



# Prabuddha Bharata

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

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## THE UNIVERSAL CALL OF RELIGIONS

This is the eternal glory of Brahman: It neither increases nor decreases through work. One should know the nature of That alone. Knowing It one is not touched by evil action.

Therefore he who knows It as such becomes self-controlled, calm, withdrawn into himself, patient, and collected; he sees the Self in his own self (body); he sees all as the Self. Evil does not overcome him, but he overcomes all evil. Evil does not affect him, but he consumes all evil. He becomes sinless, taintless, far from doubts and a true Brāhmaṇa (knower of Brahman).

*Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad IV. 4.23*

If one makes confession of the religion of the Wise One and resolves never to commit forbidden deeds then his sin is taken from him.

*Vendidad 3.41*

Constant action overcomes cold; being still overcomes heat. Purity and stillness give the correct law to all under heaven.

*Tao Teh King 45.2*

He who covereth his sins, shall not prosper, whoso confesseth and forsaketh them, shall have mercy.

*Old Testament: Proverbs, 28.13.*

Those who, when they do a crime or wrong themselves, remember God and ask forgiveness for their sins, and do not persevere in what they did, the while they know,—these have their rewards, pardon from the Lord.

*Koran 3.129*

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## ONWARD FOR EVER!

*The whole world worships ease and pleasure and very few dare to worship that which is painful. To rise above both is the idea of freedom. Unless man passes through this gate he cannot be free. We all have to face these. We strive to worship the Lord, but the body rises between, nature rises between Him and us and blinds our vision. We must learn how to worship and love Him in the thunderbolt, in shame, in sorrow, in sin. All the world has ever been preaching the God of virtue. I preach a God of virtue and a God of sin in one. Take Him if you dare—that is the one way to salvation; then alone will come to us the Truth Ultimate which comes from the idea of oneness. Then will be lost the idea that one is greater than another. The nearer we approach the law of freedom, the more we shall come under the Lord, and troubles will vanish. Then we shall not differentiate the door of hell from the gate of heaven, nor differentiate between men . . . . Until we see nothing in the world but the Lord Himself, all these evils will beset us and we shall make all these distinctions; because it is only in the Lord, in the Spirit that we are all one; and until we see God everywhere, this unity will not exist for us.*

*Swikhandh*

## TOWARD PEACE FOR A MEANINGFUL FUTURE

## I

Even a casual observer cannot fail to notice the global tensions arising out of national aggrandizements and animosities and marked by atrocious attacks and deplorable loss of lives and resources in this civilized century. The high grounds of culture and civilization won so far have long been in peril of being swept by the scourge of war.

Powers, big or small, overtly or covertly involve themselves in the conflicts with a view to manipulate the political and economic forces in their favour and augment their position of power despite their protestations of peace and co-existence. The state of war, cold or hot, that is allowed to go on in different areas of the world is a distressing sign of snag in human relations inconsistent with the unprecedented progress claimed for our era. The sizable sums that are allotted to defence and security in the budgets of countries today are unwarranted anomalies in view of the presence of widespread poverty and illiteracy.

The temptation of even poor nations to resort to arms budget has drawn the attention of the U.N. Secretary-General U. Thant. In a message to the opening of the forty-seventh session of the U.N. Economic and Social Council on the 14th of July 1969 he said: 'Aside from the enormous waste—and dangers—of the arms race between the super powers, we should pay more attention to the reality of the military postures of so many poor countries. The proportion of the meagre national resources devoted to military budget by several developing countries is high.'<sup>1</sup> He also warned: 'The Governments of countries which are not in

<sup>1</sup>The *Hindusthan Times*, 16 July 1969.



a position to meet, even partly, the expectations of their people for a better life, may be tempted to resort to some adventurism to relieve the pressures exerted on them.'<sup>2</sup> The military adventurism is too alluring for developing nations to refrain them from armament budgeting. It is a libel on humanity that staggering amounts of wealth and resources are spent on armaments while millions do not have even the basic necessities of life and more than half the population of the world suffers from hunger, malnutrition and disease. The huge sums spent on military personnel and installations could well be expended to feed, clothe, house and educate the needy, if mankind knew how to outgrow the habit of going into wasteful and senseless wars.

On the other hand, political leaders are not lacking whose attitude of balance of terror adds insult to injury. Little do they realize the tragic result that such a shortsighted policy will lead to—devastation of cities and countries, unbearable sufferings of human beings, not to speak of demoralization and death. Of late, the super powers' production and stockpiling of chemical and bacteriological weapons capable of inflicting death, paralysis, and untold suffering hit the headlines. The worst of it is that these nerve killers are undetectable, since they can neither be seen nor smelt and modern delivery methods dart forth large quantities of gases. The world has yet unfortunately found no defence or antidote against these deadly weapons.

The question could rightly be asked: Why do nations persist in manufacturing and stocking these killers? Of the malignant afflictions that have come upon mankind, nothing would be so self-destructive as involvement in warfares, in which perfected precision lethal weapons of indescribable destructive power will be used. As nations

tend to assume military postures with these weapons, the bleak prospect presents itself: the last world war may not perhaps be the last great war in the series. With the memory of the horrible experiences that mankind had to pass through at that time, one is in great dread of the future, for the power of internecine war is on the increase. The utter ruination of the human species is now almost certain if mankind failed to devise ways of resolving conflicts without taking to arms.

## II

As one reviews the progress of war down to modern times, one comprehends how the religious fanaticism that characterized the early stages of man's history has yielded place to fiercer fanaticism of nationalism and how under its spell the nations today are arming themselves to the teeth unmindful of, but in response as it were to, the wily snares of some sardonic and suicidal stimulus. Although advancement of technology and development of speedy communication have made propitious a climate for internationalism, it is a strange paradox that technology is exploited with a frenzy for reaching out to new dimensions of destructive capacity of armaments and for serving the side of parochialism inimical to world understanding.

Now that the earth has in effect become smaller, there is the deadly danger of its being infested by the virus of violence. Unless held at bay, the forces of narrow nationalism, racial bigotry, political acrimony and economic self-interest threaten to grow sufficiently strong to spark off a conflagration. The more the militarism, the greater its grip on man. Such is the potency of the sword that those who take it perish by it. This gospel truth given by Jesus Christ is no less inexorable today. Proliferation of armament is but a sign of proliferation of the stranglehold on mankind by

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.



the evil spirits of greed and aggression. In the initial stage war appears quite attractive for tempting the belligerents to mobilize their forces. Its deadly character is scarcely visible nor the insidious way it establishes its stranglehold on the victims is recognizable until it takes a heavy toll of lives and destroys the fruits of man's industry.

History bears witness to the breakdowns of civilizations caused chiefly by the engine of war. Arnold Toynbee writes: 'Militarism has been by far the commonest cause of the breakdowns of civilizations during the four or five millennia which have witnessed the score or so of breakdowns that are on record up to the present date. Militarism breaks a civilization down by causing the local states into which the society is articulated to collide with one another in destructive internecine conflicts. In this suicidal process, the entire social fabric becomes fuel to feed the devouring flame in the brazen bosom of Molech. The single art of war makes progress at the expense of all the arts of peace; and, before this deadly ritual has completed the destruction of its votaries they may have become so expert in the use of their implements of slaughter that, if they happen for a moment to pause in their orgy of mutual destruction and to turn their weapons for a season against the breasts of strangers, they are apt to carry all before them.'<sup>3</sup> In view of the verdict of history and the horrors of last war, one shudders to think any more in terms of war. Obviously, prudence consists in putting an end to all that smacks of it and earnestly working for the cessation of the present conflicts.

### III

Against this, it is, however, contended

that the institution of war by its survival and service down the ages has proved itself a necessity, that it is not intrinsically an evil and that it has evoked in soldiers the noble virtues like valour and sacrifice. Down the ages it inspired the warriors to heroic action. And the display of their heroic qualities contributed in no small measure in saving the country to which they belonged from the aggression of foreign enemies. Fighting was all along a common occurrence and the hero's leadership was welcomed and willingly submitted to. The glorification of war as an article of faith is thus justified.

Well, the sinister and wicked nature of militarism is unveiled in its nakedness when we recall the devilish designs of warlords like Hitler to bring the whole world under their thumb and set their feet without compunction on the necks of the dissenters. And what cruelty and barbarity did they not perpetrate? Their religion was nothing more than the primitive idolatrous worship of the tribe or State; their ritual, violent indoctrination or forcible conversion to their faith of chauvinism; their creed, military devastation and massacre.

With regard to the virtues exhibited in the warfield, is there not a vast field in the world where incessant war needs to be waged against poverty and illiteracy, narrow loyalty and bigotry, crime and violence, exploitation and oppression in the political, economic, social and religious realms? It summons up great heroic qualities to combat these enemies and this struggle brings good to the people in its train. But wars have spelt ruin in their wake, enticing the victor and the vanquished alike to wage more and more wars *ad infinitum*. In the face of such facts how can one admit that war is not an evil? It is true that there was a time when it was considered a necessity. But in the chang-

<sup>3</sup> Arnold J. Toynbee: *War and Civilization*, Oxford University Press, London, 1951, p. 130.



ed conditions of modern times, no country is far or foreign and none is barbarian or alien; nor is there need for the gruesome institution of war. 'There is hardly any occurrence or phenomenon about which we need always be of the same mind', wrote G. F. Nicolai in *The Biology of War*, 'if we trace it back through the ages. That is, no evil was originally an evil, but only became so ... Many ... instances of things originally good, but which have outlived their purpose, could be quoted; and among them perhaps we might include War. Like everything which has life, war never remains stationary, but is always developing. Animals did not wage war, but human beings did, and our descendants—the "supermen", as Goethe and Nietzsche call them—will cease to do so.'<sup>4</sup>

#### IV

To save mankind, this cessation of war has to be brought about by all means befitting the dignity of humanity. Two broad methods are discussed here for the purpose, one at the level of the State or society and the other at that of the individual. The statesmen in charge of governments and leaders of societies, irrespective of the party or creed to which they individually belong, should be helped by the thinkers of that country and other lands to develop a common sense working world-view, if not a philosophical world-view. They should be guided to look beyond the immediate interest which often ill serve the true enduring interests of their own States or societies. This would not mean neglect of, but deeper devotion to duties to their own States or societies. They should be enabled to see the fact that we all live in an interdependent world and that to look upon other States or societies with suspicion or

enmity, distrust or fear is like biting one's own hands, for as integral parts of one body, each is striving for its own development and withal contributing its share to the development of the entire body, in other words, to the progress of the world.

The leaders of one country will then learn to see that their activities for their people in no way affect, much less jeopardize, those of the leaders of other communities or countries. It will then be realized that the aim of all leaders should be to work harmoniously and to help one another to the best of their might. This calls for an understanding not only of the problems of their own countries but all the countries of the world, developed, developing or backward, in a broad perspective. The knowledge that in the ultimate analysis war is suicidal and nations stand or fall together will be a filip to them not only to renounce their aggressive attitudes but also to understand, sympathize and aid one another in a joint undertaking to advance the interests of the entire mankind from the national and international standpoints. In effect it will lead to the purposive recognition of the dignity and rights of human beings the world over, however divergent they are racially, politically and socially.

If this would appear Utopian and impossible of achievement, one has only for a moment to consider how we have reached the present stage of civilization which our forbears did not think feasible of attainment. Even moon is made accessible to man today. The same endeavour, enterprise and sacrifice as characterized the onward march of man are needed in this case also. The main issue will not be lost sight of when we ask ourselves the question: Is the State meant for man or *vice versa*? Is it not the cause of man, wherever and wherever he is, that the State must subserve? If mankind is to be saved and the welfare of human beings is to be

<sup>4</sup> Cited by Arnold Toynbee in *War and Civilization*, p. 22.



ensured, we have to pay the price commensurate with our objective.

In these days of democratic and socialistic trends, there is the compelling necessity to understand that narrow nationalistic or totalitarian thinking is outdated and disastrous even from the crass selfish point of view. The earlier the leaders learn to move with the times, the better for their country and humanity. They owe a moral responsibility to mankind as a whole and have to take upon themselves the ennobling task of leading their folk to wide horizons of world fellowship in which alone is true security of mankind. It is prudent for the statesmen at the helm of government to take counsel with the broad-minded men in order to eschew the war-path and establish lasting peace. It should be clearly seen that men of brain trust need not only have brains but hearts as well. Too much brains make things as complicated as the brain itself. Heart can show out the way where brain fails. By sincerely working for peace, the great as well as small powers will make history and lay the foundation for a stable future. By virtue of the vast resources and power in the hands of the big powers, great responsibility rests on them for the least inadvertence on their part is likely to lead to dire disaster to all human beings including their own people. Therefore working for enduring peace has become the first imperative of the law of survival.

## V

At the level of the individual, man has larger scope and indeed greater need for translating the ideal into practice, for it is the individuals who constitute the State and the policy of the State but reflects the united will of the citizens. The individual may be compared to the root while the society to the tree. Just as by watering the root the whole tree is benefited, so also by educating

the individual we educate the society or the nation. Perpetual peace is conceivable in the frame of eternal unity of mankind. It is easy to comprehend that unity makes for love, amity and peace whereas difference is the cause of opposites. Our education in diverse arts and sciences imparts to us the knowledge of the complex variety in nature; the more specialized the science, the more diversified is the knowledge we get. There is no gainsaying the fact of multifarious variety in the cosmos. But, to base the concepts of love and peace on firm foundation we also need an education which treats of the essential, fundamental unity at the back and as cement of the perplexing diversity. Where can we have this education? Luckily for humanity, we have such a knowledge in Vedanta. While admitting the manifold multiplicity from the empirical point of view, it brings to light the unity of all existence including mankind. Brahman is the Ultimate Universal Entity, the Supreme Essence, the Source, Support and Goal of all things. It is the Life-Principle, Immortal, Peace Eternal and Bliss Infinite. There is nothing that is not Brahman. Man is verily That.

Such is the vivifying wisdom that Vedanta brings to the war-torn world. Such is the elevating knowledge mankind is badly in need of today for being able to pursue its upward pilgrimage to perfection. All men are united, nay one, in Brahman. Here is the basis—an unshakable, everlasting basis—for the establishment of enduring peace on earth. A doubt naturally arises in the mind: if man is essentially Brahman that is the ground of everything, how is it that man injures man? Why does one nation wage war with another as if they were different? Vedanta replies: because of our ignorance of Brahman, the Centre of our being and the universe. The further a man moves away from the Centre, the greater is the divergence, estrangement and tension.

The more he approaches It, the more he is at peace with himself, with his neighbour and with the world.

The sun of the Self is veiled as it were by thick layers of clouds creating the illusion of gloom and cold. Self-realization is the unveiling of the innermost Self. The path to peace and goodwill lies in our awareness of the Self by the removal of the cover hiding It. Somehow we are hypnotized into thinking that one man is different from another. This is the root cause of ill will and enmity. What is needed is dehypnotization culminating in the realization that I and my neighbour are one. The individual's highest duty is to do his best for attaining this realization and abiding peace comes in the process.

If wars begin in the minds of men, they have also to end there. Mind is the source of war as well as peace. The individual has to discipline his mind and be a master, not a slave, of it so that he may freely think and work in terms of peace in the face of inimical forces. In every individual there is an inherent capacity to control and change his thoughts and acts; only it is waiting as it were to be summoned up and manifested with a strong will.

According to Vedanta, we are responsible for what we are; again the power to make ourselves and thereby the world what we want them to be must come not from some outside agency but from us. We are the architects of our destiny. If we have made

war a norm of our time, we can certainly unmake it. But mere wishing does not suffice, vigorous endeavour, is called for from every individual. The Vedantic knowledge of oneness of all beings is to be imbibed at every stage of life—as a suckling child, as a playing boy or girl, as a learning student, as a citizen of the State and as an old man sans teeth. The unifying wisdom needs to be imparted in the home, school, field, factory and office. When one is imbued with the wisdom of oneness or sameness, one becomes an irresistible power for peace. Śrī Kṛṣṇa teaches: 'They indeed have conquered (relative) existence even in this life whose mind has become fixed in sameness. God is pure and same to all; therefore they are said to be in God.'<sup>5</sup> When such individuals inhabiting the world will grow in number, naturally the world will become a more peaceful place to live in. With the State or society comprising them as the citizens, leaders or statesmen, war will gradually become a memory of the past. And the huge expenditure on armaments thus saved will then have a better chance of being wisely diverted to constructive and welfare projects.

The wisdom of Vedanta holds the key not only to personal peace, but also to world peace and necessarily a more meaningful future for the entire mankind.

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<sup>5</sup> *Bhagavad-Gītā* V. 19.



# LETTERS OF A SAINT

THE BLESSED FEET OF THE GURUDEVA,  
MY REFUGE

Sri Ramakrishna Advaita Ashrama  
Luxa, Benares City  
14.12.1912

Dear Sri

I have received your letter dated the 10th. I have had no information of you for quite a long time. However, I am happy to learn that you are now keeping good health.

Never desist from thinking on God. Whether you get joy or not, go on practising concentration and meditation every day in a regular manner. If you can do so single-mindedly, you will again experience bliss etc.

Vyāsadeva has said: When there is disorder of biles, sugar does not taste well in the mouth. But if one goes on earnestly eating sugar every day, then the ailment of biles gets cured and gradually sugar also begins tasting good. Likewise, the blemish of nescience (avidyā) robs us of the relish for adoration of God. But if one lovingly practises repetition of Lord's name, concentration and meditation every day, then the blemish of ignorance leaves him and love of God is also generated within. Therefore never desist from the practice of meditation and adoration. On the other hand you must certainly practise them, as a result of

which you will again derive joy from them.

Why do you pay so much attention towards the fruits (of action)? Go on doing your work. People in the world pay for labours done, and will not God pay [for labours done for His sake]? Work on. What will it avail always complaining: 'nothing has happened', or 'nothing is happening'? Rather, if you go on working quietly, in time fruits will materialize of themselves. Ramprasad has said :

'Be like a [hereditary] farmer in your work

Work on with the greatest care and you will get precious gems.'

That is all. Patience is needed. Do fruits appear as soon as you sow the seed? What is wanted is patience; it is only after putting forth a lot of exacting efforts by way of protecting the seeds, watering, weeding, and saving the plants from the attacks of goats and cattle by fencing them off, that the harvest is reaped.

What more to write?

With my best wishes for you and all others,

Your well-wisher  
Sri Turiyananda







## PROFILES IN GREATNESS

### HUMILITY OF THE GREAT

'And there was Swami Saradananda...as the Secretary of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, an indefatigable worker and easily the most balanced man in the whole Order. With his gentle manner, musical voice, reasoned talk, facile pen, tender heart and, above all, his even temper under all circumstances, born of deep spiritual introspection, he was the sheet-anchor of the organization... Upon his strength of character was to be erected the Master's vast edifice. Once he (Sri Ramakrishna) had playfully sat in Sharat's lap, and on rising up had remarked, "I was testing how much weight he could bear!"' This is how the historian of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission refers to Swami Saradananda or Sharat Maharaj as he was otherwise called.

'I shall have no difficulty as long as Sharat lives. I do not see any body else who can shoulder my burden... Only Sharat can'. Such was the categorical opinion of the Holy Mother of the Ramakrishna Order, Sarada Devi.

Swami Vivekananda, the great leader, himself had such an absolute confidence in 'Sharat' that it was to this trusted lieutenant that he would entrust tasks of the greatest responsibility; the culmination of it all was making him the executive head of the Organization, the Secretary of the Order, a

singularly delicate and onerous assignment. And Swami Saradananda rose to the occasion and justified the confidence placed in him as few could have.

The secret of his stamina was a true humility, an utter lack of egotism, founded on a living spiritual outlook, which would respect truth wherever it was found, and give respect wherever it was due, irrespective of the personal status of the individual.

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For the Holy Mother's residence in Calcutta, the Swami took the initiative to build a house, which became the 'Udbodhan Office'. In order to defray the expenses incurred he wrote his classical book, *Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master*. In all respects he was the managing guardian of the establishment. But from the beginning to the end he considered it only as the 'Mother's House' and that he was only her servant. He would declare, 'I am her door-keeper' and actually conducted himself as such.

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As the executive head of a religious order he had to face many special and sensitive problems needing for their handling both secular and spiritual ability. At one time there arose serious misunderstandings and bickerings among the workers of



a centre. The Swami proceeded there, stayed with the workers, studied the situation and talked with them all—juniors and seniors—freely, inspiring them with the true spirit of service. A junior novice, however, rose up and complained that he was overworked, that he could not reconcile himself to the duty of collecting food-grains from house to house for serving the needy patients.

Without a word the Swami took up the bag for begging and himself set out on the errand; that is how he gave his most eloquent discourse on the dignity of labour and of dedication to duty.

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As the esteemed Secretary of the Order, he commanded the love and reverence of all the workers to such an extent that his slightest desire would be fulfilled with the utmost veneration. Yet such was his true democratic spirit and humility that he was ever open to suggestion from any quarter, nay even to correction, be it seniors, equals or juniors.

Once he found that a young monk, in charge of one of the centres of the Order, had left his place and come away without intimating him. When the monk reached his presence, he took him to task and scolded him for what was obviously wilfulness. But the monk replied that prior information had been given. Actually he had written but his letter had somehow been misplaced, only to be read later. The letter was subsequently found. When he saw it Sharat Maharaj called the monk, who was thirty years his junior, and tenderly apologized to him. Even with that he was not satisfied. He went to the President of the Order and pleaded to be relieved of his office because of incompetence. He had lost his temper and found fault with another on insufficient evidence; he was unfit to be the Secretary!

The crowning act of this dedicated and competent person's self-effacement occurred when after Swami Brahmananda passed away, the choice of the next President lay between Swami Shivananda the Vice-President and Swami Saradananda the Secretary. The limited election held for the purpose indicated a predominant majority for Sharat Maharaj; so like a true monk Swami Shivananda proposed, 'Since almost all want Sharat, let him be the President'. The President-elect, however, had other views. He was more interested in the well-being of the Order than in promoting his own personal position or prestige. He wanted that the Order should benefit by the rare spiritual qualities of Swami Shivananda, while he could attend to the business side. So he proceeded to firmly decline the presidential election, putting forth the plea, 'Swamiji (Swami Vivekananda) made me the Secretary of the Mission and I shall stick to it'! Now it was Swami Shivananda's turn to demur, expressing his diffidence in dealing with the complex administrative problems. But he could not prevail against Sharat Maharaj who offset the hesitation by his re-assuring persuasion: 'For those executive complexities, I am ever available, always at your service.' And to demonstrate that he fully meant what he said, he prostrated himself before the President of his choice.

He saw to it that his brother-monk was duly installed as the President and he was happy to continue as the Secretary till the last day of his life.

—EXPLORER.

SOURCE :

*History of the Ramakrishna Math & Mission.*  
By Swami Gambhirananda  
*The Apostles of Ramakrishna*



## PREFACE TO RĀJA YOGA

Visitors to India quickly become familiar with her *sādhus* and *fakirs*, or religious beggars, who form so picturesque an element of Indian crowds. Most of them whether Hindu or Mohammedan, are wanderers; and some of them belong to floating orders of great prestige and antiquity. All alike wear as their badge the *geruā*, or earth-stained cloth, of salmon-pink colour, and some are further distinguished by the carrying of large rosaries, sacred staff or tridents, the smearing of face and body with mud or ashes, and the wearing of the hair in matted locks, piled high on the head. Some of these varied brotherhoods of *yogis*, *nāgās*, *oodāsis*, and what not are famous for their Sanskrit learning; and of none is this more true than of the *Sannyāsins* of the Puri order, founded by Śankarāchārya, himself a *sannyāsin* of two thousand years of spiritual descent,—about the year 800 A.D. and to whose number the Swami Vivekananda,—writer of the present book in the original English,—belonged.

Born and educated in Bengal, he became a *sannyāsin*, in his youth, and as such was the first religious teacher of modern times in India, to break through the barriers raised by Hindu orthodoxy, and cross the seas, for the purpose of preaching in the West. His first journey was made to the United States, *via* China and Japan, in order to represent the religious ideals of the Hindu peoples at that Parliament of Religions which will be remembered as a feature of the Chicago Exhibition of the year 1893. He was deeply conscious of the significance of the step he was taking. Hinduism had not then thought of itself as a missionary faith. 'I go', a friend reports him as saying, at the moment of leaving his mother-country, 'to preach a religion of which Buddhism is but a rebel child,

and Christianity, with all its idealisms, a far-fetched imitation'.

The Swami's success as a preacher, at Chicago, was followed by some years of work and travel in America, and in the years of 1895 and 1896, by two visits to England, and to the Continent of Europe. On his return to India, early in 1897, he was accorded an ovation, by his countrymen, which may be termed historic. From Colombo, where he landed, to Madras, from where he had been originally sent forth and again in the various visits which he was called upon to make, after reaching his monastery in Calcutta, to the cities, provinces, and feudatory princes of the North, his journey formed a veritable triumphal progress and in the South, where the Hindu consciousness has been least impaired by the proximity of Islamic Communities, his rulings on controverted points of faith and doctrine, were by common consent, from that time forward, placed on the footing of a final authority on Hinduism. India thus ratified by acclamation the mission and the utterances of the yellow-clad begging-friar who had gone forth from her shores four years earlier, in her name. It may serve to give some idea of the extent to which ancient culture is still living in India, when it is said that for fourteen days in Madras, noonday sittings were held daily by the Swami, in which scholars and Brahmins of distinction brought to him philosophical and other questions, to be answered by him, *first in Sanskrit and then in English*. Sanskrit is by no means a dead language in its own country. The Swami's second and last journey to the West was made in the year 1899. He returned to India late in 1900, and less than two years later, on July 4th, 1902, he died. He had visited Paris three or four times, spending several



weeks there in the year 1900, and speaking twice at the Sorbonne.

In the work done by the Swami Vivekananda in his own country, he never adopted the role of a religious or social reformer. He took no advantage of the position accorded him to impose any favourite sectarianism of his own upon others. To all the perplexities of the present age of transition, he replied by raising the banner of a spiritual Hinduism, ideal, dynamic, and towering high above all those externals of caste and custom which might be expected to change with changes of place and periods. He held that even the Vedas and Upaniṣads had voiced nothing else than the call to this central and most searching form of religion, and that the same had been the message, written or unwritten, of all the Indian saints and teachers, in times more modern.

As an apostle of Indian thought in the West, however, the Swami's labours were of a somewhat more complex character. Here we find him, in the numerous works which he has left, not only defining and expanding the great basic philosophy of *Advaita* or Unity,—the idea of the Immanent Divine but also, as in the case of the present volume, acting as a witness to the authenticity of an antique form of knowledge, which, familiar as it is to India, can scarcely be regarded as known to Europe, even the name.

Apart from its obvious division into an original treatise and the translation of an Oriental work and its commentaries, this book of *Rāja Yoga* falls under a twofold category. In the first place, we find ourselves listening as it were to a melody which identifies the subject with religion, and in the second to an intermingled strain by which it is regarded purely as a science. On one side, we hear the impassioned cry, 'The way is found. Children of Immortality, and ye who dwell in higher spheres,

by perceiving Him Who is beyond all darkness, your path is made from out this darkness—and to escape, ye have no other.' And on the other hand, as we follow page after page, comment upon comment we feel that—at least as regards temper, apart from the question of credibility—we are in the presence of nothing more or less than an ancient and unfamiliar system of Psychology, complete of its own kind, and supported by a vocabulary and system of reasoning curiously unlike any to which we are accustomed.

Both points of view are correct. *Rāja Yoga*, from the Oriental point of view, is religion: from the Occidental, it is science. We in the West are not left entirely without witness to the occasional occurrence of saintly raptures and prophetic visions which cannot be adequately described as mental aberrations. Without Francis of Assisi, Joan of Arc, Teresa of Jesus, and Ignatius Loyola, all our history would have been the poorer. But we have felt ourselves under no necessity of giving a scientific account of such phenomena. They have taken place for the most part, in spite of our misunderstanding of them, not because of our sympathy. In the East, however, humanity will give truth to a religious idea, with as much simplicity and directness as in the West they would characterise the invention of a machine, or the elaboration of an industrial process. It follows then that the recognition of that mood in which religions are born,—that mood which the Swami Vivekananda terms 'Super-consciousness' — must necessarily form an integral part of Eastern Psychology.

Could any *dictum* laugh itself more haughtily, more fearlessly, under the banner of scientific ideals, than the seventh aphorism of Patañjali's first chapter—

"Direct perception, inference, and competent evidence are proof"? Is there any



trace of confusion in the mind of the man who wrote this? Any window to be kept dark? The same words, by implication, base the claim of the aphorism to credence, on experience alone. There is here no room for the appeal to authority. "Competent evidence"—mark the pride of the adjective—to guide the student; "inference" as a reliable means of determining points of theory; but both of these alike dependent on that which alone, therefore, forms the ultimate test for all—"direct perception". Is it not true that such a readiness to submit the whole content of faith to the test of experience, refusing authority, is to Western thinking, one of the *differentia* of Science rather than of Religion?

Another point on which this Eastern Science—assuming its credibility—challenges comparison with that of the West, is the question of method. In the very nature of investigation, the human body is itself the laboratory, and all instruments, save those found within, are excluded. But it is not equally true that there is no experiment. The whole research claims to be built upon experiment. And when we read that the heart itself can be brought under such control that the circulation of the blood can be regulated or stopped at will, we catch a glimpse of the courage and devotion to knowledge that the subject must have demanded in its pioneers. There is no room to believe that the sacrifice of life demanded for the authoritative establishment of its various steps was in any way less than that required by, for instance, modern Chemistry or modern Medicine. And in the severity of the discipline

imposed, it is evident that the habits of life of the modern scholar must give precedence to those of the older.

One more point remains to be touched upon. Patañjali, writing his *Yoga aphorisms* in the second century B.C. must not be looked upon as an author, in our twentieth century meaning of the term. Rather, he was a recorder of those conclusions, which had been arrived at by the concourse of effort and opinion in his time. His name is used to this day as that of the head of the Yoga school. But this is perhaps the same thing as to make the President of the academy of sciences personally responsible for all the scientific discoveries published under the *imprimatur* of that body, in a given year of Grace!

The *Yoga aphorisms* represent an era in culture, the work of a great floating university of begging friars, which at the time of their publication was already many centuries old.

Finally, this strange old science of *Rāja Yoga* is to this day alive in India. Many thousands of students have made some progress in it; some few, it may be, are highly proficient. In any case, we who have been his disciples,—both Indians and Europeans, regard the writer of this book, the Swami Vivekananda, as belonging to the latter of these two classes. He was one of those souls for whom *samādhi* or super-consciousness, had no secrets, and when he publishes a statement regarding the nature of Yoga, his words fall under the category of "Competent Evidence".

*Nivedita of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda*

# THE SPECIAL RELEVANCE OF ADVAITA VEDANTA TO MODERN TIMES

SRI M. K. VENKATARAMA IYER

Advaita Vedanta is as old as the hills and will last as long as the Himalayas and the Gangā will last. It knows no limits in respect of time or space. Its appeal is not confined to any particular age or clime. It is the only perennial philosophy. This is because it is not a set of beliefs arrived at by mere reasoning. On the other hand, it is the outcome of the deepest insight into the heart of Reality. Leaving reason behind, it soars into dizzy heights with the aid of mystical intuition. It is more an experience than a system of philosophy. It is experience of Reality face to face. The distinction between knower and known, between subject and object is obliterated in it. The finite self, the Jīva, storms the Infinite Self, Brahman, by a frontal attack and loses itself in It. This is Samādhi of the Nirvikalpa order and there is no experience higher than this. Hence it never suffers any contradiction. There is nothing to falsify it. Like a steady and unfailing light on the top of a hill, it disperses darkness and illumines the entire world.

Based on the eternal verities, it is founded like the rock. Nothing can shake it. The time-process will leave it untouched since there is nothing accidental or unessential in its composition. It has no historical, political or social affiliations. It has not allowed any extraneous consideration to hamper its free march to the destined goal. It is an autonomous pursuit solely ruled by its own end, not even allowing the needs of religion and morality to obscure its vision. The only loyalty that it knows is loyalty to Truth, the whole Truth and nothing but the Truth. All lesser loyalties are put in their proper places. They are not exalted at the expense of the

Highest Loyalty. In this unrelenting pursuit of Truth, Advaita Vedanta leaves even logic behind. Transcending the laws of thought and the subject-object relationship, it reaches the level where both subject and object are overwhelmed in the dazzling light of impartite and unconditioned Consciousness. Knowing culminates in Being. Neither the developments in the field of science and technology nor even the process of heat-death can have any meaning in this level.

Speaking of the Ātman, the Lord says in the *Gītā* (II. 23-25): 'Weapons do not cleave Him, fire does not burn Him, water does not make Him wet, nor does the wind make Him dry. He cannot be cloven, He cannot be burnt, He cannot be wetted, He cannot be dried. He is eternal, all-pervasive, unchanging and immovable. He is the same for ever. He is said to be unmanifest, inconceivable and unchanging.' (Prof. D. S. Sarma's translation) We may go further and say that not only the elements like fire and water can do no injury to the Ātman, but even the modern weapons of destruction like the hydrogen bomb and the ballistic missile will not so much as touch Him.

Philosophy that is based on such immutable Reality, literally deserves to be called Perennial Philosophy. It has a message for all times. The central truth that is enshrined in it admits of infinite application. Just as Śruti, when applied to the changing conditions of time, takes shape as Smṛti, even so Advaita Vedanta, which is only another name for Śruti, can yield useful lessons when it is viewed in relation to the conditions that have come to prevail in modern times all over the world. Such practical Vedanta will go far in lessening



tension and make the world, if not a very heaven on earth, at least a place where men can do the pilgrimage of life in a purposeful manner.

We hear of nothing but tension all over the world. There are tensions between the big powers, between the smaller States and between one section of the community and another within the same State. There is unrest everywhere. No part of the world is free from it. The great advances in the realm of science have undoubtedly wonderful achievements to their credit. Things unheard of before have become accomplished facts. Orbiting the earth and landing in the moon by means of spacecraft are breathtaking exploits. Very soon we may hear of the successful landing in Venus by a space man. These daring experiments have annihilated distance and made the universe look a much more compact unit than it appeared before. Needless to say that the several parts of the globe which we inhabit have come very near to one another. Peoples who live poles apart have come to look upon themselves as next-door neighbours.

All this is quite true. Peoples have been physically brought nearer to one another. But is there a corresponding mental approach? Is there better understanding between peoples professing different political ideologies, and religious beliefs? Sharp differences, specially in regard to the former, have divided the world into warring camps, each threatening its opposite with wholesale destruction within a few seconds. The world is now on the brink of a catastrophe. The tension is mounting from day to day and who knows when it may reach the breaking point and engulf the world in all-devastating flames? It may happen at any moment.

Is this the brave new world that we were led to expect from the march of science? The fault surely does not lie with science.

It is neither moral nor immoral; it is amoral. It is just an instrument in the hands of man. Any instrument can be used both for constructive and destructive purposes. Science is like a double-edged sword which can cut both ways. Everything depends on the mental disposition of the man who uses it. If it is of the refined and spiritually regenerate type it will use the instrument, whether it is science and technology of the modern world or *tapas* of the ancient world, to promote human well-being; if, unfortunately, it is of the unregenerate, demoniac type, it will use it for self-aggrandizement and consequent destruction of foes.

The misuse of scientific power that we witness at the present time is not altogether a new phenomenon. A little reflection will show that it had its counterpart in the olden days also. In our Epics and Purāṇas we have heard of men like Rāvaṇa, who acquired terrible power and strength and near-immunity from death by the practice of fierce *tapas*. The boons granted to them by the gods went into their heads and made them think that they could commit any atrocity with impunity. Intoxicated by power they proclaimed themselves to be the Supreme Lord of the universe. There was no one to cry halt to them. Having granted the boons, even Brahmā, the Creator, felt himself to be powerless. The tyrant lacked the moral sense. The distinction between right and wrong, between Dharmā and Adharma had no meaning for him. He had stifled 'the still, small voice within', known as conscience. He therefore went about brandishing the big stick and threatening complete destruction if any one thwarted his will. Rāvaṇa, for instance, gave the ultimatum to the ruling princes of his day: 'Surrender or take the consequence'. He could not have spoken in such a superior strain but for his terrible strength and the utter lack of the moral sense.



The military confrontations of the big powers that we witness today are only an instance of the old phenomenon appearing in a new dress. At heart, the malady is the same and the causes which give rise to it are the same. At bottom it is thirst for overlordship. It is the ego, the small self, that has bloated beyond limits for want of anything to curb it. Utter selfishness, absolute disregard for the welfare of others, clamorous insistence on one's rights and privileges to the complete exclusion of one's duties and obligations, self-glorification, lip-service to the higher values of life, these are the ugly manifestations of unrestrained egoism. It does not make much difference whether all this egoism is practised in the interests of a single individual or a collection of individuals. In the name of one's country and one's nation, egoism finds a fuller scope for its play and it may acquire a certain respectability also. To what atrocities national patriotism can lead was clearly brought to light in the course of the second world war. The bombing of Hiroshima is still fresh in the minds of people. Surely egoism in the name of the nation can be more dangerous than egoism in the name of a single individual.

What is the remedy for all this? How can the ego be held in check? Can mutual defence pacts, diplomatic exchanges, state visits by V.I.P.s do the trick? We have seen enough of all this, but there is no sign of the ego fading out. The periodic meetings of the Security Council and the United Nations General Assembly have not brought about better understanding between the warring nations. If anything, fear and suspicion are on the increase day by day. The U.N.O. has not brought peace to the world.

This can be accomplished only by a different approach to the problem. People must be made to awaken to the soul which is now all but extinct. We can go on add-

ing to our conquest of nature, but unless there is a corresponding conquest of the lower nature in us, we will not be any the nearer to happiness. He who aspires to rule a kingdom must first learn to rule himself. The baser passions can be conquered only by awakening to the soul in us. In one of his minor poems known as '*Anātmasrī vigrahana Prakaraṇam*', Śrī Śaṅkara makes out that no achievement, however great, striking or far-reaching, in the realm of matter can prove to be a compensation for the loss of spirit. 'What does it profit a man', he asks with a sadness brimming over with sympathy, 'if he gains the whole world but loses his own soul?' The great inventions of modern science, the plane, the spaceship and so forth, will make no impression on him. He would, no doubt, value them, but he would not regard them as any substitute for the emptiness that is within us. Man may fly in the air, unearth hidden treasures, perform great yogic feats but if he has not discovered the hidden treasure that is within himself, he can find no happiness. '*Yena svātmā naiva sāksāt kṛto abhūt*' is the closing line of every stanza. It occurs as a refrain in all the sixteen stanzas of this poem. The repetition brings out his earnestness. Where one's highest spiritual interests are concerned, it is almost criminal, in Śrī Śaṅkara's opinion, to go in for the second best, to be satisfied with mere tinsel and to mistake pinchbeck for genuine gold.

The real remedy, therefore, lies in a complete change of outlook. A total awakening alone can bring about this change. It is the real enlightenment and not the mere sharpening of the intellect that will enable the rulers of nations to see their fellowmen with other eyes. The realization must come to them that reality at its core spiritual and that the material forms through which it manifests itself are not a necessary part of it. Every living being is an appear-



ance of the Universal Spirit under the limitations imposed by its material adjustments. Thus the race, colour and creed of human beings are mere adventitious adjuncts. It goes without saying that their political affiliations, their social customs and manners, the language they speak, the way in which they dress themselves are purely accidental and have nothing to do with their real nature. It requires a discerning eye to see that, stripped of these external wrappings, all men are manifestations of the One Spirit. Each human being will appear to the awakened eye as a centre of the Supreme Consciousness and consequently akin to one another in essence. The entire race of human beings will then appear to be one big family. Considerations of 'mine' and 'thine', 'my country' and 'your country', 'my nation' and 'your nation', 'my people' and 'your people' will then cease to have much meaning. Just as hideous dreams which 'abuse our curtained sleep' dissolve into thin air the moment we enter the waking state, even so these differences based on race, creed, colour and so forth will drop away of their own accord and in the place of prejudice, fear, suspicion, rivalry and hatred that now prevail, there will reign universal love, compassion, fellow-feeling, sympathy towards our less fortunate brethren, peace and goodwill. This new order of things may look like an unrealizable, utopian dream, but it is not impossible of achievement if the rulers will but imbibe the true spirit of Advaita Vedanta.

The unity of spirit is its central teaching. It does not believe in dichotomizing Reality into spirit and matter. The two are not equally real. The latter is only the outer shell covering the gem within. It is bound to fall away when it has served its purpose. Due to foundational ignorance the world which is through and through spiritual appears as material. We allow ourselves to be deceived by appearances. With the grad-

ual removal of ignorance, the world will increasingly assume its true spiritual form. When nescience is completely removed, the world will appear as nothing but Brahman. Realized souls like Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Sri Sadasiva Brahmendra will exclaim: '*Sarvam khalu idam Brahma*' (All this is verily Brahman).

With the advent of such vision, where is room for delusion, for the sense of separateness, for the consequent fear from rivals, for hatred of those who are stronger than ourselves, for enmity and for the breaking up of the world into armed, warring camps? The Upaniṣads declare in one voice that the perception of the unity of spirit is the sole panacea for all the ills that afflict mankind. 'He who sees all living beings in himself and his own self as the activating principle in all beings, does not hate anybody. To the wise man who sees all beings as the manifestations of the Self (Ātman) where is room for delusion or grief?'<sup>1</sup> 'Fear arises from the perception of the second.'<sup>2</sup> 'Fearlessness is Brahman, he who knows the true Self becomes fearless.'<sup>3</sup>

That the perception of the unity of the Self results in universal love and sympathy (sarvātmabhāva) is well brought out in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*: 'Steadfast in yoga, he sees himself in all beings and all beings in himself. He sees the same Self in all. He who sees me everywhere and sees everything in me—I am never lost to him and he is never lost to me. The yogin who, having attained to oneness, worships me abiding in all beings,—he lives in me howsoever he leads his life. He who looks upon all as himself in pleasure and pain, he is considered, O Arjuna, a perfect yogin.'<sup>4</sup>

The worship (upāsana) of Brahman with attributes (Saguṇa Brahman) is recom-

<sup>1</sup> *Īśā Upaniṣad*, 6 and 7.

<sup>2</sup> *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, I. iv. 2.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* IV. iv. 25.

<sup>4</sup> *Gītā*: VI. 29-32. Prof. D. S. Sarma's translation.



mended in Advaita Vedanta to cultivate equal love for all people. Saguna Brahman or Īsvara, being the Creator of the universe, can have no likes and dislikes. No one can be *persona grata* to Him nor any *persona non-grata*. All must be equal in His eyes. He will not bestow special love and tenderness on any one individual or group of individuals. He will not hate anybody, not even wicked folk. He cannot afford to take up an attitude of indifference towards any group of people. By the steady worship of Saguna Brahman we will also develop equal love towards all our fellowmen to whatever race, religion or political camp they may belong.

Advaita Vedanta permits the worship of the special manifestations of Saguna Brahman like Śiva, Viṣṇu, Devī and so forth. Any particular individual is free to choose the god of his liking and offer worship to it. This concession is made to suit the differing tastes and temperaments of people. It is not at all intended to engender a spirit of exclusiveness or bigotry. One can have preferences but no exclusiveness. Since all the popular gods are only partial manifestations of Īsvara, there is absolutely no reason to exalt any one of them and maintain that the worship of that god alone will prepare the way for liberation. By its emphasis on the central truth that God is One though He may assume various forms to suit the differing tastes of people, Advaita Vedanta effectively cuts the ground underneath the feet of religious fanatics. Advaita religion thus falls into line with Advaita Vedanta in promoting the spirit of wide tolerance and sympathy. One who imbibes the catholic attitude of this religion will cultivate equal respect for all faiths. He will not indulge in comparisons or seek to convert people from one faith to another. Proselytization is quite foreign to the genius of Advaita religion. Such an attitude of wide sympathy and tolerance

will remove one of the major causes of dissension in the world.

In the removal of dissensions arising from differing political ideologies also, Advaita Vedanta can bring the healing touch. Forms of government are determined by many factors—geographical, historical, social and economic. The people of a country willingly choose the form of government which will best suit their genius. Any form of government cannot be arbitrarily imposed on any people, irrespective of their needs and aspirations. The same form of government will not suit all people. Just as in the matter of religious worship, Advaita Vedanta allows a wide choice to suit the differing mental dispositions of people, even so it will approach the political problem with understanding and sympathy. The Advaitic politician will have no quarrel with people living under forms of government different from his own. In the wide structure of Advaita Vedanta there is room for people professing diverse faiths in matters religious, political and social. It is not a narrow and closed system of thought. It is rather an experience which embraces all. If the big powers would but imbibe even a little of this wide sympathy, tensions will completely disappear. It is no use maintaining 'my doxy is orthodoxy and your doxy is heterodoxy'. This attitude of self-complacency and self-righteousness must go. Advaita Vedanta alone can effectively cure this malady.

It is the greatest reconciler known to the world. The Advaitin has no quarrel with people professing other faiths. He not only tolerates differences but has also a word of appreciation for them. His belief in the doctrine of *adhikāri bheda* stands him in very good stead in reconciling differences. He knows that there are wide differences between people in respect of their intellectual, moral and spiritual equipment. These differences cannot be conjured away. They



must be reckoned with. It is worse than useless therefore to thrust people into the same steel-frame. Each one must be free to progress along the line best suited to him. The same rule holds with regard to whole communities of people.

There is the famous declaration of tolerance in the *Gītā*: 'Let no one disturb the faith of another.'<sup>5</sup> 'Howsoever men approach me, even so do I accept them, for on all sides whatever path they may choose is mine.'<sup>6</sup> 'Whatever may be the form which each devotee seeks to worship with faith—I

make his faith steadfast in that form alone.'<sup>7</sup> These statements have an application far beyond the confines of religion. They essentially represent an attitude of mind. Its application to the political field will remove the major cause of tension in the world. In two poems, *Jivanmuktānandalaharī* and *Praudhānubhūtiḥ Śrī Śaṅkara* has well brought out the need for wide sympathy and understanding and tolerance. Advaita Vedanta alone can promote such an outlook. The need to study it is greater today than it ever was before. It can alone bring sanity to the warring nations of modern times.

<sup>5</sup> *Gītā*: III. 26.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* IV. 11.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* VII. 21.

This infinite power of the spirit, brought to bear upon matter evolves material development, made to act upon thought evolves intellectuality, and made to act upon itself makes of man a God.

\* \* \*

Religion is the idea which is raising the brute unto man, and man unto God.

—SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

True religion is the foundation of society, the basis on which all true civil government rests, and from which power derives its authority, laws their efficacy, and both their sanction. If it is once shaken by contempt, the whole fabric cannot be stable or lasting.

←EDMUND BURKE



# ILLUMINATING DIALOGUES FROM INDIAN LORE

## DHṚTARĀṢṬRA AND SANAT-SUJĀTA—I

TRANSLATED AND COMPILED BY

SWAMI SMARANANANDA

Dhṛtarāṣṭra, the old king, had lost his sleep. The clouds of war were thickening. He could not make his incorrigible sons yield to the Pāṇḍavas, their cousin brothers, their rightful share of the kingdom. Even their request for just one village had been turned down by Duryodhana. But wise men had not given up hope. Frenzied attempts at bringing about peace were going on and envoys were running back and forth the two warring camps.

Sañjaya, Dhṛtarāṣṭra's personal envoy, had just returned and had administered a rebuke to the old king for his infatuation towards his sons, which was the stumbling block in weaning them away from their brinkmanship. His envoy's report had cast a gloom on the blind king and he sent for his saintly half-brother, Vidura, to hear some words of wisdom and consolation. The king requested Vidura to talk to him about Dharma and advise him. Vidura, too, discoursed long on various aspects of righteousness and morality. When he concluded, Dhṛtarāṣṭra said again: 'O Vidura, if there is anything left unsaid, say it then, please. Wonderful are your words!'

Vidura replied: 'The ancient sage Sanat-sujāta has said that there is no death.

He will expound to thee this subject.'

Dhṛtarāṣṭra: Don't you know what that immortal ṛṣi has to say? Why not you yourself explain it?

Vidurā: No Sir, I am of low birth and therefore do not venture to say more than what I have said, though I do have that knowledge.

When asked by the king, as to how he could meet the ancient and immortal ṛṣi, Sanat-sujāta, with a mortal body, Vidura meditated upon the ṛṣi and Sanat-sujāta appeared before him. Then Vidura requested him to explain the subject of immortality to the king, as he himself was incapable of doing so. Dhṛtarāṣṭra questioned the sage: 'O Sanat-sujāta, I hear that thou art of opinion that there is no death. However, the gods and demons practised austerities to conquer death. Of these two opinions, which one is true?'

Sanat-sujātā: Listen, O King, without doubting. Some are of the opinion that death is conquered through various deeds. On the other hand, others are of the opinion that there is no death. Both these ideas are in existence since the beginning of creation itself and both are true. But men of wisdom believe that delusion is death.



Therefore I, too, declare that ignorance is death and eternal awareness (of one's Self) is immortality. It is, indeed, due to ignorance that the demons (*asuras*) were destroyed, while the gods attained Brahman through knowledge (and thus became immortal).

Death does not devour people like a tiger, for its form cannot be seen. It is ignorant people who say that Yama (the God of Death) rewards the virtuous and punishes the sinful and that he is verily death. But, in fact, Yama is not death; ignorance alone is death and Self-knowledge is immortality. Some say that death stalks the earth in the form of anger, ignorance, and delusion, causing transmigration of souls. Therefore, whenever one gives up a body, it is called death. Desires, followed by *kāma* and *krodha*, lust and wrath, lead to death, and embodied creatures are thus bound to sojourn in a cycle of births and deaths. But what can death do to a person whose soul has not been confounded by desire? A soul filled with desires, wrath, and covetousness is indeed filled with ignorance which is death. But through knowledge death is conquered.

Dhṛtarāṣṭra: The knowers of the Vedas say that through prayers and sacrifices men go to eternal regions. The Vedas too, declare it to be so. Then why not a man of knowledge perform these acts?

Sanat-sujāta: Indeed, the deluded ones attain those regions, and the Vedas, too, mention these acts for such people who desire those worlds. But the wise ones do not strive for these evanescent worlds. Renouncing these paths that lead to impermanent worlds, they attain oneness with the Supreme Self.

Dhṛtarāṣṭra: Who impels this unborn, ancient One to manifest all this creation and enter into all this? What purpose does it serve or what happiness? Please do tell me all this truly.

Sanat-sujāta: Great error results in thinking that the Unborn has become differentiated. (That is not the intention of the Vedas). The *jīvas* come into existence by the contact of primordial ignorance (*Māyā*). Its (Brahman's) supreme glory is never retarded. Only through beginningless ignorance men, too, come into existence. That everlasting Lord manifests all this universe through His power of projection. This is considered His *śakti*. In this matter of His becoming the cause of the universe by means of His (*śakti*) power, there is the Vedic support, too.

Dhṛtarāṣṭra: Some perform rituals through virtuous deeds in this world, while some others do so through sinful deeds. Does Dharma destroy sin or does sin destroy Dharma itself?

Sanat-sujāta: Dwelling amidst virtue and sin, a man of wisdom destroys both. But other embodied ones without knowledge attain virtue or sin. This is established (by the scriptures). The doers of virtuous deeds with an eye on Heaven, indeed, attain the perishable fruits of these. Doers of vile deeds, too, suffer their deserts. But in this world, doers of virtuous deeds (who do not seek any recompense), destroy sin through virtue. Thus know that virtue is stronger than sin.

Dhṛtarāṣṭra: Sir, please tell me of those worlds attained as a result of virtuous deeds by the twice-born persons<sup>1</sup> and of their gradation. Please tell me, too, about other worlds with their gradation.

Sanat-sujāta: Those who vie with others in doing virtuous deeds (having an eye to results) like strong men trying to prove their own strength, such Brāhmaṇas, departing from this world, attain the bright heavens (for enjoyment). But those who are not proud of their virtuous deeds, for them these deeds are a means to knowledge.

<sup>1</sup> The higher castes are meant.

Such wise men, departing from this world, attain heavens free from all misery (i.e. perfect bliss). The knowers of the Vedas call such a person a man of perfect behaviour. But his neighbours and relatives do not care much for him.

The recluse should live in a place where food and drink are easy to obtain, like fodder and water in the rainy season. He should not suffer (as that is not conducive to practice of Yoga). But he should live in such a place where, without revealing his powers, he may be subjected to insult and harassment. There the monk who practises Yoga, without revealing his identity, is greater than one who shows off his merits.

The most acceptable food for monks is from such a householder, who is not envious of others' prosperity, and who does not eat himself without serving monks and ascetics. As the dog eats his own vomit, causing his own peril, similarly a monk who obtains his food by parading his greatness eats his own vomit.

He who is on the path of Brahman does not want to disclose his identity. Such a one, though living amidst relatives, is not affected in any way.

Who, indeed, can know this Inner Self (Antarātman), who is without any qualities, ever steady, pure and free from all dualities? And which sin is not possible for him, who considers it, (which is free from all attributes and dualities,) otherwise? He who walks on the path of Brahman is free from the idea that he is the body. And so he is free from exertion and is not disturbed by his mind and the senses. Such a one, though he hides his greatness, is deemed by the wise as a knower of Brahman and a man of wisdom.

Those men of renunciation who are free from worldly prosperity or attachments,

but are endowed with the great qualities mentioned in the Vedas, cannot be shaken by temptations. Know them to be in the image of Brahman. Not even those who, in this world, please the gods through sacrifices and obtain their favour, are equal to a knower of Brahman.

He who is respected by the wise, even though he does no worldly duties, such a one neither considers himself worthy of respect nor is disturbed by disrespect shown to him. If someone respects him, he thinks it quite natural for people, like the opening and closing of the eyelids. And if others disrespect him, he thinks that too natural as the non-virtuous people, ignorant of scriptural knowledge, are accustomed to do so.

Never do enjoyment (*māna*) and spirituality (*mauna*)<sup>2</sup> stay together, for this world is the object of enjoyment, while the Supreme is the object of spirituality. The wealth accumulated in this world of enjoyment is antagonistic to knowledge of Brahman. O King! it is indeed extremely difficult for one devoid of spiritual knowledge to obtain this wealth of Brahman.

Holy men have mentioned many paths that will lead to Brahman and act as restraints to the attraction of worldly enjoyment. I mention six of them: speaking the truth, straightforwardness, feeling of shame in doing undesirable acts, control of the senses, internal and external cleanliness, and spiritual knowledge.

(Ref: *Mahābhārata*, Udyoga-Parvan, Chapters 41 and 42.)

<sup>2</sup> These words, meaning respectively, 'respect' and 'silence' are used in a special sense here. For worldly people respect worldly enjoyments, while men of spirituality are indifferent to them.





WHAT  
INSPIRES ME  
MOST IN  
HOLY  
MOTHER'S  
LIFE

PROF. PRANAB RANJAN GHOSH

In Bengal, it is now Puja time. The sky is crystal blue; after months of rain, white clouds shine like the beaming smile of some divine being. You can hear the street-singer singing *Āgamani* (coming of the Mother) songs. In the village you will find small white *sefali* flowers strewn over the path, whenever you go in the morning. And in every street-corner *kāsh* flowers are singing in the air, announcing as it were the advent of the great event that the Goddess Uma is coming to her parents' house, just for three days! These three days will pass, but its remembrance will remain like a lasting fragrance throughout the year in every Bengali's mind.

I am reminded of a visit to the village Jayrambati, the birthplace of our Holy Mother Sarada Devi, the divine consort of Sri Ramakrishna, during Puja time. Only a few decades back, this lady from the poor village lived as the personification of the motherhood of God. As her husband turned a sannyasin, she also became nunlike, but both of them remained in the household life. More than her husband, she symbolized the real spirit of a householder by actually taking over the responsibility of serving her husband and later the entire household of her aged mother at Jayrambati. She rarely practised her meditation in a lonely or a far-away place. Hers

was the practice of the presence of God in the everyday duty of a Hindu woman's life. By being true to her station of life she realized the unfathomable depths of spiritual realization.

After Sri Ramakrishna's demise, whenever there was any doubt regarding spiritual matters, the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna always referred to her and got the right advice, which proved most beneficial in their lives. To the monks and selfless workers of the Ramakrishna Mission, she was the embodiment of the highest spiritual ideal of renunciation compromising nothing with worldly affairs, and to the householder devotees she was the ideal of womanhood, as faithful wife, expert housewife, and loving mother. Motherhood in her knew no bounds of caste, creed or nationality. Monk Saradananda, dacoit Amjad of Jayrambati, and Sister Nivedita—all had equal share in her eternal fountain of loving motherhood.

Sri Ramakrishna has often said that Nitya and Līlā, Brahman and Its creative force are but the same Truth. To me it seems that in the same way Sri Ramakrishna, the ascetic and Holy Mother the embodiment of motherhood are but the same truth manifested in two ways. The Holy Mother said, 'Thakur (Sri Ramakrishna) worshipped God as Mother. And



he has left the legacy to me to show to the world the motherhood of God'.

Be that as it may, Holy Mother's life is another proof of Sri Ramakrishna's ideal that true wisdom comes from direct realization. In whatever station of life one may be, one can realize eternal Truth if one is pure and simple, selfless and sacrificing in spirit. But no amount of book-learning, propaganda or preaching will do the job.

The eternal ideal of India is to realize God in every thing, big or small, for that indeed is the ultimate fact of existence. So one can do the smallest duties of his or her everyday life, knowing fully well that there is nothing profane in this world; what the world really is, is nothing but Divine Spirit or Caitanya.

In Sarada Devi's life the Divine and the human have found a rare harmony, which is really difficult to find in any other spiritual leader of the world. She is the emblem of the inexhaustible spiritual heritage of India's common mass, and yet so uncommon!

I once enquired one of my University teachers, a disciple of Holy Mother, as to what struck him most in her personality. My teacher with tears in his eyes replied, 'I found, here is one in whose love there is no question of great or small, saint or sinner, one who could love each one in the same way and yet her eternal spring of love remained unexhausted as before.' This was his personal experience. The same must have been the feeling of many other devotees who had the unique fortune of meeting Holy Mother.

But there are instances when Holy Mother herself expressed her preference for the Sannyasins (or the monks) who have forsaken everything for God. When we view it in the perspective of Sri Ramakrishna's life, it seems quite natural. No one knew better than Holy Mother of

the complete renunciation of her husband. This 'natural renunciation' (*svabhāvik tyāga\**), she considered as the chief characteristic of Sri Ramakrishna. To understand this characteristic of him, we need to apprehend the inherent purity with which Holy Mother came to this earth. Theirs is the unique ideal in the conjugal history of the human race. They did not forsake each other, rather found therein the Iṣṭa or God in each other, and long after the demise of Sri Ramakrishna, it was Saradadevi who combined in herself the eternal love of an ideal Hindu woman for her departed husband and the spiritual wisdom to feel his divine presence in every action of her life. She exemplified in her life the motherhood of God, that motherhood which Sri Ramakrishna had invoked in the Kali temple of Dakshineswar. Like her Guru and husband, she herself was an embodiment of total renunciation.

This ideal of renunciation found a new dimension in her life. Unlike her husband, we find her always absorbed in household duties, first in her husband's house and then in the later part of her life in her parents' house. Even when she had a house of her own, built by one of her spiritual sons, her daily routine was almost the same. She was always the mistress and mother of the house wherever she lived. Besides she had an almost mad niece (Radhu) whom she had adopted from the latter's infancy. Those, who came to visit her in the latter part of her life, often thought that she was like other widows of a Hindu family, living with her near relations and taking over herself the burden of the family, just to engage herself in something. But all her works had only one centre, that was Sri Ramakrishna. It was a continuous worship in the form of work. She was never attached to

\* In her own Bengali.



money, name or fame. All her life was full of that Divine presence, which made the most ordinary duties of life beam with holiness itself. Thus like a true mother, she was full of love; at the same time she was full of renunciation. Both these qualities made her the ideal mother for householders as well as ascetics.

I shall conclude my humble note with a saying of Holy Mother which was uttered in answer to a disciple's asking her ad-

vice for his spiritual ways. In later life this disciple became a monk of Belur Math and dedicated his whole life to the ideal of Sri Ramakrishna. Showing a small piece of watch, kept in a closet, Holy Mother said to her young disciple, 'As that clock is always making sound, tick, tick, so in every moment of your life utter the name of God.' This indicates her insight into the great truths which she could illustrate by the most common things of the world.

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## A RIDDLE OF THE RĀMĀYAṆA

SWAMI SIDDHINATHANANDA

The Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata are the perennial sources and reservoirs of Indian culture. They both depict a society highly evolved materially, intellectually and spiritually. The code of honour and valour they present is a goal which subsequent generations fervently cherish and assiduously attempt to cultivate. The ancient bards Vālmīki and Vyāsa are considered contemporaneous recorders of the events they recount. Both the epics depict a domestic disruption. In one the denouement is grand and glorious; in the other it is sad and disastrous. In the Solar dynasty there was a dispute regarding the right of inheritance. But there each of the claimants disclaimed his right in favour of the other and thus it was competition in selflessness, whereas in the Kuru clan, the contending cousins fought a bitter battle and both the parties met with rack and ruin. Through self-denial Rāma and his brothers have made themselves shining examples of fraternal affection and harmony; through lust of pelf and power, the Kauravas and Pāṇḍavas have made themselves bywords

for ruinous rivalry. Self-sacrifice elevates; self-assertion annihilates.

It was an intriguing situation that paved the way for Rāma to waive the right of primogeniture and surrender the kingdom to his younger brother Bharata. The episode presents certain riddles.

Daśaratha, the mighty monarch of the Solar dynasty, grew very old; he was feeling the infirmities of age and so wanted to divest himself of the cares and responsibilities of governing a vast kingdom. More than being rid of the burden, he was anxious to see his beloved son Rāma seated on the throne safely and securely. There was a very healthy practice in ancient times for aged kings to hand over the reins of the Government to proper successors and betake themselves to the woods and devote their entire time in religious observances and spiritual disciplines. This was a very necessary and desirable arrangement. For one thing, wars of succession would be avoided. Chances of conspiracies and usurpations would also be lessened. In the case of Daśaratha, he perhaps had no

intention of retiring into the forest; he rather wanted to enjoy the pleasure of seeing Rāma anointed heir-apparent and himself to lead a life of retirement. This would give Rāma experience in the onerous duties of a ruler and Daśaratha supreme happiness, for, Rāma was for him more than his life and no sacrifice was too great for the sake of his beloved son. Daśaratha knew also that the people were very fond of Rāma and they were eagerly looking forward to the day when Rāma would be their ruler.

Daśaratha saw certain evil omens which foreboded ill for himself and his dynasty. So he could brook no delay in settling matters of succession. He hurriedly called to council prominent citizens from places far and near, the vassals and chieftains. Two close relations were not invited, Kekaya, the father of Kaikeyī and Janaka, the father of Sītā. Since it was all done in great haste, there was no time to send word to them; and after all it was a happy thing and they would hear the pleasant news later; thus Daśaratha excused himself this omission. Then there was another snag. Bharata and Śatrughna were away in Kekaya. They had gone thither soon after marriage and now some twelve years had passed. There was no time to bring them either. After all the bond of affection between the brothers was so strong that none of them was likely to raise any objection at this.

Daśaratha addressed the assembly in a stentorian voice and placed before them his proposal of placing Rāma in charge of the administration and of himself retiring. He sought their considered opinion on the matter. They all acclaimed the proposal in one voice. Though Daśaratha rejoiced at heart at their approval, he put them an embarrassing question. He asked: 'How is it that when I am carrying on the duties of the king justly and properly, you want

Rāma to take over the rulership from me?' Undaunted, they extolled Rāma unreservedly and submitted that it was Rāma's excellence of character and accomplishments that constrained them to so opine. Daśaratha was of course highly pleased to hear his beloved son being so well praised and to know that Rāma was the apple of their eyes. The king then entrusted Vasiṣṭha and Vāmadeva with the task of making every arrangement for the ensuing great event. Rāma was then sent for. Rāma came and duly saluted the king and stood with folded hands. Daśaratha enfolded him in a warm embrace and asked him to be seated. Then he informed Rāma of his proposal and of the people's approval thereof. He gave Rāma words of advice and guidance and asked him to get ready for the ceremony. Rāma's friends hurried to Kausalyā to announce this happy news to her. Rāma bowed down and went to his palace and the assembly dispersed.

After dismissing the assembly, Daśaratha took counsel of his ministers and decided that the very next day, during the auspicious Puṣya Nakstra—the eighth lunar mansion—the installation should take place. This done, entering the inner apartments, the king despatched Sumantra to fetch Rāma again. Guards informed Rāma of the king's summons. Hearing the call so soon again Rāma was nonplussed. He enquired of the messenger the cause for the call; but the latter could not enlighten him. Immediately Rāma started and presented himself before his father and saluted him. Daśaratha offered him a seat and spoke thus:

'Rāma, I am old, indeed very old. Enjoyments I have had enough. A hundred sacrifices I have performed in due form with great pomp and paraphernalia. I have been blessed with a beloved and excellent son in you. The debts due to the gods, the sages, the manes and wise men have all been paid and I am free. I have nothing more to do even for the welfare of my soul.



Now nothing more remains for me to do except to anoint you as my successor. All people wish you to be the ruler. Therefore, I want to instal you as the crown-prince. Dear son, I have had some bad dreams today and find many an evil portent. Those who are versed in interpreting portents tell me that these foretell serious calamities for the king, nay, even the king's death. O Rāma, get yourself installed before my mind gets confounded, for, man's mind is fickle. Astrologers tell me tomorrow is Puṣya asterism, auspicious for the purpose. Have it done tomorrow itself; my mind hastens me as it were. I am going to anoint you tomorrow. So, you and Sītā observe fast this night. Let trusted followers guard you all around, for, on occasions like this, many obstacles might befall. I feel the proper time for your coronation is when Bharata is away from here. True, your brother Bharata is good, noble, obedient and dutiful. But, men's minds are not strong and steady, I am afraid. Noble minds will acclaim in good spirit what has been accomplished. So, get ready for coronation tomorrow.'

Rāma took leave of his father and went back to his palace.

There seems to be something hushhush about the manner in which the aged monarch set about the impending transfer of power. It is expressly stated (Ayodhya III 24 & 25) that 'Rulers from the four quarters, Mlechhas, Aryas and even tribal leaders from the forest areas were present' in the assembly wherein Daśaratha sought approval for his proposal. Again, the poet explicitly states (Ayodhya I. 48) that 'the king of Kekaya and king Janaka were not invited because of haste'. The ceremony was to take place the next morning. In the assembly held the previous day, dignitaries from far off places were present. How were they gathered together so quickly? If they could be informed beforehand, could not the other two also be so informed? The others must have been brought to Ayodhya on some other pretext and Daśaratha with seeming suddenness expressed his intention. Are we not justified in suspecting that the omission of these

close relations is deliberate? What was worrying Daśaratha to make him adopt this sort of dubious device? Then again, in the confidential communication of Daśaratha to Rāma, what is it that prompted the former to say (Ayodhya 4-25) that the proper time for Rāma's coronation was when Bharata was away? Why did Rāma not protest against this aspersion on Bharata's rectitude knowing as he did Bharata's sterling qualities? Does the poet withhold from us any information Daśaratha confided to Rāma? Why was Daśaratha himself uncertain about his own resolution? Daśaratha's manner and words betray certain secret apprehensions on his part that there might crop up some sort of opposition to the proposed change of power. But the poet gives us no clue here as to what was worrying Daśaratha. It is a riddle for the present. Let us proceed.

Daśaratha's favourite spouse Kaikeyī had a hunch-backed maid called Mantharā. She was deformed mentally as well as physically. She saw the arrangements for some festivities going on in the city. On enquiring she came to know of the proposed coronation of Rāma. She ran to her mistress and announced that a great calamity had befallen Kaikeyī. The queen elicited from the maid the nature of the calamity. Instead of getting upset as was anticipated by Mantharā, Kaikeyī was only happy that her beloved Rāma was going to be made heir to the throne. The wily maid played on Kaikeyī's jealousy towards her co-queen Kausalyā and on her attachment to her own son Bharata. Kaikeyī became an altogether different person. Looking through the crafty eyes of Mantharā, Kaikeyī saw a deep-laid conspiracy on the part of the king to discard her and her son Bharata from royal favour. She became furious and vowed that she would see that Rāma was driven away into the forest and then get Bharata seated on the throne. At



Mantharā's instigation, Kaikeyī decided to demand of Daśaratha the two boons which he had granted her and which she had kept with him for subsequent use; the first boon was to be the banishment of Rāma to the woods and the second, placing Bharata on the throne. Doffing all royal vesture and ornaments, donning sack cloth and with dishevelled hair, Kaikeyī entered *krodhā-gāra*, the chamber of protest for aggrieved and angry womenfolk. (Was this provision for a permanent place of protest a regular arrangement in ancient royal households? Or was it only a forethought on the part of the kings of Ayodhyā, partly out of fun and partly out of necessity? In any case, it seems a sensible thing to have an isolation ward for the piqued and the chagrined!)

Entering the inner apartments and not seeing his beloved queen in her chamber, Daśaratha became perplexed and perturbed. Hearing from the guards that she had gone to the protest chamber, Daśaratha hastened thither with a heavy heart. Seeing his sweetheart down on the bare floor swathed in dirt and dust, Daśaratha caressed her and anxiously enquired of her the reason for her unusual behaviour. He tried all his arts and skills to cajole and console the estranged queen. Finally he swore by Rāma and all the gods that he would grant her whatever she would ask of him. When she heard the oath, assuring herself that it was irrevocable by making him repeat it, she revealed her demands for having Rāma banished and Bharata enthroned. Daśaratha could not believe his eyes and ears. It was a veritable thunderbolt. When he realized that Kaikeyī was sane and serious about her intention, he swooned. When he came back to consciousness, he was not quite sure whether he was in a dream world or had gone out of mind. Sorely grieved and highly enraged, he denounced her and despised her. Then he reminded her of how

she had spoken endearingly and nobly of Rāma. He bowed down to her and appealed not to press her claims. Despite everything Daśaratha did or said, Kaikeyī remained stubborn. She demanded of him the fulfilment of his promise to the very letter. She accused him of breaking faith with her in order to prefer Kausalyā to her through this contrivance. Daśaratha was disconsolate in the extreme. He wept and cursed—cursed his fate and cursed the queen. But nothing was of any avail. She was stiff and stern.

The day broke. Vasiṣṭha arrived at the palace and sent in Sumantra to announce to the king that arrangements were all ready for the day's ceremony. After due salutation Sumantra started singing the king's glories. Daśaratha cut him short. Startled, he withdrew. Kaikeyī bade him fetch Rāma. He hesitated having had no order from the king. Daśaratha too ordered that Rāma be brought to his presence immediately. And Rāma was brought. He found his father sad and jaded. He duly saluted them both. Seeing Daśaratha's plight, Rāma was perplexed. He enquired of Kaikeyī the reason for the king's changed demeanour. He wanted to know if he had unwittingly committed any wrong. He said he would do anything for the sake of his father, would even give his life. When Kaikeyī felt sure that Rāma would honour his words at any cost, she disclosed her demands. Rāma was not perturbed at this unexpected turn of events. He said :

'Well, forthwith I go to the woods to dwell therein as you wish and to uphold the word of honour of my father, the king. Mother, entertain no doubt, hereby I give you my word. I have no two words. I will do your bidding to your entire satisfaction. Only I am worried over one thing: how is it that the king himself spoke no word to me about Bharata's appointment. I will, of my own accord leave everything for Bharata. How much more readily would I do that if father also so desire? Let messengers



be despatched to fetch Bharata. Here I go immediately to the Daṇḍaka forest to stay there for fourteen years in accordance with your wish. Even if I receive no word of command from my father, I shall go, mother, at your command.'

Kaikeyī demanded that Rāma should leave the place immediately and added that the king would neither bathe nor eat until and unless he had removed himself from there. These cruel words pierced the heart of Daśaratha and he fell down unconscious. When he awoke, he could only weep and wail. Rāma went back to his palace to take leave of his mother and wife and get ready to depart. Notwithstanding all the objections raised by his mother, Rāma stuck to his decision. He could not persuade Sītā to stay behind. Lakṣmaṇa also entreated Rāma to be permitted to accompany him. Thus the three, Rāma, Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa soon got ready to depart and went to Daśaratha to take leave. Seeing Rāma coming, Daśaratha rushed towards him, but fell before reaching him weighed down with grief. He enfolded Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa in his arms and wept. With folded hands Rāma prayed for leave for them three. Staring Rāma in the face and finding that he was bent upon going Daśaratha spoke through sobs and sighs :

'Deluded am I, O my darling, by the granting of boons to Kaikeyī. Do thou become the ruler in Ayodhyā restraining me.'

Hearing this, Rāma with folded hands said :

'You will be the ruler of the world for a thousand years more. I shall live in the woods. I do not covet the kingdom. Spending nine and five years pleasantly in the forests I shall shortly salute your feet again at the end of the stipulated period.'

Bound by his promise and goaded by Kaikeyī, the old king through tears gave his beloved son leave with these words :

'For thy weal and glory, for safe return, tread thou thy chosen path with no let or hindrance, with no care or fear and go thou thy way. I

have no mind to stop thee on thy path of duty and truth. Son my dear, stay with me and thy mother this day. Spend the night with us. Wait thou till the morrow. Rāma my darling, thou hast taken then this hard path for pleasing me. But I hereby swear, this pleases me not in the least. I have been deceived by this wily woman. Thou desirest to uphold what she has exacted from me by foul means. It is no wonder that thou, my eldest son, should wish to see his father redeem his pledge in this manner.'

Rāma did not tarry further; for one thing, that would have displeased Kaikeyī; for another, it would have only added to the agony of the aged monarch. Sumantra and Vasiṣṭha tried to persuade Kaikeyī to withdraw her demands. She heeded them not. The two brothers Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa donned barks of trees in place of the princely attire and along with Sītā, after duly saluting the parents and Brahmins, got into a chariot driven by Sumantra and set out for the forest.

Broken-hearted, Daśaratha went to Kausalyā's apartments and there on the seventh day morning he breathed his last calling on Rāma and denouncing Kaikeyī. Vasiṣṭha despatched messengers post haste to Kekaya to fetch Bharata and Śatrughna. And they came. Kaikeyī broke the news of Daśaratha's death, Rāma's exile and her successful manoeuvring in winning the throne for Bharata. Bharata was sad and furious. He denounced Kaikeyī in very harsh words and swore that he would foil all her fond dreams. After the obsequial ceremonies and the mourning period, Bharata with his entourage of ministers and preceptors and mothers set out in search of Rāma in order to bring him back and enthrone him in Ayodhyā.

Here let us pause: while in the woods, whenever anyone asked Rāma for the cause of his exile, his invariable answer was that he did so to uphold the plighted word of his father. It is commonly held that Daśarātha ordered him into the woods in pur-



suance of his promised boons to Kaikeyī. Did Daśaratha ever ask Rāma to go? No. On the contrary, he asked Rāma to supersede him and thereby rescue him from the tragic situation. So, it was not to the liking of Daśaratha that Rāma should go away. He did not even give his approval to Rāma's going. He was constrained to acquiesce in it when he found that Rāma was adamant in his determination to honour his father's promise to his step-mother. Legally Rāma would not have been culpable had he insisted that he would forsake his claims only on an express order from his father. But Rāma is not a stickler for such niceties. He is virtue personified. So, for him procedural flaw has no value. Not only that, Rāma proffered to Kaikeyī that he would do whatever she or Daśaratha wished him to do even before getting any inkling into the cause of the king's grief. And when Kaikeyī revealed her nefarious scheme, Rāma readily submitted to it. He could have said that Bharata's opinion also might be ascertained before deciding the matter. True, Kaikeyī was not likely to brook any delay; but, it would have been very hard for her to oppose such a demand had any been made. Then, how and why did Rāma go without a specific order to that effect from the king, when usually he is very finical about all formalities? Was there any other consideration in Rāma's mind in readily agreeing to go? We have to probe further for an answer.

Bharata and his retinue reached the Citrakūṭa mountain. Seeing smoke rising from a place, they located Rāma's hutment. Requesting Vasiṣṭha to bring up the entourage Bharata ran ahead, Śatrughna following. From a distance Bharata espied his beloved brother seated on grassmats clad in bark, along with Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa. Bharata hastened his steps and in a choking voice called out 'Brother

dear'. He could utter nothing more; the voice stuck to his throat. He rushed to Rāma's feet; before he could reach them he fell down. With running eyes he sobbed 'Brother' and fell at Rāma's feet. Śatrughna also prostrated before Rāma. Rāma lifted them up and enclosed them in a warm embrace and wept.

When the atmosphere became calmer and after the preliminary enquiries were over, Rāma asked Bharata why he came away leaving their beloved father behind. Bharata broke the sad news of Daśaratha's demise to Rāma. And Rāma swooned. He was nursed back to normal. They all then went to the river and offered libations to the departed. By the time Rāma's mother, preceptor and others reached the hermitage, Rāma fell at their feet. Kausalyā embraced Sītā and wept. They all spent the night weeping and grieving. At day break, after bath and ablutions they all came and sat in front of Rāma.

Bharata submitted:

'Brother dear, my mother's wish has been fulfilled; she has given the kingdom to me. Now I offer it to you. Pray, accept it. None else is competent to administer this vast realm properly. I am totally unfit for it. Be pleased to return to Ayodhyā and gladden us all.'

Rāma answered:

'Brother, man is not free to act as he pleases. He is not free. Karma drags him hither and thither. Our father after righteously ruling the kingdom has gone to his immortal abode. We should not give way to grief on that score. A wise man ought to face such misfortunes calmly and with fortitude. You go back to Ayodhyā. That is the command of the king, our father. I shall dwell where our father had been pleased to place me. We both are equally duty bound to honour the bidding of our departed sire. I will do my part staying here and you do yours going back to Ayodhyā and ruling the land.'

Bharata could not be persuaded. He was very sore towards Daśaratha for banishing such a dutiful son as Rāma. He



desisted from denouncing Daśaratha in more harsh terms only because he feared Rāma's displeasure. If Rāma was bent upon choosing the harder way, well, he might very well take up the onerous duty of wielding the sceptre, compared to which the life of hermits in the woods was light and easy, argued Bharata. He requested to be allowed to perform Rāma's coronation then and there, the requisite materials and arrangements for which he was ready with.

Bharata said :

'Pray, save me. Have mercy on me. If you decide to stay on in the forests discarding my supplication, well, I too will live with you here.'

Nothing could make Rāma modify his resolve. He again advised Bharata to return to Ayodhyā and do as he was bidden by their departed father. In this connection Rāma added:

'Listen, brother, our father in days gone by while wedding with your mother had promised your mother's father that his daughter's son would inherit the kingdom.' (Ayodhyā—107-3.)

Now, this is a statement which stands alone without any reference before or after. Can it be considered a baseless statement made by Rāma in order to persuade Bharata to retreat? No, it cannot be; because, Rāma himself has proclaimed that he has never, not even in jest, uttered a lie. So, it must have been an authentic information. Whence and when did Rāma come to know of it? Evidently, it could not have come from any source other than his father Daśaratha. When did Daśaratha take Rāma into confidence regarding this matrimonial nuncupation? The poet does not give us any clue regarding that beyond the bare statement given above. So we are left to circumstantial evidence to arrive at a conclusion. It is not likely that Rāma knew anything about this undertaking before the public announcement of his coronation by the king. For, had

Rāma known it, he would not have agreed to be crowned contravening this solemn pledge. That would have infringed Rāma's own code of honour and fair play. He could never stoop to such expediency for gaining any personal profit. After dismissing the assembly retiring to his private rooms, Daśaratha summoned Rāma from his palace for a private audience. During this meeting, we are told, the king advised Rāma to be on his guard because such occasions were fraught with all kinds of dangers; Daśaratha was suspicious of Bharata and was anxious to have Rāma's installation done before the former's return. The poet does not say in clear terms anything about the aforesaid promise. But we have to conclude that it was during this private interview that Daśaratha let Rāma know of the promise he had made to Kaikeyī's father. But then, why did Rāma not insist on Daśaratha's making good his word? The reason is this: the king had publicly announced that Rāma would be made heir-apparent the next morning; and in the night he informs Rāma of an inconvenient undertaking. What could Rāma do now? Could he openly withdraw saying that he was doing so in order to make Daśaratha keep his word? Would that not have compromised Daśaratha's reputation? On the one hand, his public announcement would be set at naught; and on the other, the belated honouring of his word under Rāma's insistence would present Daśaratha as a dubious personality. So any expression of reluctance on the part of Rāma would tarnish Daśaratha's good name. So better keep quiet and let things take their own course, Rāma must have thought. In this quandary, Rāma first acquiesced in the conspiracy of inexorable circumstances.

To whom all was this agreement known, besides Kekaya and Daśaratha? Perhaps to none else. Or perhaps, only perhaps,



it was known to Vasiṣṭha also, he being the royal preceptor and to none else. Neither Kaikeyī nor her humpbacked maid knew anything about it; for, had either been aware of it, it would have been made the first and foremost point by Kaikeyī to buttress her claims. Other queens also could not have known of it; had they known, they, especially Kausalyā, the seniormost queen, would have protested against it. So this was a top secret and the poet also has kept it very ingeniously hidden.

Then another question may be raised: Why did Kekaya not advance claims on behalf of his daughter? Daśaratha had no issue by his first wife Kausalyā. Then he married Kaikeyī, readily promising the throne to her issue. Many years passed. He married another princess Sumitrā. Several thousand years passed. Daśaratha had no issue by any of them. Then in the evening of his life, through divine intervention he got four sons. The sons were only twenty-five years of age when Daśaratha thought of appointing a successor. How could Kekaya ask a mighty monarch who had been ruling for several thousand years to vacate the throne in favour of his grandson? Then again, Kekaya might have heard from the mouth of his own grandson such glowing praises of his elder brother that he might have thought it wise to keep quiet. Bharata would never agree even to entertain such a thought, the grandsire might have felt.

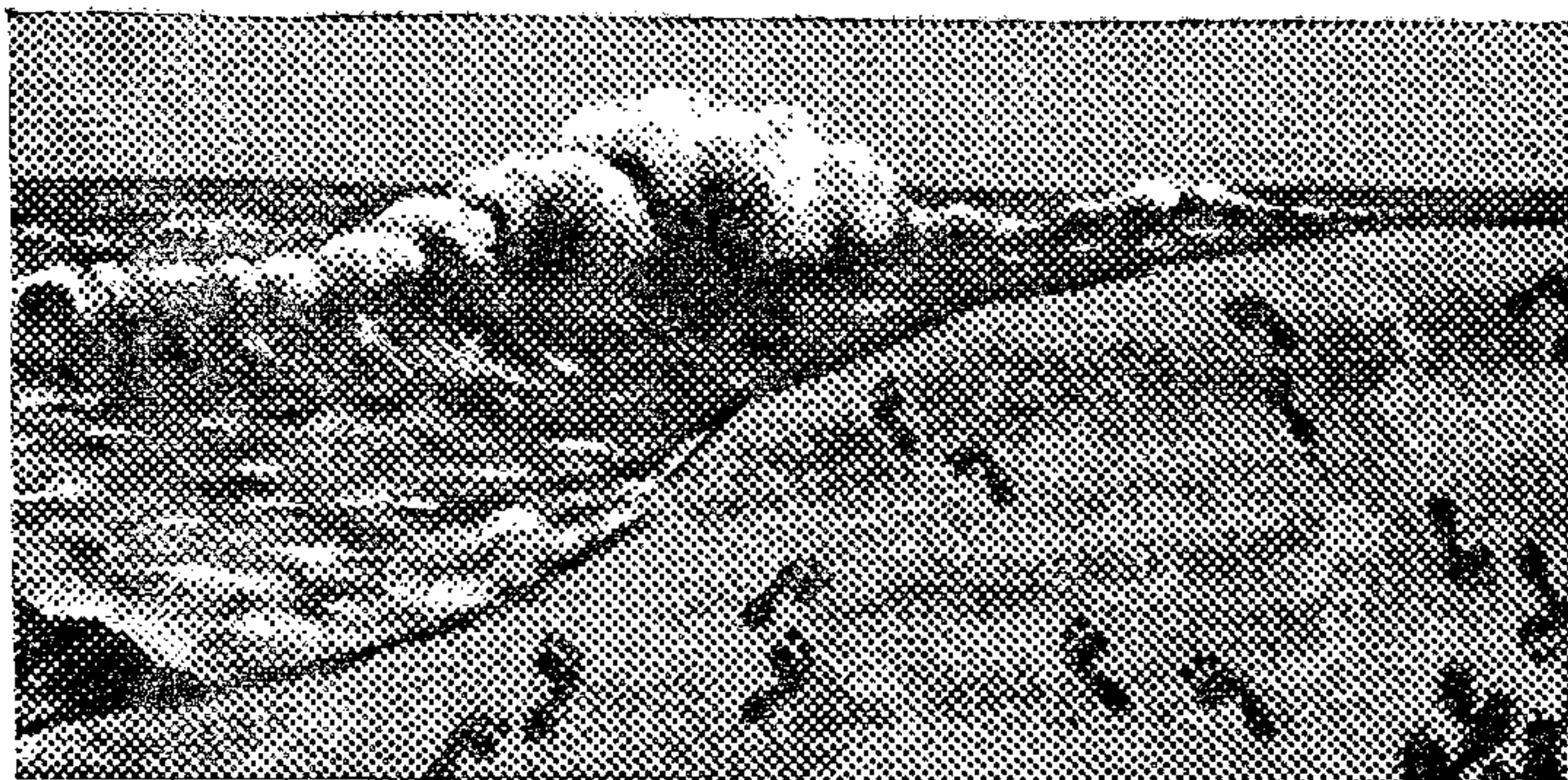
How can we explain Daśaratha's conduct in deciding to discard his matrimonial undertaking? There are certain situations in life wherein telling a lie may not be considered inexcusable. When one's or another's life is in danger, for purposes of marriage, for protecting one's property, one might utter a lie. Of course it is only an emergency sanction for which expiation is provided. Daśaratha might have thought

this was one such occasion. True, he had given his word. But then, at the time he was issueless. None could foresee a situation in which he would have had to disregard his undertaking. But as events turned out, it was impossible for Daśaratha to think of depriving Rāma of the throne. He was noble, able and perfect. Primogeniture was the age old tradition for succession in the Ikṣvāku dynasty. Daśaratha did not think it worthwhile or necessary to evoke a secret, private agreement to violate all these weighty considerations. And after all, it was given so long ago, few knew about it, and none invoked it; why then bother about it, Daśaratha might have thought.

All the same, Daśaratha was feeling uncomfortable. His conscience was chiding him. It was this sense of his own guilt that made him suspect the innocent Bharatā; made him keep Bharata away. We now know why Daśaratha was in such a hurry. He wanted to present a fait accompli to the world. He must have planned it sufficiently early. Otherwise, how could he leave out Kekaya and Janāka from the advisory council, when he had taken care to bring nobles and vassals from outlying and even mountainous area? The specious plea that it was due to want of time is untenable under the circumstances. This was also an additional reason why Daśaratha was tongue-tied when Kaikeyī challenged him as to what happened to his oaths and promises. After having been made aware of the existence of such an agreement, Rāma was also feeling uncomfortable at its being overlooked. Probably that is why he readily agreed to abide by Kaikeyī's wish even without suggesting that they might send for Bharata and ask his opinion in the matter. Kaikeyī's demands put Rāma at ease. He could vindicate his father's honour and at

*(Continued on p. 443)*





# HUMAN TRENDS

## ARE WE COMING TO A TURN IN THE ROAD?

These days when there is so much that is unsavoury being offered in the name of entertainment and literature, it is a joy to come across articles of a different nature, two of which I came across recently and which I would like to bring to the attention of the readers of the *Prabuddha Bharata*.

The first article which cheered me appeared in our daily newspaper last December. It was in reference to a 'war on mediocrity' being waged in Bombay, India. The idea was conceived by three Bombay men who apparently believe the statement of writer Somerset Maugham to the effect that if you refuse to accept anything except the best, you will very often get it. With this principle in mind, these well-known men in intellectual and commercial circles of Bombay, who prefer to shun personal publicity in connection with this endeavour, being concerned about the problem of achieving greater respect for high standards in India, got together over a year prior to see what could be done to bring about this hoped for greater respect for high standards in their country. The result has been an organization strikingly named the Indian Centre for Encouraging Excellence. The Centre has no formal membership; anyone interested in its cause

is welcome to participate; and the cost of its programme is met by donations. The prime purpose of the organization is to promote at all levels of society a concept of excellence with an aim to outlawing mediocrity. To quote a spokesman for the Centre: 'Young people should make it their aim to think in terms of excellence and what an average Indian can do to make his country better. Unless each one of us does his very best, in whatever field he may be working, our country will never show any progress.' When I read this statement, the concept of karma yoga immediately came to my mind and it seemed so right that a movement of this type should emanate from the land where the idea and belief in karma yoga originated.

The activities of the Centre were started with a series of weekly meetings addressed by eminent figures in industry, administration and academic life. The meetings apparently were well attended and as a result other projects have been commenced. For instance, a school was 'adopted' by the Centre and encouraged to give the best possible account of itself in sports and other activities. A number of other schools in the city have asked pupils to give up a few hours each week to carry out cleanliness drives in hospitals and public places. Additionally, some supporters took up a campaign to show city dwellers how to grow



vegetables and fruit on open terraces or in courtyards.

One can't help thinking how wonderful it would be if this idea would spread to other cities of India, and ultimately to the cities of the world at large. There is a saying that anything worth doing at all, is worth doing well. If for no other reason, it is worth doing well whatever we do just for the pleasant feeling of accomplishment and well-being that such action engenders. Most everyone has, at one time or another, experienced a sense of fulfilment, contentment and pride because something undertaken has been completed not only satisfactorily but to the very best of one's ability, and we all know that this is an inner, private, subjective feeling, and not one brought about by any monetary gain or unsought praise. I think it is safe to say that if all endeavours were approached and carried out in this manner, workers would benefit and prosper materially as a result, because good results are a concomitant of good actions. And so, anyone, anywhere, working to abolish mediocrity and achieve greater respect for high standards is bound to profit not only materially but more importantly, such a person cannot help but grow ethically, morally and, yes, spiritually as well.

The second item which I found most encouraging was about a teen-age decency movement which took place in March of this year in Miami, Florida. Teen-age youths sponsored and held a rally attended by 30,000 people of all ages. They stressed the fact they were not protesters stating 'We're not against something. We're *for* something.' This in itself was refreshing for all too often of late there have been groups criticizing just about anything one could mention, but without offering any suggested ways of changing or improving conditions, so it is not only refreshing but encouraging to read of these youngsters who

have a definite plan. They selected 'five virtues' as the keynote of the rally. They were : belief in God and that He loves us ; love of our planet and country ; love of our family ; reverence of one's sex ; and equality of all men.

Teen-age speakers gave three-minute talks on these subjects which were interspersed by appearances of professional entertainers who donated their services because they, too, believe strongly that decency in entertainment is desirable and necessary, and that any movement fostering it should be supported and strongly supported.

It is apparent that the majority of young people throughout the country want to support such a movement because many phone calls and letters from teen-agers all over the country came pouring in at the close of the rally indicating an interest and desire to spread the movement for decency. And weeks after the rally two of the youths appeared on national T.V. and said the response to a call for decency is continuing and that it has been overwhelming.

One of the members of the executive committee of the rally, a youth of 16, said they were going to try to come up with some kind of international youth organization. He felt it could really tie the world together. The youths of the world are very much in the majority population-wise and if the movement has the proper foundation and aims, it conceivably could grow and possibly ten years from now, when these same youths are all older, the world might very well be a happier and better place because of them and their present concern in fostering and spreading decency.

A clergyman stated in a sermon recently that prior to his present assignment he had been affiliated with a church in Hollywood and, hence, came in contact with many film producers and other people in the movie and entertainment world. He said that in



discussions with these producers many of them openly admitted they were ashamed and embarrassed by much of what was being produced in the movie industry today but it apparently is what the public wants. The clergyman went on to say that in the final analysis it is the vox populi which governs and determines such things and that if enough people let their likes and dislikes be known and if they will ban what is undesirable and support that which is good, they can bring about changes they want and which are certainly much needed these days. But there is no use bemoaning the state of things unless each and everyone of us is willing to actively support that which is right and good and ban that which is not.

We all know that there is a long road that has no turning, and though it does seem for a long time now we have been following a road leading only in one direction—a road that has led us ever downward to all that is unsavoury in literature and entertainment—perhaps we are at

long last approaching a turn in the road, a turn that will take us on an upward road to all that is worthwhile and good and virtuous. The movement for decency started by teen-agers in Miami and the war against mediocrity being waged in Bombay encouragingly point in that direction.

Perhaps there are some unseen forces at work in this world of ours, possibly brought into play by the advent of Sri Ramakrishna, believed by people the world over and not just those of India, the land of his birth, to be an Incarnation of God. Has not the Lord promised in his Incarnation as Śrī Kṛṣṇa that 'He is born in every age for the protection of the good, for the destruction of the wicked, and for the establishment of Dharma'? Who is to know through what channels He will accomplish this in our age? Could it not be through a war on mediocrity and a movement for decency starting almost simultaneously, but distinctly apart from one another in distant parts of the globe?

*Anna Nylund*

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(Continued from p. 440)

the same time be at peace with himself. Otherwise an uneasy feeling of having been an accomplice in an unjust conspiracy would have haunted Rāma's mind all through his life. Kaikeyī's demands released Rāma from this fix and exonerated Daśaratha. But for this undertaking, Daśaratha's words and conduct in his last days would be inexplicable. So the causes of Rāma's exile are two fold: this secret promise of Daśaratha to Kekaya and Kaikeyī's overt demand to that effect.

Thus, this one verse throws a flood of light on the happenings in Ayodhyā which

resulted in the exile of Rāma and the demise of Daśaratha. Without a proper appreciation of the implications involved in this verse, a lot of the story would remain confused and mysterious. That such a vast amount of complicated affairs could be compressed in a short verse, and that too kept very cleverly concealed, speaks volumes for the skill and ingenuity of the master mind of the First Poet. Verily, he has written a long story in a small couplet and secretly revealed it in the forest!

Indeed Vālmiki knew how to keep a secret!

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## NOTES AND COMMENTS

### IN THIS NUMBER

This passage 'Onward for Ever!' occurs in the *Complete Works*, Vol. I, 1962, p. 339

The editorial stresses the need for imbibing and propagating the Vedantic knowledge of oneness of all beings to promote personal as well as global peace.

In 'Profiles in Greatness' of this issue the 'Explorer' finds greatness in the true humility and utter lack of egotism of Swami Saradananda, the first Secretary of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission.

'Preface to Rāja Yoga' by Sister Nivedita was discovered among the papers of Swami Saradananda. This preface, which was presumably written for being used in Swami Vivekananda's *Rāja Yoga*, stayed unused. To our knowledge this has not been published anywhere before, except in Bengali rendering in the *Udbodhan*, Aswin, 1376.

The writing came to us through the courtesy of the Editor, *Udbodhan*, for which we are thankful.

Sri M. K. Venkatarama Iyer, formerly

Head of the Department of Philosophy, Annamalai University, in his thought-provoking article 'The Special Relevance of Advaita Vedanta to Modern Times' makes a fervent plea for the study and assimilation of Advaita Vedanta, for it alone can ensure an attitude of wide sympathy and understanding tolerance which mankind is badly in need of today.

In 'Illuminating Dialogues from Indian Lore' Swami Smaranananda, Manager of this Journal, presents the famous conversation between Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Sanat-sujāta culled from the Mahābhārata.

Prof. Pranab Ranjan Ghosh, Lecturer in Bengali, University of Calcutta, records 'What Inspires me most in Holy Mother's Life'.

Swami Siddhinathananda of the Ramakrishna Order portrays the ingenuity of the master poet Vālmiki in solving a riddle of the Rāmāyaṇa.

In the column 'Human Trends' Anna Nylund brings some refreshing glad tidings, in which a new quality of hope tenderly smiles.

### DIGNITY OF THE INDIVIDUAL

Dignity of the individual in effect constitutes an important fundamental of the Constitutions of nations which aim at safeguarding the human rights and providing opportunities for the fruition of potentialities of individuals. The U.N.O. adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights at a solemn moment a couple of decades ago and thereby gave effect to one of the provisions of its Charter viz. to

make recommendations 'for the purpose of promoting respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all'. That the Declaration was adopted without a vote being cast against it revealed the supreme significance attached to it by the Member-States of the world body and their unanimous determination to combat the evils of oppression and exploitation rampant everywhere in the



world. Unfortunately, even after two decades, the enemy stays entrenched there with a ferocity that calls for energetic efforts on the part of one and all.

Constitutions and Charters alone, however well-framed, prove ineffective to bring about the desired changes in the society. They have to derive their sustenance from the individual himself. Cultivation of anything, good or bad, begins at home. Is a person conscious at home of the worth of other individuals at the time of his behaviour with others, say those who are subordinate to or dependent on him, servants for example, and with his equals, as also with his neighbours? If he is, well and good; others will learn of him. Children will imperceptibly imbibe the virtue and lay the foundation for social ethics, for home is the first school. Suppose, on the other hand, he is self-centred and impudent enough to do violence to the dignity of others, the way to reclaim himself lies in thinking loudly and reasoning out—man is after all a rational being—to what disastrous consequences his unsocial behaviour leads. He poisons the atmosphere, paves the way for the undesirable growth of the characters of his dear ones including his children and himself becomes a detestable object in the eyes of others.

To whichever calling or place—city or village—one belongs, one will do well to analyze and understand the healthy and harmful effects that one's act of recognizing and denying the dignity of the individual respectively will produce. Such an analysis will bring to light the evils of corrupt practices involving denial of dignity to others and create in oneself a desire to foster and promote social justice.

For the ideal of human dignity to be realized, what is needed is to fortify the understanding and desire with a strong will. The concept of dignity of mankind was promulgated ages back in the Vedic dictum *Tat Tvam Asi* (That Thou Art), raising thereby the dignity of man to the highest level—that of all-comprehending Divinity. How is it that in India the birth-place of the dictum there has been for long so much social injustice and inequity perpetrated on grounds of caste and religion? It is because of wide gulf between high concept and low practice, non-application of religious principle of equality or same-sightedness in social life. The *Gītā* (XIII. 28) clearly states the path to salvation:

‘Verily, seeing the same God equally existent everywhere, he does not injure the Self by the self, and so goes to the Supreme Goal.’

The neglect of scriptural teaching resulted in the neglect of the dignity of the masses who form the vast majority, the monopolizing of the means of enjoyment and education by the few and long slavery under foreign rule. Let not the dark period recur. Let us learn from the follies and foibles of the past. If India is to stabilize herself politically, economically and socially and hold her head high in the comity of nations, she can do no better than take the cue from the life-giving spiritual truths, end all forms of exploitation and discrimination on the basis of caste, creed, race and religion, restore and heighten the dignity of the individual. This is a task not to be left to the State alone but to be carried out by the citizens themselves with a will worthy of a great nation.



## REVIEWS AND NOTICES

MEANING FOR MAN BY ROLLIN CHAMBLISS, Philosophical Library, 15 East 40th Street, New York, N.Y. 10016, pages xi+191, Price \$4.50

This is a very handy book running to just one hundred and ninety-one pages, but a very weighty one considering the thoughtful manner in which many important topics of current interest are discussed in it. Besides the introductory chapter, there are nine other chapters in it dealing with problems relating to heredity, environment, personality, reason, freedom, meaning, love, morality and duty. The treatment is of a penetrating nature and focuses attention on the problems involved in each of them.

The central theme running through these chapters is the meaning of life. The author's main concern is to discover the pervasive purpose which gives meaning to human existence and sustains all its multifarious activities. 'Man's question "why" is the expression of the human need for meaning. We ask, each one of us in his own fashion, the question that the Hindus raised long ago in the Upaniṣads: "Whence are we born? Whereby do we live and whither do we go? O Ye, who know Brahman, tell us at whose command we abide whether in pain or pleasure."' (Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad I. i).

There is urgent need today, as we face the future fraught with perils, to ask with the utmost seriousness the question, 'What is good for man?' 'The answer to this question depends ultimately upon what we consider man to be.' Though man has many features in common with animals and consequently can be assigned his place in the scheme of nature, he yet rises above nature and the level of animals by virtue of his powers of reasoning, his sense of right and wrong and his longing to reach the Infinite. It will not do to overlook his spiritual nature and reduce him to the purely biological level. Speaking about freedom versus determinism the author observes: 'Value premises underlie all our undertakings and if we lose sight of these we have nothing to guide us in our efforts to achieve specific ends. That is why it is important to unmask our presuppositions in order to make explicit the ultimate values we accept, because only in that way can the intellectual need for order and unity in our lives be satisfied. We need to ask, therefore, to what image of man our institutions and practices are logically related, because only in

that way can we maintain a sense of direction.' (p. 109)

Repeated attempts have been made to define man, but it is evident that the definitions found in biology, philosophy, psychology and theology only present one or more aspects of human nature and consequently do not represent the whole truth. Often something remains untold about human kindness and human courage after the artist has done his very best. The full meaning of human love is never wholly grasped. When all is said and done there is an element of mystery at the heart of human behaviour.

Mental phenomena cannot be satisfactorily explained in purely physiological terms such as chromosomes and genes. No physiological basis can be found for many psychoses. Mental aberrations cannot be wholly traced to heredity. Genius and special aptitudes defy analysis. Nor can these phenomena be explained as being due to environmental forces. There are some stubborn individuals who remain impervious to them. Children born of the same parents and brought up under identical environmental forces exhibit wide differences. Considering all this, it seems necessary to admit a third force which will explain these phenomena. In addition to heredity and environment, there are the latent tendencies (*vāsanās*) which the individual carries with him from his past births. These are also spoken of as *Samśkāras* arising from previous thoughts and actions. The author is aware of this initial equipment of man. 'The Hindu doctrine of Karma, which can be loosely defined as retributive justice, while opposed to fate in that it makes the individual ultimately the creator of his own destiny, recognizes the reign of law in the spiritual universe, the law of causality determining the place in society in which he is reborn.' (p. 106)

In society man has to play many roles. 'When any one tries to find himself, he may wonder if anything remains when all that is role in him is stripped away. He may decide that either nothing exists in him that cannot be identified with some particular role or that whatever does exist at the core of his being is unknowable personality.' Roles may 'vanish' but the witness of the roles remains constant. This is pure eternal consciousness. It undergoes no change. It knows no extinction. It is the standing witness of all our mental and bodily states.



About freedom and equality the author has interesting things to say. 'If man enjoys absolute freedom, there will be nothing to prevent him from exploiting the weak. No society has achieved equality for all its members throughout the world, in all periods of history, some individuals have had more wealth, power and prestige than the others. Any definition of equality that denies gradation is unrealistic. The principle of equality is not violated if the social scale is a social ladder on which all of them have equal opportunity to climb.' 'Caste justifies an individual's position on the social scale by maintaining that every person determines by his behaviour in any life-span the position in which he will be reborn. Equality of opportunity exists, therefore, across a succession of life-spans and, while there is no way to climb or fall from one caste to another in one life-time, every person gets eventually his just deserts.'

The quotations given above are specimens. It is needless to quote more passages. Throughout the book the author raises problems for which he himself suggests the solution as it is found in Hindu thought or leaves the reader to supply it for himself.

It is a very thought-provoking book and the eager student of Vedānta cannot do better than read it as a preparation. It may be said safely that Vedānta, as its very name implies, comes at the end of (scientific) knowledge. It begins where modern science and western philosophy end. Problems which remain unsolved in them find a satisfactory solution in Hindu thought in general and the Vedānta in particular.

In respect of printing, get-up and neat execution, the book, like most American publications, leaves little to be desired.

M. K. VENKATARAMA IYER

**SANSKRIT DEEPIKA ( PARTS I AND II :**  
BY PANDIT K. S. PARAMESWARA SASTRY, P. S. K. Sastri, 254 Jawahar Nagar, Goregaon (West), Bombay 62, pp. 160 and 170, Price Rs. 1.50 and Rs. 2.40.

This text-book is written for beginners by an experienced teacher in Sanskrit. The lessons are arranged in a carefully graded manner. Students can easily grasp the rules of grammar without taxing themselves too much. Exercises at the end of each lesson are very carefully framed to illustrate the rules. Students are taken by easy steps from one lesson to another. The transition is very natural.

The first book consists of twenty-seven lessons and the second thirty. The relevant sūtras of Pāṇini are given in the foot-notes. There are also useful hints to teachers.

Being a sāhityaśiromaṇi, the author is able to find suitable passages from eminent poets and prose-writers to illustrate the grammatical points. This incidentally serves to introduce the students to the great classics in Sanskrit literature.

Now that there is no scope for students to study Sanskrit as part of their school curriculum, those who desire to study this great language will find this book immensely useful. Voluntary organizations which have taken up the work of teaching Sanskrit to students will be well-advised in using this book as the text.

SRI M. K. VENKATARAMA IYER

**NAVA NAVA RUPE SWAMI VIJNANANANDA**  
(SWAMI VIJNANANANDA IN VARIOUS PORTRAITS) : COLLECTED BY SRI SURESH CHANDRA DAS, General Printers and Publishers Private Limited, 119, Dharamtala Street, Calcutta 13, An Album, Price Rs. 25/-.

This is a beautiful album published on the occasion of the birth centenary of Swami Vijnananda, one of the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna and the fourth President of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission. Although it is not claimed to be a complete representation of the great monk's manifold personality (because very few pictures are available at present), still his towering spirituality and true monk-like aloofness is imprinted in each of these pictures. Those who want to meditate upon his life and message will receive immense help from this album.

In a short introduction to this album, Swami Vireswarananda, the present President of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, observes, 'It is easier to understand God through an Avatara, likewise it is easier to understand an Avatara through his intimate disciples.' (Translated from the original Bengali introduction.) Truly, through the personality of Swami Vijnananda, one can have a glimpse of Sri Ramakrishna, who is 'wide as the sky and deep as the sea'.

In an album like this, mention of the year, occasion and place of each picture would have enhanced the present value of the work.

Taken as a whole, this devotional offering of a disciple of Swami Vijnananda deserves every praise from devotees as well as students of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda movement.

PROF. PRANAB RANJAN GHOSH



## NEWS AND REPORTS

### RAMAKRISHNA MISSION ASHRAMA, CHANDIGARH

REPORT FOR 1968-69

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

*Spiritual and Cultural:* 1. The Ashrama maintains a shrine which provides the opportunity and atmosphere for devotees seeking to meditate and pray and participate in the evening Arati and Bhajans. Fortnightly Rama Nam Sankirtan was conducted. The birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother and Swami Vivekananda and other spiritual luminaries were observed. 2. Regular weekly classes and lectures were conducted on Saturday evening, Sunday morning and evening respectively in Hindi and English by a monastic member and others. Total number of classes: 90; total number of lectures: 55. The Secretary was invited by several colleges and cultural groups, local and outside. Total number of lectures: 11. 3. A special event of the year was the combined public celebration of the birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother and Swami Vivekananda in one elaborate function held from March 1st to 9th, 1969. 4. The Library has a total number of 1368 books, of which 216 were issued. The reading room provided one newspaper and 8 periodicals.

*Medical:* The free homoeopathic dispensary continued its work of serving the sick. The total number of patients served was 9775, of which 3953 were new cases.

*Educational:* Vivekananda Students' Home was started in 1960 accommodating students studying in Chandigarh colleges. The objective of the institution is to supplement the academic education of the colleges by providing facilities and an atmosphere conducive to the development of a healthy and wholesome character, under the guidance of a monastic member. Weekly classes for building up a good moral and spiritual life were held for the boys by the Secretary. The total number of students at the end of the year was 32, of whom 2 were part-free.

Besides the routine maintenance and working of the Ashrama the following items need urgent attention: Repairs to and renovation of the Ashrama

and Students' Home buildings and roads; Replacement of obsolete furniture and equipment; Improvement of library through repair and addition; Helping poor and deserving students; Dispensary supplies.

### RAMAKRISHNA MISSION ASHRAMA, KATIHAR

REPORT FOR 1963-68

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

*Educational:* The Secondary High School had a total strength above 600 students on the average. Full free studentship and half free studentship were awarded to meritorious students apart from financial aid to poor students. During 1967-68 the amount spent for poor students was Rs. 431.42.

Education is imparted through Bengali. Hindi is also taught as compulsory language in classes III to VIII. In addition to the prescribed curriculum special stress is laid on physical and religious development.

*Students Home:* Ashrama runs this Home where efforts are made to develop the qualities of head and heart in students apart from regular study hours. Daily prayers and Gita and Upanisad chanting classes are conducted.

*Library and Reading Room:* The Library contained the total number of 2100 book in English, Bengali and Hindi on religion, philosophy and literature. There are two dailies and 17 weekly and monthly magazines. In 1967-68 the number of books issued was 818.

*Charitable Outdoor Dispensary:* The Dispensary with its Allopathy and Homeopathy departments was conducted by qualified doctors and compounders. Free medical aid and medicines (inclusive of injection, minor operation, eye treatment) were served to a large number of patients. In 1967-68 the number of patients treated was: Allopathy 15771; Homeopathy 10159.

*Preaching Work:* The birthday celebrations of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother and Swami Vivekananda and other spiritual personalities were observed. Regular religious classes and Ramanam Sankirtan on Ekadasi days were held in the Ashrama.