotle's view, that Particular Propositions always imply existence, agrees with the modern view, and his followers have correctly recognized that unless Particular Propositions are made to imply existence, the doctrine that A & O and E & I are contradictories, no longer holds good.

Some of the consequences of Aristotle's views on propositions, considered above, are as follows: (i) It is natural within this theory to regard singular and general propositions as co-ordinate species of a genus. The copula and the predicate have the same function in both the cases and the kinds differ only in the nature of the subject-term. (ii) Every general term is capable of occurring either as a subject or as a predicate, without change of meaning. (iii) The copula has to retain the same meaning in all the four forms of general propositions. (iv) The use of both terms and propositional-variables does not lead to ambiguity or awkwardness. (v) Lastly, all the inferences of Aristotelian system hold good within the system. However, all these implications are not true together, as



may be seen from a consideration of the various possible interpretations of Aristotle's four forms.

Let us examine, first, the nature of propositions. In a proposition, according to Aristotle, we assert a predicate of a subject, and if the predicate can be defined and known what it means, then it cannot be applied to the wrong subject. So the doctrine is, if we look after the predicate or term, the proposition will look after itself. The definable predicates are, therefore, alleged to be necessary pre-suppositions of true propositions. The acquiring of these predicates must be prior to, and independent of, the propositions, otherwise our propositions would be confused and false. Thus the possibility of the proposition is explained at the cost of throwing all the real work in the acquisition of knowledge on to conception. But the truth is that propositions are prior to terms or concepts, and it is only by a series of propositions that we can arrive at clear concepts. All our knowledge is acquired through propositions and giving it just a secondary place does not explain the process of knowledge, without which no logic can proceed. It would imply, moreover, that in inferring through propositions, we do not add anything to what we know before, and, hence, by inference we do not acquire any new knowledge. It is, perhaps, this point which Kant expresses by saying that in Aristotle's logic, propositions are regarded as analytic.

Further, it may be objected, with Russell, that Aristotle has blurred the necessary and clear-cut distinction between the existential and non-existential propositions. The difference between the two forms, e.g. 'Socrates is a man' and 'All Greeks are men', respectively, is that the first cannot be significant unless there is a man called 'Socrates', while the second can be significant even if there are no 'Greeks' and no

'men'. But the second proposition is interpreted by Aristotle as implying that there are Greeks; for without this implication, many of his logical doctrines would not be valid. Now in order to be explicit, the proposition 'All Greeks are men' must be divided into two: one saying that 'There are Greeks' and the other saying that 'If anything is a Greek, it is a man'. The latter statement is purely hypothetical and does not imply that there are Greeks. The proposition that 'All Greeks are men' is, thus, much more complex in form than the statement 'Socrates is a man'. 'Socrates is a man' has 'Socrates' for its subject, but 'All Greeks are men', does not have 'All Greeks' for its subject, for there is nothing about 'All Greeks' either in the statement 'There are Greeks' or in 'If anything is a Greek, it is a man'. However, it may be admitted here that this charge is genuine only if logic is treated to be as purely linguistic. Those who have tried to defend Aristotle on this point, can do so only if logic has to deal both with facts as well as language. But that will simply change the nature and scope of logic, it in no way renders the charge of the modern logicians unjustified. As a supporter of Aristotle himself admits, it may fairly be said that 'Aristotle's logic as a consistent system of procedures is much too limited in its field of operation to be of aid in most of the logical needs of to-day.' (*Philosophical Review* Vol. 56, 1947, pp. 680-81)

But even if logic is considered as dealing with facts, there are some internal discrepancies which Aristotle himself has admitted by implication. In *Sophistic Refutations*, he very explicitly recognizes that there is no real incompatibility between the truth of a rule in general and its falsity in a special case. It is said that there is nothing to prevent a statement from being false in general and yet true in a way or of something, or from being true



in particular but not in general. This pronouncement seems to attest the possibility that the truth, in general, of an A proposition may co-exist with that of an O proposition in a particular case, and so they are not incompatible. In spite of what Ross argues to the contrary, nobody can deny that men may be disposed to particular virtues, without being in general good men; that perishable things need not perish at a particular time; that when one is ill, one may benefit by drugs which would otherwise be harmful; and that to sacrifice one's father may be right among the tribals. (*Mind*, Vol. 23, 1914, p. 397.) It follows, therefore, that a rule, true in general, need not be true under a qualification and, thus, an A proposition, which is true in general, does not exclude the truth of an O proposition in a special case.

Another serious defect of Aristotle's propositional theory is to think that a predicate of a predicate can be a predicate of the original subject. If one says 'Socrates is Greek' and 'All Greeks are human', Aristotle thinks that 'human' is a predicate of 'Greek' while 'Greek' is a predicate of 'Socrates' and, therefore, obviously 'human' is a predicate of 'Socrates'. But, as a matter of fact, 'human' is not a predicate of 'Greek'. There are different levels of predication and Aristotle has not been able to recognize it clearly. He has confused, thus, the distinction between names and predicates and this has led to disastrous consequences in logical sphere. It is only in the modern times that Russell and other formalists have been able to recognize it correctly.

Aristotle interpreted the subject-predicate form of proposition to mean that all

statements are *attributive*, i.e. they assert an attribute of a subject. Now most of the statements are of such a form that they present the attributive form, e.g. 'This flower is red' and so on. But it may seem useless to reduce a statement to attributive form if someone says 'At 6-30 p.m. Miss X lost her balance and fell into the well'. Hence, instead of taking as self-evident, it seems a highly unnatural view. Moreover, there are propositions in which it is difficult to find a subject and a predicate, as in 'It rains', 'It thunders' and so on. Then, there are others in which either term may be made the subject or the predicate, as in the proposition: 'Virtue is the road to happiness'. This example also serves to show that it is sometimes difficult to decide whether a proposition is universal or particular. In a similar way, the quality of some propositions is so dubious that logicians have never been able to argue whether they are affirmative or negative, as in the proposition: 'Whatever is insentient is not animal'.

In the end, as there is one class of categorical propositions which have only two terms, subject and predicate, so there are many classes that have more than two terms. What Aristotle says is applicable only to categorical propositions and to them only the rules concerning conversion, moods and figures of syllogism are accommodated. The fact is that Aristotle has almost completely ignored the importance of relational propositions with their various subdivisions, and this, as recognized by the modern logicians, is the most damaging set-back of his propositional theory.

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## NOTES AND COMMENTS

### IN THIS NUMBER

Dr. S. P. Sengupta, M.A., Ph.D. (London), is the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Head of the Department of English in the University of North Bengal, Raja Rammuhanpur, Darjeeling, West Bengal. As a writer of deep scholarship and sober outlook he has to his credit a number of books on Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda written by him. The present article on 'Sri Ramakrishna: The Wit—1' forms the first section of his another careful and meticulous study on the subject that he has made. The teachings and conversations of Sri Ramakrishna in which, to borrow the words of Aldous Huxley, 'mystical doctrine alternates with an unfamiliar kind of humour' are always profound in depth and sublime in their flights and Dr. Sengupta quite excellently deals with the subject in his article.

Late Dorothy F. Mercer was the member of the Vedanta Society of Southern California, U.S.A. and an initiated disciple of Swami Prabhavananda. A graduate of Oxford and for many years an Instructor of English at San Francisco City College,

she was a scholar, deeply interested in Indian studies. She read Swami Vivekananda assiduously, and was blessed by Swami Trigunatitananda and Swami Abhedananda, the two direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna. Turned towards Vedānta since 1902, she had been keen on her ideal all the while until she passed away in 1962 like the true devotee, that she was. In order to survey the excellence and logicity of Vedānta as a practical religion, she sent out questionnaires to about two hundred members of the Vedanta Societies in U.S.A. and collected first-hand testimonies from the answers sent. The article 'Vedānta Membership in America' which is based on that survey, gives an illuminating account of the potent role of Vedānta in present-day America. We are grateful to Swami Vidyatmananda of the Centre Vedantique Ramakrishna, Gretz, Paris, France, for kindly making the article available to us.

In his article 'An Examination of Aristotle's Views on Propositions', Sri R. D. Misra, M.A., U.G.C. Research Fellow, Department of Philosophy, Lucknow University, makes a critical analysis of the Proposition Theory of Aristotle.

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## REVIEWS AND NOTICES

**GANDHIJI'S FIRST STRUGGLE IN INDIA.**  
By P. C. RAY CHAUDHURY. Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad 14. Pages 203. Price Rs. 2.

Here is a lucid, well-connected account of the events that drew Gandhiji to the Champaran district of Bihar to fight the oppressive tyranny of the planters over the utterly helpless tenants, forced to grow indigo, much against their will, in the interest of their European, mostly English, bosses. A number

of illegal exactions were made from the ryots on some pretext or other by the whole hierarchy of the feudal structure. The account of the depredations reads like a horror story. If the administration joins hands with the capitalists in exploiting the masses, incredible inhuman oppression and tyranny could be inflicted on the people to squeeze their blood to provide comforts for the aristocracy.

The struggle that Gandhiji carried on in 1917 in



the Champaran district to liberate the tenants from the jaws of the indigo planters is of momentous historical significance. It was an excellent experiment in the application of the technique of non-violent fighting. Gandhiji responded to the challenge of the situation with the brave heart of a hero, when abject helplessness characterized the behaviour of not only the ignorant masses but also of the educated and the affluent classes.

The author has done a good job, indeed, in digging out of obscurity the original records in connexion with the story of Champaran struggle to build up a cogent and coherent historical account of the evolution of the struggle. Those who wish to learn what 'satyāgraha' can achieve in the worst ever possible situation of tyranny and oppression may go through this book with profit. Gandhiji's correspondence with the officials, drunk with power brings to light the approach of a great genius to an extraordinarily difficult political, economic, and social situation. This would be of immense value to those that are engaged in putting through any social action in the teeth of the opposition of the vested interests. The book is thus of great value to all those interested in the fight for freedom from tyranny.

H. G. KULKARNI

**THE IDEALIST STANDPOINT—A STUDY IN THE VEDANTIC METAPHYSIC OF EXPERIENCE.** BY DR. DEBABRATA SINHA, M.A., D.Phil. Centre of Advance Study in Philosophy, Visva-Bharati. 1965. Pages 180. Price Rs. 12.

Originally presented as the thesis for the doctorate degree in Philosophy, it has now been published in the form of a book with the necessary additions and alterations. The eight chapters of the book are divided into three parts, the first dealing with the 'Notion and Status of *Cit* as Subjectivity' (chapters one to four), the second with 'Vedanta phenomenology' (chapters five and six) and the last with 'Beyond Phenomenology' (chapters seven and eight). A 'Note in Retrospect' coming at the end gives a succinct and clear summary of the main theme of the treatise. There are two appendices, the first containing a select bibliography of Sanskrit works and the second a 'Note on Phenomenology'. There is a useful index at the end.

The author believes, and rightly, that 'the older systems of thought must undergo the process of being reintegrated to the living currents of present-day thinking'. With this end in view he has instituted comparisons between Advaita subjectivity as pure *Cit* with the notions of Kant, Hegel, Husserl, Alexander and Kierkegaard. The comparisons are

illuminating and throw into bold relief the logical consistency of the Advaitic standpoint. The comparisons with other systems of Indian thought such as Buddhism, Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, Sāṃkhya, the two schools of Mīmāṃsā and Viśiṣṭādvaita are also very helpful in arriving at a clear appreciation of the essential Advaitic doctrine that consciousness which is the basic underlying reality implicit in all experience is the very essence of the self and not its attribute or property.

To reach this conclusion the author has adopted the method of 'critical reflection' which consists in eliminating all that is adventitious in a given experience and laying bare the foundational principle which cannot be doubted, denied or otherwise explained away. This line of transcendental analysis brings to our view that *Cit* or Pure Consciousness is the ultimate rock of certitude. It is not possible to go behind it. All the states of the mind known as the *vṛttis* are illumined by it. In deep sleep when the mind is quiescent and consequently there are no particular experiences, consciousness does not get extinguished but continues to shine and shows that there is nothing to light us excepting the mass of ignorance which is known as the causal sheath (*kāraṇa śarīra*). In *samādhi* it emerges in its present form and shines supreme as Absolute Consciousness (*Akhaṇḍa Caitanya*).

In the third part of the book, the author develops the transition from *Cit* as the subjective principle involved in every state of experience to *Sat* or Brahman which is the sole reality. By a careful analysis the author shows that knowing merges in Being, that epistemology finds its fulfilment in Ontology. *Cit* or Consciousness, which is established in the first two parts of the book as the basic principle involved in knowing, feeling and willing, is also the ultimate Brahman or Being. Brahman is therefore to be sought not anywhere in the objective world but within the depths of our being. It is, therefore, not only the infinitely real but also the immediately real. This is the most characteristic feature of Śaṅkara's Advaita which is known as Ātmādvaita as distinct from Sattādvaita of other thinkers, especially of Bhartruhari. References to Post-Śaṅkara Advaitic works like *Bhāmatī*, *Pancapādikā*, *Vivaraṇa* and *Cītsukhī* throw additional light on Śaṅkara's main thesis.

It is a very useful book and advanced students in philosophy will derive much benefit from it. From the standpoint of the general reader however one could wish that the presentation had been less ridden with technicalities and made a little more intelligible.

M. K. VENKATARAMA IYER



## BENGALI

SRIMAD BHAGAVAD GĪTĀ. BY SRI AMULPADA CHATTOPADHYAYA. PUBLISHED AT 14/3C BALARAM BASU GHAT ROAD, CALCUTTA-25. 1964 (Bengali year 1371). Pages 621. Price Rs. 5.

This Bengali edition of Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā with a detailed preface of 22 pages, contents of ślokas running to 16 pages, a detailed index in the end according to subjects and text with explanation running to 621 pages is in many ways a remarkable work and extremely readable.

Every verse (śloka) is first stated. Then follows its meaning. Finally explanation and elucidation with reference to similar thoughts and ideas found in

other important religious books. The work is, thus, sufficiently scholarly, and reading this book will add to the knowledge of the most scholarly persons.

However, it is much to be hoped that in the future editions of this valuable work the get-up should be far better. We also think that the value of the work shall be immensely increased if the author mentions in detail (giving the number of ślokas etc.) the verses from our Śāstras that he has cited in way of explanation.

We congratulate the author on producing such a useful work and recommend it to the public wholeheartedly.

DR. P. N. MUKHERJEE

## NEWS AND REPORTS

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION HOME OF SERVICE  
VARANASI

## REPORT FOR 1963-64

The activities of the Sevashrama during the year under review were as follows:

*Indoor General Hospital:* Total number of cases admitted during the year: 2,281; cured and discharged: 1,842; relieved: 140; discharged otherwise: 104; died: 92; remained at the end of the year: 103. Total number of surgical cases: 632. Total number of ghat and roadside cases: 20. Daily average number of beds occupied: 87.

*Out-patients' Department:* Total number of new patients treated in this department (including the Shivala Branch): 58,636; repeated cases: 1,76,294. Daily average attendance: 644. Total number of surgical cases (including injections): 42,266.

*Pathological Laboratory:* Specimens examined: (1) General Clinical Pathology: blood: 2,231; kala azar: 42; microfilaria: 104; B.T., C.T.: 84; urine 1,815; stool: 2,360; E.S.R. 751; sputum: 189; malaria: 174; (2) Haematology: 11; (3) Bacteriological: 484; (4) Bio-chemical: 368; (5) Miscellaneous: 76.

*X-ray and Electro-therapy Department:* Number of cases examined in the X-ray department during the year: chest: 1,161; bone: 271; barium meal: 38; fluoroscopy: 107; urinary bladder: 18; cholecy-

stography and pilography: 8; gall bladder: 2; short wave: 13; ultra-violet ray: 24.

*Refuge for Aged and Invalid Men and Women:* This refuge is meant for poor invalids starving in the city. Though it has a capacity to accommodate 25 men and 50 women, it was possible to maintain only 12 men and 23 women invalids during the year for want of funds.

*Outdoor Relief to Poor Invalids and Helpless Ladies:* Under this head, 107 persons received monthly pecuniary help, and the total expenditure came to Rs. 2,794.02.

*Special and Occasional Relief:* Help in the shape of food or cash relief was given to 105 stranded travellers; total expenditure: Rs. 398.50. Besides these, 89 cotton blankets were distributed.

*Milk Canteen:* In the outdoor department, milk prepared from milk powder was distributed daily, on an average, to 503 children, nursing and expectant mothers, and the sick and aged invalids, for one and a half months. The total quantity distributed: 1,124 lb. of milk powder.

*Holy Mother Centenary Memorial Fund:* The income of Rs. 231, accrued from this fund, was utilized for distributing prizes in essay competition, purchasing books for the library, and for supplying books to poor school-going children. As many as 470 books were distributed among 104 poor students.

## CORRIGENDA

## MARCH '66 NUMBER

Page 88: Column 2: Line 34: read 'Mysore' for 'Hyderabad'.

Page 116: Column 1: Lines 16, 32, and 40: read 'mouths' for 'months'.