

**VOL. LXXIII**

**MAY 1968**

# **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

MAY 1968

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# PRABUDDHA BHARATA

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# PRABUDDHA BHARATA

Vol. LXXIII

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No. 5



उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत

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

—:o:—

LETTERS OF SWAMI SHIVANANDA

( 142 )

Godavari House  
Ootakamund, Madras  
31 August 1926

Dear Sriman —,

Your letter of 25.8. reached me duly. I received the earlier letter too. I know that you will get the answer to your question right from within you. He, by whose will and inspiration I have initiated you into His name, will verily let you have your answer through the flash in your heart. He is the indwelling Consciousness of your heart :

*Īśvaraḥ sarvabhūtānāṃ hṛddeśe'arjuna tiṣṭhati,*

*Bhrāmayan sarvabhūtāni yantrārūḍhāni māyayā.*

—'The Lord, O Arjuna, dwells in the hearts of all beings, causing all beings, by His Māyā, to revolve (as if) mounted on a machine.' The Master is that Lord who, by dwelling within your heart, is guiding you through that very Māyā. You only pray to him : 'O Lord you are verily my indwelling Self and you are guiding me by your very Māyā. But O Lord my prayer is this : "You have two forms of your Māyā—the *vidyā-māyā* and the *avidyā-māyā*. Lord, have mercy on me and guide me through your *vidyā-māyā*.'" Pray to him this way fervently. After this, chant His holy name and meditate on Him in your heart. Thereafter, do according as He directs your intelligence. Never He fails his devotee or guides him in the wrong path. Know it for



certain. Send your prayerful earnestness to the Master, the Lord of your heart in that very sincerity with which you write letters to me. That very Lord dwells within me and I am telling or writing you that which He is directing me to tell or write. Be sure about this. Only by doing this way that you can be led to the right path through His grace. What to write you more? This is the secret. My heart-felt love and blessings to you.

By His will my health goes well now. I may most possibly go to Bangalore after two weeks. There is no fear for you. The Master will let you have the right guidance. There is nothing wrong which you have done to me. It is to your own self that you have done wrong; for you do not pray to the Master. As a child petulantly seeks something dear from his father or mother, insists on it and cries for it, so you are to pray to the Master with a fervent heart for faith, devotion and compassion. Pray to Him with a distressed heart so that you may know the art of living in this world unattached. Pray this way for some days and then do according to the direction that you feel within you. Never you will be misguided, if you do things this way. You will surely feel His power with'in you.

The relation that persists between you and me is spiritual—not a human one. You should know it for certain. All relations centre round the Master. He is God in human form, the incarnation for this age. He is full of divine grace that knows no discrimination; He is the kindest of the kind, most compassionate of the compassionate and most affectionate of the affectionate. He wants only the love of heart. It is very difficult to attain to Him by any other thing. Verily for this, I have mentioned that He is the Lord of your heart, the Self of your self.

Your well-wisher,  
Shivananda

---

“Men as spiritual guides can be had by hundreds of thousands, but it is hard to get a single disciple,”—is an ancient saying. Many are the persons who can give good advice, but few there are who care to follow it.

—Sri Ramakrishna

# AN UNPUBLISHED LETTER OF SWAMI AKHANDANANDA

[Swami Akhandananda was one of the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna. His present letter, found among his old papers, gives a graphic description of *An Ardha Kumbha Melā* which he visited. The letter has been made available to us by Swami Niramayananda, Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission, Cherrapunji. Assam.—Ed.]

18 George Town,  
Allahabad  
18.2.1924

My Dear Swami Atulananda,

I have information from Sriman Suddhananda that you are at Kankhal now. I hope you are keeping good health.

From Calcutta I came to Benares in company of a *bhakta* family, the grandsons of the Rānī of Puthia. But I am sorry to say that though I stayed there for about four months, the place did not suit me so well. About a month ago, I came upto Allahabad in their company and have been feeling much better here. During the (*Ardha*) *Kumbha Melā* [vast assemblies of *sādhus* which occur once in every twelve years] held here of late, we went to the Triveni banks at the confluence of the Jamuna and the Gaṅgā and lived there in a tent for about a week. In this *Melā*, *sādhus* of various sects and grade assembled to the extent of seven to eight thousand in number for bath on the three auspicious days, viz., *Pauṣ-saṅkranti*, *Amāvasyā*, and *Śrī Pañcamī*. On these days the *sādhus* went to have their bath in processions. Their *jhaṇḍas* or distinctive flags were borne on elephants, the *maṇḍaleśwars* [Spiritual heads or leaders of groups of ascetics] and *mohants* [Abbots of monasteries] following in palanquins. The Paramahansa *sādhus* and Nāgās walked on foot in a well-disciplined order. The Nāgās were stark-naked, others had a *geruā* dress. Bands and bag-pipes accompanied their march. I had never been at any other *Kumbha Melā* [vast assemblies of *sādhus*, which occur once in every twelve years at Hardwar, at Allahabad, Nasik and Ujjain] before this and was greatly impressed with the sight.

I visited the different Ākhārās [centres of the *sādhus*] in which they gathered and was much pleased at hearing from some *sādhus* of our Mission about the hospitality and liberality of *sādhus* in general. It grieved me greatly, however, to find that our Mission was conspicuous by its absence in this great assembly of the *sannyāsins*. Swami Vijnanananda with a paltry sum of Rupees two hundred only opened a small outdoor dispensary there but it could not provide shelter even to the handful of *sādhus* of our Mission who had come to have a bath on this auspicious occasion. Our *sādhus* had to take shelter either in the Nirvāṇī Ākhārā or somewhere else.

When I was at Udaipur about the year 1895, I lived for some days with a party of Nāgās [naked ascetics] who were spending their *cāturmāsya* [vow observed by the wandering ascetics during the four months of the rainy season] there. Their *mohant* was a man who had a little education, but Nāgās



were quite illiterate and bigoted. But their general good behaviour and strict discipline made a good impression upon my mind. A very funny thing happened one day. As I sat conversing by the side of a Nāgā, suddenly he turned to me and asked, 'Maharaj, can you tell me who rules over 'Laṅkā' (Ceylon) now?' I said, 'Yes, the English people.' 'The English? impossible! Vibhikhan rules over it', said the Nāgā. 'Why?' I replied, 'if it be possible for the English to rule over the place where Rāmacandrajī reigned, how do you think it to be impossible for them to rule over Laṅkā where Vibhikhan reigned?' At this he said, 'No, it cannot be so. But you, who wear the dress of a 'Paramahansa', how do you dare to speak like a heretic?' As he uttered these words his looks became so fierce that I thought it wise to drop the matter altogether. After a while as I went to the *mohant*, he remarked, 'Have you seen, Maharaj, how illiterate and bigoted these people are?' I then asked, 'Why don't you give them a little education?' To this he replied in a sorrowful tone that the learned 'Paramahansa' *sannyāsins* who are their *gurus* look down upon them for their illiteracy and do not like to mix with them, what to speak of taking any trouble for their education. About this I wrote a long letter to Swamiji [Swami Vivekananda] who was then in America. He, in reply, wrote a very encouraging letter regarding my plan of work for the regeneration of the Nāgās. But our Lord willing otherwise, I went to work amongst the poor at Sargachi, and was so engrossed with the work there that for about twenty-five years I could take no notice of the outer world.

In this connexion, I cannot omit to tell you of a sad incident that took place in the recent *melā*. It has helped to open my eyes still wider to the dire necessity of preaching amongst these *sādhus* the great gospel of our Lord about the reality and tolerance of all religious faiths. A certain *bhakta* brought a cart-load of logs of wood for distribution among the *sādhus*. He took his stand in front of the Nirañjanī Ākhārā. A few Vaiṣṇavas came to the place eager to take wood from the cart. At this an altercation ensued between the Vaiṣṇavas and some Udāsī Nāgās. The devil of sectarianism soon woke up in their hearts and the Vaiṣṇavas in a large number invaded the Daśnāmī [ten orders or classes of monks] Ākhārās where the Udāsīs had taken shelter. They began to beat the inmates pell-mell, and ultimately set fire to their huts and tents. The Nirvāṇī and the Aṭal Ākhārās' loss by this fire amounted, as I hear, to about one and a half lakhs of rupees in property and cash. What a sad incident over a trifling thing in this age of our Lord's gospel of universal tolerance!

*Sādhus* in India count many lakhs. They have *maths* all over the country. The income of these *maths*, put together, comes to about twenty crore rupees or so. What a great potent force this country has in these *sādhus* and in these religious endowments of India! Should we any longer remain idle and not exert ourselves to find a proper channel of expression for these? The *mohants* of these *maths* some of whom possess princely income should be invited to the next *melā*. They should be so influenced that the religious endowments, of which they are practically the masters, would be utilized for the good of the country. Each *math* should be made an institution to support

a fixed number of Nāgās and arrange for their education. That education may be in the cult of the sect to which the *math* belongs, only with the super-added idea of universal tolerance in it. These Nāgās should go out and serve the country when it is in the throes of famine and pestilence. A portion of the income of the *mohants* should also be set apart for this purpose.

Our Lord was an incarnation of universal tolerance, purity, self-denial and mercy. Some of his beloved sons have still been left here to work out his gospel among these who are steeped in ignorance and bigotry. These *sādhus* have a very sound ground-work of self-denial and discipline. The dross they have in them should be driven out by infusing in them the ideal of our Great Master.

The bright thoughts that found an encouraging echo from our beloved Swamiji overseas are returning to me with great vigour and are stinging me to the quick. Great visions are floating before my eyes and are inspiring me to work them out. Hitherto we have confined our activities to the services of the poverty-stricken and benighted house-holders, but the banner of the Lord has not yet been taken into the fold of the *sādhus*—those who have renounced their all in search of God—the beloved sons of the Lord. With them our relationship is still deeper and real. ....

An idea has taken firm possession of my mind for launching the banner of our Lord in the next *melā* with greater grandeur and paraphernalia than those great Ākhārās of Nirvāṇī, Aṭal, Nirañjanī, Junā, Nirmala, Udāsīs and Vaiṣṇavas have hitherto shown. The next *Purṇa Kumbha* takes place at Hardwar just three years hence. We should prepare ourselves for it even from now. There is no time to lose. Our programme is a long and arduous one. It will require more than a lakh of rupees to work it out. We shall assemble there in full strength. *Sādhus* and *brahmacārins* from all our Ashramas [centres] should go there. *Bhaktas* from all parts should throng at the *melā*. We should open a big Sevashrama hospital and dispensary and also have a big Ākhārā of our own. In the centre of it on a large and high platform there shall stand a big sized photo of our Lord surrounded by the pictures of all the great teachers of religion hitherto born. By His side shall stand Śrī Gourāṅga, Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, Madhva, Nimbārka, Nānaka, Dādu, Buddha, Christ and others. All should be worshipped daily and have lights waved and incense burnt before them. We shall have a banner indicating unity of all religions. That banner should not be inferior to any in grandeur and workmanship. In the surrounding tents and huts should be housed our *sādhus* and *brahmacārins*, *bhaktas* from all parts, pundits and *sevakas*. Our *bhaktas* would include the orthodox Brahmins of Madras as well as the Europeans coming from overseas. Of course they would be housed separately. we should lavishly spend money in giving *bhaṇḍārās* [feasts] to *sādhus* of all shades and grades always serving them with great humility and sweetness. Was not our Master an incarnation of humility ready to serve the great and the low in equal terms? As for me, if I be spared these three years and be present at the coming *melā*, I should like to wash the feet of the roughest Nāgā with my own hands. The great role our beloved Swamiji played in



the great Parliament of Religions at Chicago, would be enacted again at Hardwar. This time our Lord shall burst upon the *sādhū*-world with all His grandeur and power. They shall know and feel His greatness and be a helping hand to spread His good influence amongst themselves and the outside world.

When we were young, we used to hear long stories about how the Nāgās of different sects fought with each other for precedence in procession. We heard there were numerous casualties in these sectarian struggles for supremacy. The Arms Act was not so rigid in those days and it was quite possible for such events to happen. But since it was decided at Ujjain the order in which the different Ākhārās should march to take their bath on such occasions, we hear no more about it. We thought the Nāgās had forgotten all about their former quarrels and the devil of fanaticism had died an eternal death. But lo! what a sad event took place in the recent *melā* over a trifling matter! The devil is not dead yet but lurks in their heart of hearts.

A certain gentleman had brought a cart-load of logs for *dhuni* [sacred fire] for distribution among the *sādhūs*. He took his stand in front of the Nirañjanī Ākhārā. The Udāsīs of the Nirmala Ākhārā and the Daśnāmī Nāgās whose Ākhārās stood side by side were taking wood from it. A few Vaiṣṇava Nāgās came to the spot and were eager to take wood from it. The gentleman mildly protested to the unseemly hastiness of the Vaiṣṇavas telling them that the cart would be taken to their quarters as well. To this Udāsīs also joined their voice. On this a sharp altercation ensued between the Udāsīs and the Vaiṣṇava Nāgās. The Vaiṣṇavas went back to their tents in an angry mood, but returned in a few minutes in a large number. The Udāsīs, finding what was the intention of the Vaiṣṇavas in coming back and in such a large number quickly hid themselves in the Nirañjanī and the adjoining Daśnāmī Ākhārās. The rage of the Vaiṣṇavas was not to be softened and they entered those Ākhārās in search of Udāsīs. The Daśnāmī Nāgās protested against such improper and unlawful act of theirs. At this the Vaiṣṇavas fell foul upon all *sādhūs* of the Nirañjanī Ākhārā and began to beat them right and left in a pell-mell manner, entered their kitchen and after setting fire to the huts and tents fled. The fire spread from hut to hut and tent to tent and was not quenched till it had burnt down the whole of the Aṭal and part of the Nirañjanī Ākhārā and the adjoining police *chowki* [station]. We have heard there were a few casualties in this fight and the loss due to fire was immense.

Now, to what cause can we ascribe this fight but to the old devil of fanaticism—intense hatred of these sects for each other. That such sectarian enmity should exist in this land of ours and among the *sādhūs* when gospel of reality of all religions preached by our Lord had been proclaimed by our most beloved Swamiji to the distant land overseas, is a matter for great regret no doubt. The reason is not far to seek. The Nāgās are all illiterate people and keep little information about this world-moving dispensation . . . .

Yours etc.,  
Akhandananda

# PERSONALITY OF A PERSON

[ EDITORIAL ]

*The Basic Questions:* The personality is that by which an individual becomes a person. It is by this that one makes immense impression upon others. The charisma of a political leader, the influence of a public speaker, the image of a statesman, the power of a saint's teaching—all spring from this personality, the mysterious basic element that operates on the psychophysical plane. The personality of a person is the root of his success or failure in life. To define personality in precise terms is always a difficult task and nobody knows what its exact nature is. Yet, it is the concern of all men the world over. Volumes have been written and read on the art and science of personality-development; methods and means have been evolved and popularized to promote the personality of a person. 'There are now at least nine firms in Europe and America', writes one correspondent in a recent review, 'which specialize in what they term "image-promotional apparatus" for politicians and public speakers.' An electronic expert is an indispensable part of the staff of any important political leader or statesman who wants to impress his image upon the public. The U.S. President, for example, uses a parabolic microphone when he gives his press conference on any important national or international issue. This overhead microphone, which is like a white canopy, is the latest device of the electronic experts to ensure that regardless of what the President says, his voice can always be heard in most impressive conditions. Also added to this, there is a specially designed rostrum that contains a prompter which unwinds the speech on a paper tape to help the President when he speaks. The French President uses a

similar specially-built rostrum to make his voice impressive and speech convincing. Sir Winston Churchill, in order to impress his speech upon his listeners, used to have notes of pet phrases and paragraph headings. The Russian Premier, whenever he makes a major speech, would like to hold his notes before him in a large leather folder. During election tours, the leaders in Europe and America today use designed rostrums and desks having volume control devices which they can employ to counteract the disturbances of the hecklers. Modern television studios have their concealed lighting methods that can promote the image of a person by skilfully counteracting any unflattering shadow or depressing glare which may fall upon him. To make the personality impressive people would dress themselves elegantly, don different masks, chatter gaily, make gestures or postures and display social graces as they command. They take lessons, undergo training and comply with various codes of conduct and behaviour while they deal with others. The personality is thus a vital concern for everybody, whether he is a guest or a host, an employer or an employee, a leader or a speaker. Does personality then depend upon dress and appearance of a person and his mannerisms? Is it something that is extraneous like a mask which a person wears and which can be changed at will, improved by ingenuities and promoted according to the needs? How does a person build and develop his personality? Answers to these questions lie, perhaps, in the study of the structure of the human personality in its various component parts.

*Analysis of the Structure:* The study of the various aspects of the personality of



man has been the major preoccupation of modern psychology and physiology and it would be interesting to observe what they posit. Webster defines personality as 'the totality of an individual's characteristics', that is, all the entities that form the structure of a person, just as the aggregate of all persons makes the entire humanity. But the science of modern psychology looks upon personality as a specific faculty of psychological chain connexions and characteristics. So Karl Jaspers describes this as 'the individually differing and characteristic totality of meaningful connexions in one psychic life'. The word 'person' comes from the Latin word '*persona*'— a term that was originally meant to signify a mask worn by an actor in a drama in which the same individual could play different roles by wearing different masks on different occasions. From this, it becomes apparent that Jasper's 'meaningful connexions', though they differ from one another, remain rooted in the same person as a cluster of experiences forming an organic mass, as it were, and react as a whole. Just as the body, which is made up of different parts, reacts as a whole to any external stimulus, so does the personality of a person respond and react as a whole in every action and it is no more justifiable to hold any part of the personality responsible for any action than it is to hold the tongue responsible for telling a lie. Personality thus appears to be essentially a multiple psychological structure held together by the tensions of many opposing forces and contradictory tendencies that give it a form and make it flexible. Freud, while formulating his personality theory, makes a threefold division of the human personality. The first, according to him, is the *id* which consists of the blind impulses that are rooted in the biological structure of the organism. This he de-

scribes as 'a cauldron of seething excitement' lying deep down in the unconscious. The second part is the *ego* or the rational part. Compared to the wilderness of the tensions prevailing in the first part, this second part is far too weak to extend its control over the first. So he postulates a third part, the *superego*, which he identifies with the voice of the society. This *superego* operates through the second part, the *ego* and disciplines the *id*. This *superego* or the voice of the society acts as a conscience in every man, guides him in his dealings with others and makes him sacrifice his individual characteristics to social conformity. Personality, as has been defined by the Western psychologists, is the social self of a person. Through this social self, the individual plays the different roles as prescribed by the society and grows and develops according to the beliefs, values, ideals and the morals of the society. The structure of this social self is basically psychological and it is made up of several parts the most important of which is character. Character and personality, according to this view, are not always one and the same thing. Character sets the behaviouristic pattern of the actions of a person and his reactions to different situations in life and the personality is a product which emerges out of the integration of all such actions and reactions. Thus, a person may have a lot of character but little personality or to speak the reverse, lot of personality but little character. This character, according to the psychologists, is an endowment that one inherits from the heredity and it rarely changes. The word 'character' derives its meaning from the Arabic word *kharat* which signifies 'to sculpture' and this also describes the immutable nature of a person's character. So, the personality of a person, too, cannot be changed. The social roles that one plays may be different and diverse



but the nature of the individual playing in each case will remain the same. Techniques and means, instruments and apparatus, elegance of language and grace of mannerism then do not and cannot improve the image of a person. These only add a new polish to it, offset the deficiencies and make it more conformable to the social eye.

Modern physiological researches describe human personality as a structure built on a complex scaffolding consisting of endocrine - pituitary - hypothalamus - adrenal chain, heredity, environment, intelligence quotient, morphology and the vegetative, visceral and motor reactions of the central nervous system. The link that connects the physical and psychic sector of a person is the endocrine-neurovegetative axis which governs our thoughts and determines the mode of the motor reactions in each person to the parade of the stimuli stemming from different directions. It is this axis that explains the strong mental reactions of the hyperthyroids or the slow mental actions of the hypothyroids. It makes one person strong and robust and another, frail and weak. Physiologically speaking, the personality of a person is a psychic structure which is governed by a physiological system inherited from heredity. It is, to echo the words of a noted Western thinker, 'a structure or structural system, in a series of enumerable determinate "properties" that can be expressed in words and that manifest a determined behaviour'.

Is it then so that the personality of a person is a freak of the past which is tied down to the wheels of certain predetermined Freudian psychology always prone to obey the dictates of certain animal instincts or a product of the endocrine-pituitary-hypothalamus axis that is guided by certain blind biological actions and reactions? To tell this is to tell but half

the truth. Psychology or physiology does not encompass all true knowledge but only psychological or physiological knowledge and one need not stop short where psychology or physiology ends. A person is not merely a social being whose self emerges as a social product and his personality is not simply a bundle of some actions and reactions in a given medium at a fixed period of time. Beyond his roles in the society, he is also a spiritual being—a line, as St. Thomas would say, where heaven and earth lose their boundaries and merge their qualities. 'There is a divinity', says Shakespeare, 'that shapes our ends.' To be a person is to be more than an individual and to have a real personality is to grow in spirituality. It is about this spiritual dimension of a person that Eckhart speaks, when in his *Fragments* he writes :

That I am a man  
this I share with other men.  
That I see and hear and  
that I eat and drink  
is what all animals do likewise.  
But that I am I is only mine  
and belongs to me  
and to nobody else.

Goethe's remark 'Two souls, alas! reside within my breast' also hints at this spiritual being within a person. So Somerset Maugham wonders and asks :

'There are times when I look over the various parts of my character with perplexity. I recognize that I am made up of several persons and that the person which at the moment has the upperhand will inevitably give place to another. But which is the real me? All of them or none?' (*A Writer's Notebook*, 1949, p. 23)

Every study of the personality of a person will always be a half-told story, if we fail to take notice of this ultimate scaffolding of spirit upon which all the other struc-



tures—material, mental, physiological and psychological, stand. This is what Vedānta says in this context.

Personality of a person, according to Vedānta, is the projection of the character, the invisible power that radiates from the mind. It is the real person who steals a march upon other minds. Dress, equipage and manners; words, thoughts, and wits are but shadows and echoes of that mysterious power of character that leaves traces behind by its actions and reactions. It is like the elusive flame that leaps and moves in the background of a glowing fire. And the secret of character remains hidden in the mind. It is no sagacity that likes to pretend but an intuitive faculty which skims the core of things, becomes infused into design without any conscious effort and envelops its surrounding unnoticed. But, then, what is the basic ingredient of the mind that can build such an entity like character which wields the magic power of personality? According to Vedānta, it is just the sum total of the impressions or tendencies of the past treasured up in a cluster and called out by the occasions. A person is a tool in the hands of this mass of accumulated tendencies. He is what his tendencies are. If anybody is good at the present moment, it is because he cannot help it. Likewise, if anybody is bad, it is because he cannot help it. What we know to be our mind is only its luminous conscious part. The rest consisting of the millions of our sunken thoughts remains submerged, as it were, as the dark unconscious mind which unconsciously influences our body, mind and personality. These millions of sunken impressions hawk millions of tendencies, good and bad, as shopmen and barkers tease us to buy goods. One instance in *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (p. 585) describes how powerful these sunken thoughts can be :

‘A prince had, in a previous birth, been the son of a washerman. While playing with his chums in his incarnation as the prince, he said to them : “Stop those games. I will show you a new one. I shall lie on my belly, and you will beat the clothes on my back as the washerman does, making a swishing sound.”’

Here the tendencies that were stored up in the unconscious part of the mind of the prince produced certain automatic behaviour over which he had no control. Thus the structure of the mind shapes the structure of the character as well as its outward projection, the personality and, to a large extent, determines the structure of even the physical frame too. But mind, in Vedānta, is not the ultimate scaffolding. This also is a superstructure that rests on the foundation of the soul. This soul, which is the real in a person, stands surrounded by the accretions of mind and body. The working of the endocrine-pituitary-adrenal axis, the vibrations of the mind bursting forth into our actions and behaviours, likes and dislikes, hopes and courage, are but echoes of that soul—the reservoir of infinite power, purity, potentiality and possibility. When Eckhart speaks of ‘I’, he means this soul within him. The two opposing forces that torment and tear Goethe’s breast are but the opposing tensions of the good and the evil tendencies of his own mind. When Maugham sees his character divided into several parts, he only describes the display of the accretions of his own tendencies upon his soul, which is the only real in him.

By postulating soul behind our psychic being, Vedānta adds a new dimension to our personality structure. A new folding door of a great possibility is thrown open by this. It is this conception of the soul that makes a real difference between

Western and Eastern thoughts on psychology. For the Western psychologists, the mind is the soul and, therefore, the mind, whose predetermined nature makes us good or bad, can never change. If it changes, it contradicts itself; it cannot be the nature. The animal that lurks in the darkness of the unconscious mind never transforms itself. Only it remains restrained by the whip of a Freudian *super-ego*. Vedānta, on the other hand, says that the nature of the soul is divine. And this divinity is the law for every human being. For, the evolution of a life, according to Vedānta, is a continuous struggle to regain the equipose of that purity and divinity from which it has been thrown off, we do not know when and how. Personality of a person depends upon the extent of that power of the soul which he manifests. In this context here, Patañjali, the great Indian sage, gives the celebrated analogy of the cultivator bringing water into his field from a huge tank somewhere :

‘The tank is already filled and the water would flood his land in a moment, only there is a mud-wall between the tank and his field. As soon as the barrier is broken, in rushes the water out of its own power and force. The mass of power, purity and perfection is in the soul already. The only difference is the *āvaraṇa* this veil—that has been cast over it. Once the veil is removed the soul attains to purity, and its powers become manifest.’ (*The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. III, p. 335)

This barrier or the veil does not develop in a single day. Neither does it grow out of its own accord. It is the accumulation of a long forgotten past and it is there because the person has made it a part of him. The prodding of the good and evil that one feels today is the momentum of his own thoughts which he once embellish-

ed and nurtured in the past. But the mind that can create barrier can also wield power to break the same. And this, as the Vedānta says, it can do at its choice and ease. By one’s intense self-effort, one can build one’s character and develop one’s personality, no matter what one inherits from the past. Through intense thoughts, one can even shorten the evolution of many lives in one single life and reach the desired goal. The difference between an amoeba and a Buddha, what Vedānta would say, is the difference in the degrees of evolution. One is the evolved Buddha and the other is the involved amoeba.

That the powers of thought decompose and recompose our personality with the help of intense desires can be illustrated by evidences from the lives of the saints and God-men. One is amazed to study the bodily changes that came upon Sri Ramakrishna under the influence of strong spiritual emotions on several occasions. The author of *Sri Ramakrishna The Great Master* describes the details in the following words :

Once, ‘blood oozed out from every pore of the Master’s body on account of the extreme anguish arising from the sense of separation from Śrī Kṛṣṇa. It happened at that time, in the ultimate stage of the *Mahābhāva*. He became so much absorbed in the constant thought of himself as a woman, that he could not look upon himself as one of the other sex even in a dream. His body and senses acted naturally like those of a woman.’ (p. 242)

In another chapter of the same book, he records how Sri Ramakrishna attained a different bodily change :

‘Knowing that with the help of devotion, it was possible to have, like Mahāvīr, the vision of Śrī Rāmacandra, he became engaged in *sādhana* by assuming Mahāvīr’s attitude for himself



for the purpose of attaining perfection in the *dāsya-bhāva*. The Master said that, thinking of Mahāvīr incessantly at that time, he became so much absorbed that he forgot altogether for some time his separate existence and individuality. "At that time", said the Master, "I had to walk, take my food and do all other actions like Mahāvīr. I did not do so of my own accord, but they so happened of themselves. I tied my wearing cloth round my waist so that it might look like a tail and walked jumping; I ate nothing but fruits and roots, which again I did not feel inclined to eat when skinned. I spent much of my time on trees and always cried, 'Raghuvīr, Raghuvīr', with a deep voice. Both my eyes assumed a restless expression like those of the animals of that species, and it is marvellous that the lower end of the backbone lengthened at that time by nearly an inch." When we heard the last mentioned fact, we asked, "Sir, does that part of your body continue to be so even now?" He said, "No, in course of time it assumed slowly its previous natural size when the mastery of that mood over the mind had ceased." (pp. 160-61)

The science of *Rāja-Yoga* tells us that what we call the automatic actions of our organs within our bodies can be made to obey our commands. This is the truth which Vedānta upholds and declares with regard to the personality of a person.

*The Inevitable Conclusion*: Personality is thus the weight of the entire character exerted by a person upon the external

world. It is not the refinement of dress and manner but the result of finely balanced thoughts and feelings, and it lends a secret charm to the entire being, throws the magic and works a miracle. A great house over our head is of no use but to announce the great man within. Similarly, one who claims to be of great personality is required first to house a great person within. True personality calls for a higher mental calibre that never derives its nourishment from the varnish of pretended refinement and code. It is anti-establishmentarian, requiring no equipment or apparatus for its scaffolding, running against the current of popular prejudices, riding above the ignorance of most of the people and facing and overcoming every opportunism. It is always ready for the cup of hemlock. In a word, the personality of a person is neither a trick nor a trade. It is made up of neither fancy nor fashion. It is always the person within. So Swami Vivekananda would say:

"The ideal of all education, all training, should be this man-making. But, instead of that, we are always trying to polish up the outside. What use in polishing up the outside when there is no inside? The end and aim of all training is to make the man grow. The man who influences, who throws his magic, as it were, upon his fellow-beings, is a dynamo of power, and when that man is ready, he can do anything and everything he likes; that personality put upon anything will make it work." (*The Complete Works*, Vol. II, p. 15)

# ŚRĪ ŚĀṆKARA : HIS LIFE AND THOUGHT

SWAMI ANANYANANDA

Every student of Vedānta is familiar with the name of Śaṅkara—the great philosopher-saint who lived and propagated Vedānta in India nearly twelve hundred years back. Śaṅkara is looked upon by millions of Indians as a God-man; and here, we shall dwell on some of the salient points of his philosophy. We shall also briefly touch upon the main events of his life, though very little is known of his intensely active but very brief life on earth.

Also, every student of Vedānta—particularly of monistic Vedānta, known as Advaita Vedānta—is familiar with the thought of Śaṅkara. True, indeed; for Advaita Vedānta and Śaṅkara are inseparable, and one cannot be thought of without the other. Advaita and Śaṅkara have become synonymous, and will for ever remain inseparable and associated with each other. Advaita Vedānta is quite often referred to as Śaṅkara Vedānta, indicating the power and influence of the personality of Śaṅkara in interpreting and propagating this ancient Upaniṣadic philosophy of Advaita. During these twelve hundred years since the time of Śaṅkara, the philosophy of Vedānta, as expounded by him, has taken longer and longer strides, and silently traversed to distant lands of the globe, imperceptibly working on the life and thought of numerous people, transforming their lives, and providing spiritual solace and comfort to them. Even at present, the circle of admirers and adherents of Vedānta is ever widening, day after day.

If you enter upon any discussion of Vedānta, you cannot do without reference to Śaṅkara and his works. Wherever Vedānta is lived and taught, there is

bound to be the spiritual presence of Śaṅkara. Whenever one thinks of Śaṅkara, the traditional image of the great teacher, young and brilliant, sitting under the spreading banyan tree, expounding his doctrines to his disciples who were older than himself, rises before one's mental eye and commands devotion and veneration.

Śaṅkara lives in his works—in his philosophical expositions and treatises as well as in his devotional prayers and hymns to the various Hindu gods and goddesses. He has immortalized himself by writing those thoughtful and penetrating commentaries on the major Upaniṣads, the *Brahma-Sūtra*, and the *Bhagavad-Gītā*—the triple source-books of Vedānta. His commentaries are noted for their profundity and philosophical as well as spiritual insight, beauty of language, clarity and simplicity of presentation. Śaṅkara became a model to all the later-day commentators and interpreters of the sacred scriptures. Vedānta is claimed to be Hinduism at its best; and Śaṅkara is undoubtedly the grandest and the most rational interpreter of Vedānta. And Śaṅkara will live, his memory will be cherished, as long as Vedānta or Hinduism lives and functions as a spiritually elevating and liberating force in this world.

In order to fully understand and appreciate the contribution of Śaṅkara in the realm of Indian philosophic thought, we have to turn our attention to the religio-philosophic background that obtained in our country at the time of, or before, his advent. First, there were the Mīmāṃsakas who believed in the supremacy of the ritualistic portions of the Vedas, who spent their time and energy in performing those sacrifices and rituals and propagating the



philosophy underlying them. A reaction against the Mīmāṃsakas had already set in by the birth of Buddhism, which fought against the practice of rituals, ceremonies, and sacrifices of the Mīmāṃsakas.

Secondly, there were the Buddhists themselves. Although Buddhism, as originally presented by Buddha, was aimed at weaning away people from sacerdotalism and giving them a pure, ethical, and spiritual religion, it gradually drifted away from the original path. In the course of the centuries that followed, Buddhism degenerated into a hopeless mess, in spite of its grand and high philosophy—a mess full of horrible rituals and practices. Even in the realm of philosophy, several systems and sub-systems developed, ranging from absolute and uncompromising idealism, on the one hand, to pure realism and ritualism, on the other. The religion of the great Master, which he had called 'pure and perfect', was lost sight of in the mass of confusion that grew in the name of Buddhism later on. During the twelve hundred or thirteen hundred years between Buddha and Śaṅkara, the religion of the Blessed One had not only seen its most glorious days for long periods, but it had also decayed and degenerated and ultimately disappeared from the very soil on which it had flourished.

Added to these two, namely, the Mīmāṃsakas and the Buddhists, there was the third group, the Naiyāyikas (logicians), who had developed an intricate philosophy based on the power of word and subtlety of logic. It was all head without heart, all intellect without any emotion. Brilliant as the system was—so far as the logical development and intellectual attainment of the system was concerned, it was undoubtedly brilliant—it could not offer comfort and consolation to the heart of man. The logicians remained in the air, in the rarefied air at that; they could

not touch the ground, the hard ground of reality. They did not help the common man, who sought comfort and consolation from religion and philosophy.

That was the triangle of forces in the religio-philosophic scene of India that obtained at the time before the advent of Śaṅkara—the Mīmāṃsakas who were ritual-ridden, the Naiyāyikas with their high flown logic which had no relation to life here or hereafter, and Buddhism which had fallen on evil days. In the medley of these triple forces, and the consequent confusion that arose in the mind of the common man with belief and faith, the pure religion of the Hindus having its source in the Upaniṣads—spiritual life based on unshakable faith, yearning devotion, profound conviction, and indomitable will for investigating truth—that religion was on the wane. Śaṅkara had, therefore, the stupendous task of reviving the religion of the Upaniṣads, which was the backbone of the nation, and establishing it on a firm foundation by providing not only a strong philosophic basis for that religion, but also ways and means for the emotional expression of that religion. It is in such a situation that Śaṅkara appears on the Indian soil as the saviour of her cultural and spiritual tradition.

Diversity of faiths has been the religious tradition of India from time immemorial. That is why Hinduism or, to use the proper word, 'Vedic religion' or '*Sanātana Dharma*', as it is known in our ancient books, cannot be called a single religion. It is a federation of faiths, in which people professing diversity of faiths in individual lives pay homage and owe allegiance to one common source of spiritual inspiration. Unity in diversity in matters religious has been the characteristic of India, for the people of India believe that 'Truth is one, and the sages describe It in different ways'. The goal is one, and



the paths to it are many ; and so, no teacher works against this tradition. Śaṅkara, too, worked along the line of accepted tradition ; and without destroying the individuality and integrity of the prevalent faiths, he provided a common rallying point to the people in the great philosophy of Vedānta.

Before we come to a consideration of Śaṅkara's works and of his philosophic thought, we may take a glimpse into his life, which was very brief. He lived only for thirty-two years ; and it is amazing to see what he achieved during that short period.

The life of Śaṅkara, as it has come down to us, is full of legends and miracles. From out of these stories and miraculous accounts, modern scholars have been able to extricate some facts about his life and work. Śaṅkara is believed to have lived towards the end of the eighth century and the beginning of the ninth. The generally accepted date is from A.D. 788 to 820—that makes it thirty-two years. The nativity of Śaṅkara was in a small village called Kaladi, in Kerala, nearer the western coast in the Indian peninsula. He hailed from an orthodox Nambūdiri Brāhmaṇa family. His father died while Śaṅkara was still young ; and he grew up under the tender care of his loving widowed mother. He was a precocious boy ; and from his very young age, he had a strong inclination to embrace the life of renunciation and lead the life of a *sannyāsin*. But, then, his loving mother was in his way of embracing the life he loved so dearly ; for how would she allow her only son to leave her and go away as a *sannyāsin*. The story goes that Śaṅkara had to adopt some trick to obtain the permission from his mother ; and to make the breaking away of the bonds of love smooth, he promised her that he would be by her side in her last moments and that he would perform the last rites

for her, though it was against the tradition for a *sannyāsin* to perform them.

Men who are born with a mission cannot be tied down by earthly bondages. They are sure to break them away and proclaim themselves free—free to fulfil the work for which they incarnate. Śaṅkara, having got away from his home, was now free to go and equip himself, in order to fulfil the mission that awaited him and which was slowly dawning upon him. Having departed from his home, he was in search of a teacher under whom he could study and master the ancient Vedic lore as well as other systems of philosophy. In his wanderings, he came to the banks of the Narmadā, where he found his *guru* in venerable person of Śrī Govindapāda, who was himself a great *jñānin* and a disciple of Śrī Gauḍapāda, the well-known author of the *kārikās* on the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*. As the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* puts it : 'Wonderful was the teacher, and equally wonderful was the student.' Extraordinary was the brilliance of Śaṅkara ; and in an unbelievably short time, he mastered all his *guru* had to teach. Having completed his education under Śrī Govindapāda and obtained his blessings, he set out on his great work, a mere boy just in his teens.

First, he went to Varanasi, that recognized great seat of learning, where it was that one had to obtain recognition from scholars, if one were to embark upon a new mission in one's life and as a teacher of religion and philosophy. There he met various contending forces, which were sticking to the letter and not to the spirit of the sacred scriptures, thus eating into the very vitals of our national religious life. He met the most powerful adversaries and opponents among the Mīmāṃsakas and the Naiyāyikas of the time. He successfully won over them all by demolishing their theories and established the



supremacy of the Vedāntic thought. Very soon, disciples began to gather round him ; and among them were some of the greatest scholars of the day, who had met Śaṅkara in philosophical dispute, and who, having been defeated by him, had accepted his philosophical views as well as discipleship under him. That is how it came to be that some of his disciples were older than Śaṅkara himself. There are many interesting anecdotes, mostly legendary, which took place during this period of Śaṅkara's life—how Śaṅkara met his opponents and won them over to his own views and how they became his trusted disciples later on.

It is about this time, also, that Śaṅkara began writing his commentaries on the original source-books of Vedānta, with a view not only to propagating the monistic, the non-dualistic, philosophy of Vedānta, but also to establishing that philosophy on firm foundations. Preaching and discussing as well as writing commentaries went on side by side. The literary life of Śaṅkara was confined to a very short period. First, he wrote commentaries on the Upaniṣads, besides writing expository annotations on books like the *Viṣṇusahasranāma* and the *Sanatsujātīya*—the first, a long hymn in praise of Viṣṇu, containing a thousand names in His praise ; the second, a philosophical treatise included in the *Mahābhārata*. Then, we have him writing his clear and thoughtful commentary on the *Bhagavad-Gītā*—that immortal song of God, which is also bodily incorporated in the *Mahābhārata*. We also see him writing a number of other treatises on Vedānta, independent works inspired by, and expounding, the philosophy of Advaita—works like *Vivekacūdāmaṇi*, *Ātmabodha*, *Upadeśasāhasrī*, etc. Side by side, he composed numberless *stotras* in praise of the various important gods and goddesses of the Hindu pantheon. And he completed his *magnum opus*, his masterly commentary

on the *Brahma-Sūtra*, the tradition says, when he was barely sixteen, so that most of his philosophical works were completed when he was just in his teens.

It was during this period that Śaṅkara, one day, had a strange experience and felt that his mother's end was drawing near. In compliance with the promise he had made to her at the time of leaving his home, he came back to his mother during her last moments. The end came, and the dear old mother of Śaṅkara passed away. Having performed the last rites to his deceased mother, as the tradition has it, and thus fulfilling his promise, though it was against the tradition for a *sannyāsin* to perform the last rites for any relative, Śaṅkara was now free to embark upon his mission and to campaign in the name of Vedānta.

Like a 'Lion of Vedānta', he travelled the length and breadth of the country—this brilliant young monk followed by aged disciples, all great scholars themselves—thundering the message of Vedānta and liberating the pure religion of the Vedas and the Upaniṣads from the hideous traditions of superstition and meaningless practices, on the one hand, and from the atheism of Buddhism, the ritualism of the Mīmāṃsakas, and the logicism of the Naiyāyikas, on the other. Śaṅkara realized that the need of the hour was a powerful rallying thought-force with an all-comprehensive philosophy and an all-reconciling view of life, which would bring round all the moral, social, cultural, and religious forces of the country under one banner, slowly work for the unity and harmony among the various prevailing sects, and yet preserve the distinctive features of each one of them. That explains his writing philosophical commentaries and treatises, which were to provide the common rallying point, and his innumerable hymns for the various gods and goddesses, which were meant to show the need for preserving the



distinctive features of each and every sect and subsect. Drawing inspiration from one and the same philosophy of life, people could still pursue their own respective religious practices, paying homage to the different forms of one and the same God-head. This Śaṅkara accomplished under the hegemony of Vedānta.

Another of his great contributions to India, particularly, was his grand conception of her cultural and national unity. As an emblem of this conception, he established four *maṭhas* or monastic headquarters at the four corners of India—Sringeri in the South, Puri in the East, Badarikasrama in the North, and Dvaraka in the West—and put each of them under the charge of each one of his four famous disciples. He entrusted them with the task of continuing the work that he had inaugurated. Happily, each of these monasteries is flourishing to this day, despite the various vicissitudes of history each had to face, and continues to be a power-house of spiritual thought and inspiration.

Thus completing the mission of his life, Śaṅkara departed from the arena of this world at the tender age of thirty-two, after lifting India out of the morass into which she had fallen and establishing her ancient philosophy of Vedānta on a sound and secure basis.

The mainspring of inspiration of Śaṅkara in his life and thought was the Upaniṣads and the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. By writing commentaries on them and popularizing their teachings, he presented a practical philosophy to the world to live and function. In the light of Vedānta, he purified the various sectarian customs and modes of worship.

Himself rising above all creeds and dogmas, Śaṅkara never denounced any of the religious practices, for he recognized, in the true Vedāntic spirit, in every one of them, a necessary step in the evolution of

man. He fought against false and misleading theories. He fought tooth and nail against atheism, agnosticism, and scepticism. He encouraged every sincere attempt to live religion, whatever might be its outer form. His was a philosophy which accepted all forms of worship, and rejected none; and it was based on the fundamental principle of the spiritual Oneness of the whole universe.

From a study of Śaṅkara's career, it becomes abundantly clear to us that his purpose was to reduce to unity and harmony, under the all-comprehensive spiritual philosophy of Vedānta, the multiplicity of thought-systems, without destroying the integrity of the prevalent faiths. Unity, not dead uniformity, was his aim. A rich and colourful diversity in the world of faiths has been the special feature of India. Śaṅkara never attempted to do away with that diversity, for that would militate against the very spirit of India—which is unity in diversity. What Śaṅkara did was to introduce a mediating element among the several faiths, and this he did on the basis of the great and grand philosophy of Vedānta.

What is the philosophy of Śaṅkara? As already stated earlier, Śaṅkara and Advaita have become synonymous; and by Śaṅkara Vedānta is meant Advaita Vedānta. Of all thinkers, in the realm of Indian philosophic thought, Śaṅkara is perhaps the most misunderstood, although it can be said without any hesitation that, throughout his commentaries and other extensive writings, he has nowhere been ambiguous. Śaṅkara's writings are noted for their lucidity as well as clarity. This misunderstanding is chiefly due to the central idea of his philosophy—the theory of *Māyā* or *Māyāvāda*, as it is popularly referred to—which cannot shield any human weakness, and which requires its followers to give up all attachment to this world



and sever all emotional connexion with all that is dear to the heart. It is our attachment to the things of the world, our worldly-mindedness, which obscures our vision; and we try to interpret things in a way that fits in with our subjective beliefs and likings.

To put the theory of *Māyā* in the simplest terms, it is the illusoriness of the individual self. That is the central notion of Śaṅkara's Vedānta, and every other vital tenet of his philosophy—Brahman as the sole Reality, the object as false, *Māyā* as neither real nor unreal, *Īśvara* as Brahman in reference to *Māyā*, *mokṣa* (liberation) through knowledge of Brahman and as identity of the self with Brahman—may be regarded as an elaboration of this single notion. By illusoriness, Śaṅkara never means illusion or non-existence. He only repudiates the apparent character of the given relative reality, including the individual self, and says that what appears to be real from our relative or mundane standpoint is not finally or ultimately real. The only fundamental reality, which is the most intimate in the individual self and which is the most ultimate as the universal Self, is the reality of Brahman, the Absolute, and all else is a superimposition on It.

Śaṅkara bases his view of the absolute-ness and oneness of the ultimate Reality on the teachings of the Upaniṣads. The Upaniṣads state in clear and unambiguous terms that Truth is one only, without a second; that Brahman is Truth, Knowledge, and Infinite; and that Brahman is all this. It is God alone that pervades everything; it is He alone that permeates and animates everything. He is the warp and woof of the fabric of this manifold manifestation. He is there behind every knowledge. It is because of His presence that all comprehension as well as all apprehension is possible, and does take

place. He stimulates and enlightens our understanding. In creation, all activity goes on in a regulated manner, because He is there behind as the guiding factor. The sun, the moon, and the stars go about their duties directed by Him. He is near, He is far, and He is everywhere. It is because of His light that everything becomes intelligible to us. In His light, everything shines. Our bodily and sensory functions take pace under His direction. He is the ear of the ear, the eye of the eye, the mind of the mind, the speech of speech, the life of life. It is birthless, eternal, undecaying, and ancient. It is subtler than the subtle, and greater than the great. It is lodged in the heart of every creature. All this is surely Brahman. This Self (*Ātman*) is Brahman. It is that which is beyond mind and speech, unthinkable, indescribable, in which all phenomena cease, which is unchanging, auspicious, and non-dual. That is the Self, and that is to be known.

These statements have been taken at random from different Upaniṣads. It is interesting to note in them that sometimes the word 'Brahman' is used to denote the ultimate Reality, and sometimes the word *Ātman*, the Self; and one of the statements actually says that 'This Self (*Ātman*) is Brahman'. It is also interesting to note that Reality is referred to as He or It, and even as She sometimes, in the Upaniṣads.

Having accepted this position of the Upaniṣads, namely, the absolute oneness and the non-dual character of the ultimate Truth, Śaṅkara proceeds to understand and explain the manifold creation—both man and nature. Every philosophy worth the name is concerned with the understanding and explanation of these three entities; namely, God or Being, nature, and the individual self, and their mutual relationship. It is in connexion with this understanding and explanation of *jīva* and



*jagat*, that is, the individual self and the world or nature, that Śaṅkara takes recourse to the theory of *Māyā*.

To Śaṅkara, the authority of the Śruti, i.e. the Upaniṣads, is unquestionable and final; and he did not flinch from its inevitable consequences. The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* says: 'Thou art That'—referring to the *jīva*. In other words, *jīva* is Brahman. The individual self is to be regarded as perfectly and totally identical with Brahman. According to the Upaniṣads, Brahman is immutable, infinite, without any parts, without any attribute, unconditioned by space, time, and causation, without any activity or movement and so on. *Jīva*, as we experience, is just the reverse of all this. How could *jīva* be identical with Brahman? How to explain the contradiction?

The world, too, is said to have the Self—the same Brahman—as its cause. How could this phenomenal world be spoken of as emanating from, subsisting in, and finally merging in the absolute Brahman? How could this relational world, including the *jīvas*, be linked with the non-relational Brahman? Śaṅkara's answer to this is clear and definite—the impossible can never be made possible. The world is only an appearance. It has no absolute existence. It is not real from the absolute standpoint. It is to explain the contradiction between appearance and reality, both in the case of the *jīva* and the *jagat*, that Śaṅkara adopts the theory of *Māyā*, well-known as *adhyāsa* in Vedānta.

Śaṅkara says that *adhyāsa* or *Māyā* is the principle of unifying contradictions—contradiction between the Self and the non-Self, the ego and the non-ego, the subject and the object, the cause and the effect, Brahman and the world. We know that contradictions can never be reconciled; but no experience is possible unless and until they are *somehow* unified. And

*Māyā* is the principle that *somehow*, mysteriously and inexplicably, unifies contradictions, as it were, and makes all experience possible. The way *adhyāsa* takes place, or *Māyā* operates, is rather mysterious. Hence it is inexplicable and inscrutable. Śaṅkara says that it is the principle of identification of contradictions, or the principle that makes a thing appear as what it is not. We mistake a rope to be a snake. This is *adhyāsa*. Brahman is taken to be the world. This is also *adhyāsa*. In reality, there is no snake; it is only the rope. In reality, there is no world; it is only Brahman. Yet the principle of *adhyāsa* creates this superimposition, and thus all our worldly activities go on. Though, in the ultimate analysis, *Māyā* cannot be proved to be real, it looks as if it were indispensable for all human affairs. It is the law that regulates all our actions; it is the law that makes the world what it is. Although it is indefinable, yet it is no abstraction. It is and, at the same time, it is *not*, just like the snake in the rope. The snake is true, and exists, as long as the illusion lasts. When knowledge dawns, the truth about the rope flashes at once, and we know that the snake never existed.

According to Śaṅkara, illusions are due to the absence of right knowledge, technically known as *avidyā* or *ajñāna*. It is this *avidyā*, or want of right knowledge, regarding the Reality that creates the *jīva*-hood of the individual self as well as the world-appearance, and makes us feel that they are real. Śaṅkara holds the view that it is Brahman that appears as the *jīva* through ignorance or superimposition. Similarly, Brahman is the ground of the world-illusion. The rope does not lose its ropeness even when it is mistaken for a snake. Brahman does not lose Its Brahmanhood to transform Itself into the world. It only appears as the world because of



*adhyāsa* or superimposition. Thus, both the *jīva* and the world are, in reality, nothing but Brahman Itself; and they appear as what they are now because of *adhyāsa*. That is the position of Śaṅkara.

*Adhyāsa* can be removed by right knowledge, which will reveal the true nature not only of the self, but also of the world. This right knowledge is spiritual knowledge, which comes through realization as a result of moral perfection, purity of mind, and other spiritual practices. It is in connexion with the removal of *ajñāna* or ignorance that Śaṅkara recognizes the need of spiritual life and prescribes a discipline for attaining perfection in it. When right knowledge is attained as a result of spiritual perfection, truth stands revealed in all its nakedness and glory; and there is no doubt or confusion in the mind of the seeker. Then, he realizes that all is Brahman; indeed, himself, the world, and everything in it is realized as Brahman. That is the meaning of the Upaniṣadic statement 'All this is verily Brahman'—an experience which comes to the man of realization.

Besides the *jīva* and the *jagat*, the individual self and the objective world, we have yet one more concept in the philosophy of Śaṅkara, and that is of *Īśvara*. True to his fundamental philosophy of the non-dual character of Brahman, Śaṅkara says that *Īśvara* is none other than Brahman, for Brahman alone is the one, ultimate Reality. But once we speak of the self and the world, there is also the need for an *Īśvara*, who is looked upon as the creator, the preserver, and the destroyer of the world. *Īśvara* is looked upon as the universal Being, a direct emanation of Brahman; He is the master and wielder of *Māyā*. He is the cosmic soul, the dispenser of the fruits of merits and demerits of individual souls, and to whom

they look up and pray for guidance and grace. *Īśvara* is Brahman in Its personal aspect. He creates the world—His creativity is like that of the magicians; it is an appearance. It has no reality of its own. It is founded only on the reality of Brahman, which is the basis and the ground of all, including *Īśvara*, the world, and the individual self. This *Īśvara* is the God of religion, while Brahman is the Absolute of philosophy.

*Īśvara* is personal in form, and has several attributes. This one and the same *Īśvara* is looked upon in different forms by different groups of people, and is adored and worshipped in numerous ways. It is the one God that is spoken of differently and variously by people following different faiths. And Śaṅkara, as pointed out earlier, did not do away with any of the faiths and beliefs that were prevalent at his time. He gave them all a sound philosophy based on the teachings of the Upaniṣads; and on that basis, he upheld and glorified each and every one of them.

*Mukti* is the goal of life. *Mukti* or liberation, according to Śaṅkara, is freedom from ignorance, which veils Reality from our vision and projects the false appearance of this world and the equally false notion of individuality. To break the shell of individuality through knowledge, to pierce through the veil of ignorance, and to realize our true nature of purity, perfection, eternity, and infinitude, is freedom. That is *mokṣa* according to Vedānta. We must lose the consciousness of our individuality through spiritual exercises and merge ourselves in the universal Consciousness; and this is to be achieved in this very life. Śaṅkara's philosophy is intimately connected with life here and now. The fruit of our *sādhana*s is something to be had here on earth, while we are alive in this body. This is *jīvanmukti*, freedom-while-living.

We have tried to give here a broad outline of the philosophy of Śāṅkara, focussing attention only on the main features in it. To sum up, we may briefly state the findings of Śāṅkara in his study of Vedānta.

1. Knowledge or consciousness Absolute is the reality that is Brahman.

2. It is one, indivisible, without a second, having no difference of any kind in Itself.

3. The *jīva* is essentially the same as Brahman, and it is therefore self-illuminated, unlimited, and ever-free. Its apparent finitude and the consequent effects are due to *avidyā*, and, as such, they are unreal. The sense of personality and individuality is bondage; that of universality is freedom. In freedom, this apparent finite individuality expands into the infinitude of Brahman.

4. It is Brahman alone that appears as the world; it appears so because of *avidyā*. The world has only a phenomenal or relative reality. It has no absolute reality. Its reality is only in Brahman.

5. Brahmanhood is realized by the knowledge of the absolute identity of the *jīva* and Brahman. The Upaniṣadic dictum *Tat-tvam-asi* (That thou art) reveals this identity.

6. *Mukti* or *mokṣa* is nothing but the realization of this identity. Nothing new happens in the state of freedom. All spiritual practice is directed towards the removal of the manifold layers of *avidyā*, which are heaped on the purity and perfection of the Self. This *mukti* can be attained in this very life, which is *jīvan-mukti*.

The essence of the philosophy of Śāṅkara, of the philosophy of non-dualistic Vedānta, can be summed up in a few sentences: Brahman alone is real; the world is only an appearance. The *jīva* is verily Brahman; it is identical with It. There is no difference between the two. This truth is to be realized in spiritual experience. That is *mukti*, freedom, which is the goal of life, according to Advaita Vedānta, and, therefore, according to Śāṅkara.

## THE PRACTICAL ASPECT OF ŚRĪ ŚĀṆKARA'S TEACHING

ŚRĪ M. K. VENKATARAMA IYER

Let no one imagine that Śrī Śāṅkara was always soaring in the empyrean heights and never came down to the earth. It is true that as a philosopher he attained dizzy heights but it is not true to say that he did not indicate the means by which they could be reached by even ordinary people. As the true friend of the common man, he is prepared to take him by the hand and lead him step by step till he feels that he can be left to his own devices. No one has shown greater earnestness

than Śrī Śāṅkara in advancing his fellow-men in the path of true spirituality. In scores of contexts, he expresses his sorrow at the fact that most men waste their time and energy in the pursuit of trivial and unprofitable ends. In his *Śataślokī* (stanza 5) he writes:

'Numbers of men think that bodily comforts, wife, sons, friends, servants, horses and cattle are sufficient to make them happy and thus spend their entire life-time absorbed in what is perishable.



It never once occurs to them to turn their attention to the realm of spirit which is imperishable. They never realize that material objects acquire a value only when they are animated by spirit.'

In his *Vivekacūdāmaṇi* (stanzas 2 to 5) he expresses his grief in a more poignant manner :

'Of all forms of life, birth as a human being is a rare privilege. It holds out the prospect of infinite possibilities. By walking in the strict path laid down in the Veda, one can not only acquire knowledge of the Śāstras, but also learn to distinguish between Self and not-Self, the means of abiding in the Self and attain final release. It is a terrible pity that people run after evanescent things and miss the true aim of life. It really amounts to committing suicide. Having obtained birth as a human being by virtue of previously acquired merit and having also mastered the Vedas, the man who is so foolish as not to exert himself for his deliverance commits self-murder in effect. Can there be a greater fool than the man who, in spite of the advantages arising from his birth as a human being, fails to work for achieving the true purpose of life?'

Seeing that he is so deeply grieved at the fact of men neglecting their true spiritual interests, we can certainly expect him to render all possible practical help by guiding them in the right direction. He is fully alive to the difference that exists between human beings in respect of their intellectual and moral attainments. He knows perfectly well that all are not equally gifted. Some start life with initial advantages which are denied to others. The first thing that a practical philosopher has to realize clearly is that there are huge differences between one man and another. It is no use importing doctri-

naire notions about the equality of mankind. Men are not born equal.

It is well to keep this important fact in mind when we set out to lay down practical courses of discipline for men. There are all sorts and conditions of men. There are the good, the bad and the indifferent. There are those who are so lost in the material pleasures of life that the thought of life at a higher level does not cross their minds even once. The realm of spirit is *terra incognita* to them. There are others who get fitful glimpses of that realm but they are very short-lived. They may glow with religious emotion for a few minutes but, like wild-fire, it will cool down very soon. Still others are a little more alive to their spiritual interests but think that those can be postponed to a later period of life or even to the next life-time. Lastly, there are some who are of course keen on their deliverance, but it must come as a gift from above. They are not prepared to exert themselves in that behalf, much less to make sacrifices.

In his *Sarva Vedānta Siddhānta Sāra Saṅgraha* (stanzas 228 to 232), Śrī Śaṅkara recognizes four classes of *adhikārins*, the *tīvra*, the *madhyama*, the *manda* and the *atimanda*. Those who acutely feel the pinch of the three fold misery (*tāpatraya*) and are prepared to throw away all their material possessions as so many hindrances come under the first category. Others who feel the pinch of *tāpatraya* but are unable to extricate themselves from their attachment to wife, children and possessions and are consequently hanging between heaven and earth come under the second category. Those who think that wisdom consists in 'taking the cash on hand and waiving the rest' come under the third category. These people have persuaded themselves that their present life-time must be devoted to the pursuit of material pleasures and that the longing for *mokṣa* can afford to wait.



Last come those who expect liberation to come as a gift from above without any effort or sacrifice on their part even as a wayfarer lights upon a gem lying on the roadside.

The foregoing makes it clear that the discipline must necessarily be graded and suited to the intellectual and moral attainments of the different categories of aspirants. It would be worse than useless to lay down the same kind of practical training to all people irrespective of their position. All cannot be forced into the same steel-frame. A lower level of discipline will do as much harm to the advanced *adhikārins* as a higher one to those in the initial stages. The discipline must neither retard the progress of any nor force the pace of any.

It goes without saying that the grades of discipline are meant only for more or less well defined groups of people and not certainly for particular individuals. The latter is obviously impossible. The special kind of discipline that any particular individual wants has to be sought only from the teacher. The safest course for any individual is to betake himself to a competent teacher, put himself under his watchful guidance and walk in the path laid down by him. The guidance of the *guru* will meet the special requirements of each aspirant. The *guru* occupies therefore a very important place in the scheme of practical training. In the Upaniṣads there are several references to this fact. (*Vide, Praśna* I; *Muṇḍaka* I. ii. 12; and *Chāndogya* IV. ix. 3, VI. xiv. 2, VII. i. 3 and VIII. vii.)

One must prove himself to be a man before he can hope to become a superman. The virtues that are expected of any human being are known as *sādhāraṇa dharma*. These elementary qualities are listed under the first two steps, *yama* and *niyama* of *aṣṭāṅgayoga*. They are non-

violence (*ahimsā*), truthfulness (*satya*), non-stealing (*asteya*), celibacy (*brahmacharya*), freedom from greed (*aparigraha*), purity (*śauca*), contentment (*santoṣa*), austerity (*tapas*), study of the scriptures (*svādhyāya*), and worship of God (*Īśvara praṇidhāna*). These ten commandments are binding on all. Man shows himself to be a man only if he possesses these rudimentary virtues. They belong to the sphere of the categorical imperative, since they apply to all men irrespective of any condition. The Upaniṣads also insist on these virtues as the prerequisites. *Kena* (IV. 8) lays down austerity, self-control and truthfulness; *Kaṭha* (I. ii. 23) says that the instruction should not be imparted to one who has not ceased from wickedness, to one who is not tranquil, to one who cannot concentrate his mind and to one whose mind is not composed. *Praśna* (I. 15) enjoins austerity, truthfulness and freedom from deceitfulness, falsehood and hypocrisy. These qualities constitute the base for all further progress.

Next there are the duties enjoined on an individual by virtue of the social class to which he belongs and the stage of spiritual advancement that he has reached. These duties are collectively known as *varṇāśrama dharma*. The Hindu society is composed of four *varṇas*, the Brahmin, the Kṣatriya, the Vaiśya and the Śūdra. These are occupational divisions. The duties that are enjoined on the four castes are based on inborn qualities and gifts. They owe their origin partly to heredity and partly to each individual's *samskāra*. It is no use ignoring these inborn gifts and leaving men free to choose any occupation that looks attractive. Abandoning the duties for which a man is qualified by virtue of his own *samskāras* and his hereditary tendencies and adopting others for which he is not so qualified will do more harm than good to the individual himself. The



society also will stand to lose. The *Gītā* (III. 35 and XVIII 47-48) is emphatic on this point. It adds further that the best way of pleasing Lord is by faithfully discharging the duties that devolve on a man by virtue of his station in society.

‘Man reaches perfection by devotion to his own duty. He from whom all beings proceed and by whom all this is pervaded—by worshipping Him through the performance of his own duty does man attain perfection’. (ibid., XVIII 45-46) Almost echoing these words, Śrī Śaṅkara says in his *Aparokṣānubhūti* (stanza 3) that

‘By the strict performance of the duties that are binding on one by virtue of his *varṇa* and *āśrama*, he pleases the Lord and through His grace easily acquires the other more advanced qualifications’.

The *āśrama dharma*s are briefly stated in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (II. xxiii. 1). Religious studentship (Brahmacarya), life as a house-holder (Gārhasthya), virtual renunciation (Vānaprastha) and complete renunciation (Sannyāsa) are the well known four *āśramas*. The duties incumbent on these four *āśramas* are as follows: Sacrifice, study and charity for the householder, life of strict discipline, bodily and mental, and learning for the religious student, austerity for the virtual recluse and complete detachment for the *sannyāsin*. In the *Smṛtis*, the duties which are binding on the four *āśramas* are set forth more at length.

Sacrifice, for example, which is enjoined on the house-holder includes the several rituals laid down in Karma Kāṇḍa of the Veda. These are collectively known as *nitya* and *naimittika karma*. They are in the nature of injunctions (*vidhi*). The proper performance of these rituals strictly according to *Śāstra* makes for mental purity. Unless the mind is cleansed of impurities like egoism, arrogance and conceit,

it will not become a fit instrument for receiving the highest knowledge. Brahman-knowledge can come only as a mode of the mind (*ṛtti*) and unless the mind is free from the impurity that has accumulated on it from a dateless past, it will not be fit to receive it. In three contexts, the *Gītā* (III. 20, V. 10 and XVIII. 5) affirms that the proper performance of Vedic ritual effects the purification of the mind. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (IV. iv. 22) states :

‘The Brāhmaṇas seek to know It through the study of the Vedas, sacrifices, charity and austerity.’

The *Śvetāśvatara* text (II. 6) says :

‘Where *dharma* and ritual are practised, there inspiration is born.’

Commenting on *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* (I. 10) Śrī Śaṅkara writes :

‘Divine visions relating to the Ātman occur to him who, free from desire and aspiring to know Brahman, is devoutly engaged in the obligatory works enjoined in the *Śruti* and *Smṛti*.’

Such devout performance, in as much as it cleanses the mind and helps in the advent of the highest knowledge, has certainly its place in the scheme of spiritual discipline. In the opinion of Śrī Śaṅkara, it is indirectly helpful (*ārād upakāra*).

Devotion to a Personal God (*bhakti*) also occupies an important place in the scheme of practical discipline adumbrated by Śrī Śaṅkara. In his *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* (stanza 31) he asserts that it takes the foremost place among the factors that make for liberation. Let it not be thought that there is no place for devotion in Śrī Śaṅkara’s philosophy, because it does away with the difference between the finite self (*jīva*) and God (Īśvara). The difference disappears only in the final stage when communion with the Supreme has supervened on the intellectual apprehension. When the intellect makes place for intui-



tion, all differences are bound to disappear. But there is a stage prior to that final consummation. That prior stage is characterized by the difference between subject and object, knower and known and necessarily between the finite self and God. The finite self, aware of the gulf that divides it from God, is bound to lift up hands in prayer. It is therefore a mistaken notion to say that in Śrī Śaṅkara's Advaita philosophy there is no place for devotion or prayer.

The place for devotion there is not only necessary but also a very necessary one. Devotion to a Personal God is a necessary preliminary discipline which one has to go through before he can have the higher communion. *Bhakti* finds its logical culmination in the advaitic experience. In his *Tripurasundarī Veda-pāda Stotra* (stanzas 81-82) he has said that absolute devotion to Devī finds its fulfilment in *sarvātma-bhāva* which, in turn, dissolves the knot of the heart, *hṛdaya granthi*. The cosmic vision is only another name for the highest advaitic experience.

If devotion is to lead to this high experience, it must be intense, single-minded, disinterested and free from narrow exclusiveness. Though as many as six gods are recommended as fit for worship, Śrī Śaṅkara is careful to emphasize that they are only so many forms that the Absolute has assumed to suit the differing tastes of individuals. The conception of a Personal God is in the nature of a concession to human weakness. Since the generality of men cannot concentrate their minds except on some thing concrete, the formless and nameless Brahman assumes both a form and a name. When Brahman manifests Himself in 'empiric dress', He comes to be known by many names such as Śiva, Viṣṇu, Devī, Gaṇapati, Subrahmanya, Sūrya, Rāma, Kṛṣṇa and so forth. The last two in this list are only special manifestations of Lord

Viṣṇu. There remain only six gods. All these have the sanction of Veda. A man is free to offer worship to any one of these according to his choice. The god whom a man selects for worship is his *iṣṭa devatā*. This selection of a particular deity should not carry with it hatred of the other deities. One can have preferences but no exclusions. It must always be kept in mind that all gods are only so many forms that are imposed on the Absolute to suit our needs. One form is as good as another. There is no ground to suppose that any one of them is superior to the rest. There is therefore no point in swearing by any particular god saying that it alone is the supreme. Religious fanaticism is born of delusion. In his *Haristuti* (18), Śrī Śaṅkara has drawn pointed attention to this fact.

'The one Supreme Being appears under many names and forms owing to differences in the temperaments of men.' The same essential truth is underlined in one of the earliest hymns of the *Ṛg-Veda*: *Ekam Sat viprā bahudhā vadanti*. So oriented, *bhakti* can easily prove to be the ante-chamber of Brahman-knowledge.

Devotion can take many forms. One can offer *śoḍaśopacāra pūjā* to his *iṣṭa devatā* by bringing it to dwell for the moment in a concrete image or picture. This is known as *pratimā pūjā*. Or one can recite the *mantra* of his favourite deity. The five-syllabled *mantra* of Śiva, the eight-syllabled *mantra* of Nārāyaṇa or the fifteen-syllabled *mantra* of Devī can be intensely meditated upon, or one may read with devotion the hymns composed by great mystics in praise of Śiva, Viṣṇu, Devī and the other gods. We may add that Śrī Śaṅkara himself has composed several *stotras* in praise of all the six gods whom he has recommended for worship. These hymns are as famous for their poetical quality as for the depth of religious emotion. Special mention must be made of *Saundarya*



*Laharī* in this connexion. He who reads this poem will stand doubly benefited. It will fill his religious sense and at the same time give him the satisfaction of having tasted excellent poetry. In view of his great contribution to religion, Śrī Śaṅkara has come to be known as *śaṅmata sthāpanācārya*.

*Karma* and *bhakti* are intended to prepare the ground for the further discipline which may be styled as advaitic discipline proper. One who has successfully gone through the two stages of preliminary discipline, *karmānuṣṭhāna* and *Īśvara praṇidhāna* will have developed the sense to distinguish between permanent and ephemeral values (*nityānitya vastu vivekaḥ*), to renounce the craving for the pleasures of the senses both in this world and in the world to come (*iha amutra artha bhoga virāgaḥ*), to keep his body and mind under strict control (*śamadamādi sādhana sampat*) and lastly to intensely long for liberation from the shackles of empirical existence (*mumukṣutva*). These four dispositions of the mind are collectively known as *sādhana-catustaya*.

The further discipline for this *adhikārin* comprises devout listening to the instruction of the teacher (*śravaṇa*), active cogitation (*manana*), intense meditation (*nididhyāsana*) and final absorption (*samādhi*). The teacher's instruction will relate to the *mahāvākya*, '*Tat Tvam Asi*' which occurs in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*. The statement affirms the underlying identity between the finite self (*Tvam*) and *Īśvara* (*Tat*). Superficially speaking, the two can never be identical, since there are vast differences between them. If, however, we eliminate these adventitious differences, we will be able to recognize that at bottom both are of the nature of consciousness. To arrive at this realization the student has to do much careful thinking. It is at this stage that one will have to call one's powers

of reasoning into full play. This reasoning process is known as *manana*. Except by hard thinking, it is difficult to get at the underlying truth. In his *Aparokṣānubhūti* (stanza 11) and *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* (stanza 11, 12 and 15), Śrī Śaṅkara emphasizes the importance of reasoning and investigation (*vicāra*). But the reasoning must be in conformity with the findings of *Śruti*. This amounts only to saying that the intellect belongs to a lower order and hence it is subservient to the discoveries of intuition, which belong to a higher order. The reasoning which thus plays a subordinate role is known as *anukūla-tarka*. Its aim is not so much to discover new truths as to render probable to the thinking mind what has been intuitively felt and experienced. Discovery and proof are obviously different functions. We require two separate faculties for them. Intuition discovers fresh truths, while the intellect proves them to the satisfaction of the mind. What is felt in the heart must be grasped by the mind.

When the great truth relating to the identity between the finite self and God has been intellectually grasped and all doubts have been laid to rest, the only thing to do for the *adhikārin* is to concentrate his mind on it and dwell on the truth without intermission. This is known as *nididhyāsana*. It is intense and uninterrupted meditation. If it is continued for a fairly long time, the instruction received from the teacher which is mediate and indirect will be transformed into an immediate and direct experience. The essential identity between the *jīva* and *Īśvara* will be realized in a sudden flash. To say that the two are identical only means that both shed what is adventitious to them and merge in universal and impartite consciousness. Both *jīva* and *Īśvara* lose their distinctive features and emerge as Brahman, which is their true nature.

This grand discovery will come as a mode of the mind (*vr̥tti*). By further practice and contemplation, it will be transformed into a settled attitude. At this stage, consciousness of the Absolute will make place for Absolute consciousness. This is known as *sarvātma-bhāva*, seeing everything in the Self and the Self in everything.

This is the state of *nirvikalpa samādhi*. There is nothing higher than this experience. It is the crown and consummation of all our endeavours. It is to the eternal credit of Śrī Śaṅkara that he has shown the way to this mighty realization by easy steps open to all people.

## THE MESSAGE OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

DR. KARAN SINGH

[Text of the speech delivered by Dr. Karan Singh, Minister of Tourism and Civil Aviation, Government of India, at the Ramakrishna Mission, New Delhi on 11th February, 1968—Ed.]

Swamiji and friends,

Why is it that India survives through the centuries while many other great civilizations have perished and passed away into the dust? As you know, there were great civilizations in the past; there was Babylon and Mesopotamia and Greece and Egypt, and yet those civilizations have vanished from the face of this earth and live only in the four walls of museums or in the minds of research scholars. But India retained the living and vital link with the sources of its civilization, with the very dawn of its history. It seems to me that the reason for this is that in this country there have been born from time to time great men and women who have kept the spark alive. From time to time, when everything appeared dark and lost, and when it seemed that India would finally succumb to her enemies, there have arisen people here who have brought us a new light and a new hope and a new faith.

This I think is visible throughout the history of India, and one such period had come upon us in the middle of the nine-

teenth century. In 1857, the Indian Mutiny, or as we now prefer to call it the First War of Indian Independence, had been defeated by the British, and India lay crushed and prostrate at the feet of her conqueror. It was not only a physical defeat, a military defeat—but it appeared almost as if the spirit of India was broken and that finally we were about to go under. At that time when everything around us was dark, there arose a new light in this country, a new power, a new vision. The Indian renaissance began, and within ninety years swept to a triumphant conclusion.

It is indeed a fascinating chapter in the long and varied history of India to study this marvellous renaissance that took place, the efflorescence in every field of human activity, in every field of human study. But perhaps the most remarkable part of this renaissance was the revival of the Spirit that revolved around two great personalities—Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. It was Sri Ramakrishna, who gave a new vision to India, and who



became a beacon light of spirituality, attracting people from four corners of the country, and particularly the intelligentsia of Bengal, to his feet. And it was Swami Vivekananda who carried the message of the Master throughout the length and breadth of this country and to foreign land. It is a moving story how Narendranath Dutta met Sri Ramakrishna; his boyhood; his meeting with the Master; his discipleship; then his period as a wandering monk; then his visit abroad; his triumph in the Parliament of Religions at Chicago and then his return to India and his triumphant march from Kashmir to Kanyakumari spreading the gospel of the Master. What Swami Vivekananda did was nothing less than completely to reinterpret Hinduism for his time and for his generation.

As I have said it is this constant reinterpretation of eternal truths, it is the constant restatement of eternal verities, that is the key to the progression and the evolution of India, and Swami Vivekananda did this. He gave a new interpretation to Hinduism, and indeed it was not only Hinduism that he preached but it was in fact a universal religion. And it is relevant for us today, because today again India finds itself in a difficult period. We are in a period of transition and turmoil and change. The old is dying, the new is yet to be born, and we find ourselves precariously poised in the midst of a changing world. At a time like this, we must turn again to Swami Vivekananda for his message of hope and power. I will try this evening to share with you some thoughts upon what I feel are the four basic concepts of Swami Vivekananda, which are as relevant to us today as they were when he expounded them many decades ago.

The first concept is the essential unity of all religions. As you know, this is the fundamental tenet of our culture—the R̥g-Vedic dictum '*Ekam sad viprā bahudhā*

*vadanti*'—'The truth is one, the wise call it by many names.' Swami Vivekananda constantly reiterated this, and he based his teachings not merely upon theory but upon the actual religious and spiritual experiences of Sri Ramakrishna. Sri Ramakrishna, in the course of his extraordinary *sādhana*, not only underwent the traditional Hindu disciplines, but also the Islamic, the Christian and other disciplines, and each one of them culminated finally in the same realization. As the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* puts it:

*'Yathā nadyaḥ syandamānāḥ samudre astam  
gacchanti nāmarūpe vihāya;  
Tathā vidvān nāmarūpād vimuktaḥ  
parātparam puruṣamupaiti divyam.'*

'As streams arise in many different parts of the country and yet find their way to the same ocean, or as to the same mountain peak there are many different paths, so do the various religions that have arisen in the world lead ultimately to the same goal.' And this essential unity of all religions was a very important aspect always stressed by Swami Vivekananda.

The second concept was that he moved beyond the divinity of God to the divinity of man. The divinity of God is something which is being preached at all times and by every religion, but India has done more, it has preached the divinity of man. The Upaniṣads have a wonderful word for the human race—*amṛtasya putrāḥ* 'children of immortality'. It is the birth-right of every individual who is born into this world to achieve that self-realization, and Swami Vivekananda reiterated that the mere quest for self-realization is not enough unless it is involved in the welfare of the people '*Ātmano mokṣārtham jagaddhitāya ca*'. Suffering humanity is around us everywhere, and Swami Vivekananda used to say that it is not enough to go away into the vastnesses of the Himalayas or into some cave and to meditate upon one's own



being, but it is necessary to see the divinity in this vast mass of suffering humanity that is around us. And therefore Swami Vivekananda preached something that is very important for Hinduism and for India, because very often we have had this divergence between the inner quest and outer involvement. Swami Vivekananda taught that there was no contradiction between the two, but that in fact the outer involvement could itself become the vehicle for the inner quest, and it is this message of Swami Vivekananda which the Ramakrishna Mission is so nobly propagating today.

Closely allied to the concept of the divinity of man is the concept of the dignity of each individual. Swami Vivekananda thundered against the superstitions and absurdities that have gone in the name of religion in this country. He used all his eloquence and all his power to speak against what he called 'kitchen religion'. As you know, he used to say: 'Is your religion such a weak and poor and paltry thing that by touching somebody or by eating with somebody it will get destroyed? If it is, then it *should* be destroyed, because any religion which is based upon such weak foundation cannot hope to survive and to live.' Similarly against untouchability and other such practices that have for centuries sullied the fair name of India, Swami Vivekananda spoke with eloquence and with power, and he was committed inalienably to this concept of the dignity of each individual.

Fourthly, Swami Vivekananda was imbued with a deep and glowing love for India. It is true that he travelled throughout the world, but for India he had a special love and a special reverence, and when he sat on the famous rock beyond Kanyakumari and looked up at the great nation that has given our race sustenance for so many thousands of years, he had a

new vision and new dream of the India that he wanted to see, an India that would be resurgent, an India that would glow with power and energy, an India that would take to the whole world a message of spirituality. And here, very much like another great thinker Sri Aurobindo, Swami Vivekananda felt that Indian freedom and Indian greatness had a message for the rest of the world. It was not merely for her own sake that India had to be great and free, but because she embodied in herself certain eternal truths and verities which had to be spread throughout this planet so that people could live in harmony with each other.

These to my mind were the main tenets of Swami Vivekananda which he preached with such nobility and with such power. Today again we need that type of a message. What we really have to ask ourselves is, are we living up to the ideals and the vision that this great man held before us? Twenty years after independence, our country is today again ridden with petty differences with wranglings over things that are not of fundamental importance. Today again we seem to be losing sight of the great vision that our seers had placed before us. Today again we seem to be entering a period of criticality. We are today at the crossroads, not only we, but the whole of mankind. Wars and conflict rage everywhere, and even as I am speaking to you today there are thousands of people writhing in the torment of war in another part of the world.

Even in our own country the post-independence generation to which I belong, the generation that came to maturity after independence, is groping for a new vision. Old traditions are collapsing, old leaders are disappearing. They no longer have the hold and the power over the minds of the younger generation. Old taboos, old teachings no longer have the magnetic



power that they once had. And we find the youth of the nation today groping vainly for a new integration, for a new light, for a new vision. It seems to me that this light and this vision has been provided to us for many many centuries. The light is there in the Vedas, in the Upaniṣads and in the whole history of this country, and the light was again revealed to us by Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. I would therefore in closing submit to this distinguished audience that when we

gather to pay homage to this great man we should not do so in any sense of ritual or mere formality, but we should try to understand the inner power that motivated Swami Vivekananda, the glowing vision that he had before him. We should try and look within and see whether we cannot even at this late hour rededicate ourselves to the principles for which Swami Vivekananda stood, and reintegrate our lives around the glowing philosophy that he preached for us and for all mankind.

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## RATIONAL AND NON-RATIONAL ELEMENTS IN RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

DR. S. N. L. SHRIVASTAVA

The publication in the twenties of the present century of Dr. Rudolph Otto's *Das Heilige*, known in the English translation as *The Idea of the Holy*, has created a stir in religious thinking and orientated a new approach to religious experience, as perhaps no other book of contemporary times has done. It is a widespread opinion that the success of the book lies in its having vindicated in a powerful and unique manner the validity of religious experience against rationalistic attacks by showing the essentially non-rational nature of religious experience. While some think that this is the chief merit of the book, there have not been wanting critics who have criticized Otto for having given an account of religious experience slanting unduly towards the non-rational than towards the rational.

Prof. G. Dawes Hicks, for example, says :

'I am unable, then, to look upon Otto's attempt sharply to distinguish what is essentially characteristic of religious experience from the rational and the moral

as any more satisfactory than other attempts of a similar kind have been ... Otto's way of taking the "numinous" as purely non-rational and the rational as consisting merely of concepts, involves an abstraction which precludes him even from so much as indicating any middle term by which to bring them into union. Treat the "numinous" as strictly non-rational, and it is simply incomprehensible how it could ever be clothed with the ideas of goodness, mercy and love'. (*The philosophical Bases of Theism*, pp. 139-40)

Prof. H. J. Paton, in Chapter IX of his book, *The Modern Predicament*, subjects Otto's account of religious experience to a scathing criticism and attempts to bring out the contradictions inherent in that account. The central doctrine of Otto, as Prof. Paton puts it, is this 'that non-rational numinous feeling is an essential element in religious experience and is part of its compelling power. By calling it "numinous" he wishes to insist that it is not dependent on theoretical or moral

concepts, but is something original and even primitive. The crux of his doctrine lies in the claim that by numinous feeling it is possible to apprehend both the existence and value of a corresponding numinous object'. (*The Modern Predicament* p. 133) What baffles Prof. Paton is just this crux of Otto's doctrine that numinous feeling can apprehend God. 'The crucial question for philosophy', says Prof. Paton, 'is the claim that by numinous feeling he [the religious man] is able to apprehend the existence of God. So far as divination is a feeling, or a source of feelings, we have to face the difficulty that no mere emotion can by itself give us knowledge of the existence of God.' (*ibid.*, p. 143)

The relation of the non-rational to the rational element in Otto's account of religious experience is to Paton, as to other critics, precisely the most baffling aspect of it. Otto, on the one hand, Paton points out, speaks of 'a unique original feeling-response', the numinous feeling which is non-rational and non-conceptual, as the 'real inmost core' of religion at all its levels; and on the other, he attempts to relate this numinous feeling to human reason. To quote Prof. Paton's words:

'At times he speaks as if no intellectual justification of religious "intuition" is possible; but he also wishes to show that it is at least not unreasonable to believe in a transcendent reality which is the object revealed to numinous feeling; and his account of the special faculty of divination and of its relation to human reason is partly directed towards this end. Hence the first question before us is this—Does he rest belief in God's existence on reason or on divination?' (*ibid.*, p. 141)

Prof. Paton pin-points the following chief difficulties in Otto's exposition of the subject:

(1) Granted that there is a special and

unique kind of religious feeling, which though having likeness to is yet distinguishable from aesthetic rapture or moral exaltation, and may be termed 'the faculty of divination'. The difficulty is to understand how this faculty of divination 'although originating in feeling, is aware both of a transcendent reality and of its objective value, and is even able to grasp and appraise itself.' (*ibid.*, p. 136)

(2) The other difficulty which Paton has found in Otto's account is the latter's attempt to make the non-rational related to and permeated by the rational by resorting to the Kantian terminology of the *á priori*.

Paton is intrigued, as any reader of Otto is apt to be intrigued, by the latter's assumption, on the one hand, that the numinous feeling is a *feeling*, something distinctively non-rational and his insistence, on the other, that the numinous 'is completely permeated and saturated with elements signifying rationality, purpose, personality, morality'.

How is the permeation of the non-rational by the rational to be explained? To do this Otto follows or borrows the Kantian methodology of the *á priori* and schematization. The complex category of the holy with its rational and non-rational elements is an *á priori* category, having its roots in the hidden depths of Spirit itself. This borrowing of terms from Kant, Paton holds, is inappropriate, in so far the concepts of *á priori* in Kant are totally different. There are two classes of the concept of *á priori* in Kant. One is that of the Ideas of Reason—Ideas with a capital I. These are concepts of the absolute or unconditioned and as we can never experience anything absolute or unconditioned, Ideas by definition can have *no* object in experience. Of the other class of the *á priori* are the 'categories of the understanding' which apply *only* to objects



of spatial and temporal experience and therefore no category can be predicated of God.

'Otto' says Paton, 'lumps together Ideas and Categories—he uses the words interchangeably—and assumes (by twisting the meaning of both) that the category or the Idea of "the holy" can give us knowledge of an object which transcends ordinary experience altogether.' (ibid., p. 139)

## II

I have cited above two critics of Otto's exposition of the nature of religious experience who have attempted to point out what they consider to be the weak-points or short-comings in Otto's treatment of the subject. The chief defect in Otto's exposition, according to G. Dawes Hicks, is his characterization of religious experience as purely and essentially non-rational, something sharply distinguished from the rational and the moral. Paton also notices a similar emphasis in Otto's exposition and wonders how a feeling as such, however exalted and unique it may be, can give us a *knowledge* of the existence of God and could enable us to apply rational attributes to God. Paton's further complaint is this that Otto's attempt to bridge the gulf between the non-rational and the rational or to synthesize the two by the appraisal of the holy as a complex *à priori* category, after the Kantian fashion, is a misapplication of the Kantian technique.

Let us see how far these criticisms are justified. Otto does indeed give prominence to what he calls the 'non-rational' elements in religious experience, but what precisely he means by the non-rational must be clearly borne in mind if we are to understand his position aright. It is of the highest importance to remember that he does not mean by the non-rational the infra-rational or something so opaque to reason that it could never be articulated

through rational concepts. This he has made clear beyond a doubt. Even the mystic's 'ineffable', he tells us, 'does not really mean to imply that absolutely nothing can be asserted of the object of the religious consciousness; otherwise, Mysticism could exist only in unbroken silence, whereas what has generally been a characteristic of the mystics is their copious eloquence'. (Rudolph Otto: *The Idea of the Holy*, p. 2) He is definitely inclined to 'count this the very mark and criterion of a religion's high rank and superior value that it should have no lack of *conceptions* about God; that it should admit knowledge—the knowledge that comes by faith of the transcendent in terms of conceptual thought ...' (ibid., p. 1) What, then, does he mean by the non-rational? By the non-rational he means the supra-rational. When Otto says that the elements of religious or numinous experience are non-rational, he does not mean to say that these elements cannot be articulated through rational concepts, but this that even when done so, they would immeasurably be exceeding our human restrictions and limitations; they would carry with them an overplus of meaning. For want of any other word available for the purpose, Otto, it appears, was obliged to use the word feeling to indicate the complex and unusual mode of knowing peculiar to religious experience. That Otto never regarded his numinous feeling as feeling, pure and simple, is also clear from the way in which he differentiates his own position from that of Schleiermacher. After explaining Schleiermacher's description of religious experience in terms of 'intuitions' and 'feelings' (*Anschauungen* and *Gefühle*), Otto adds this significant remark: 'and for all Schleiermacher's aversion to the word in this connexion they must certainly be termed *cognitions*, modes of *knowing*, though, of

course, not the product of reflection, but the intuitive outcome of feeling. Their import is the glimpse of an Eternal, in and beyond the temporal and penetrating it, the apprehension of a ground and meaning of things in and beyond the empirical and transcending it'. (ibid., p. 151)

Granting therefore the possibility of religious experience being expressed in rational terms, Otto asks us 'to be on our guard against an error which would lead to a wrong and one-sided interpretation of religion. This is the view that the essence of deity can be given completely and exhaustively in such "rational" attributes as have been referred to above and in others like them'. (ibid., p. 2).

A word may finally be said about Professor Paton's objection to Otto's borrowing of the *á priori* terminology of Kant and his twisting its meaning in his religious context. It is, of course, obvious and indisputable that Otto has pressed into service the Kantian terminology of the *á priori*—even if we say he has 'borrowed' it, it is no discredit to him—but he has extended (not *twisted*) the meaning and the application of the *á priori* beyond the Kantian ranges. All honour goes to Kant for having brought to light the role of the *á priori* in the mechanism of knowledge

but his *á priori*—the Ideas of Reason and the Categories of the Understanding—has its drive and roots in 'thinking' whereas Otto's *á priori* category of the Holy has its drive and roots in the Spirit itself. It is not the huddling together of the Kantian Ideas of Reason and the Categories of the Understanding, but a higher *á priori* of a higher range of experience, experience *ne plus ultra*,—the mystical experience.

Why should Professor Paton, with all due deference to his vast erudition in Kant, deny the possibility of a higher *á priori* than those pointed to by Kant? The Ideas of Reason may simply leave us with a purely speculative vindication of the absolute or the unconditioned and present no corresponding object; but spiritual illumination *does* present the Object. In pointing to the reality and the role of the higher *á priori*, the *á priori* of spiritual experience, applicable, as the Kantian Categories of the Understanding are not, to a reality transcending all that is known and not yet known but could be known in future in the world of space and time (*Viditād adhi aviditādadhi*, as the Upaniṣads have put it), Otto has broken a new ground in the field of the epistemology of the religious or mystical experience.

## THE CONCEPT OF ETERNITY

DR. G. S. HERBERT

'The word eternity—meant originally endlessness of time which must count, therefore, as its literal meaning. But in its religious and metaphysical use it is a *metaphor* for the characteristic of the experience. For in that experience time drops away and is no more seen.' (Stace: *Time and Eternity*,

p. 76) Thus there are two ways of looking at eternity, one with reference to time as 'endlessness of time' and the other, eternity by itself 'without any reference to time'.

According to both the views, a distinction is made between a temporal order and an eternal order. To put it in the words of



Stace, 'There are two orders, the natural order which is the order of time, and the divine order, which is the order of eternity.' (ibid., p. 75) But there is an important difference between the two points of view. The literal view does not admit any contact between the two orders, whereas the religious view (if we are allowed to call it so) admits of a contact between the eternal and temporal orders. Let us elaborate and analyse these two points of view.

To consider the literal view first, a 'temporal order' would mean a 'limited time'—'fugitive time' as Heidegger (*Being and Time*, p. 478) would call it, and an eternal order would mean 'unlimited or endless time'. If so, it is really impossible to have any contact between the two orders. For, to consider time as being endless is to think of time as being extended, extended infinitely in terms of temporal length. In such a case, to the extent we can understand or grasp a temporal length, it is temporal order, and the temporal length beyond our grasp is the eternal order. Thus eternity would be an extension of time. Then the eternal would not be timelessness but an endless time. As the *Oxford English Dictionary* gives the meaning of eternity, this endlessness of time is specially taken to be in terms of future. But strictly speaking endlessness should refer to both future as well as past. As St. Thomas Aquinas says, 'eternity can be closed neither prospectively nor retrospectively.' (*Philosophical Texts*, p. 83)

This would correspond roughly to infinity of numbers. If we take No. 1 to indicate the present, we can extend to any extent by adding one more number to the right of it as 1, 11, 111, 1111, 11111, *ad infinitum*; or by putting a decimal point to the left of it and adding numbers between the decimal point and No. 1 as 1, .1, .11, .111, .1111, .11111 *ad infinitum*. In the same manner any temporal length, a second or an hour or an year is taken

to be the present and the past and the future extended, as being stretched in the opposite directions, starting from the temporal length taken as the present. This evidently implies a quantification of time.

If eternity is taken as an endless time, there does not seem to be much justification for the distinction between the temporal and eternal orders. If eternity is an extension of time to infinity, there is only one temporal order, parts of which we are able to grasp and the rest of it is beyond our comprehension. And as eternity is an extension of time, naturally, there is no possibility of any contact between the two orders of eternal and temporal, as there are no two orders. It is one and the same order looked at from two different points of view, limited and unlimited. The limited temporal order is what we call time and the unlimited temporal order is eternity.

Passing on to the religious view of eternity, eternal would mean not endless time but timelessness. Then eternal would be a denial of time, i.e. the notion of eternal would be entirely different from that of the temporal.

Let us try to understand what timelessness means. The essence of time is duration and diversity. To consider duration first, it means a temporal length. To endure is to be temporal. A given duration is a temporal length, a limited time. To be devoid of duration would mean to be without time or being timeless. Hence, *eternity as being timeless would mean durationless*. It will have no temporal length.

Then is eternity instantaneousness, an atomic now, devoid of any duration? 'Instantaneousness' and 'now' are temporal terms. So, the question does not seem to be proper. Eternity is neither instantaneous nor now. *No temporal term or characteristic can apply to it*. This follows from a strict adherence to the meaning of eternity as being timelessness.



At this stage it is easy to see the characteristic of diversity in relation to, eternity. Diversity means, past, present and future or '“before” and “after” in one' to put it in the words of Bradley. (*Appearance and Reality*, p. 34) Eternity will have no diversity, diversity being a temporal characteristic. As St. Thomas Aquinas says, eternity 'is entire all at once without any successiveness.' (*Philosophical Texts*, p. 83) If there is no successiveness, there is no possibility to have diversity. 'Eternity—has no before and after and is simultaneously entire'. (*ibid.*, p. 85) Thus eternity as timelessness would mean as that which is devoid of duration and diversity.

The religious thinkers who hold such a notion of eternity some how think that there is a point of inter-section or contact between the eternal and the temporal. They think so, for they identify the eternal with something pertaining to God and the temporal pertaining to man and the world. The former is a divine order and the latter is a human order. And as there is bound to be contact between God and man (the creator and the created), it is argued or taken for granted that there is contact between eternity and time. This view point may best be expressed with reference to Keirkegaard. Having strong Christian moorings Keirkegaard holds that there is a reconciliation between the eternal and temporal orders through Jesus Christ who is both God and man. He writes: 'In the person of Christ, God Himself enters into the zone of the existential. The immovable becomes a changing being, the eternal puts on temporal process, the supra-historical enters into history'. (Collins: *The Existentialists*, p. 15) Thus we find that the contact is between God and man and consequently between eternity and time. Let us further explain this point.

There is a real difficulty here for those who consider time and eternity as entities by themselves. For, if so, there can definite-

ly be no contact between the two. But eternity and time are not entities existing by themselves. Entities may have these characteristics, as for instance, God is eternal and man is temporal. So there can be contact between God and man only but the question of contact between time and eternity does not arise as there are no 'time' and 'eternity'. But in the sense that there is contact between the eternal God and the temporal man there is contact between the eternal and temporal orders.

Thus eternity is not infinite time, which would mean that eternity is just an extension of time. If eternity is only an extension of time, it would only be time and there is no need to have another concept of eternity. Eternity as timelessness seems to be a correct notion, Eternity is such an ultimate and simple notion that a definition cannot be given. A definition or a description also cannot be given as there is nothing like eternity. Eternity is the name we give to timelessness.

If the thesis that time is a construct of the self and things other than the self get the characteristics of time by the projection of the self is postulated, we can say that eternal is that on which we cannot project time. Now we know only of one entity, God on whom we cannot project time. It is open to have any number of such entities without being limited by our epistemological limitations.

However, it should be pointed out that eternity is not a mere negative concept. It is a positive concept as well. It is obtained at a moment of mystical illumination. In terms of language, it is negative, but in terms of experience, it is positive. Those who cannot have this experience cannot possibly deny eternity on the basis of lack of knowledge. Ignorance is no basis of denial of any thing. Several religious thinkers testify to have known eternity at a moment of mystical intuition of rare illumination. 'Within that single moment of time



are enclosed all eternity and all infinity'. nity as timelessness and as obtained in (Stace: *Time and Eternity*, p. 75) So eter- intuition seems to be a correct notion of it.

## NOTES AND COMMENTS

### IN THIS NUMBER

Swami Ananyananda is one of the former Joint Editors of the *Prabuddha Bharata*. The Swami who was for some-time the Assistant Secretary of the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Calcutta, was also one of the Editors of the *Vedanta for East and West*, the Journal published by the Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre, London. He is at present associated with the task of bringing out a new edition of *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*. His present article on 'Śrī Śaṅkara: His Life and Thought' adds to the value of the current issue, as Śaṅkara's birthday falls in this month.

Sri M. K. Venkatarama Iyer, M.A., formerly Head of the Department of Philosophy, Annamalai University, Madras focuses our attention on 'The Practical Aspects of Śrī Śaṅkara's Teaching'.

Dr. Karan Singh, Minister of Tourism and Civil Aviation, Government of India has a great admiration for the message

of Swami Vivekananda. The text of his speech, which appears in this issue in the form of the article entitled 'The Message of Swami Vivekananda', has come to us through the kind courtesy of Swami Swahananda, Head of the Ramakrishna Mission, New Delhi. We convey our thanks, in this connexion, to Dr. Karan Singh for the text which he has so kindly made available to us for publication in *Prabuddha Bharata*.

S. N. L. Shrivastava, M.A., D.Litt., is the Professor and Head of the Department of Philosophy, Vikram University, Ujjain. The article on 'Rational and Non-Rational Elements in Religious Experience' forms the text of a paper which Dr. Shrivastava read at the forty-first session of the Indian Philosophical Congress held at Benaras during the year 1967.

G. S. Herbert, M.A., Ph.D., of the Department of Philosophy, Sri Venkateswara University, Tirupati, writes here on 'The Concept of Eternity'.

# REVIEWS AND NOTICES

## ENGLISH

**A CRITICAL STUDY OF AUROBINDO.** BY L. G. CHINCHOLKAR. Ananda Bhavan, Tikekar Road, Dhantoli Nagpur. 1966. Pages 214. Price Rs. 21.

In this closely reasoned study, the author focuses his attention on the truth of spiritual evolution as developed by Sri Aurobindo. In the first section, he gives a general introduction to the philosophy of the seer of the Life Divine, examining several concepts peculiar to it viz. overmind, supermind, psychic being etc. He next proceeds to describe the process of spiritual evolution as envisaged here: an involution of the Divine Spirit in the Inconscient and its progressive emergence through the terms of matter, life, mind, psyche etc. to its original status of Sachchidānanda. A comparison of this theory of evolution with prominent theories on the subject, both in the West and the East, forms the subject-matter of the second section. The third section is devoted to an objective appraisal of the main tenets of this philosophy, especially the logic and soundness of Sri Aurobindo's interpretation of the cosmic manifestation in terms of a spiritual evolution.

The author underlines the rational approach of Sri Aurobindo to the problem of man and the universe and points out in what precise direction the limitations of Reason need to be transcended for an effective solution of the problem. The mind can grasp the situation but cannot overcome it on its own; the heart and the soul behind it have to step in for that purpose. Dr. Chincholkar does justice to his subject and this book can be safely recommended for a proper understanding of the Philosophy and Yoga of Sri Aurobindo.

M. P. PANDIT

**REFLECTIONS ON SCIENCE, PHILOSOPHY AND ART.** BY PRABHAS JIVAN CHAUDHURY. Progressive Publishers, College Street, Calcutta. 1966. Pages 175. Price Rs. 15.

This memorial volume containing 14 Papers of the late Dr. Chaudhury covers a wide field as indicated by the title. The author was a progressive thinker and believed in arriving at a synthesis in oneself before dealing with problems in humanities or the sciences. Throughout these essays, he tries to forge a bridge between Science and Metaphysics and seeks to impart the precision of the former to the latter and the plasticity of

the latter to the former. His writings on Indian Poetics, the concept of *rasa* and the role of catharsis in the inner evolution of man, are specially rewarding. There is an over-all perspective of totality.

The book is an educative publication.

M. P. PANDIT

**MYSTIC APPROACH TO THE VEDA AND THE UPANIṢAD.** BY M. P. PANDIT. Ganesh and co., Madras-17. Pages 127. Price Rs. 3.

In our country the Veda has enjoyed the position of pre-eminence as the highest authority in regard to matters supersensuous. They have been looked upon as the inspired utterances of great sages who had qualified themselves to receive the transcendental truths by a life of hard discipline and immaculate purity. They have transmitted to posterity the grand truths which were revealed to them. They have faithfully handed down to the generations coming after them what was, so to say, whispered into their ears. Hence comes the name *śruti*. Having received the eternal verities from above, the sages do not naturally claim to be their inventors or creators. Hence the Vedas are spoken as *apauruṣeya*, not owning their origin to any human author. It follows that they are completely free from the blemishes that generally pertain to human creations. This is the view that has all along prevailed in this land.

European scholars, however, lacking the background of tradition, read the Vedas from their own limited point of view and found them to be no more than the 'babblings of infant humanity'. Following them, some of our own men also began to underestimate them. Swami Dayananda Saraswati was the first to cry halt to this debunking tendency. He was followed by Sri Aurobindo to whom 'the *ṛsis* of old were not bards or poets of common clay, but inspired singers who poured out in living vocables the highest experiences and realizations of the soul'. He found that 'the *mantras* of the Veda were not of the usual human origin, but bespoke the presence of the Word beyond words'.

The sacrifices of which we hear so much in the *Samhitā* and *Brāhmaṇa* portions of the Veda have a deep spiritual significance. They are symbols of the supreme sacrifice by which the Puruṣa gave rise to the world. It is again by a supreme act of self-losing that the world must get back to its source. The lesser gods who preside over the



sacrifices are powers of the Supreme Puruṣa. The libations that are offered to them through Agni are tokens of the act of self-losing on the part of human beings. The *mantras* that are uttered have profound spiritual overtones. The Vedas, consequently, are 'pre-eminently scriptures of knowledge and practice of the art of God and science of soul'.

The book under review consists of six Chapters. The need for the new approach is made out clearly in the first Chapter. The next three Chapters bring out the deeper meaning of the *soma-sacrifice*. Superficially speaking, it simply consists in pressing the juice of the *soma* creeper, purifying it, mixing it with a little milk or honey, allowing it to ferment, making the offering to some god by reciting some *mantras* and then the priest quaffing it. But the whole procedure has a deeper meaning. 'The outer ritual was meant to hold and turn the minds of men in the mass to things godly, while to the initiates it seemed as a kind of scaffolding for the inner edifice under erection.' The draught of *soma* symbolizes the bliss which lies at the root of all existence. Since it is the essence of the inmost self, it is but fitting that it should be offered as the choicest gift to god. The author proves the correctness of Sri Aurobindo's interpretation, as stated above, by a close consideration of some typical hymns from the *Rg-Veda Samhitā*.

In Chapter V the author proves by a careful analysis that human sacrifice was not prevalent among the Āryans of the Vedic age. *Puruṣa-Medha* does not mean human sacrifice, but the going out, the manifestation, of the cosmic Puruṣa into the forms of the universe.

In the last Chapter, the author shows conclusively that the teachings of the Upaniṣads are certainly not in the nature of a revolt against the teachings of the *mantra* and *Brāhmaṇa* portion of the Veda but a logical continuation. European scholars are mistaken in thinking that the Kṣatriya kings led the revolt against Vedic ritualism merely because it is stated in some Upaniṣads that the new doctrines were taught by Kṣatriya kings. There is plenty of evidence within the Upaniṣads themselves that their teaching is the natural culmination of what is taught in the earlier portion of the Vedas.

It is a well-written book. Every important statement is supported by evidence.

M. K. VENKATARAMA IYER

## KANNADA

NĀGMAHĀŚAYA. BY S. C. CHAKRAVARTI. TRANSLATED BY A. R. KRISHNA SASTRI. Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, Bangalore. Pages 165. Price Rs. 2.50.

This is a moving biography of Nagamahashaya, an outstanding householder disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, who reached heights of Superconscience by sheer humility, self-abnegation and intense devotion. He was held in great esteem by Swami Vivekananda. Written originally in Bengali by a close associate of the saint, the book contains, among other interesting things, a profound observation of Girish Ghosh: 'Mahāmāyā sought to bind Naren and Nagamahashaya, but found herself in trouble. The more Naren was tied, the more huge he would grow; the rope of Māyā would never be sufficient. Finally, she had to give up. She went on to bind Nagamahashaya. But the more she tried to tie him, the more subtle he would turn. And finally he got so subtle that he escaped through the net of Māyā.'

The Kannada rendering is chaste and fluent.

M. P. PANDIT

## GERMAN

DAS PHANOMEN DES TODES IN DENKEN HEIDEGGERS UND IN DER LEHRE BUDDHAS. BY S. SUBHASH CHANDRA. Köln Univeritat. 1965. Pages 244.

This study on the Phenomenon of Death in the thought of Heidegger and in the Doctrine of Buddha is both penetrating and interesting. The writer first dwells upon Heidegger's thoughts about *Existence towards Death* and brings to the fore the philosopher's attempt to give Life its full value, its essence and transcendence. The next section deals with Buddha's personal meeting with Death and how he sought to overcome Death. There is a comparison between the views of both. The German philosopher does not seek to overcome Death but accepts it unlike Buddha, though he does not conceive of Death as a process of Life.

PETER STEIGER

## HINDI

ŚRĪMADBHAGAVAD GĪTĀ. TRANSLATED BY MOHANLAL SETHI. 174A Rajpur Road. Dehradun. Pages 176.

This is a handy pocket book containing the author's free Hindi rendering of the *Gītā*, verse

by verse, with helpful notes wherever found necessary. The introduction gives a rapid account of the background events that led to the crisis which called forth this supreme Utterance from the Lord. The book would have gained in value if the text (in Sanskrit) had been included in the brochure.

M. P. PANDIT

## SANSKRIT

GĪTĀ ŚĀSTRĀRTHA VIVEKAH. BY SACCHIDANANDENDRA SARASWATI. Adhyatma Prakash Karyalaya, Holenarsipur, Hassan District, Mysore. Pages 196.

The *Gītā* is one of the three texts on which the edifice of the Vedānta philosophy is erected. It is one of the *prasthāna-traya* and consequently it carries the same authority as the Upaniṣads and the *Vedānta-Sūtras*. It enjoys a wide popularity not only in this land but in other lands as well. Though the text is fairly simple, it has been interpreted over and over again by different commentators. There is not one civilized language into which it has not been translated. The *Gītā* therefore has become a world-scripture.

But this popularity is not an unmixed blessing. The author of the *Gītā* has had to pay a heavy price for it. There is no end to the interpretations that are placed on it. People, who are on the look out for some śāstraic support for their pet theories, easily think of the *Gītā*, because some stray verses, by reason of their ambiguous construction, seem to lend support to their *ip se dixits*. Seeing that politicians and sociologists have sought to foist their new-fangled notions on the *Gītā*, it is no matter for wonder that the protagonists of the cult of *bhakti* have attempted to find full support for their conclusions. In the midst of this bewildering maze of interpretations and counter-interpretations, the ordinary, unsophisticated, reader finds himself at sea.

Of the commentaries, Śrī Śaṅkara's is not only the oldest but also the most authentic one. The work of a commentator is by no means an easy job. His business is not only to give the plain meaning of the text but also to bring together all the

most important and relevant texts into a coherent system. Nothing that is important should be ignored. To effect such a comprehensive synthesis, a broad hypothesis is necessary. Nothing short of a wide philosophy of life can take within itself all the different shades of thought that are expressed in the *Gītā*. With his panoramic outlook on life and his deep insight into the vexed problems that confronted human beings, Śrī Śaṅkara has been able to interpret the *Gītā* in a most natural manner. In his ample structure, every stanza in the *Gītā* sets in its proper place. Every unbiased reader will bear witness to this fact.

Of late there has been a tendency to discredit Śrī Śaṅkara's interpretation saying that it is too far-fetched and metaphysical. By pointing to the particular context in which the teaching was imparted to Arjuna by Lord Kṛṣṇa, critics make out that the main emphasis of the *Gītā* is on ethics and not on metaphysics. In so far as the ethical teaching implies a metaphysical background, the notion of a Personal God will serve the purpose. Śrī Śaṅkara's views regarding the metaphysics and ethics of the *Gītā* are therefore dismissed as unwarranted by the text.

In the face of such criticism, a book like the one under review is to be specially welcomed. It is essentially a call back to Śaṅkara. It is a clear and lucid defence of the correctness of Śrī Śaṅkara's interpretation. It points out that the *Gītā* is in full conformity with the teachings of the classical Upaniṣads such as the *Chāndogya* and *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*. The terms 'Sāṃkhya' and 'Yoga' should not mislead us. They bear a different meaning altogether in the *Gītā*. Similarly, the use of some technical terms associated with the Sāṃkhya system should not lead us to imagine that in the *Gītā* we have a theistic restatement of classical Sāṃkhya. The author has shown that the *Gītā* is in line with the Vedānta and has no truck with the Sāṃkhya. He presents the authenticity of Śrī Śaṅkara's interpretation in a very convincing manner. He wields a simple and easy style. The book is worth a most careful study.

M. K. VENKATARAMA IYER



## NEWS AND REPORTS

### RAMAKRISHNA MISSION ASHRAMA, ASANSOL

REPORT FOR 1964-66

The activities of the centre during the period under review were as follows:

*Cultural and Religious:* Daily worship and prayer etc. in the Ashrama shrine; observance of the important annual festivals such as *Durgā pūjā*, *Kālī pūjā*, *Sarasvatī pūjā* and *Viśvakarmā pūjā*; and celebration of the birthday anniversaries of Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda and the Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi were the main activities of the centre. The birthdays of prophets like Buddha and Christ were also observed duly. Scriptural classes were held on Sundays for the public at the Ashrama premises as well as at Dhanbad, Durgapur, Kumardhubi and at Ramakrishna Sangha, Asansol.

*Philanthropic:* The centre granted relief to the distressed students by rendering help in cash, and with gifts of books. Many distressed people were also served with meals. During this period,

the needy persons were rendered help to the extent of Rs. 2,500.

*Educational:* The centre runs a Higher Secondary Multipurpose School with three streams—Humanities, Science and Technology and two Junior Basic Schools. The numbers of the students on the rolls during 1964-65 and 1965-66 were 1099 and 1153 respectively. Every effort was taken to mould the character of the students through cultural, moral and religious instructions. The results in the Higher Secondary examinations were uniformly brilliant. In 1965, the success was 100 per cent and in 1966, it was 98.78 per cent. There were 5,814 books in the library during the close of the period and the reading room received 20 journals and 3 dailies.

*Students' Home:* 37 boys were accommodated in the Students' Home of the centre. A few poor students enjoyed free boarding and lodging. 40 boys reading in classes V to VIII were maintained in a private hostel started by the Central Relief Committee.

*Public Library:* At the end of the period, there were altogether 1000 books in the Library maintained for the public.

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