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उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत

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

—:0:—

A LETTER OF SWAMI TURIYANANDA

Dear—,

It need hardly be said that you should stay devotedly engaged in the service of your father.

पिता स्वर्गः पिता धर्मः पिता हि परमं तपः ।
पितरि प्रीतिमापन्ने प्रीयन्ते सर्वदेवताः ॥

'Father is the heaven, father is Dharma, he alone is the supreme austerity; father being pleased all the deities are pleased.'

This verily is the injunction of the scripture. You have accepted the religion of service. To do good to all beings in general is your duty, not to speak of service to your father !

It is a pity that you are being deprived of holy company. But what can you do? The Holy of holies stays within your heart; now try to feel more attracted to Him alone; He will set everything in order to your advantage.

How have you been after going to your country home? How have your relatives been disposed towards you, and how have you yourself been feeling? Never desist from good conduct towards them, for otherwise your religion of service will have become false.

The Lord is in all beings. He alone is the main objective of life.

Ever your well-wisher,
Sri Turiyananda

SRI RAMAKRISHNA THE FRIEND OF ALL BEINGS

(EDITORIAL)

We all have heard about Sri Ramakrishna. But who is he? Do we really know him?

One who knew him most intimately—Swami Vivekananda—has described¹ him as :

The breaker of world's bondage.
Timeless Supreme Spirit manifest as
the God incarnate.
The remover of the evils of Kaliyuga.
The ever mad ocean of Divine Love.
One who transforms your sins into
virtues.

Sri Ramakrishna has been described as the prophet of new India. Even prophets may leave our lives untouched. But this cannot be said of Sri Ramakrishna for he is, '*cira unmada prema pathara*', ever mad ocean of Divine Love.

This love that is Sri Ramakrishna has brought the absentee God to man's parlour in a new way, and prodigal man to God's bosom.

For us all he has done the most wondrous thing conceivable. When we realize the implications and significance of this we grow to love this person as the dearest friend of our soul. You have not to be a Hindu, or an Indian, or a Vedantin in order to feel this way.

You may be any one, born anywhere, speaking any language. But if you are seeking to know about the true meaning of life, about that mysterious but unavoidable thing called God, then in Sri Ramakrishna you will find the greatest benefactor and helper, who will take you by the hand with infinite love all the way through.

¹In his two hymns on Sri Ramakrishna, one beginning with the words, '*Khandana-bhava-bandhana*', and the other '*Om Hrīm Rtam.*'

He is truly what Sri Kṛṣṇa describes in the *Gītā* as *suhṛdam sarvabhūtānām*, friend of all beings.

You may not yet know it, but he has love reserved for you personally, such love as you have never known before. The fortunate ones somehow come to know about this.

We here quote a few lines from a letter we received sometime back from an unknown American, living in Jackson, Missisipi. He wrote :

'Although I am unlearned in philosophy, science and religion, two things I know: I love Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Ramakrishna loves me. Actually, what else one need know?

'Sri Ramakrishna entered my life just as I had come to what I believed was the end of a long and almost futile search for God. In every way known to me, I had searched for Him. But, I could not harmonize all the creeds, doctrines and ideas. A fundamentalist background which consigns most of humanity to the flames of hell almost swamped the little light I had and caused me untold mental suffering. Finally, in desperation, I wept and called for help.

'Sri Ramakrishna came.'

This was exactly as Sri Ramakrishna had said it would be. You might say, this was happening as the fulfilment of the scripture.

Sri Ramakrishna said that if any person anywhere sincerely longed for God, cried for Him, even for once, he would come to him.

This is another way of saying that if you sincerely long for God even for once, no matter where you be in the world, he will find you out, and give you the necessary help Godward.

This coming of Sri Ramakrishna in your life, in the form of help for movement Godward, may happen in diverse unexpected ways. His inspiration may reach

your soul in ways unthinkable to you now. But, be sure, it will reach you.

What will happen to you when he comes? You will find your way for moving Godward. You will be transformed into a spiritual being, as distinguished from being merely a religious person. You will become a lover of God, as distinguished from being merely a Hindu, a Jew, a Christian or a Mohammedan.

If as a Christian you had lost love for and contact with Christ, Sri Ramakrishna's coming in your life will mean that he will fill your heart with love for Christ. So will be the case with all who had wandered away from the God of their heart. And those who thought there was no God in their heart will suddenly discover Him there.

Not only that, your coming to Sri Ramakrishna, or rather Sri Ramakrishna's coming to you will mean a strange new thing for you. Love for Sri Ramakrishna will enable you to love God in every one else's manner and place of worship.

Thus surprisingly you will find your very concept of God has gotten shattered with all its separating limits and you have become the worshipper of an ampler God as it were, whom you can give all your soul, for He is great enough for all souls.

In this sense Sri Ramakrishna is the revivifier of all authentic approaches to God. He is the energizer of all true divine inspirations. He is the anxious protector of all flickering faiths. He is the feeder of all our little lamps, our little longings for God.

He has proved the potency of the *yantras* and power of *mantras*. He has demonstrated the anxious responsiveness of God to the devotees' cries through every faith.

He belongs to all mankind and all religions, and to all ages. And to you,

II

After reading his life, if you are a reasonable person, you can never be any more in doubt in regard to that most disturbing question: does God exist?

Truly said Mahatma Gandhi:

'The story of Ramakrishna Paramahansa's life is a story of religion in practice. His life enables us to see God face to face. No one can read the story of his life without being convinced that God alone is real and that all else is an illusion.'²

Indeed in the annals of man there have been many knowers of God. Even prophets have been quite a few. Among all the knowers of God and prophets, Sri Ramakrishna has a singularity of his own in a very comprehensive way.

In writing his biography Romain Rolland underlines his uniqueness in these words:

'The man whose image I here evoke was the consummation of two thousand years of spiritual life of three hundred millions of people ... his inner life embraced whole multiplicity of men and Gods.'³

Two thousand years of spiritual life of India has been a staggering one crowded with diverse religious experiments and experiences. It is truly an amazing phenomenon to have unified all these mighty streams of spirituality in a single symphony of a life of fifty years only.

We can today read Sri Ramakrishna's life within two covers of a book. But what an incredible life it was! Sri Aurobindo wrote:

'The world could not bear a second birth like that of Ramakrishna Paramahansa, in five hundred years. The mass of thought that he has left, has first to be transformed into experience; the spiritual energy given forth has to be converted into achievement. Until this is done, what right have we to ask for more? What could we do with more?

² Vide: Foreword to *Life of Sri Ramakrishna*, Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Himalayas, 1964.

³ Romain Rolland: *The Life of Sri Ramakrishna*, Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta 14, 1954, p. 14.

'His was the great superconscious life which alone can witness to the infinitude of the current that bears us all oceanwards. He is the proof of the Power behind us, and the future before us. So great a birth initiates great happenings. Many are to be tried as by fire, and not a few will be found to be pure gold; but whatever happens, whether victory or defeat, speedy fulfilment or prolonged struggle, the fact that he has been born and lived here in our midst, in the sight and memory of men now living is proof that

'God hath sounded for the trumpet
That shall never call retreat!
He is sifting out the hearts of men
Before His judgement seat;
Oh, be swift my soul, to answer Him:
Be jubilant, my feet!
While God is marching on!'⁴

III

In Sri Ramakrishna's personal life there are two mighty movements, the study of which is fascinating, as a pure study besides their implications for those who keep on trying to derive spiritual inspiration from his life.

But before we discuss the point we need clarify some ideas. Among our readers there are people of various faiths with varying degrees of association and acquaintance with the life, teachings and Mission of Sri Ramakrishna.

Some may accept Sri Ramakrishna as an illustrious saint and not take seriously what the devotees say about his being God incarnate on earth. There are surely others, the devotees, who are perfectly convinced that he is the God incarnate on earth, and hence the saviour of humanity.

Even during Sri Ramakrishna's lifetime diverse people looked upon him differently. Some thought that he was a mad man. Some looked upon him as a good man, a good devotee about to be spoiled by the adulation of his admirers. Some looked upon him as a great Bhakta. There were many

with whom it was obvious that he was an uncommon saint. A few were perfectly convinced that without question, he was God incarnate on earth. Bhairavi Brahmani went to the extent of calling an assembly of scholars, and there she established the fact of his being an incarnation of God on the basis of indubitable testimony. Swami Vivekananda maintained his scepticism almost up to the end of his Master's life.

Once shortly before Sri Ramakrishna's passing away the idea entered into Naren's mind of testing the Master's statement about himself that he was an incarnation of God. He said to himself: 'If in the midst of this dreadful physical pain he can declare his Godhood, then I shall believe him.'

Strange to say, no sooner had this thought crossed his mind than Sri Ramakrishna opened his all-seeing eyes and summoning all his energy said distinctly:

'He who was Rama and Krishna, is now Ramakrishna in this body—but not in your Vedantic sense.'

'Narendra was stricken with shame and remorse for having doubted the Master even after so many revelations.'⁵

If Vivekananda hymned Sri Ramakrishna as the 'supreme Lord incarnate', it was not simply an overstrained panegyric of a disciple, but a clinical report, so to say, for Narendra had tested Sri Ramakrishna for long five years in all possible ways with that kind of an awakened intellect which only a genius possesses. His ways of testing were not restricted even by the rules of personal regard, but guided purely by methods of scientific enquiry.

Fortunately for mankind, Sri Ramakrishna's life and teachings were authentically recorded in his lifetime by people

⁴ Vide: *Karmayogin*, 5th Chaitra, 1316.

⁵ *Life of Sri Ramakrishna*, Advaita Ashrama, 1964, p. 594-95.

who though disciples or admirers, were trained in the methods of critical study of a phenomenon.

Now, you may look upon Sri Ramakrishna in any way you want to. But even this absolute unqualified freedom has to be answerable to authentically recorded facts, and we add authentically recorded *all* facts.

If you accept a portion of the recorded facts and ignore some other facts, for some reason or other, then your understanding, being qualified by your partial approach, is bound to be partial. And you cannot help the situation without accepting all recorded facts. True understanding of any phenomenon calls for a totality-approach.

So, if you accept Sri Ramakrishna's life and teachings as authentically recorded, accept them in toto. Otherwise, from a kind of intellectual nibbling one can only have a selective misapprehension.

For comprehensive understanding of Sri Ramakrishna's life and teachings, all authentically recorded facts need be equally weighed and considered. And the mind needs to be kept open to what emerges from such totality of comprehension.

In expounding Sri Ramakrishna's life and teachings, we shall be writing here from this comprehensive standpoint, derived from all recorded facts of his life.

From this point of view, you will find that in Sri Ramakrishna's life there are two mighty movements. One is Godward movement, the other is manward movement. The first movement is vertical, the other horizontal; one is shooting up, the other is spreading over. But these descriptions only indicate certain ways of looking at these movements: Godward and manward. The power source of these two movements is the same, which is an inborn love; and the person in whom they originate is also the same: Sri Ramakrishna,

In the first, movement Godward, we find Sri Ramakrishna a mad seeker forcibly storming the citadel of God in diverse ways and appropriating Him as it were in a measure unknown to man. This movement started in 1856 when at the age of 19 he became the priest of the Kali at Dakshineswar temple and its serene finale came in 1872 with the Sodasi Puja, in which Sri Ramakrishna worshipped Saradamani Devi, his wedded wife, as the Divine Mother.

This was the consummation of Sri Ramakrishna's life as a spiritual seeker. In this worship he dedicated everything to the Mother of the Universe, manifested through the living symbol of God. In his eyes there was no spiritual gap between noumenon and phenomenon, God and man, between one religion and another. He literally saw God in everything, and everything in God. Moreover he discovered himself as God. Though all his life he behaved as a humble devotee of the Divine Mother, on crucial revealing occasions he did not hesitate to declare:

'He who was born as Rama in previous incarnations, he who was born as Krishna, in this body is born as Ramakrishna.'

Then the Godward tide turned manward. And that again is equally a wonderful story.

There was a time in Sri Ramakrishna's life when with the coming of the evening he would fall on the ground and rub his face and cry in agony:

'Another day is spent in vain, Mother, for I have not seen You. Another day of this short life has passed, and I have not realized the Truth.'⁶

Now when Sri Ramakrishna had discovered his Godhood with the ringing of the vesper bell instead of going to the temple he would rush to the terrace and cry piteously:

⁶ Vide: *Life of Sri Ramakrishna*, 1964, p. 68.

'Come, my boys! Where are you all? I cannot bear to live without you.'⁷

The fact that Sri Ramakrishna wept as copiously for devotees as he had done for Kali is of utmost significance for understanding his life. If he had done *Kali-sadhana*, he also did *Narendra-sadhana*, the first representing his soul's Godward movement, the second his manward movement.

His first sadhana, spiritual strivings, represented the God-hunger of the soul.

His second sadhana represented the soul-hunger of God.

In the first sadhana it was shown how man must love God to attain Him.

In the second was shown how God loves man. What more need we know as aspirants?

It was the same Divine love after once having flowed Godward now turned manward.

But then who is God? And who is man? Now, you may find out that mystery!

We may only give a hint here.

Sri Ramakrishna's portrait, which may be considered as his greatest teaching, will provide you the mysticism of it.

This portrait, a unique one in the world, reveals a tremendous truth, of man being God, and God being man, in a sportive way, if you like, in such a real way though, that you can touch it, you can feel it.

Man's maximum God-hunger and God's maximum soul-hunger are fused into one in this portrait. It will be difficult to find any other such picture in the gallery of man.

IV

What did Sri Ramakrishna teach?

Sri Ramakrishna's spoken words are re-

corded in a book of more than 1000 pages. This book, called the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, has become a source of inspiration, guidance and help for seekers of God all over the world. If you are really seeking God, in this book you will find such help as is provided by a road map when you are driving in an unknown country. Moreover, it will also supply you all the power and food you will require on the way. When you are tired of travelling it will help you to regain your strength. If you have lost your way it will bring you back to the right path. To the end of the journey it will take you step by step.

Sri Ramakrishna's teachings come to us from many other authentic sources. In fact, by supreme good fortune we have really an abundance of them.

In one sense, however, Sri Ramakrishna knew only one thing. And so he could teach only one thing: God.

About this one thing he knew and taught everything one needs to know. Generally speaking his teachings about this one thing: God, may be viewed as having three strands:

the fact of God; God's ways in the world and with men;

the ways of bringing God home, seeing Him and realizing Him; and

the ways of living a life in and for God only.

His teachings may branch off in many other allied fields. But no teaching of his is unrelated to God.

And Sri Ramakrishna was the most perfect teacher for our times, fully imbued with the scientific spirit. While seeking God, he did not take Him for granted. He turned his whole life into a vast laboratory for experimenting with God. While giving others his knowledge of God, he asked them to test his words before accepting them.

⁷ Vide: Eastern and Western Disciples: *Life of Swami Vivekananda*, Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta 14, 1965, p. 42.

One day a devotee asked Sri Ramakrishna :

'Sir, why are there so many different opinions about the nature of God? Some say that God has form, while others say that He is formless. Again, those who speak of God with form tell us about His different forms. Why all this controversy?'

A very important question, which we too would like to ask. In reply Sri Ramakrishna said :

'A devotee thinks of God as he sees Him. In reality there is no confusion about God. God explains all this to the devotee if the devotee only realizes Him somehow. You haven't set your foot in that direction. How can you expect to know all about God?'

Sri Ramakrishna had experienced God thoroughly well. His is not just another different or differing view of God. His is a panoramic view where varying views fall in their respective places. This is why, as an authentic report; Sri Ramakrishna's experiences about God and the life of the spirit are invaluable.

What did Sri Ramakrishna see and say about God and on the life of the spirit?

We shall quote a few of Sri Ramakrishna's own words so that you may directly hear him speaking as it were :

'Yes, I see God just as I see you here, only in a much intense sense ... God can be realized; one can see and talk to Him as I am doing with you. ... If one weeps sincerely for Him, He surely manifests Himself.'

'He who seeks God with a longing heart can see Him, talk to Him as I am talking to you. Believe my words when I say that God can be seen.'

'God can be realized by means of all paths.'

What did Sri Ramakrishna say about God after seeing Him? He said :

8 'M': *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, translated by Swami Nikhilananda, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 1944, p. 73.

9 Vide: *Life of Swami Vivekananda*, 1965, p. 47.

10 *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, 1944, p. 552.

11 Ibid. p. 82.

'No one can say with finality that God is only "this" and nothing else. He is formless, and again He has form.'

'He has many other aspects that cannot be described'.

'God has different forms, and He sports in different ways. He sports as Iswara, jiva, man, and the universe. In every age He descends to earth in human form, as an Incarnation, to teach people love and devotion. ... Infinite are the ways of God's play.'

'Everything is possible for God. First of all reach the indivisible Satchidananda, and then, coming down, look at the Universe. You will then find that everything is Its manifestation. It is God alone who has become everything. The world by no means exists apart from Him.'

'... I see that it is God Himself who has become everything—the universe and its living beings.'

'God certainly listens to prayers, if it is sincere. There is no doubt about it.'

Many of us do not know what is the ultimate purpose of all our strivings, of our life itself, to what direction our thoughts and actions should be directed.

Sri Ramakrishna says :

'The only purpose of life is to realize God.'

He emphatically declares :

'He is born in vain, who having attained human birth so difficult to get, does not strive to realize God in this very life.'

'What will you gain by merely being intuitively aware of God's existence? A mere vision of God is by no means everything. You have to bring Him into your room. You have to talk to Him.'

'... Sometime or other, in this very life or after many more lives, all will and must, see God.'

What a great good fortune for any one to be able to hear this great tiding that God-realization is the ultimate end of

12 Ibid. p. 72.

13 Ibid. p. 115.

14 Ibid. p. 181.

15 Ibid. p. 321.

16 Ibid. p. 570.

17 Ibid. p. 180.

18 Ibid. p. 197.

19 *Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna*, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 1938, Saying No. 2.

20 'M': *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, p. 731.

21 *Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna*, saying No. 11.

human life! When we first read these words what a flood of light they bring to us. Everything falls in the right place, doubts are all dissolved, despair vanishes for ever. Never more we have to be groping in darkness. The business of life becomes so simple and so joyous—going to God, any way, every possible way. Life attains a new meaning and purposiveness and becomes a perpetual adventure for which we never lack enthusiasm.

While frantically searching for the meaning of life, a sizable number of world's bright children, blasted as it were by the evil glance of a deadly power have, so to say, become the worshippers of the absurd. But how could meaning of things be found excluding that which is the very essence of things? But Sri Ramakrishna assures :

'All will surely realize God. All will be liberated. It may be some get their meal in the morning, some at noon, and some in the evening; but none will go without food. All, without any exception will certainly know their real Self.'²²

All the seekers of meaning would do well to take these words deep into their lives and allow them to grow there in power and promise.

The most important question which now arises is :

How can we see God?

The writer of the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, Mahendranath Gupta, known as 'M', asked him one day this very question :

'Is it possible to see God?'

Sri Ramakrishna said :

'Yes, certainly. Living in solitude now and then, repeating God's name and singing His glories, and discriminating between the Real and the unreal—these are the means by which one can see God.'

Then 'M' asked :

'Under what circumstances does one see God?'

Sri Ramakrishna said :

'Cry to the Lord with an intensely yearning

heart and you will certainly see God. ... Cry to Him with a real cry.'

Further he assured :

'God reveals Himself to a devotee who feels drawn to Him by the combined forces of these three attractions: the attraction of the worldly possessions for the worldly man; the child's attraction for its mother and the husband's attraction for the chaste wife. If one feels drawn to God by the combined forces of these three powers of attraction, then one can attain Him.

'The point is, to love God even as the Mother loves her child, the chaste wife her husband, and the worldly man his wealth. Add together these three forces of love, these three powers of attraction and then direct it all to God. Then you will certainly see God.

'It is necessary to pray to Him with a longing heart.'²³

What prevents us from seeing God? Sri Ramakrishna says :

'“Woman and gold”—by which Sri Ramakrishna means lust and greed—alone is the obstacle to yoga.'²⁴

'The two obstacles to spiritual life are “woman and gold”.'²⁵

'“Woman and gold” is the cause of bondage. “Woman and gold” alone constitutes samsara, the world. It is “woman and gold” that keeps one from seeing God.'²⁶

One stands for man's psychic bondage, the other for his phenomenal bondage.

How do we get over these obstacles?

The easiest way of doing this is to take refuge in God whole-heartedly, practise remembrance of God constantly and pray to God for *suddhā bhakti*, pure devotion. One need moreover beseech God that he may not be deluded by world-bewitching maya.

Time and again Sri Ramakrishna emphasized that one should not only have love for God but also grit for God. One must have fervour, enthusiasm and a whole hoggers passion for God.

²³ 'M': *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, pp. 6-7.

²⁴ Ibid. p. 37.

²⁵ Ibid. p. 170.

²⁶ Ibid. p. 364.

²² Op. Cit. p. 747.

One of the main notes of his teaching is that one should not practise lukewarm devotion. Christ taught :

'... Kingdom of heaven suffereth violence. The violent take it by force.'²⁷

Sri Ramakrishna utters almost similar words with the same emphasis. He says :

"I must attain God in this very life; yea, in three days I must find Him; nay, with a single utterance of His name I will draw Him to me"—with such violent love the devotee can attract the Lord and realize Him. But devotees who are lukewarm in their love take ages to find Him, indeed if they find Him at all.'²⁸

'Why this attitude of an idler, that if realization is not possible in this birth, it will come in the next? There should not be such dullness in devotion. The goal can never be reached unless a man makes his mind strong, and firmly resolves that he must realize in this very birth, nay, this very moment. ... Dullness is not at all desirable. Gather strength, have firm faith, and say that you must realize God this very moment. Then only can you succeed.'²⁹

'One must have stern determination; then alone is spiritual practice possible. One must make a firm resolve.'³⁰

The question of the life in the world is the most important one. How should one live in the world in order to realize God?

Sri Ramakrishna directly answered this very question many times. In fact the main bulk of the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* consists of the most detailed answer to this question. Only a few cardinal points of his answer may be mentioned here. Sri Ramakrishna said :

'Do all your duties, but keep your mind on God. Live with all—with wife and children, father and mother—and serve them. Treat them as if they were very dear to you, but know in your heart of hearts that they do not belong to you.'³¹

'First secure divine love and then set your hands to the duties of the world.'³²

'Living in solitude now and then, repeating God's name, singing His glories, and discriminating between the real and the unreal—these are the means to employ to see Him.'³³

'If a man holds to truth he will certainly realize Him.'³⁴

'Even those engaged in worldly activities, such as office work, business, should hold on to truth. Truthfulness alone is the spiritual discipline in the Kaliyuga.'³⁵

'... Worldly man must constantly live in the company of holy men. It is necessary for all, even for Sannyasins. But it is especially necessary to the householders.'³⁶

'It matters not if you live the life of a householder—only you must fix your mind on God. Do your work with one hand and hold the feet of the Lord with the other. When you have no work in the world to do, hold His feet fast to your heart with both your hands.'³⁷

'He finds God quickest whose concentration and yearning are strongest.'³⁸

Sri Ramakrishna touched the life of the spirit in its many facets, which we do not propose to touch upon here. Three other teachings of Sri Ramakrishna only we shall refer to here for these three teachings have revolutionized sociological thinking in India and have potentiality for doing greater good to all humanity.

Sri Ramakrishna practised almost all the methods of worship known in Hinduism. Moreover, he practised Islam and also had the vision of Christ followed by a unitive mystic experience. From his personal experience on religions Sri Ramakrishna taught :

'God can be realized through all paths. All religions are true.'³⁹

'It is by the will of God that different religions and opinions have come into existence.'⁴⁰

²⁷ St. Matthew 11.12.

²⁸ *Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna*, saying No. 626.

²⁹ *Ibid.* saying No. 627.

³⁰ 'M': *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, p. 133.

³¹ *Ibid.* p. 5.

³² *Ibid.* p. 6.

³³ *Ibid.* p. 7.

³⁴ *Ibid.* p. 221.

³⁵ *Ibid.* p. 101.

³⁶ *Ibid.* p. 269.

³⁷ *Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna*, saying No. 267.

³⁸ *Ibid.* saying No. 630.

³⁹ *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* p. 35.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* p. 467.

'Different creeds are but different paths to reach the one God. ... Every religion is nothing but one of such paths.'⁴¹

'A common man through ignorance considers his own religion to be the best and makes much useless clamour. But when his mind is illumined by true knowledge, all sectarian quarrels disappear.'⁴²

'Every man should follow his own religion. A Christian should follow Christianity, and a Mohammedan Islam. For the Hindu the ancient path, the path of Aryan Rishis is the best.'⁴³

'A truly religious man should think that other religions are also so many paths leading to the Truth. He should always maintain an attitude of respect towards other religions.'⁴⁴

'Dispute not. As you rest firmly on your own faith and opinion, allow others equal liberty to stand by their own faith and opinion.'⁴⁵

'Bow your head where others are bowing. Veneration never goes unrewarded.'⁴⁶

Sri Ramakrishna's teachings on religious harmony provide the much needed spiritual basis for the growth of a new human civilization in a shrinking world.

Democracy to succeed in an enlightened manner in a country where several religions are owned and practised, requires a much deeper sanction than the Constitution of the land provides. Minorities in India are to have equal rights, respects and opportunities not because India is a secular state, but because all are pilgrims to the same Summit and manifestations of the Divine. We need to have felt affinities of our soul with those who practise faith other than those of our own. All have to be owned as our very own people, kinsmen of soul journeying to the same God in their own manners of choosing. For being able to do this we need a spontaneous moral im-

pulse of the heart. Leading administrators of India have tried to create this moral impulse by introducing the controversial doctrine of secularity, though it is not mentioned in the Constitution of India itself. But the term 'secularity' by law of its association could never have any moral content. The doctrine of political 'secularity' which brings in its train many a wrong motivations in the stream of thinking cannot help India in the way needed, as this teaching of Sri Ramakrishna, when taken to heart and practised, can :

'When you go out and mix with people, you should have love for them all; mix with them freely and become one with them. You should not shrug your shoulders and hate them, saying, "They believe in a Personal God and not in the Impersonal," or "They believe in the Impersonal and not in the Personal," or "He is a Christian, a Hindu, or a Mussalman". Man understands about Him as much as He makes him understand. Moreover, knowing that men are of different tendencies, you should mix with them as much as you can. And you should love them all. Then returning to your own "home" (heart), you will enjoy bliss and peace. Therein you will meet with your own real self.'⁴⁷

Sri Ramakrishna's one set of revolutionary teachings is in regard to man. No one in our age placed man before man in such glorious terms, the implications of which will be worked out by history in ages to come. He taught :

'If you seek God, then seek Him in man; He manifests Himself more in man than in any other thing.'⁴⁸

'If God can be worshipped through an image, why shouldn't it be possible to worship Him through a living man? It is God Himself who sports in the world as man.'⁴⁹

'God sports through man as well. I see man as the embodiment of Narayana. As fire is kindled when you rub two pieces of wood together, so God can be seen in man if you have intense devotion.'⁵⁰

⁴¹ *Sayings*, No. 464.

⁴² *Ibid.* No. 470.

⁴³ *Ibid.* No. 482.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* No. 483.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* No. 484.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* No. 1039.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* No. 481.

⁴⁸ *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* p. 653.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* p. 614.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* p. 615.

'Talk of compassion for beings? Will you, an animal-cule, bestow compassion for beings? You wretch, who are you to bestow it? No, no; not compassion to Jivas but service to them as Siva.'⁵¹

Modern sciences, after dealing much with man, have tended to reduce him to mere hormones and chemicals. Modern politics, in its attempt to serve man, have killed uncounted millions, set millions against other millions, and reduced him to a political class-creature to be at perpetual war against his brother. Not only that, politics advanced further in enslaving man by fetters of theories.

This reduction and enslavement of man by science and politics are the greatest tragedies of our times. And all this has been done in the name of serving man!

When we proceed to serve man leaving his very essence out of our comprehension, we are inevitably led to these tragedies. Man needs to be understood better, studied deeper and respected more. In fulfilling this crucial need of human civilization Sri Ramakrishna's teachings in regard to man will be of inestimable value to all those who are not prisoners of political concepts or worse.

With this teaching of Sri Ramakrishna on worship of God in man, goes his another important teaching:

'And empty stomach is no good for religion.'⁵²

Interpreting these teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda gave India his momentous gospel of redemptive service to human beings, especially poor, looking on them as manifestations of the Divine. From these teachings have flowed the

⁵¹ Swami Saradananda : *Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master*, translated by Swami Jagadananda, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 1952, p. 821.

⁵² Quoted by Swami Vivekananda; Vide: *Complete Works*, Vol. VI, 1963, p. 254.

Ramakrishna Movement in the world, as the servant of man, friend of all beings.

Sri Ramakrishna, by his own life, more than his teachings, showed that love of God which did not flow toward man in service of man was not true bhakti, for, God abstracted from the world became less than Himself.

Therefore even with his last breath, even while suffering from throat cancer he never for a day desisted from serving the people.

But the unique thing about Sri Ramakrishna was that he did not teach us though he was a teacher. He lived his life entirely in God, and through him flowed words of God to men. In all truth he felt himself as the instrument in God's hand. 'Thy will be done' was the burden of his songs always. Again, mysteriously enough, he was also fully conscious of his Divinity.

His teachings were in fact divine love flowing to man. His tears were God's tears for man, his joy was God's joy at the sight of man.

As we have said before, perhaps the greatest teachings of Sri Ramakrishna are not in his words but in his photo, in which we find him seated in ecstasy. Here we find materialization of God's grace and devotee's absolute absorption in the Divine in a vivid vibrant manner.

In this portrait we are assured that God is; that God is with us; He watches over us; and that we have the given help to see Him here and now.

Sri Ramakrishna is the true friend of all beings for he shows to each one his way with infinite love and solicitude, and gives all the help needed to reach the Highest. He quickens everyone's spiritual consciousness.

QUESTIONS OF SPIRITUAL SEEKERS ANSWERED

SWAMI MADHAVANANDA

Q: What is meant by 'Don't seek God, see God,' and how is this accomplished?

A: Seeking God means God is away from us, distant from us, at least to some extent; otherwise we cannot seek a thing that is immediately connected with us, that is immediately at our beck and call. So, just do not actually believe that there is a distance between God and ourselves but rather try to see God, that He is here and now, try to feel Him, try to realize Him—that is the idea. And how is this accomplished? There are many paths. There is the path of devotion, path of work, unselfish work, there is service unto others, path of reason, path of mysticism: all these are different paths. The biggest questions, how devotion is attained as also how realization is attained, can be explained in that way. So don't seek God, but see God. Seeing God means we must believe in His existence everywhere as if He is in and through us, as if we are immersed in Him, like water everywhere. Some little pieces of ice have been formed in that water; that is what we are, nothing more than that. So, to feel that, should be our endeavour. God is not away from us. We are not away from God. We are not entirely divorced from God. God is charging us through and through, like putting lemon in a jar of lemon juice—inside also there is lemon juice and outside also—, we are floating in God, as it were. We are in God's presence. That is what we are supposed to think and meditate on and to have before our mind, and this can be done in innumerable ways. Whatever puts in our mind this central fact, that can be taken.

Q: How does one overcome distracting forces in meditation?

A: Distracting forces come because we have more attachment to those things that distract than to the thing upon which we are meditating. Theoretically, we are supposed to have more love for God because that is the greatest quest in life. Actually, so many other things engross our attention when we are living in ordinary world, just living an ordinary, normal life and not trying to meditate. So many things have got lodgement in our brain; we have given some attachment to them, we like them, we love them. And, as it always happens, things that we love, things that we crave, well, they have some power over us, and therefore they distract us even while we try to meditate. But they cannot, if we are always thinking, meditating upon the glory of the Chosen Ideal, the glory of the quest of God, that it is the supreme pursuit of human life. Other things that distract us mostly concern themselves with joys in some form or other, may be ordinary joy of the lower kind, or intellectual joy, or some other kind of joy that has been experienced before. Things that are painful seldom attract us. So, if we try to remember that God is the greatest source of attraction for us, ought to be the greatest source of attraction, beyond Him there is nothing, or rather nothing that is more attractive, there will be less of distraction. All the joys that we find in the world are only little parcels of the supreme joy, supreme bliss, that God is. God is an embodiment of all this. All other joys that we find through the senses, through the mind, through everything, they are little bubbles, as it were, borrowed things. Just as the sun may heat some sand and that sand even may burn one's fingers, but it is borrowed heat, something

like that. If we remember that, gradually, the mind will try to be calm.

Also we may watch our minds to see how the mind goes into all these gyrations, the outgoing movements, and so on. Let the mind, a part of the mind, watch how the other part of the mind runs about here and there. And if the running part of the mind knows that, 'I am being watched', then, gradually, those gyrations, those movements to and fro, those distractions, will also become slower and slower. That should be the constant effort: First of all, letting the mind dwell on the glories of the Atman, glories of the Self or glories of the Chosen Ideal, that is the positive way; and also keeping watch upon where the mind goes, how the mind goes. If we keep watch, 'Well, let the mind, let this rascal go about everywhere, I will see; I will see, I will watch where it is going', in that way, also, the mind becomes ashamed to go, to distract itself during those times.

And one can also tell the mind, as to a child, 'Well, not now.' We are not meditating for 24 hours a day; only an hour, half an hour at the most we try to meditate. And if we tell those distracting thoughts, 'Just wait, let me face this, and then I will attend to you while you possess me.' In that way also they will be a little sober.

Only if they think they are being extinct, there is the trouble about it. I think the real metaphysical truth behind our distractions is this: Nobody wants to die, no principle, no being, no existence wants to be killed. When the mind thinks it is being killed, 'Well, he is obstructing me, he is controlling me—I shall have no freedom, I will die', it tries its worst to free itself, something like that. But if we succeed in telling the mind, 'Know, by sitting still, you will get much more than what

you expect to get from outside', then the mind will get calm gradually.

Q: How can our desire for and devotion to God be increased?

A: Just as our desire for the ordinary things of life is increased, similarly,—because we think that so much fruit can come, so much joy can come, by having this thing in such proportion—if we apply that mind, that attitude towards God, towards the possession of God, towards the quest of God, then, naturally our desire for and devotion to God will be increased. If we can tell our mind, convince our mind, that there is nothing superior to God, God is the greatest possession we can possibly have, and all other attractions are but little particles, little reflections of immense joy of the embodiment of Bliss that God is, so let us strive after God and other things will be added unto us: if that attitude is held before the mind through discrimination, through gradual enforcing of those ideas upon ourselves, then grace will be.

Q: Will you tell us something about Maharaj¹—anything that, you feel, will help us to know him better?

A: Well, about Maharaj, there are books and you have read some of them. At least one or two have been published in English and you can get enough material from them. Our personal contacts with him had been, of course, on many occasions, but Maharaj generally was what Sri Ramakrishna used to describe as 'a colour hiding mango'. He was wonderfully great, but he would not let it out. It was only those persons that came in close contact with him that knew that here was a mine of spirituality, only it had to be approached properly. Whenever a person raised a spiritual topic he would,

¹'Maharaj' in the parlance of the Ramakrishna Order refers to Swami Brahmananda.

like a child, simply ward it off, saying, 'Oh, the body is not feeling all right to-day,' and so on. But if that man began to come and go every day, began to associate, then once in a while, in a few days, he would see something extremely wonderful.

I want to tell you one thing, that all these great men, particularly Sri Maharaj notwithstanding his great spiritual wisdom, his being the very embodiment of spiritual wisdom, he was full of fun and boyishness also. I think in that way he tried to have a little relaxation. If he remained always on the high altitude of spiritual bliss, his body would not remain very long.

Many years ago, when I first went to one of our great Swamis, Swami Ramakrishnananda in Madras—as a novice, I wanted to join there—, there was Swami Brahmananda. I met him first there. About Maharaj Swami Ramakrishnananda said, 'Why is Maharaj behaving like an ordinary person? Well, it is for our good. If he poises his mind always on the highest level, then his body will not remain for long.' So he tried to beguile him and let him pass his time with ordinary things also, among us, living just a joyful life. And he loved mirth, he loved fun, everything, but through every one of those little things he tried to instruct us.

One day, he was talking just ordinary matters, very ordinary matters, but in the midst of it a gentleman came to see him for the first time. And at the end of about an hour or so Maharaj apologized to him, saying, 'Well, you have come for the first time, and I have wasted the time on trivial things, so you got nothing from me.'

But the man folded his hands and said, 'No, I got much, very much.' By living the kind of life that a man of realization lives, full of joy, full of mirth, whatever came from him, of course, had an ennobling effect. That we could see. And there

are so many other things, but it is not possible to refer to them because, as I said, he was not available for spiritual instructions all the time. But once in a while he would give the best that there was in him.

Q: Mind is restless. How can we control it?

A: Think of one thought, namely God. The question is practically answered about meditation. What applies to meditation, steadiness in meditation, applies also to making the mind more and more restful, by watching it and by pondering more of the glory of the Ideal.

Q: How can one come into contact with close friends and relatives who are cynical and sceptical without harming one's spiritual development?

A: This is a real problem in the world. One has to be in the world, of course, and one cannot antagonize one's friends. But as one associates with them, as one attends to one's social duties, one must be a little alert so that the flame of spirituality, the higher ideals that have value only for him, that flame of spirituality is kept burning. Here, a little added effort is necessary, and if one practises that, I think, success will not be lacking.

Q: Then the questioner goes on: 'If one takes a positive view of life, it is resented; if one pretends to agree in order to keep closeness he is disturbed by his dishonesty. Avoidance seems both impossible and undesirable.'

A: I would say there is no royal road to it, but one has to feel one's way. One of the greatest poet saints of India, Tulsidas says in a couplet: Sit with everybody, associate with everybody, and take the name of everybody, but in your heart of hearts you remember the Lord, and be sincere and devoted to Him. Simply grinning up to a certain extent in common talk in social intercourse, social conversation, well,

that does not mean that I have already given up my hold on the real ideal or that I am simply lowering my own ideal. Again, if I practise some reticence, it is because people cannot understand my ideal, I am simply shading it from them, that's all, nothing further than that. And I can keep those ideas bright before me when I withdraw from the association that is really unavoidable.

Q: What is the most effective way to increase our intimacy with the Ideal?

A: That is also in a way how we can dwell more upon the object of meditation, simply something like that. In proportion as we dwell upon the glorious side of the ideal, naturally our intimacy will be more. We love those things about the qualities of which, about the virtues of which, we are cognizant. So, the more we remember God, the more we come in contact with Him, in whatever form, in word, thought or deed; and by coming in contact with God more and more we shall be more and more blessed. If we remember that, naturally there will be the desire to be more intimate with the ideal, instead of frittering away our energies in so many vain pursuits. Things that are absolutely necessary for us to do to make a living, to remain in society, we must do, but that does not mean that we shall give all of our mind away, waste our mind like that. Some part of the mind also should be given to God so that we may really achieve the best fruits of human life, namely realization of God.

Q: Does the lack of feeling and appreciation for the ritualistic approach hamper the spiritual development of a person to any degree, or is it something that grows on one with association?

A: Of course, really it doesn't hamper. Rituals are only a part of religious life; they are only one of the paths to God

realization. So, by following another path, it is not meant that one is actually hampering the spiritual development, but it simply means that one is taking a different path, that is all. And, 'is it something that grows on one with association?' Certainly. If one loves a person, one associates oneself with that person in innumerable ways, and rituals are ways of keeping the vision of the Chosen Ideal before us. Instead of meditating on Him within the body, and meditating on Him as simply a luminous figure sometimes we mentally also are offering many things, as if he were a human being, very near and dear to us. And just as we deal with a human being that we love, similarly, many things are offered to the Deity inside—that is called internal worship. But here, generally, ritualistic approach is meant as some outward rituals. When a guest comes home, we do so many things for him. Similarly when we believe that God is present in a particular form in front of us, we try to do some rituals also as a way of worshipping Him, of offering our highest devotion to Him. But if one is insensible of that, if one has not yet understood the efficacy of that or the glories of that, there is certainly no compelling him to do that. It will not be a loss. But, ultimately he will come, he will understand, 'Oh, this is another way of worshipping him. Just as I worship Him inwardly in meditation, the devotees who are performing rituals are also worshipping Him.' So he also has been induced. Sometimes it happens like that too.

Q: In your translation of the *Vivekachudamani* you enumerate the requirements for illumination, as follows: human birth, brahminhood, the longing for liberation, the protecting care of a perfect saint, knowledge of the Scriptures and human birth in a male body. 'Why does it say a male body, when we read in some of the

Upaniṣads about women having attained perfection?’

A : The thing is, the book was addressed to Indians, and you have no idea under what great handicap women have been put so long, and even now, to a great extent they are. So, attaining perfection in a woman's body means attaining perfection in the midst of greater handicaps than in a male being, than a man in India was expected to. That is all that was meant. Because so many subjections were there, she had no freedom whatsoever. And this means, attaining the perfection means perfect freedom, even to making the greatest amount of renunciation. But there was not that option. So, according to the particular social conditions, in view of the particular social conditions pertaining in the country where the things were written or spoken, those words are uttered. And, of course, in the Upaniṣads, we hear of certain ladies having attained perfection, and in other scriptures of India also we find mention of that. God is not confined within certain limits; only men can realize Him and women cannot—that is absurd. Only with respect to the condition, social conditions, certainly those disabilities had to be removed before perfect freedom could be attained, I mean, facility could be had for them to attain realization.

Q : Were they then exceptions to the rule and came to the earth already perfect souls ?

A : Not that, it is not that. They were also ordinary persons. If in the midst of all those handicaps, too, those blessed few women attained realization, that means, that they became exceptional people. Compared with so many men who have attained realization the number of women who are mentioned as having obtained realization is small. That shows that the handi-

caps were greater for them, simply because of social conditions.

Q : If we take away omniscience, omnipotence, etc. from Ishwara and the deficiencies of knowledge, power, etc., from the ego, only Brahman remains as a substratum of both. This is written in the *Vivekachudamani*. It is understandable, but what puzzles me is that the Lord differentiated between some of the very great Swamis, calling some ‘eternal companions.’ Wherein lies the difference of kind or degree, when all have attained to Nirvikalpa Samadhi, or am I presupposing that they have ?

A : All have not attained to Nirvikalpa Samadhi; of course, not. They were not temperamentally built that way. That does not mean that they were not equally worthy, also, but their temperament varied, and all of them, had not attained the exact degree of realization. So there is nothing wrong in calling some ‘eternal companions’ and there is such a classification in God's realm, and some of them came with Sri Ramakrishna also. Naturally such expressions occurred.

Q : About Holy Mother. She says that she has gone through every known hardship. ‘Why don't we do a part of that even ? Is it because of our samskaras ?’ the questioner asks. ‘Is that why we do things that we know we should not do regardless of obvious results ? Is it because past samskaras are too strong ?’

A : Holy Mother, as I said, was an Incarnation. Whatsoever she did was without any thought done perfectly; that cannot be expected of us ordinary mortals. So, there is no need for self-disparagement or denunciation of one's self, but the normal channels are open to us for trying to do more and more, trying to do better and better. Success will come in the long run; there is no doubt about that. Self-abasement is no part, should not be a part of one's virtue, rather, it takes away some of

our innate ability. Rather, we should believe that through the grace of great personalities, including the Holy Mother herself, even a little amount of self-effort will produce great things. Actually, it happens like that. Whatever we can per-

form well, if sincerely done, and if there is the earnestness in us to improve ourselves, to do better and better, God's grace will be upon us and we will succeed.

(Concluded)

WHAT INSPIRES ME MOST IN HOLY MOTHER'S LIFE

AN ASPIRANT OF WESTERN U.S.A.

It was said that a casual observer could not have picked out the Holy Mother from the company of other women, her manner was so unassuming and humble. Her power, grace, and dignity were of such quiet order that in the present day of rampant egoism, ruthless competition, and psychopathic exhibitionism, her divine selflessness may appear to some as the most inspiring quality of her life.

At the age of forty, she was described by a monk of the Ramakrishna Order as having the countenance of a maiden in tenderness and delicacy, and speaking only words of sympathy and compassion. Her divinity was hidden like the most precious jewel, but her divine selflessness and purity became apparent to the careful observer who felt himself mentally and spiritually elevated in her presence. The tireless whirl of thought would cease, anxieties and doubts faded away; depression gave way to courage and confidence. Visitors and aspirants experienced varying degrees of spiritual exultation according to their capacity, but nothing was done by dynamic personality, spectacular behaviour or aggressive magnetism. The presence of radiant, egoless divinity in the Mother-form emanated an inexpressible peace.

While suffering many physical ailments and the constant torment of eccentric and

venal relatives, her selflessness was so complete and motherly that she 'lost herself in compassion' for the suffering of those persons who came to see her. On one occasion an old woman had been abandoned even by her relatives because of 'foul cancer of the ear', but Holy Mother extended unstinted love and care. When refuge was found for the old woman in a Ramakrishna Mission hospital, it was said that Holy Mother's face was radiant beyond anything ever seen in a human face, so vast was her impartial, selfless love and compassion.

Though the Lord in human form, Sri Ramakrishna himself, worshipped her as the embodiment of the Divine Mother, and gave her the result of his incomparable spiritual practices and austerities, she had no pride of position. Sweetly she performed any menial service for others. Whatever her need, she rarely expressed that need in order to avoid inconvenience to others.

Her humility and selflessness was a supreme expression of divine love and purity. She claimed no power for herself. To her, the Master was everything; she was only the instrument. She had lost her sense of individuality and separateness in Him, and at the same time she did not assert the least sense of ownership in regard

to Him as she might have claimed by legal relationship. She made Sri Ramakrishna available and the same to all, results varying according to the devotion and aspiration of the seeker.

Rarely did she speak of or reveal a hint of her divine power. Her simplicity and humility were uniformly unaffected, with nothing of guile, nothing planned or maintained for effect, no 'role perfected', but a free-flowing, spontaneous naturalness and selflessness she wore like a hidden crown jewel.

With the capacity to confer liberation on anyone, she was gentle and retiring, modest and soft-spoken, seeing no flaws in the devotees, the mother-servant of all, a shining symbol of selfless Divinity. Her tendency was ever to appear the least consequential of persons, concealing her divinity with the cloak of selflessness, and silent, unobtrusive service. Swami Premananda said of her that 'an empress among queens, has become of her own accord a beggar and does all the menial work with her own hands. She is putting up with hardships to teach householders how to perform their duties.'

With all her quiet demeanour and non-assertive ways, however, when the need arose she could figuratively face a pride of lions without losing ground. Many instances are known of her courage, her keen intelligence and swift perception, qualities which would have made her distinguished from the commonplace in any situation.

Great honour came to her from the senior monks of the Ramakrishna Order and from monks of other orders, from high-ranking citizens, from scholars, from distinguished foreign visitors, but her modesty and selflessness were unflinching. She seemed unaware of being the recipient of so much honour and adulation. To her selfless mind, whatever she received was honour and devotion to Sri Ramakrishna. She was that rare

being without the curtain of Ego obscuring the divine; all her virtues manifested themselves naturally and spontaneously as from a fountainhead of purity.

As long as physically able to do so, she took more than equal part in the household tasks, wherever she might be, and gave away unstintingly whatever she possessed to give. Devotees came at all hours of the day or night for telling their woes, or to receive initiation. Her usual period of sleep was four hours. Everything was done in unselfish spirit, divinely so, as if her life were to be a beacon light and a ransom for all women everywhere, then and for all time to come. May they discover the hidden Mother.

From the beginning of her relationship with Sri Ramakrishna, selflessness was her shining characteristic. It might be called purity, or divine love, but in the explicit need of the world today, may it be called selflessness. Conditioned as she must have been from childhood to believe that children were the natural ornaments of marriage, and that a woman without them was considered most unlucky, when joining her husband at Dakshineswar, her reply was immediate and selfless when asked if she had come to drag him down to the life of the world—'I am here only to help you realize your spiritual ideal,' she said.

Sri Ramakrishna said of her: 'Had she not been so pure, might I not have behaved like an ordinary man? Who can tell?'

Later, fearing that her sleep was being disturbed by his nightly states of God-intoxication, Sri Ramakrishna asked her to sleep in the music tower near his room, the nahabat. This was a mere alcove of space, small and so restricted that an American devotee was heard to declare on seeing it that had he lived at the time of Holy Mother, his whole life and energy would have been used to make her comfortable. She lived in this cramped space and

seclusion as long as Sri Ramakrishna remained at the Dakshineswar temple garden, gladly sharing the tiny room with women devotees and visitors, as well as pots and baskets of food.

Ever selfless, she lived in this confinement uncomplainingly, and in such seclusion and self-effacement that persons living at Dakshineswar had never seen her. It was only a rumour that such a person as Holy Mother existed, for she went to bathe in the very early hours of the morning. The cooking went on day and night. From behind the screen on the tiny porch of her room, she would stand for hours hoping for a glimpse of Sri Ramakrishna, or to hear his ecstatic singing with the disciples and devotees. Sometimes she would see him briefly once in two months, but she consoled herself thus: 'O mind, why should you think yourself so lucky as to be able to see him every day?' She later spoke of this time as a period of unparalleled bliss to experience even fleeting glimpses of the Lord, or to hear His voice when singing.

Though Purity Itself, she prayed that her mind might be more stainless than

the moon, and prayed, too, not to be able to see others' faults. In her divinely pure mind, the faults of her children seemed not to exist.

Spiritual seekers came of their own accord as if notified by the divine telegraph of the spirit, however hidden her existence might be. She welcomed and gave loving shelter to all, both as guru and as mother, showering her grace in equal measure upon the virtuous and the wicked. She worked unceasingly all the while, in her pure and practical wisdom saying that meditation cannot go on twenty-four hours a day. She said: 'Without work, the mind becomes befouled.'

Thus she lived ever toiling: chopping vegetables, scouring pans, husking paddy, carrying heavy pots of water from the pond, collecting fruits and preparing items for worship, making hundreds of rolls of betel every day—cooking, sweeping, washing clothes and dishes, kneading dough, worshipping, the Divine Mother of the Universe caring for all relatives and visitors, with incomparable, impartial love, a light of divine selflessness shining for all time.

THE INDIAN AND THE CHALLENGE OF MODERNITY

DR. D. PRITHIPAUL

A study of the present cultural and religious situation in India fills one with an uneasy pessimism. It may be a simplification to state that the Indian does not fully apprehend what is involved in the challenge of modernity. But the simplification is warranted. Modernity does require of the Indian a re-examination of the validity of the ancient structures and a renunciation of the customary self-defen-

sive stance whenever an example of administrative failure or of social imperfection is pointed out to him. Indifference to suffering or lack of concern for the national good may be explained away as the result of the loss of political liberty for about a thousand years or as an unpleasant, but tolerable, consequence of caste loyalties which, after all, have assured the stability of Indian society down the

centuries. Still it ill-profits the Indian not to see in social indifference the product of a moral atrophy built in his psychical structure. That is why the Indian ought not to make a virtue of his stark indifference to the beggar rotting with gangrene in the dust. Nor ought he, at all times, to seek justification for his struthionian escape to the glory of a pre-Islamic past to bolster up his self-respect. The inadequacy of the reliance on the memory of the achievements of the Gupta artists or of the Pallava builders explains, to a large extent, the absence of creative passion in the Indian heart and his inability to vindicate pride in the past with present deeds.

Common to all schools of Indian philosophy and all religious sects is the belief that the world is awry, that life in *samsāra* is imperfect, that Truth lies 'beyond' the temporal order. But to-day the Indian discovers he cannot but recognize the existential, vital relevance of the historical moment, when it is his country, more than the world, which is going awry. The conspicuous signs of the cultural disarray that besets the Indian scene are economic failure and, to some extent, political insecurity. The picture becomes complete if we include the slow rhythm of national growth, the prevalence of hunger on a large scale, the inability to grapple with nature and make it yield its benefits to support life and provide more leisure. The sense of confusion is further intensified by the ineffectiveness of institutions in providing adequate sustenance to the aspirations of the youths when the latter find themselves incapable of defining their goals. The leaders of thought either do not exist or, if they exist, have not exerted any lasting influence in helping the young to choose and decide what is good and desirable. Abstract virtues and values find expression in the historical set-

up at very few personalized centres. Large numbers of our youths, for example, grow up in institutions or in areas where their spiritual growth is stunted largely on account of the scarcity of men and women capable of translating, in the fulfilment of their tasks, exalting passions and ideals. That is why the Past becomes so inspiringly relevant: one is forced to buttress one's strained moral sense by a constant appeal to myths and symbols and to folklore. But the error into which the Indian sometimes unconsciously slips consists in his considering the Past as a totem.

We need not explain in detail the causes of the economic failure and what remedies must be used to give to Indian economy its required resilience and vitality. Experts know the causes, they have proposed the solutions. Similarly political insecurity may be seen in isolation as a phenomenon caused by the economic disturbances. Or, both phenomena may be viewed as mutually and causally related. For the purpose of this article we shall consider these phenomena as the more visible aspects of a global situation in the process of change. It is the particular man and, with him, the group that are changing. The Indian individual is, for the first time, thrown into the current of world history. This is the new basic event which conditions all his loyalties, loyalty to the past and traditions, loyalty to his mystic nostalgia, loyalty to his family and to his Dharma, loyalty to himself, to his social and individual duties as defined by others preceding him in the established hierarchy. What offers a fascinating sight to the discriminating eye is the tension which strains the intellect of the Indian when he finds himself compelled to harmonize what he thinks he is with the growing number of stimuli brought to his private world by technological innovations, travels, cultural exchanges. The grafting and crossing of cultural pat-

terns have, within the span of a few decades, constrained the thinking elite to re-evaluate its norms and to situate its preferences and its decisions in new perspectives. Naturally the untutored peasant is not aware of these changes; or, if he is, he does not have the categories to help him preserve his primacy amidst the swirl of changing values. On the other hand, the intellectual feels it his duty to reflect upon this new historical situation. But, unfortunately too often, he finds himself faced with a cultural antinomy. He is, more often than is recognized, an uprooted man. He belongs neither to the Western nor to the Indian value-system. An example will illustrate this ambivalence in the Indian intellectual. A reputed scholastic in an important national university makes it a point, to impress his students, to leak out to them how, in his youth, he walked bare-footed from South India to a village in Uttar Pradesh, begging for his food on the way, in order to study under a famous 'guru'. Subsequently honours and academic success have transformed him into a 'professor'. He revels in bearing British titles. Yet his morbid xenophobia astounds all those who know him closely. He considers it a humiliation to be identified with the traditional Indian scholar, the 'pundit'. As the head of his department he sees to it that the funds awarded by the central government are allowed to lapse, that the initiatives of his junior colleagues are snuffed, in order to prevent any encroachment on his authority. What is important for him is not the promotion of learning or the academic growth of his institution, but the integrity of the hierarchy of which he is the head. He is utterly incapable of realizing that the pride in bearing Western titles also carries with it a sense of duty to his students, to his own institution and to the country. The search for prestige in hold-

ing to an administrative job, and the energy wasted in preserving this prestige to the detriment of scholarship, produce a paralyzing narcissism. This is in no way an exception: academic life in India is being choked under the ponderous authority of scholars who use the power entrusted to them to deny to their institutions and, as a result, to the community at large, the benefits of change. Hierarchy fulfils a useful purpose when it supports a dynamic society. It renders possible mobility, not in the 'having' but in the 'being': passing from one social level to another level of a higher moral order enriches the individual, enlarges his sense of responsibility and binds him to a more profound attachment to disinterestedness, freedom and generosity. Apparently opposed to progress, hierarchy, when activated by a moral purpose, becomes a defence against the impersonal tyranny of the masses. In her social and caste hierarchies India has two powerful defences against the establishment of a homogeneous, colourless society. At the same time the demands of modernity do precisely challenge the effectiveness of these defences. There is no evidence, as yet, of the Indian's aptitude, on a convincing scale, to successfully preserve his hierarchical structures and reduce, at the same time, the ignorance and backwardness not only of the illiterate peasant but, more so, of the official academic or degree-holder.

Must then the intellectual take a heroic decision and reject all the borrowings from the West and return to his own ancestral moorings? We need not discuss that this is materially, socially and intellectually impossible. Must the intellectual accept his uprootedness as part of his being, without giving in to any strain, and look upon himself as the new breed of Indian elite, the new humanistic type for the Indian society of the future?

The growing class of intellectuals in India is destined to produce a new humanism, with its system of positive values. Those who choose to chew the lotus leaves or to bury their heads smugly in the sands of a narcissistic self-righteousness will remain behind, cast by the waves of History on the deserted shores, like dried, bleached shells, emptied of purpose and life. The intellectual does not wait for History to bend him to its demands. He views it with full awareness of his independence, mindful of his dignity. He participates in History only by forming it to the measure of his being, and he uses his maieutic imagination to make the future yield to his decisions and options.

The Indian is space-bound: he feels uneasy when forced to face Time and History. He looks back at the monuments erected by the anonymous artists and feels that they are his. He draws inspirations from the philosophies of the ancient seers and mystics by writing a thesis on what they have recorded. Most of academic Indian philosophy is nothing but a series of reviews of a few basic texts. This is why the philosopher's thinking moves within a closed circle, a spatial entity, 'the land where roamed the white-spotted gazelle'. He has not the moral courage for a positive encounter with the rest of the world. If at all he thinks of Time, it is only when he remembers the Past.

The average thinking Indian has no myth to help him understand the future and the young. There practically does not exist a literature for the child and the adolescent. Even the modern form of popular art—the cinema—has not, in India, produced a genre that appeals to the child's mind. The Indian thinker never considered it necessary to value the needs of the youth. The latter grew up within the family, following the rules of the hierarchy and when he grew into the right age he

inherited the elder. This has been the social set-up for the right of inheritance down the centuries. The traditional process of inheriting not *from* the father, but inheriting the father, explains how the Congress Government has, since independence, merely inherited the British Rule. Else how can one rationally explain the continuation of the old, unconcerned bureaucracy, unaffected by the plight of the suffering millions, the inability on the part of the government to alter the educational system to meet the requirements of a new nation. In other words, inheriting the father testifies to the mobility, not of the land being transferred from one person to the other, but of the rank and status of the heir. Correspondingly the rulers of free India merely inherited the British imperialists: the social order was not affected by this replacement of a set of rulers by their heirs. The mobility was confined to the administrative level: it has not taken the form of a correction of the old, congealed state of affairs.

However, two decades after independence, the emerging social pattern offers new dimensions. For the first time in Indian History we may speak of the decisive importance of women, of the youths, of the masses. Naturally it may be argued that there has been, at all times, the need to compromise with the masses. The Purānas and the epic poems may be cited as healthy compromises to transmit philosophical intuitions to the 'lower' strata of society. The *manda-buddhi* (dull-witted) has had his fair share of honourable consideration on the part of conscientious preachers. Nevertheless it cannot be denied that the present mutation of Indian society is real. Nor need we dismiss the process as inauthentic living, as *samsāra*, unworthy of the philosopher's attention. On the contrary, more than ever, it is

a cultural imperative that the philosopher should assert himself in a vital commitment to the process of transformation going on all over this planet. It is tragic that he should abdicate his role in the universal drama of the present time. He is content to be merely a spectator, cynically unconcerned with what happens within his range of vision. When the Indian philosopher justifies, by a good deal of casuistry, his indifference to other fields of men's activities he is actually pointing to the blinkers round his eyes as the badge of his profession.

The rigid compartmentalization of academic disciplines in Indian universities has resulted in an aberrant cultural development. The Indian system of education is breeding a race of alienated individuals. No one knows what the situation will be after a few generations, if no step is taken now to adjust the present system of education to the traditions, the temper and the aims of the Indian nation.

The main problem then is that of the confrontation of the Indian thinker with the historical dimension of his being. It is easy to assert that the basic philosophical intuitions will remain unshaken by any number of social changes. We may concede that. Yet we shall still have to grant a historical status to all existential situations: dismissing them as forms of a sapless *samsāra* without any relevance to the individual or to the nation is too facile a solution. We need not betray or disown the past in seeing something more in *samsāra* than what it usually stands for, that is, a religiously meaningless existence. It jars neither with reason nor with our aesthetic sense if we accept mystic union with Reality as the authenticity of our Being and the unfolding of our life in *samsāra* as the unreal, inauthentic phase of our Being. For the Indian the tension between the meaningless dispersal of his

being in *samsāra* and the passible realization of his personal authenticity, the discovery of his secret, now veiled Being, is the actual, historical substance of the disarray in which he finds himself. The 'maya' of modernity requires the constant commitment of one's powers to collective growth. Unwillingness to change does not express a determination to preserve one's autonomy. It has already caused much harm to social and economic progress in the country.

What tends to elude the grasp of the Indian intellectual's mind is the Indian-ness of *samsāra*. Some scholars argue that it is still possible to have faith in the traditional resilience of the Indian spirit. Seen from this angle everything western will ultimately be Indianized. The way of life, the style of feeling and apprehending outside world will be an enrichment and a continuation of what life always has been in India. Yet, for the time being, we have to admit that the academic institutions do not provide the educated Indian with the moral and intellectual tools to enable him to face the massive 'planetisation' of humanity, which is proceeding at a faster and faster pace. What must his stand now be to face the process of levelling of all the cultures into an increasingly suffocating uniformism? I have no evidence of the Indian academic scholars being aware of the need to take a stand now. One even feels that the value of 'culture' is berated. Culture is viewed as something requiring the attention of lower beings in the catalogue of scholars. Nor have the intellectuals defined what is the type of progress which India wants. Is progress mere adoption of western techniques and methods of production? Is it another name for 'modern'? Does it stand for total rejection of the past? Is it possible to think that there can be an Indian way of planning an economy, and Indian way

of reshaping a society, and Indian way to 'be' despite the growth of a homogeneous attitude towards the increasingly homogeneous consumer civilization?

Such questions ought to be asked and answered. No doubt the confusion which has thrown the Indian élite out of its sense of smug security is due to a large extent to the violent emergence of forces to cope with which the scholars and the administrators have neither the tradition, nor the categories to help them. The students' unrest is a case in point. The traditional obedience of the disciple has failed to regulate the moral behaviour of the present day student. Nor does the traditional behaviour of the guru correspond with what the 'professor' happens to be. Other sentiments, other codes, other norms have to be brought forth to meet the situation. Ancient lore does not provide the models to help one understand the emergence of new phenomena: for instance, the growing masculinity of the young girls baffles a mind reared on the traditional image of Damayanti or Shakuntala as the archetypes of Indian womanhood.

So it is with technology. Many people still view technique as essentially hostile to man's spiritual growth. But there does not exist a dichotomy of man *versus* technique or man *and* technique, for the simple reason that it is impossible to think of man without technique. Technique has entered into the very structure of man. What we have to understand is how the Indian man, sharing in a specific collectivity with his conscious and unconscious configurations, how such a man will react to the imperialism of the machine. In simpler terms how must Indians react to History—and History means change, growth, enrichment—without devaluating it by equating it with *samsāra*? Can there be

an Indian style, a meaningful way of using Time to suit Indian needs?

Whatever goes under the pessimistic expression of spiritual disarray may be after all but the birth of a new Humanism. I welcome it. Indians are too often taken in by the distinction attached to such notions like austerity, ascetic restraint, aloofness from the world. We have for too long blindly been belittling the artist, the poet, the aesthete. The good and the beautiful have always been implicitly considered to be subservient to the true. We have ample evidence in the scriptures that at all times man has been faced with the call of the spiritual and the attraction of worldly favours. We have drifted into the duality of soul and body: we know how to censure the needs of the body and how to glorify the urges of the soul. Our archaic predispositions leave us weakened in the face of modernity. A new vision into the future is required.

Already in a sort of unconscious manner a dionysiac assertion of the masses is already disturbing the subtle balance of traditional hierarchical structures. Changes in society are occurring and developing at an increasing rate. Vast numbers of people, rudderless in the face of sudden, massive changes, look up to the intellectual to obtain some guidance. Unfortunately the scholars or thinkers have not risen up to the occasion. The universities produce a hybrid culture and a rootless mentality that throws the educated class into a no man's land. We are capable neither of an Indian nor of a Western attitude. Gone are the times when a few seers could move the masses and impart to the minds of the people the respect for spiritual values. Now the rhythm of history is too fast for a few seers to be able to cope with the situation. This is why the values for the coming generations have to be forged in the fire of the philos-

opher's passion, of the religious man's dedication. The philosopher or the religious thinker has a positive dynamic contribution to offer in making his insights, his apprehensions of reality, of the good, available to the scientist, to the engineer, to the sociologist, to the economist. He has no right to present to the world the persona of a seer and refuse to admit the reality of change. He must, on the contrary, consider it his privilege to define this change, to orient it, to convince others of its meaning and its purpose. He must save his soul by doing the right service to History. He will accede to Being only by paying his due to Becoming. The philosopher cannot claim to limit his ethical responsibility to the Past. He has to extend it to the future also. The bewildering practice of indifference is comprehensible only if it is allied to an ethics of conviction. The 'philosopher' who convinces himself that he acts only according to the 'ought' or to the injunctions formally extant in the books he has studied is limiting himself to his decisions and to his personal convictions. He does not feel bound by or involved in the consequences of his attitudes. He has no intellectual faith in his capacity to alter the course of events of which he is the centre. The consequences of actions, on which he may have a hold, drift according to their own inner dynamism. But a more satisfying attitude springs from an ethics of responsibility. The 'engage' intellectual then ranges the consequences of his decisions and actions within the province of his concern. His solidarity extends not only to his action but to the consequences that follow from it. But India is distressingly unprovided with men gifted with enough moral courage as to enable them to fulfil their vocations with total commitment to an ethics of responsibility.

No wonder then that what does unhinge

the average educated Indian from his spiritual security is the tension between an infatuation with a past soaked in mystic insights and the difficulty to resist the allurements of a materialistic social order. His sense of perspective gets distorted largely because he does not own a broad, humanistic culture rooted in the classical values, while accepting the predispositions specific to modernity. The hedonist with a university education cannot communicate with the yogi and the peasant: he is a stranger to both. The great social need of the time is to reform the stranger and set him in tune with the yogi and ask him to lift up the peasant. Only the intellectual or the thinker or the enlightened religious teacher can help in correcting the aberrations brought about by ten centuries of foreign rule, aberrations that are allowed to survive at the present by the indifference and the bankruptcy of the 'elite'.

The changes sweeping across India do not act on the people's minds in the way sportsmen do on the field. The game is played; the action is over; the teams leave the ground; the spectators disperse. But the field where the game has just been played is left in the same condition as before the game started. The adoption of technological means and methods of production and of transforming society will profoundly modify the moral attitudes of the Indian. His relationships with things and with men will assume new meanings. His encounter with other cultures and religions alter his views on life, on priorities. For some time this transformation will continue to be of a secular nature.

In a special sense what has acquired poignancy since some years is the direct impingement of political authority on the direction and content the individual would, if left to himself, wish to give to his aspirations. Though India will be

spared the sufferings which, in the West, have been engendered by the need to reconcile the imperatives of religious faith with the logic of secularity, yet she will soon have to decide whether her spiritual urges must be wasted only on the organization of economic prosperity. Those who are responsible for the moral and spiritual welfare of the coming generations will have to take into account that large numbers of our young men and women do not own the necessary moral and spiritual tools to help themselves assimilate the inevitable, but necessary changes that now pass for modernity. The individual is threatened with the loss of his primacy over things; to his utter dismay his 'I' is subjected to the inexorable demands of the 'IT'. He is overwhelmed. He becomes aware that something is lacking in the traditional clichés of teachers and leaders. He requires a new faith to keep himself up and moving. Around him millions of men and women demand a more substantial sharing of the fruits of civilization. The individual citizen asserts his right: for the first time in history he knows that his right is a new addition to his private moral structure, guaranteed by the constitution and the state. He claims for the same education, the same privileges as his neighbour does. He introduces an element of competition into a society hitherto established on a more or less smooth, exclusive division of labour. Impersonal economic forces compel him to limit his family and thus to revise the validity of the age-old love for family and domestic cultic practices. The fragmentation of the joint family leads to the scattering away of the family deity (*kula-devatā*). The death of the *kula-devatā* is the first casualty in the encounter between tradition and modernity. The ideal of the chosen deity (*iṣṭa-devatā*) will resist any amount of disruptive change, for a long while. But it will remain a

disembodied ideal unless belief in the *iṣṭa-devatā* is supported by the right attitude to the suffering fellowman: an attitude of compassion and love. Turning away one's eyes from his misfortune is a cruel form of violence: many Indians forget this ancient norm of spiritual refinement, that is, the religious man is he who promotes the good of all creatures. Belief in the *iṣṭa-devatā* in a society that is getting more and more estranged from the joint family and caste structures requires to be supported by active commitment to collective action. It cannot serve as an aid to selfishness and spiritual arrogance. It has to be made into a support for the endeavours of the individual who is becoming more and more socialized. Though there existed wide disparities between the theory and the practice yet it is true that the classical Hindu structures maintained the ideal of the ascetic as the ultimate one in life. It still remains to be seen now how this ideal will be made to fit within the new industrialized society that is being established.

An article recently published purports to reconcile the traditional Indian values with the industrialization of the country.¹ The author tries to refute the Weberian thesis that India, with her penchant for renunciation, is not equipped to meet the demands of technology. The author of the article claims to have, once for all, buried Weber's view and claims that Hinduism will not in the least be vitiated by any degree of technological sophistication appropriated by the Indians. His article reveals to what extent Indian scholarship is still on the defensive: it attempts to convince the Western critics that India will very soon demonstrate how wrong they have been. But what the author of this

¹ Amar Kumar Singh, *Hindu Culture and Economic Development in India*, Conspectus, New Delhi, March 1967.

article fails to see is whether the traditional norms of classical Hinduism, seen through the prism of a sugary romanticism, are still relevant to the modern situation, or whether they can still help the Indian to face the problems of modernity. By condemning Weber for having made the wrong selection of data to vindicate his thesis concerning India, he does not realize that he too has made an arbitrary selection of scriptural quotations to justify not an existing situation, but a hope or at most a possibility of what India could be in the future. Describing a few bones detached from the skeleton in the closet does not create a new body, pulsating with life. Further the article does not state why a capitalistic order or a consumers' society are the ideal goals of industrialized India. Nor does he indicate how the values of *dharma* and *mokṣa* (freedom) will continue to be meaningful to the Indian who will own a car as a status symbol.

The problem does not consist in demonstrating how logically relevant *dharma* and *mokṣa* may be to the car considered as the symbol of status and success. There is a task to undertake. It cannot be accomplished by refuting the views of western critics. The builders of India have to decide if the ideals of *dharma* and *mokṣa* are still meaningful. If these are judged to be meaningful then the task to do is to attune people's mind to the existence of the modern *smṛti*—the entire complex of constitutional laws, moral imperatives, new structures and institutions and systems of education and civic training—which will enable the eternal always to touch the contingent.

It is no more possible for the Indian to tell himself that he is not concerned with the world as it is: he cannot explain away his responsibilities by duping him-

self that *samsāra* has its own laws, that it exists in its own right. The fact is that 'India changes', the 'Indian man does change'. For the first time there has arisen the collective awareness that India is forced to play her part in world History. Despite her policy of non-violence and her efforts to establish peace she has had to take up arms four times since independence. History is not written in peaceful professions of good will. History has its substance in war. It has been a mistake, instilled into the people's minds by the ruling intellectuals, that it is unethical to keep a strong army. It has been a tragic misreading of History to assume that good follows inevitably and invariably from good, evil from evil. The stark realities of the recent past have violently shaken the Indian from dreamy confidence in the age-old notion of stability. He realizes fortunately that he has to move from a static order to an evolutive, dynamic society. The becoming of the state has become the global preoccupation of the nation. The becoming of the individual, either as the cause or the effect of that collective becoming, is the tangible reality which ought to be the concern of the ethical or religious thinker.

Individual becoming is not all suffering or ignorance. It is a bridge to infinity, an instrument to unveil the authentic Being hidden in man. Worldly existence is not a shell; it is not silver. Everything is. Feelings, thoughts, passions are real. Not only the Past is sacred. The future also is sacred. It is the philosopher's vocation to see in Time the form which imparts holiness to it. He will have to do so with a deep sense of what is good for the individual and for historical India. This concern must suffuse all modern achievements: be they the building of a dam, the construction of a temple or of more roads and cars to enable more and more

women to reach the sacred places of pilgrimage.

Part of Indian lore is a highly sophisticated doctrine whereby the agent remains unattached to the fruits of action. To face

Modernity the Indian may have to learn that to substitute 'what is to be done' (*kartavya*) for *karma* is not a mere semantic indulgence. It demands involvement, moral responsibility, and compassion.

ON TEACHERS AND TEACHING

WILLIAM E. HOOKENS

There was a time when teachers were considered as the hub of society. They were men of sterling character and the children in their charge were children; and the teachers were in sole control over them, from the time children stepped into the school till they left it, and even out of the school premises these teachers could pull the children up when they went off the track and no one dared to check these teachers, believing as they did that it was only the teachers who knew what control, discipline and life were! To teachers, therefore, all bowed their heads and, in India particularly, students as much as guardians touched their feet by way of homage. Great were the days when teachers were considered as teachers and the saviours of society! And greater still were the children of these teachers who brought glory to their teachers as much as to their country by their noble lives, sacrifices and the good deeds they did to those around them, and when they were placed in posts of responsibility, they were more than a credit to their teachers who were not only as good as gold but instilled in them this gold-like quality.

These teachers gave out their best to the children they taught and they had for them that affection which made teaching such a delightful experience. Not that all children learnt equally well at the same

time, but there was this in the teachers—and which the children could not help knowing—a determination to teach and enthusiasm in the subjects they taught. And those children who could not make the grade, were made to sit in the class long after others had left and they would do their work and the teachers would be there to help them out, knowing as the teachers did that these children would not do the class-work at home and that they needed to be drilled into working; and, in course of time, these children would not only make the grade but be a credit to their teachers and work so hard as to win laurels from their teachers and parents. Work, work, work, this was the keynote of the teachers as much as the grown-ups then, and nothing was thought as too difficult once the persons made up their mind to do a thing. Character was developed through sheer will-power and the atmosphere of the school and the home was such as to make good morals as much part of the day as good thoughts, good feelings and good actions—and all were so happy.

These teachers judged by today's degree standards, were often not even graduates and yet they had in them much that made them figures of note. They had the capacity to think and feel and their minds and hearts were as big as they could make them, and no one meeting them ever thought

them ordinary or average. Simple in their ways, they were guided by simplicity in all that they did, and they served as examples to all as men of noble calling. Their thoughts were big, and the bigness of their personalities was apparent in the way they behaved. They brought to all they met the atmosphere of calm and peace and their schools, though not big or wonderful to look at, were so many holy places where knowledge was imparted in a manner that often made the children as much as the teachers to consider these places of teaching as temples where the shoes would be removed out of doors and, in the manner fit to enter temples, both teachers and taught entered these sacrosanct areas and lo! the glory of God descended. The voice of the teacher, the subjects he taught, and the behaviour-pattern of the taught—all these made school-going an experience far removed from the ordinary, and parents and guardians looked on these noble beings as God-sent angels to help their children grow, and were in high praise of them at home and out of it, in the presence of their own children as well as in their absence, and the natural corollary of all this was that the teacher-taught relationship was cordial.

There was, I hear someone say, a different method in those days for teacher-training and that it would be a good exercise for the teachers of today to see what subjects they were taught in those days and what subjects are being taught these days. Belonging as I do to the generation of teachers who have made teaching a vocation, I see absolutely no difference in the books as such that were taught in those days and the books that are being taught these days, but I do see a world of difference in the approach of the educationists and even of training colleges when it comes to the subject of teaching. I do concede that teachers and teaching must change with the changing times but, then,

I would not concede that overnight in the bid to show our progressiveness that we competed with the West. Competition is always good as smugness is an evil, but I would not expect India to compete in matters educational with the West but with herself, because there is much in the West that is not the same as India or the East; and I believe it is nothing short of suicide to take things of the West without absorbing them or seeing their desirableness for us as a people. We are, all said and done, a different people by virtue of our tradition, our environment and the philosophy of living that has become a part of us, and whether we know it or not, it is a fact. I am not for sheer conservatism or for the stick-in-the-mud attitude to life, but I do believe that the teachers as much as the teaching methods need to fit in with the people and not be thrust on them because the reactions are likely to be bad. Education, it will be agreed, need to fit in with the philosophy and the temperament of the people unless the educationalists of the country are certain that there is something radically wrong both with the philosophy and the temperament of the people and are keen on changing them to fit in with what they call the world-change or movement. This is not only a big question but needs a big mind as well to see the implication of education of yesterday, today and tomorrow and whether the findings are to be implemented now or tomorrow will depend on the seriousness or otherwise of education as the educationists see it.

What I have said about the teachers and teaching of yesterday is true not only of India and the East but of the West as well, and one has only to read books on the history of education to see that sincerity, conviction, character-formation, discipline were as much the hall-marks of yesterday's citizens as, I believe, insincerity (or double-dealing), fickleness (or erraticism), lack of

character, indiscipline have become the keynote of today's people; and this is true of India as much as the world with few exceptions; and therefore education which has begun to take, what I would call, the lowest place in the order of importance has begun to attract the attention of all those who had so far neglected it, seeing in it an evil that had become part of tradition and which had to be continued. Even in Britain which no one would call uneducated, by and large, there are educationists of the country who have pulled up all those in charge of education to take seriously this subject of education unless there was the desire or urgent need for robots in the country. Education in Britain, at the best of times, has not been taken seriously because the people as a whole are not that serious or philosophical by nature, and the fact that teachers are objects of ridicule even today makes education a standing joke. There are nevertheless more working-class people sending their children to universities, and democratic Britain is beginning to see its universities somehow lowering their standards to fit in with the needs of the people, as they call it, though Oxford, Cambridge, Manchester, London Universities and a few more are maintaining, as best as they can, the standard of the universities by the right choice of vice-chancellors, university professors and the continuation of such pay-scales as can maintain the high standards that Britain desires above all else.

The many schools, primary and secondary, are also beginning to recruit teachers often with a short-term teaching courses so that education will be provided for all and that no one will grumble. Though the teachers in the schools, colleges and universities dress soberly there is a difference felt in the quality of the teachers as such, and it is natural, for teachers are not born but are recruited from those of the country

and if the country provides good education there will be good teachers and if the country has nothing more than superficial education to provide the children of the country, this will be reflected in the newly-appointed teachers who will create after their own kind. History repeats itself not only in the field of heredity, but also in other fields and therefore all those who have the vision of tomorrow see to it that education is neither a slow process nor a fastly-miraculous one, and that in spite of the educationists having brain-waves of educating all overnight through the radio, television, not to mention correspondence and other schools, the education as such that the people are receiving somehow does not seem to produce any appreciable good in the people. There are today more schools, more colleges, more universities, better buildings and yet there is a tremendous shortage of good teachers the world over. There are, as up-to-date people will agree, more scientists, more artists, more doctors, more philosophers, more technologists, and yet of what use are these put to? British teachers, professors, scientists, doctors and nurses are being bought over by the wealthy Americans and Russians; and we are also told, if we are to believe the veracity of the magazine-reporters or correspondents that these specialists are being kidnapped.

There are, sad to say, today teachers, scientists, doctors, professors, philosophers who are leaving the country, be it India, Europe or Britain, for the richly progressive countries that offer them better emoluments; and there is, therefore, a severe brain-drain in this country as much as in Britain and in Europe. What has suddenly gone wrong with education? Do the educationists see that something is radically wrong somewhere and are they sitting together to find out where lies the fault or faults? Or are they sitting tight,

content as they are to draw their monthly salary and feel that all is well and not caring for the deluge after them? Teachers and teaching—what a difference between those of yesterday and today! It is high time, that education were re-defined not only for India and the East but for Britain, France, Germany, Italy and not least for America and Russia; for all the crop of diseases we see around—near and far that we find ourselves heir to, are all traceable to education or rather mis-education. And there is nothing more sickening or even dangerously so as a mind run to seed... and it would be a poorer world if we created more robots than human beings, because we would soon be run by these robots and life would be all din and ruin and not a soul would dare sigh or show signs of disapproval because all would be so highly mechanised or conditioned as to be yes-men all along the line, the brave-new-world type of humans, or the 1984 catch-while-you can spy-men, women and children. Education, I believe, poses a serious challenge to all thinking people.

THE TRUE WELFARE OF STUDENTS

DR. P. S. SASTRI

Indian students today are taking an active part in everything except their studies. They are found in all agitations. A steel plant was demanded by them sometime back and their demand was sponsored by and also followed by violence. Then they appeared prominently in another state demanding many things including the abolition of English. Recently they ran the show in Vidarbha demanding the location of an agricultural university in Vidarbha. A close analysis of all these agitations reveal a basic pattern. Some politicians start an agitation and then they involve the students in it. Gradually persons who are neither politicians nor students take control of the situation by indulging in violence. Next the police enter. In meeting the police, the politicians and others quit the scene leaving the students to face the attack. Then a demand for enquiry, hungerstrike, and the like follow. In this pattern the students are the unfortunate victims. They are duped by those not interested in their real welfare. The time has

come when the students have to pause and think.

To begin with, the Indian students must realize that they should not imitate the West or the East. The English, the American, the Russian, the Chinese or the Japanese cannot be our models. As Swami Vivekananda said :

'Suppose you can imitate the Westerners, that moment you will die, you will have no more life in you. A stream is taking its rise, away beyond where time began, flowing through millions of ages of human history; do you mean to hold that stream, and push it back to its source, to a Himalayan glacier? Even if that were practicable it would not be possible for you to be Europeanized. If you find it impossible for the European to throw off the centuries of old culture which there is in the West, do you think it is possible for you to throw off the culture of shining scores of centuries? It cannot be. To Europeanize India is therefore an impossible and foolish task.'¹

The argument is clear and convincing.

¹ Swami Vivekananda on India and her problems : Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta 14, 1946, pp. 102-03.

It is a commentary on the verse from the *Gītā* (III. 35), '*Śreyānsvadharṃo viguṇah...*'. Imitation is no solution. If so, the modern Indian student is not expected to allow himself to be indoctrinated by an ideology that is exported to our country. If the ideology is beneficial, and if it harmonizes with the spirit of our culture, there is no harm in receiving it. Thus the values of democracy are easily assimilated into the Indian spirit.

But a more important thing for a student is the carrying out of the 'Svadhyaṃ Vidhi', bode of study. In old days this 'Vidhi' or code meant that one should study his own Veda first and ignore all other activities of life. In modern times this 'Vidhi' would mean that he must study the subjects or the craft he has chosen and refuse to get himself interested in any activity other than his study. When you study something, the aim must be to master it.

But the subjects studied today are so studied and so taught as to have no impact on the student's life or on the teacher's life. The emphasis is more and more on the accumulation of general knowledge. It is a process of storing the memory. Such a process does not contribute to the real *well-being* of student. Long ago, Plato emphasized the close relation of *well-knowing* to *well-doing*. The modern method of getting the facts by rote does not mould our ways of looking at things or our forms of behaviour. In other words, the real welfare of the students is not achieved by such a system of education.

Since the students are those seeking knowledge, this knowledge must be one that can be and should be assimilated. Such a knowledge can mould the human personality and make it fit to face the challenges of life. Where are we to have such a knowledge? And how can such a knowledge contribute to the true welfare

of students? These questions can be answered if we restate the values of education.

In Indian tradition there is a famous passage in the *Taittirīyopaniṣad* (I. XI. 1-4) where at the end of his educational career the student receives a highly valuable advice. It is the eleventh *anuvāk* of the *Śikṣā-valli*. The English rendering is as follows :

'Speak the truth; and follow Dharma. Be not heedless about the subject or branch of knowledge you have studied. You may now offer to your teacher the gift he likes; and take care that the line of your race is not broken. Do not fail to pay attention to truth. Do not fail to pay attention to the performance of Dharma. Do not neglect well-being (*kuśala*). Do not be indifferent to what you have studied. Be mindful of what you should offer to the Gods and manes. Look upon your mother as a deity. Treat your father as a god. Offer divine honour to your teachers. Offer hospitality like a god to your guests. Perform only those acts that are irreproachable. Do not perform those that can be reproached. You must be intent on the virtuous actions that proceed from us, not on the vicious ones. When persons more distinguished than ourselves are in session enquiring the truth of a problem, do not even breathe a word. Never give an unwilling gift, for gifts are to be made willingly and gladly. Let gifts be made according to one's fortune, with modesty and fear. Let there be a friendly feeling when the gifts are offered. If there arises any uncertainty about your acts, or a doubt about your conduct in life, you must rule yourself like the wise Brāhmaṇas who are able to judge impartially, who are experienced and independent, who are gentle and intent on the law, who happen to be present near by, and who would act in such situations. ... After having understood, we must act continuously in the way taught above, till the end.'

This is a great passage. It sets forth the twin ideals of *satyam* and *dharmam*. Education must promote the apprehension and assimilation of these values. Even if we do not read the passage as a kind of a convocation address, it can be adapted to throw light on the source of the true wel-

fare of the students. Dharma is duty in general. A valid reason for the unhappiness of the modern students is their ignorance of what their duties are. They are only taught about their rights. They are not taught that these rights actually flow from their duties, and that therefore duties have a priority.

There is the emphasis on the necessity of learning, for the knowledge in youth is transformed into wisdom in age. The ninth chapter of this text accordingly lays stress on *Svādhyāya-pravacana*, learning and teaching. Learning alone opens the mind and develops insight. Learning gives an idea of Dharma and *Satya*. Now truth is so emphasized as to reject both forgetfulness and falsehood. Sri Ramakrishna says: 'Truthfulness alone constitutes the spiritual discipline of the Kali Yuga.'² The *Praśnopaniṣad* (6.1) says that he who speaks falsehood withers up to the root. *Kena* (4.8), *Praśna* (1.16), *Muṇḍaka* (3.1.5,6) and *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* (1.4.14) Upaniṣads have identified truth with Dharma. Thus truth and Dharma are two aspects of the same ideal. The subjects to be studied by the students must be so oriented as to enable them to promote truth and Dharma. This is a highly desirable ideal to be pursued from this Gandhi Centenary year; for they were dear to Gandhiji.

Students have to secure self-preservation and welfare (*kuśala* and *bhūti*). These can be had by religious and secular means. Of these, the religious is being neglected because we tend to proclaim, in excess, our secularism. Still religious instruction does have an important value. We may at the best talk only of Universal Religion, and not of any organized or institutional religion.

The next step taken up by the passage is to show that the mother deserves greater honour than the rest. That explains why the mother is mentioned first. The modern student has to be made to realize this great source of our well-being and culture. After the mother come the father and the teacher.

Then one is asked to perform only those acts which are irreproachable. If something is not consistent with reason, it should not be accepted. Education ought to train the reasoning faculty. At the same time modesty has to be cultivated. A polite behaviour is a necessity.

The passage towards the end asks the student to follow the wise elders. 'A good example is the best sermon.' Here the teachers and the elders in society have a serious responsibility. The maladies to which our students are subject, are actually imported into their midst from the society. We are apt to forget that the students and the teachers come from a given society; and the evils prevalent there tend to corrupt them. The teacher has to struggle hard to become an ideal. If only the teachers can mould their lives in such a way as to appear as examples, a part of the student-problem can easily be solved. The other part depends on the elders in the society.

The welfare of the students thus rests on many factors of great importance. Above all, their real welfare lies not in action but in a theoretical enquiry. The modern student is more eager to act, not to learn. Probably the reason is that the environment makes him so. It is also likely that a serious responsibility rests here with the teachers. Let us at least remember that those who are students today will be responsible tomorrow for the democratic and spiritual ideals and values. If we do remember this, it is the duty of the teachers to educate them in this direction, whatever may be the subjects chosen by them.

² Vide: 'M': *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, translated by Swami Nikhilananda, Ramakrishna Math; Madras, 1944, p. 237.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

IN THIS NUMBER

In this letter translated from original Bengali, Swami Turiyananda, a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, gives needed guidance and inspiration to an aspirant assailed by inner conflicts.

Sri Ramakrishna has been hymned and adored in a variety of ways. The editorial in this issue presents him as *suhṛdam sarvabhūtānam*, the friend of all beings.

We have in this the concluding instalment of the 'Questions of Spiritual Seekers Answered' by Swami Madhavananda, at the Vedanta Society of New York on March 30, 1956.

Readers will notice here with what love and understanding 'An Aspirant from Western U.S.A.' writes on 'What Inspires me most in Holy Mother's Life.'

The challenge of modernity has been upon man at turns of different epochs of history but perhaps never so powerfully like the one of today especially upon ancient civilizations which are also new emerging nations in a growing interdependent world of today. In depth, it is the question of simultaneously, heartily welcoming both the timeless and time as authentic formative forces of life. This thought provoking article 'The Indian and the Challenge of Modernity', in which Dr. D. Prithipaul covers an important but more or less neglected area of thought, will be read with deep interest by all who are aware of implications of time-change-explosions in the scheme of existence in traditional-modern India.

Dr. Prithipaul is a visiting professor of comparative religion, at University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

Professor William E. Hookens, Head of the Department of English, Sri Nilkanteswar Government Post Graduate College, Khandwa, Madhya Pradesh, draws pointed attention to a theme on which we could never pay too much attention.

Sri P. S. Sastri, M.A., D.Litt., Ph.D., Head of the Post-graduate Department of English in the Nagpur University, in writing on the 'True Welfare of Students' draws from his deep thinking in the matter and also experience.

IS THIS 'WORST CRISIS' IN CHRISTIANITY?

Politics continues to make so much noise in the world and claim so much of our attention that we are apt to hardly notice other momentous things happening in other spheres of life. One such thing sweeping over the western world right now is the religious ferment of a high potency.

This was forcefully reflected in a speech made by Father Robert Campbell, Professor of Theology in DePaul (Catholic) University, Chicago. Father Campbell was speaking at a Symposium of Religions under the auspices of the Vivekananda Vedanta Society of Chicago, commemorating the seventy-fifth anniversary of the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago of 1893 in which Swami Vivekananda made history.¹

Coming from a Catholic Professor of Theology in a Catholic University the speech was a very unusual one, in accent, candour, forthrightness and understanding.

Prefacing his speech Father Campbell is reported to have said :

'Had I been giving this talk ten years ago, I

¹ The report of the Symposium was published in the December 1968 issue of the Journal under the title 'Where Religions Meet'.

would have given an optimistic picture of Christianity, a Christianity in its ascendancy with its adherents constituting one third of the human race. But in the ensuing years it seems to me that there has developed a crisis in Christianity, the worst crisis in its history.'

Then confining himself to his own denomination, Catholicism, the speaker with true Christian candour proceeded to substantiate his statement by these points :

1. The break-down of authority which is endemic in present-day Christianity exemplified by resentful reception from many directions of Pope's encyclical on birth control and his recent statement on Catholic credo, though it represented the traditional view of Catholicism.

2. Crystallization of conservative and liberal trends in Christianity holding opposite views in regard to fundamentals, such as, the nature of God, truth, man, redemption. Every Christian denomination shows this division; it is no longer Catholic versus Protestant; rather this alignment is between conservative versus liberal.

Father Campbell said :

'In the Roman Catholic Church, for the last five or six years, the rebellion against authority has been a move in the direction of challenging the infallibility of the Pope, the ideas of heaven and hell and many other traditional doctrines. The liberal group says: "Don't worry about the old-fashioned things such as seeking converts etc. let us develop ecumenism, develop better relations with other religions."

'The traditionalist group holds that God has revealed the truth to us as to the nature of Himself, as to how man should live, and as to the after-life. These truths are eternal and unchanging. It is our duty to find out His will in these matters. But the modernist, or call it the liberal or the humanistic or secularistic, group does not agree with this. It believes that truth is a relative thing, that these doctrines and dogmas are not fixed things, they change and that we are coming to the point where we deny some things that we formerly affirmed as sacred truths. The traditionalist group affirms that Jesus is God and is unique. No other person can be mentioned in the same breath with him.

But the modernist group takes issue with this and says that Jesus is divine, true, but anyone of us can be divine.'

Proceeding Father Campbell said :

'And of course this strikes a very responsive chord with the Hindu outlook that the divine is in all of us. The liberal Christian outlook is sympathetic to a great extent to the Hindu outlook. As a matter of fact on many points, I think, you will find the liberal Christian outlook moving in the direction of the East in much of its philosophy—both in its concept of impersonal God and in the concept that we are all divine. The same obtains in the attitude toward man: traditional Christianity, according to the liberal group, was charged with a pessimistic outlook arising from its dogmas such as original sin. This concept is very offensive to liberal Christianity which holds that man is perfectable by training and proper education. In attitude to the world also there is cleavage between the two groups. Whereas the traditionalist group considers the world a danger and an enemy, the liberal group considers this a very wrong view and affirms that it can be improved and that we should devote ourselves to building a more humane society instead of pining to go to heaven.'

The speaker, significantly enough, was able to report :

'In my own university, surveys taken of Catholic students' attitudes show a great swing towards the liberal views within the last five or six years.'

Then referring to him, in commemoration of whose historic spiritual ministry to humanity seventy-five years ago, the symposium was being held, Father Campbell said :

'I know that the great Swami Vivekananda, would himself be in favour of most of the trends in the direction of liberal Christianity; because his teaching was: "Don't be concerned about doctrines or dogmas or churches or temples", and the liberal Christian would echo these sentiments one hundred per cent. The Swami told us that the old religions said he was an atheist who did not believe in God, that the new religion tells us that he is an atheist who does not believe in himself and in mankind. Now this attitude will be echoed whole-heartedly by the humanistic,

modernistic Christian approach. Although the Swami would not endorse all the modernistic attitudes—perhaps its moral code he would not endorse one hundred per cent—still I think he would be in favour of its central trends which seem to be moving in the direction of the religion which he was hoping for. I think this trend in the direction of humanism would be applauded by Swami Vivekananda if he were here today ... We can all agree on this: that this symposium whose purpose is to develop fuller understanding of each others' religions, is a good thing.'

What has been happening to Christianity is of great importance to all people in the world who care for religion. Shorn of the separating trappings of labels of this faith or that, it is an affair which concerns life in depth of all human beings who seek to live in this world fulfilling a higher purpose responsive and responsible to God and man.

To our reading, the stupendous strivings of the Catholic Church for updating itself, which marked the Vatican II (Ecumenical Council), the ferment that has been going on in entire Christendom especially among the young thinkers, the deliberations of the Fourth Assembly of the World Council of Churches held in Uppasal, Sweden, in last September, and the views which found neat summation in Father Campbell's speech (though he may have spoken only in his personal capacity)—all these indicate that Christianity is in the momentous throes of radical renewal from within. In a variety of ways an 'honest-to-God' aspiration seems to have seized the soul of Christianity.

To be sure, no one can stem the tide of this renewal without getting shattered and battered, for it is imaginable that the will of the Lord Himself is at the back of it. There is no reason to think that the sway of the time-spirit on religion is abhorrent to God. Christ of Galilee was the God-man of the open. Waves of the sea rocked the sleeping Christ. Sea winds

played with his locks. He prayed and taught under the open skies. His pulpit was a mount. He rarely ate at set tables. How wonderfully he combined rebellion with truth, non-conformism with the essence of faith, fulfilment of the scripture with the extension of its meaning. How dexterously he dovetailed the timeless with time, death with deathlessness, crucifixion with resurrection. The Cross-pattern of his spiritual ministry was perhaps a manner of bringing in weal in and through turmoil. His spiritual strategy with the Church may be the same even today.

Man does not really fully know. While fighting on religion, man, curiously enough, often forgets that there is difference between God and a concept of God. God is by no means a mere concept of His. Hence many concepts of God can be equally relevant and irrelevant from God's side of reality. In-fighting in all Churches go on, on grimly held frozen concepts and conjectures as to what is in God's mind. Meanwhile, God 'may smile and play'. The fact, however, remains that world religions have a situation on hand to face with dexterity and insight. Pertinently did Swami Ranganathananda of the Ramakrishna Mission point out at the Symposium :

'Father Campbell vividly placed before us in his lecture the crisis that is facing Christianity, specially Catholic Christianity, during the past few years. It is obvious that such a crisis is facing every religion today. Modern world conditions and modern education are forcing all religions to justify themselves at the bar of reason. No religion can escape the critical scrutiny of its own youthful followers. Hinduism has been experiencing this scrutiny, reverent as well as irreverent, for over a hundred years. It had, however, the inestimable advantage of the most progressive and enlightened spiritual leadership in the modern age in Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. Christianity is passing through such scrutiny today in a more intense fashion. Religions like Islam will experience it to vast dimensions in due course. Swami Vivekananda taught Hinduism to welcome such rational

scrutiny so that all its deadwood may be removed, allowing its tested truths to shine and inspire the modern Hindu, to acquire the necessary spiritual strength to face the challenge of modern materialism. He exhorted all other religions to respond to the modern challenge in the same way and, uniting their spiritual energies, throw a counter-challenge to modern materialism and worldliness, and thus help restore to modern man his spiritual integrity and true dignity.'

Conservatives, used to fixed patterns of piety, are apt to be exasperated by the ways of the young liberals. To question the grounds of faith from within the Church is not, however, something like pulling down the corner-stones of the Church. It appears to us that these new missionaries of truth are opening to their Church new dimensions of truth, without which the Church could not eventually help becoming a tomb, grand but dead. These new dynamic divinities are busy opening, may be with some vehemence, the long shut windows of the Church to the abundance of sunshine and allowing the choking mustiness of centuries to be wafted away.

If you are afraid of truth you are away from God. Are the liberals asking for truth? If they are, God is with them. If not, they are without God. If the liberal Catholics have gleaned truth from all over the world and brought it to the altar of St. Peter's, Christ is unlikely to be displeased with them. They may be worshipping a more vibrant Christ of true catholicity (as distinguished from Catholicism). And that may not be beside Christ's own will. How would anyone be sure that Christ is not renewing himself in comprehension in the hearts of the crusaders of truth? There is no staying them any more by any thunder or threat. They have not only power of time-spirit with them, they may have also Christ himself as their vanguard, for they are out on a new pilgrimage in his name only. Did not Christ himself say that he would be with

them up to the end of the earth? After going to the ends of the world the Lord showed them how many mansions of truth he had in his Father's house and how wonderful and various those mansions were. In every mansion there was a new reading of truth, new glow and sparks of the eternal fire. Hearts grew wider, comprehension deeper. And they manifested new glory of Christ in their courage to wonder at other faces of God, and bow their heads in the direction where others worship.

The dynamics of new Catholicism need not necessarily be an unblest aberration of the young wild, but could be a very sensitive expression of a profound renewal from within. It takes spiritual reserve to shed the old lost to meaning, and open a new leaf, green and asking light.

With the Roman curia already changed into a more flexible core operating the Church, new thinking was not unexpected, for Pope John called the Vatican Council II, for this very purpose, 'to let in a little fresh air into the Church!' Yet Pope Paul's chiding to those Catholics who seemed to be 'seized by a kind of passion for change and novelty' reflected some amount of dismay of the Church from the side of the establishment. Most shocking is likely to be the liberals' view about truth, itself, which is out to relativize everything the Church has so far held as fundamental and immutable spiritual values.

A close scrutiny of the *avant-garde* thinking within the Church as reflected in Father Campbell's speech will reveal that they are seeking an ampler concept of God which will be commensurate with their extended sense of inner responsibility to God and mankind. In their own way, the liberals may be seeking what in India has been taught as *satyasya satyam*, the Truth of truth.

If the liberals are today rejecting the idea of heaven somewhere-out-there, it is

not a sign of spiritual decay but growth. If instead of 'pining to go to heaven', they are desiring the world to be bettered, it is because God's footstool ought to be worthy of Him.

If the concept of 'original sin' is abhorrent to the awakened new in the Church, it is because decency of spirit and transparency of reason demand it. What is original is all from God. What is not from God cannot be of man in any permanent sense. It is absurd to be called upon to worship a sinning God. If the liberals are choosing original divinity in place of original sin, they are having a more enlightened concept of God and man.

If the liberals are challenging Pope's 'infallibility', they are simply asking for honest recognition of an obvious human fact. God alone is infallible and those who know Him can also so become through His grace flowing through them. If a Pope has not realized God, the mere ascendancy to the high office could not make him infallible. Are not there enough testimonies in Catholic history about the utter fallibility of Popes?

If the liberals want to develop the true spirit of ecumenism and respectful dialogue with other faiths they are only earnestly furthering the declared objective of the Vatican II. Ecumenism was an official undertaking of the Church. If the liberals are wanting to impart content and relevancy to that undertaking on which so much time, money and energy of the Church were spent, they are only rendering the Church a more valuable service than Pope Paul himself did, when he declared in his First Encyclical dated August 4, 1964, and that after all the official ecumenism:

'Indeed, honesty compels us to declare openly our conviction that there is but one true religion, the religion of Christianity.'

If this is 'honesty', by the Lord's supreme

grace, it is bound to make revolution of thought within the Church inevitable, because such 'infallibility' which combines holiness with utter disregard for truth, other religions, recorded and known facts, and obvious unreason, is too dangerous for the soul of any religion.

It augurs well that most Catholic students in Father Campbell's University are inclined to think of their religion in liberal terms. But they need to be taught about essential spirituality also.

As we see it what Father Campbell is inclined to call the 'worst crisis' in Christianity, could well be a renewal of Christianity in answer to its inner needs. Christianity's world-wide encounter with other faiths, scientific temper of the time-spirit and new humanism sweeping over the world—all have contributed to this ferment which may have far-reaching effect on entire human civilization.

The winds of change, however, have only started blowing. Whether or not these changes will turn out to be the 'worst crisis' will depend on whether or not liberals begin to worship 'change' in place of Christ and conservatives begin to adore 'no change' as Christ. But if the liberals can have the same fervour and faith in Christ as those of the conservatives, going deeply with all their liberalism, if they can maintain the intensity of personal spiritual living along with their extensity of enthusiasm for mankind and the world, in terms of serving them for their betterment, through this crisis, good is going to come to Christianity, not in the numerical sense but in the spiritual sense.

But if the modernists fail to convert their catholicity into love of God, not all their liberalism will take them anywhere, spiritually speaking. Then, God forbid, it will have been really the 'worst crisis' for Christianity.

If the priests and monks proceed to relativize the moral code, and the vow of chas-

tity, in reference to their personal lives, it will not take long for the Church to become bereft of spirituality. And that will be worse than its end. If the Catholic Church with all its dogmatic creed so far stood the tests of times, it was precisely because it continued to produce great men and women of God. This was possible because the vow of chastity stayed with them an unquestioned spiritual value. But if the liberals tamper with this value and win the day, gone will be the spiritual power of the Church, the prospect of which is truly frightening not only for Catholicism but for religion as such. A greater disaster for Catholicism of course cannot be imagined.

'Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God', said the Lord. Here is the test : if being a conservative or a liberal does not lead to *cittaśuddhi*, or purity of heart, which is the bed-rock of all spirituality and seed bed for all good-doing to the

world, then there will be little to choose between the two.

This is not a problem of Christianity alone but of all religions. In fact, in varying degrees this challenge is before both liberals and conservatives of all religions of the world. What will be helpful is jointly facing this challenge with genuine mutuality of regard in spite of deep differences in the modes of believing. Let not the liberals of any religion imagine that all the truths are with them. Let not the conservatives imagine that the liberals had none of them.

What is necessary for any religion in the world today is combining extensity with intensity, liberalism with steadfastness to God, love of man going hand in hand with adoration of God.

By the Lord's inscrutable dispensation, the 'worst crisis' in Christianity may well be a new emergence into more abundant light.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

ATMAN AND MOKSHA: DR. G. N. JOSHI, Gujarat University, Ahmedabad, 1965. Pages 868. Price Rs. 15/-.

The two terms Atman and Moksha sum up between themselves the innumerable problems regarding man's estate and its relief. No philosophy can afford to bypass these problems for they tell us what man is and what he strives to be.

Philosophers have held extreme views regarding the nature of self—from the no-self doctrine to the doctrine that self is the only reality. This is no less true about Moksha. For the Cārvākas, the present enjoyment is the only worthwhile object while the denial of this Samsāra is the first step towards achieving the ideal according to the Advaita Vedānta.

The present book is a stock-taking of the views of the Vedas, the Upanishads, of heterodox and

orthodox systems on Atman and Moksha. Medieval Indian philosophers also have been included. This is followed by a summary of about 75 pages where the author tries to make the approach comparative and critical. This by itself is a good monogram, though one may not agree with all the views expressed therein.

The work is voluminous. The study of the originals and apt references to writers, both Eastern and Western, enhance the utility of the book. The book is more informative than critical. As the author has taken up two very important topics like Atman and Moksha, a synthetic or topic-wise account of them would have been far more effective than the analytic way of dealing with the two problems systemwise.

PROF. P. SANKARANARAYANAN

NEWS AND REPORTS

THE PRESIDENT, RAMAKRISHNA MATH AND MISSION

A BRIEF REPORT OF HIS RECENT TOUR

Swami Vireswarananda, President, Ramakrishna Math and Mission, made an extensive tour of South and West India from 18th November 1968 to 9th January 1969. He visited Delhi also on his way back to the Belur Math.

Leaving the Belur Math on 18th morning, he reached Vijayawada the same afternoon. On the 19th he formally dedicated the shrine of Sri Ramakrishna at the local Ramakrishna Samiti. He stayed there for three days and initiated devotees to spiritual life, granted interviews to spiritual seekers, and gave a talk to the devotees. He also visited some of the local temples as well as the high school run by the Samiti.

On the 21st he reached Madras. While in Madras, he opened a new block of the Math Dispensary, initiated devotees, delivered a talk, and met people seeking interviews. He visited three of the Mission's educational institutions, in one of which he opened a Science Block. On the 27th he left for Salem in the morning and reached there in the afternoon, halting for a while at Sri Ramakrishna Math at Nattarampalli. On the 29th he consecrated the new temple of Sri Ramakrishna, at the Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Salem, before a large gathering of *Sādhus* and devotees, and declared open the Vivekananda Hall on the following day. He presided over the meeting held in connection with the inaugural celebrations and delivered an address before a distinguished gathering. At Salem also, he initiated many devotees.

On the 2nd December he reached Perianaickenpalayam (Coimbatore) from Salem. Next morning he addressed the Convocation of the Rural Institute graduates of the Ramakrishna Mission Vidyalaya. In the afternoon he left for Ootacamund where at the local Ramakrishna Ashrama he stayed for three days. Here he initiated the devotees and gave a talk. On the 4th December he paid homage to the sacred memory of J. J. Goodwin by laying a garland on his memorial Monument at the Christian

cemetery there. From Ootacamund he went to Mysore on the 6th of December. At Mysore Ramakrishna Ashrama he initiated devotees, received spiritual seekers in personal interview, and gave a talk. He visited the Ramakrishna Vidyasala, a residential high school for boys, and also the site for the proposed Vedanta College. He went to Bangalore on the 10th, and on the 12th, he attended the Holy Mother's Birth Anniversary Celebration at the Ramakrishna Ashrama there and blessed the devotees. On the 13th he gave a talk on the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. Here also he initiated devotees.

On the 14th he went to Hyderabad. There he visited the Mehboob College (where Swami Vivekananda delivered a lecture in 1893 on the eve of his sailing for the U.S.A.) and also the Salar Jung Museum. Here also he granted personal interviews, initiated devotees, and gave a talk.

On the 19th he went to Bombay. There he inaugurated the rennovated Vivekananda Hall of the Ramakrishna Ashrama. Mr. Cherman, the Governor of Maharashtra, was present on the occasion as chief guest. Here he gave initiation, met the devotees, and received seekers in personal interviews.

On the 25th he went to Poona, where he met devotees and gave initiation. On the 26th he went to Satara to declare open the Modern Village constructed as a part of the Ramakrishna Mission's work in connection with Koynanagar earthquake relief.

Sri Y. B. Chavan, the Union Home Minister, was the chief guest on the occasion. In the evening the Swami returned to Poona, wherefrom he came back to Bombay on the 28th. On the 29th he went to Surat and visited next morning the Mission's Relief Camp in the Tapti river valley, where the making of concrete slabs and pillars for building pucca huts for the flood-stricken people is going on. That afternoon he went to Baroda, and next morning started for Rajkot, reaching there in the evening *via* Limbdi. While at Rajkot, he initiated devotees, gave a talk, and answered questions from the audience. On the 5th January morning, he left Rajkot for Delhi and reached there the same evening. The Swami returned to the Belur Math on the 9th morning from Delhi.