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Prabuddha Bharata

OR

AWAKENED INDIA



ARISE, AWAKE, AND STOP NOT TILL THE GOAL IS REACHED





Prabuddha Bharata

Started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896

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CONTENTS

Sri Ramakrishna Answers	529
Man-Making Education— <i>Editorial</i> ..	531
Letters of a Saint	540
Swami Vivekananda's Gift to India and The World— <i>Swami Vireswarananda</i> ..	543
What Inspires Me Most in Holy Mother's Life— <i>Leta Jane Lewis</i>	545
The Mind and Its Control — <i>Swami Budhananda</i>	548
Human Trends: Youth and the Drug Scene— <i>Anna Nylund</i>	558
Notes and Comments	561
Reviews and Notices	561
News and Reports	565

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No. 12

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

SRI RAMAKRISHNA ANSWERS

Question (asked by a neighbour) : 'Sir, is it ever possible to realize God while leading the life of a householder ?'

Sri Ramakrishna : 'Certainly. But as I said just now, one must live in holy company and pray unceasingly. One should weep for God. When the impurities of the mind are thus washed away, one realizes God. The mind is like a needle covered with mud, and God is like a magnet. The needle cannot be united with the magnet unless it is free from mud. Tears wash away the mud, which is nothing but lust, anger, greed, and other evil tendencies, and the inclination to worldly enjoyments as well. As soon as the mud is washed away, the magnet attracts the needle, that is to say, man realizes God. Only the pure in heart see God. A fever patient has an excess of the watery element in his system. What can quinine do for him unless that is removed ?

'Why shouldn't one realize God while living in the world ? But, as I said, one must live in holy company, pray to God, weeping for His grace, and now and then go into solitude. Unless the plants on a foot-path are protected at first by fences, they are destroyed by cattle.'

Question (asked by a neighbour) : 'Then householders, too, will have the vision of God, won't they ?'

Sri Ramakrishna : 'Everybody will surely be liberated. But one should follow the instructions of the guru ; if one follows a devious path, one will suffer in trying to retrace one's steps. It takes a long time to achieve liberation. A man may fail to obtain it in this life. Perhaps he will realize God only after many births. Sages like Janaka performed worldly duties. They performed them, bearing God in their minds, as a dancing-girl dances, keeping jars or trays on her head. Haven't you seen how the women in north-west India walk, talking and laughing while carrying water-pitchers on their heads ?'

Question (asked by M.) : 'How ought we to live in the world ?'

Sri Ramakrishna : '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.

'A maidservant in the house of a rich man performs all the household duties, but her thoughts are fixed on her own home in her native village. She brings up her master's children as if they were her own. She even speaks of them as "my Rama" or "my Hari". But in her own mind she knows very well that they do not belong to her at all.

'The tortoise moves about in the water. But can you guess where her thoughts are ? They are on the bank, where her eggs are lying. Do all your duties in the world, but keep your mind on God.

'If you enter the world without first cultivating love for God, you will be entangled more and more. You will be overwhelmed with its danger, its grief, its sorrows. And the more you think of worldly things, the more you will be attached to them.

'First rub your hands with oil and then break open the jack-fruit ; otherwise they will be smeared with its sticky milk. First secure the oil of divine love, and then set your hands to the duties of the world.

'But one must go into solitude to attain this divine love. To get butter from milk you must let it set into curd in a secluded spot : if it is too much disturbed, milk won't turn into curd. Next, you must put aside all other duties, sit in a quiet spot, and churn the curd. Only then do you get butter.

'Further, by meditating on God in solitude the mind acquires knowledge, dispassion, and devotion. But the very same mind goes downward if it dwells in the world. In the world there is only one thought : "woman and gold".

'The world is water and the mind milk. If you pour milk into water they become one ; you cannot find the pure milk any more. But turn the milk into curd and churn it into butter. Then, when that butter is placed in water, it will float. So, practise spiritual discipline in solitude and obtain butter of knowledge and love. Even if you keep that butter in the water of the world the two will not mix. The butter will float.

'Together with this, you must practise discrimination. "Woman and gold" is impermanent. God is the only Eternal Substance. What does a man get with money ? Food, clothes, and a dwelling-place—nothing more. You cannot realize God with its help. Therefore money can never be the goal of life. That is the process of discrimination.'

MAN-MAKING EDUCATION

EDITORIAL

I

The General Assembly of the United Nations unanimously adopted a resolution on 17 December 1968 designating 1970 as International Education Year. Introducing the year the Chief of the Unesco Special Unit for IEY explained it as an occasion for a widespread effort of intellectual stimulation and reflection. In regard to the purpose, he quoted a well-known specialist on world problems in education: 'To reflect and make others reflect upon the foundations and the motives of education which have long been lost to view and which doubtless must be re-invented.'¹

This is imperative at the present time when the concept and content of education are being seriously challenged the world over. The rapid changes that are taking place in every department of life call for a fresh thinking and a new approach to the problems. Under the circumstance an education that is modelled on the needs and methods of a bygone age is ill-suited and needs a radical reorientation.

The very foundation has to be deepened, the definition made comprehensive and the structure enlarged so as to inform every human activity, include each segment of society and span not merely the so-called schoolable age but the whole of life. As the Director-General of Unesco put it on the first day of the New Year marking the commencement of IEY,

'Education is no longer the privilege of an elite or the concomitant of a particular age; to an increasing extent, it is reaching out to embrace the whole of society and the entire life span of the individual. This means that it must be

continuous and omnipresent. It must no longer be thought of as preparation for life, but as a dimension of life, distinguished by continual acquisition of knowledge and ceaseless re-examination of ideas.'²

One is struck by the similarity of sentiment of universal and lifelong education propounded at the turn of the last century as well as in the beginning of this century by the great thinker and educator Swami Vivekananda. We cite what was written about his concept of education seven years ago:

'Every act, every thought, every feeling, every idea and ideal, every belief and faith, every practice and discipline, every habit and attitude, every experience whether pleasurable, painful or neutral, that brings out perfection lying latent in us constitutes education. So it should cover all the aspects of life—physical, material, intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual, and all stages of life from birth to death. Moreover, it must meet the need and problem of man and woman in every walk of life and every stratum of society.'³

This ideal of lifelong education, it may be noticed, is reflected and given weight in IEY project. What is more, the Director-General of Unesco emphasized that in the period following IEY, the lifelong education ought to be the main line along which should be planned Unesco's activities in all matters pertaining to education.⁴ It will therefore be of profit for us 'to reflect and make others reflect' on Swami Vivekananda's concept of education. Being concerned with fundamental principles govern-

² Ibid. p. 3

³ *The Vedanta Kesari*, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, Vol. XLIX (1963), No. 11, p. 458.

⁴ Vide *IEY, Bulletin*, Paris, No. 2, 1969, p. 3.

¹ *Unesco Chronicle*, Paris, Vol. XVI (1970), No. 1, p. 21.

ing mankind and development of human potentialities, it is fit to help us face world crisis in education.

II

Paradoxical as it is, Swami Vivekananda owed much of his educational thinking to his nearly illiterate but illustrious master Sri Ramakrishna, for the latter was a man of pure originality and deep insight. The Swami spoke of him in the following strain:

'... of education in our sense of the word, he had none, and so much the more natural, so much the more healthy, was his mind, so much purer his thoughts, undiluted by drinking in the thoughts of others. Because he did not go to the university, therefore he thought for himself. Because we have spent half our lives in the university we are filled with a collection of other people's thoughts. Well has Prof. Max Müller said in the article I have just referred to ('A Real Mahatman') that this was a clean, original man; ...'⁵

'As long as I live, so long do I learn,'⁶ said Sri Ramakrishna. True to his teaching, he was ever alert to learn and inspire others to learn every day of life. His learning of any idea or ideal was unique in that he pursued it to its climax; he was not contented until he was completely one with it, until it transformed his whole being, until his very nerves were associated with it. An illustration would suffice. Being convinced of the necessity of discarding personal idea of possessiveness, particularly of wealth, for the sake of leading the higher life, he began learning the technique of renouncing money. The idea went deep into his soul. He practised it hard and gave up once for all whatever coins he had. In consequence

he became such an adept that no more would any thought of owning wealth occur to him, nay, believe it or not, he could not even involuntarily bear the touch of any money. With a view to testing him, a rupee had been secreted under his bed in his absence by Swami Vivekananda. No sooner did Sri Ramakrishna touch the bed on his return to his room, than he started back with intense pain and was convulsed.

This examination taught Swami Vivekananda a profound lesson on education. For on a later day during his itineracy when he was asked by the Maharaja of Khetri 'What is education?' he replied, 'I should say, education is the nervous association of certain ideas.' And he went on to explain this statement saying that not until ideas had been made instincts could they be reckoned as real and vital possessions of consciousness.

Education then is not mere accumulation of information that is gathered and thrust into the mind, goes undigested and runs riot there. Just as ill-digested food is the cause of physical illness, so also unassimilated ideas are the source of mental ailment. But education is that which brings about a healthy effect. It is assimilating ideas and has to be appraised by the amount of transformation brought about in a human being or society. A man may have read a lot about honesty being the best policy; if, however, he does not attempt to practise it, what does his study avail him? By adopting dishonest means in public life, he not only loses the benefit of his learning but adds to the list of offenders against social justice. Another example may be cited. A nuclear scientist or, for that matter, any educated person is aware of the hideous consequences that would ensue from a nuclear war. Yet research in bombs by scientists and proliferation of nuclear armaments by learned statesmen are going on without compunction. Their education has

⁵ *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Vol. IV (1962) pp. 167-8.

⁶ *Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna*, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, Fourth Edition, p. 329.

not given them the strength of mind to transcend the selfish or national interests, or the moral courage to think and act in terms of the welfare of the whole of humanity.

Had they been taught to translate lofty ideas in their lives, the course of history would have taken a happy turn. It is not, however, too late to learn. Now is needed whether in school or out of school an education oriented to assimilation of ideas or practicalization of ideals rather than collection of information or reading of books. Swami Vivekananda stressed this point when he said, 'If you have assimilated five ideas and made them your life and character, you have more education than any man who has got by heart a whole library. ... If education is identical with information, the libraries are the greatest sages in the world, and encyclopaedias are the Rishis.'⁷ It means that knowledge is not to be allowed to remain on the intellectual plane but to flow further and manifest itself in the life of the individual, society and nation. There should be correlation between learning and life.

A viewpoint of the modern youth takes note of want of this correlation in the activities and behavioural patterns of elders and teachers; the glaring disparity between their declarations and actions, their proclivity to quote books of high morals betraying woeful want of effort to live up to them is a target of bitter criticism for the youth. Instead of dismissing the present-day phenomenon of youth revolt as a sort of perverseness, we shall do better to look on it as a protest against the prevailing hypocrisy of the elderly people in general and leaders in particular, as a challenge to them to be sincere and truthful. For this will help us understand the problem of big gulf between profession and performance and in initiating a process of change

to narrow and ultimately bridge the gap. The youth being idealistic by temperament are disappointed when they come across a world 'with its churches and chicaneries, its books and blackguardisms, its fair faces and false hearts, its howling righteousness and utter hollowness beneath'. Their frustration increases all the more leading to restlessness and disillusionment when their own preceptors, parents, superiors and leaders are closely observed to fall far short of lofty standards they merely moralize. Statesmen rave about peace while engaged in perfecting the strategy and weapons of war. Eloquence of teachers on selflessness and service fail to impress the students as long as the former are concerned with their own interests to the neglect of the welfare of others, for fine words butter no parsnips. There are leaders who talk volubly of equality but who do not scruple to discriminate on grounds of caste, creed or colour. Such a state shocks the youth; known for their idealism and bubbling energy they grow impatient and restless for change, for a new order where man will be honest in word and deed. As days pass by, with little change in sight, their restlessness mounts up to an alarming extent. The way out of this predicament is orientation of education for assimilation of ideas.

III

Furthermore, this concept of assimilation of ideas is qualified as 'life-building, man-making, character-making' by Swami Vivekananda. Fulfilment of these conditions is a must in his scheme of education. It has to build up life, make men of us and forge character.

To the question 'What is life?' he replied, 'Life is the unfoldment and development of a being under circumstances tending to press it down.' Even as a child is born it cries, kicks and struggles against forces of nature thwarting its very existence: this is but the

⁷ *The Complete Works*, Vol. III (1960), p. 302.

beginning of hard strivings it makes against impediments as it grows up. Life is fraught with problems and difficulties. It is not by avoiding them or trying to run away from them but by facing and solving them that we manifest our being and develop our potentialities. The value of education is discerned here, for it endues us with the mettle needed to meet the challenges of life. And these challenges are ever increasing, they assault us in so many insidious ways. To be effective, education has to fit in with the need or circumstance, it needs to widen its bounds to suit the occasion and extend its horizons to help us meet the complex demands of the modern age. There would then be no limit to its province or period. Its task would be to explore and conquer new realms. In short it becomes all-comprehensive and is co-existent with the total length of life.

Education is not merely a continuous process but a life-boosting one. Man cannot live without bread. So vocational education adapted to local conditions and requirements is essential for solving the widespread problem of hunger and want in developing countries. Hence there is relevance in Swami Vivekananda's admonition:

'Well, you consider a man as educated if only he can pass some examinations and deliver good lectures. The education which does not help the common mass of people to equip themselves for the struggle for life, which does not bring out strength of character, a spirit of philanthropy, and the courage of a lion—is it worth the name? Real education is that which enables one to stand on his own legs.'⁸

In this connection Swamiji emphasizes the importance of learning from the West 'the arts, industries and the practicality necessary for the struggle for existence'. Obviously this education is not to be confined

to the student community only, but extended to the people also with a view to enable them to make both ends meet. Care should, however, be taken that it raises them up from the low level where they are vegetating and revives their lost dignity and self-confidence.

IV

Indispensable as it is as a step, as the first step, removal of economic or material wants does not make for the unfoldment of human potentiality. Satisfaction of biological or organic needs is no distinctive mark of man. Bread-winning education alone is inadequate for his full development. Far from training him to touch the deeper levels and tap the inner springs, it is concerned with the periphery of personality only, and fails to raise him to the heights of his glory. There is no gainsaying the fact that the brute is in us despite our education. This underlines the need for man-making education. So Swami Vivekananda averred: 'It is man-making theories that we want. It is man-making education all round that we want.'⁹

What does man-making education mean? Before attempting an answer, we need to know about man. Various views have been propounded and expounded since this is a theme on which man has been reflecting from olden days. Know thyself—this ancient maxim concerning man himself has held his attention and involved him in a serious study of human nature. He is viewed from different angles—as a body-mind complex, as a creature of heredity and environment, from the social, political and economic standpoints, in terms of his urges, values and goals. Yet the study is not ending, nor can one hope that the last word will be said on the subject in the future. The search is bound to baffle one's wits unless one gets to the root of the matter, un-

⁸ Ibid. Vol. VII (1958), pp. 147-8.

⁹ Ibid. Vol. III, p. 224.

less one dives into the deepest recess of one's being, unless one comes face to face with that which is the basis or essence of one's self. The core of man—the Real Man—eludes our grasp because it is super-fine. The finer a thing, the more does it puzzle our brains. The Real Man is finer than the body and mind, transcending yet animating them. It is the Spirit beyond. It is unchangeable unity beyond speech and thought. In the words of Swami Vivekananda:

'The Real Man is one and infinite, the omnipresent Spirit. And the apparent man, however great he may be, is only a dim reflection of the Real Man, who is beyond. The Real Man, the Spirit, being beyond cause and effect, not bound by time and space, must therefore be free.'¹⁰

Thus freedom is the essence of man. And man-making education is judged by the amount of emancipation it brings us. It is that which liberates us from the different kinds of fetters binding us—physical, mental, political, social, economic, and spiritual. Let every man work out his own salvation. Freedom in all matters is the supreme prize of man. Man-making education enables every one to advance in the path of liberation, it trains us to develop the strength necessary for such an advancement.

It then means the education which strengthens. Strength is the touchstone of education, or for that matter, of truth. Said Swami Vivekananda:

'And here is the test of truth—anything that makes you weak physically, intellectually, and spiritually, reject as poison; there is no life in it, it cannot be true. Truth is strengthening.'¹¹

Nowadays so many 'isms' claim our attention. In such a situation it is sensible for us to apply this test before we accept any

of them. Strength should be our pole-star in life. It is a safe guide in education too. The following words of Swami Vivekananda are indeed edifying:

'This is the one question I put to every man, woman, or child, when they are in physical, mental, or spiritual training. Are you strong? Do you feel strength?—for I know it is truth alone that gives strength. I know that truth alone gives life, and nothing but going towards reality will make us strong, and none will reach truth until he is strong. Every system, therefore, which weakens the mind, makes one superstitious, makes one mope, makes one desire all sorts of wild impossibilities, mysteries, and superstitions, I do not like, because its effect is dangerous. Such systems never bring any good; such things create morbidity in the mind, make it weak, so weak that in course of time it will be almost impossible to receive truth or live up to it. Strength, therefore, is the one thing needful.'¹²

Strength is the path to truth, the medicine for the world's ills, the protective armour against oppression, the invincible weapon to defeat the evil designs of exploiters.

In view of the significance of strength, Swami Vivekananda stresses it in his scheme of education. He traces to weakness, physical weakness, our inability to act up to what we talk, when he says:

'We speak of many things parrot-like, but never do them; speaking and not doing has become a habit with us. What is the cause of that? Physical weakness. This sort of weak brain is not able to do anything; we must strengthen it.'¹³

Hence he gives a revolutionary advice to the youth:

'First of all, our young men must be strong. Religion will come afterwards. Be strong, my young friends; that is my advice to you. You will be nearer to

¹⁰ *Teachings of Swami Vivekananda*, Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Four Edition, pp. 199-200.

¹¹ *The Complete Works*, Vol. III, pp. 224-5.

¹² *Ibid.* Vol. II (1963), p. 201.

¹³ *Ibid.* Vol. III, p. 242.

Heaven through football than through the study of the Gita. These are bold words; but I have to say them, for I love you. I know where the shoe pinches. I have gained a little experience. You will understand the Gita better with your biceps, your muscles, a little stronger. You will understand the mighty genius and the mighty strength of Krishna better with a little of strong blood in you. You will understand the Upanishads better and the glory of the Atman when your body stands firm upon your feet, and you feel yourselves as men.'¹⁴

Neglect of physical education in the curriculum is detrimental to the healthy growth and flowering of human personality. The weak-bodied are weak-kneed, lacking in the stamina to assimilate ideas. The physically weak are also unfit for the realization of the Self. To the objection that many dull-headed persons too have strong bodies, Swami Vivekananda replied: 'If you can take the pains to give them good ideas once, they will be able to work them out sooner than physically unfit people.'¹⁵ So men and women should be encouraged to pay attention to physical fitness. The importance of physical exercises, games and other athletic activities in education cannot be overemphasized.

V

While dealing with the subject of strength, we shall be cutting off a source of great significance if we ignore or omit the topic of continence. For, in the words of Swami Vivekananda, 'continence gives wonderful control over mankind, and 'the chaste brain has tremendous energy and gigantic will-power.'¹⁶ It is only a chaste man or woman who is a dynamo of power, who sways and charms others with a force that is irresistible and everlasting, whose every move-

ment bespeaks extraordinary energy. Whence comes this energy? According to the Yogis, that part of the human energy which is expressed as sex energy, in sexual thought, when checked and controlled easily becomes changed into what they call 'Ojas'. This Ojas is the highest of all the energies of a human being and explains the marvellous power manifest in a chaste person. The more the Ojas in a man, the more powerful he is, the more intellectual, the more spiritually strong. Conversely the less the Ojas, that is, the less chaste a man is, the more his loss of mental vigour and moral stamina. There must be absolute chastity in thought, word and deed if we are to evolve into powerful, perfect men. The aim is not suppression but sublimation of sex urge.

This has evidently to be tried not when one becomes old and worn-out, devoid of strength and stamina. Youth is the best period—and an important one at that. That is why Swami Vivekananda recommends, rather insists, that every boy and girl should be trained to practise absolute brahmacharya (chastity). One who observes brahmacharya develops retentive capacity and intellectual faculty. Swami Vivekananda himself is an illustrious example of lifelong brahmacharya. We shall recount an event in his life as evidence of the powers of comprehension and memory one attains as a result of brahmacharya. Seeing a new set of shining volumes of the Encyclopaedia Britannica which had been recently purchased for Belur Math, a graduate disciple of Swamiji said, 'It is almost impossible to read all those books in a single lifetime.' Swamiji replied, 'What do you say? Ask me anything you like from these ten volumes and I will answer you all.' On being examined, Swamiji not only reproduced the sense, but at places the very language of the difficult topics selected from each volume. When the disciple was astonished, saying, 'This is not within human power!' Swamiji made a significant remark:

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid. Vol. VII, p. 156.

¹⁶ Ibid. Vol. I, p. 263.

'Do you see, simply by the observance of strict Brahmacharya (continence) all learning can be mastered in a very short time—one has an unfailing memory of what one hears or knows but once. It is owing to this want of continence that everything is on the brink of ruin in our country.'¹⁷

We may add: in the world today.

Considering the benefits of brahmacharya and the evils arising from non-observance of it, Swami Vivekananda pleads for the revival of the Brahmacharya system of yore. Formerly in India the first stage of life of a man—the period of studentship designated as Brahmacharya—was a period of self-control, continence, mental discipline, character-building, study and service. Special attention was paid to this stage of studentship as it laid the foundation for the future life. This holds good today too. Besides it is patent that the modern youth are growing in feebleness and restlessness, frustration and faithlessness, and that they are lacking self-control and becoming lax in morals. They are easily attracted to Freud's views in favour of freedom in sex, little knowing that his observations pertain mainly to sick persons. To quote Alexis Carrel:

'It is well known that sexual excesses impede intellectual activity. In order to reach its full power, intelligence seems to require both the presence of well-developed sexual glands and the temporary repression of the sexual appetite. Freud has rightly emphasized the capital importance of sexual impulses in the activities of consciousness. However, his observations refer chiefly to sick people. His conclusions should not be generalized to include normal individuals, especially those who are endowed with a strong nervous system and mastery over themselves. While the weak, the nervous, and the unbalanced become more abnormal when their sexual appetites are repressed, the

strong are rendered still stronger by practising such a form of asceticism.'¹⁸

The state the youth are in, is a sign of deterioration; it augurs ill for the future. What is needed at this stage of crisis is an education of the kind of the ancient Brahmacharya training with relevant modifications, an education which will revitalize the youth by bringing home to them the blessings of brahmacharya and the injuriousness of promiscuity in sex.

A salutary effect of brahmacharya is faith in oneself. This is all the more needed today when deep frustration stalks the land, when the youth are obsessed with a feeling of debasing emptiness. How to get faith in oneself? Swami Vivekananda points out the way: 'Every boy should be trained to practise absolute brahmacharya, and then and then only, faith—śraddhā—will come.'¹⁹ This applies equally to every girl. Swamiji declares it to be the mission of his life to preach the doctrine of śraddhā or genuine faith, for this faith is one of the most potent of factors of humanity. In his view, if there has been degeneration, that degradation started on the day the people lost faith in themselves. Losing faith in one's self means losing faith in one's possibilities and potentialities, in the infinity and omnipotence of the Spirit which is one's Real nature. To counteract the demoralizing tendency of faithlessness and frustration, he exhorts us to teach the 'life-saving, great, ennobling, grand doctrine' of faith in one's own self, faith in the eternal purity and perfection of the Spirit to our children, even from their very birth. 'If I had a child,' he says, 'I would from its very birth begin to tell it "Thou art the Pure One".'²⁰ By way of illustration he refers to the beautiful story

¹⁸ Alexis Carrel: *Man the Unknown*, Hamish Hamilton, London, Sixth Impression, p. 140.

¹⁹ *The Complete Works*, Vol. V (1959), p. 369.

²⁰ *Ibid.* Vol. III. p. 243.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* Vol. VII, p. 224.

of queen Madālasā, how as soon as she has a child she puts it with her own hands in the cradle and how as the cradle rocks to and fro she sings, 'Thou art the Pure One, the Stainless, the Sinless, the Mighty One, the Great One,' and how her sons become great. As a man thinks, so does he become. If he thinks himself pure, he grows to be pure. This is a noteworthy truth for application in education to impart strength and self-confidence.

VI

Ignorance is the cause of our miseries. Knowledge, infinite knowledge, is in the mind and will be revealed if we know how to tap it. The method which mankind has adopted for ages to acquire knowledge is concentration of mind. In the past that was the way how the Greeks got mastery in art, literature, etc., the same was the procedure followed by the Hindus to develop the science of Yoga. The difference is that the former applied their concentration to the external world while the latter to the internal. Today the scientist directs his concentrated mind to the objects in the test tube in his laboratory and they give out their secrets to him. In fact, concentration is the one method used by any man who seeks knowledge. Nay, this is the *modus operandi* for efficiency in any work, whether it is earning money or cooking a meal. Discoveries of truths in any department of knowledge and achievements in any field of endeavour are the effect of concentration. The more the power of concentration, the greater and deeper is the knowledge that is gained. So Swami Vivekananda said, 'To me the very essence of education is concentration of mind, not the collecting of facts.'²¹ If a student is taught how to concentrate his mind, then he will be able to acquire

the knowledge of any subject he likes or the skill in the work of his choice.

Besides concentration, a student will gain greatly if he learns detachment and objectivity. They are essential features in the study of science, for they help him to arrive at conclusions uncoloured by his passions or prejudices. If he is devoid of detachment, he is apt to be attached to a particular object and will find it difficult to divest himself of the attachment. He then becomes miserable and loses his sense of judgement. Hence Swami Vivekananda emphasizes concentration as well as detachment in education. To quote his words:

'If I had to do my education over again, and had any voice in the matter, I would not study facts at all. I would develop the power of concentration and detachment, and then with a perfect instrument I could collect facts at will. Side by side, in the child, should be developed the power of concentration and detachment.'²²

Furthermore it is the evidence of experience that attachment narrows the heart and breeds selfishness. On the other hand, detachment fosters the expansion of heart. Intellectual knowledge alone is not sufficient to promote the cause of human welfare, it needs to be supplemented by the development of heart. The various sciences discovered and developed by intellect raise fresh problems and evils. The artificial wants that are created are beyond the means of the common man and frustrate him at every step he tries and struggles to satisfy them. The educated men hardly feel they have a duty to their hungry and ignorant brethren at whose expense they have received their education. Through the intellect is not the way to solve the problem of misery, but through the heart. Hence the heart should be cultured so that man may

²¹ Ibid. Vol. VI (1963), p. 38.

²² Ibid. Vol. VI. pp. 38-39.

cultivate purity, selflessness, service and fellow-feeling, and become a living god and not a devil on earth. The heart has the power to take us beyond the realm of intellect and land us in the region where we drink of the soothing waters of perennial values. Modern education whose ambit is intellectual development will prove injurious to the cherished values and ideals of mankind if it neglects the heart and hinders the evolution of the higher pattern of humanity. It would therefore be desirable to include in education *inter alia* provision for expansion of heart.

VII

Change of heart is brought about not by a process of insulation, by alienating oneself from others; it is done by deliberately fostering a feeling of brotherhood, even of unity through identification of oneself with every man, with every being, rather, with the whole of existence. Comprehension of the substratum of the universe including man—the unitive Spirit—facilitates the feeling. Education cannot neglect the study and promotion of unity and universality without detriment to the healthy growth of the teacher and the taught. Here comes in religion with its accent on the solidarity of the universe to boost and stabilize the sense of unity, to practicalize the doctrine of oneness of beings. Swami Vivekananda looks upon religion as ‘the innermost core of education.’²³ He of course does not refer to the narrow, sectarian, superstitious, local customs and beliefs, nor magic and miracles, nor priestcraft and church dog-

mas. What he means by religion are infinite strength, faith, fearlessness, freedom, purity, profound and perennial principles enshrined in the scriptures—particularly the strength-giving Upaniṣads—and realization of the Spirit already in man and of unity in diversity.

Education in its broad sense stands for these. The whole history of human progress in different fields may be viewed as the manifestation of the same Spirit through diverse planes: one cannot lose sight of the signal contribution of education in this respect. Spirituality of the East and science of the West are landmarks in the annals of man’s march. Both are great heritages of mankind; as such we shall be the poorer to discard either of them. A judicious combination of the two is a wise step for building up an integrated personality and education can play an effective role here. This calls for imagination and courage. In this connection it is worth giving attention to Swami Vivekananda’s valuable suggestion for additional function of education: ‘The schools and colleges should be training grounds for prophets.’²⁴

To sum up the educational concept of Swami Vivekananda in his own words:

‘What we want are Western science coupled with Vedanta, brahmacarya as the guiding motto, and also śraddhā and faith in one’s own self.’²⁵

‘Mere book-learning won’t do. We want that education by which character is formed, strength of mind is increased, the intellect is expanded, and by which one can stand on one’s own feet.’²⁶

²³ Ibid. Vol. V, p. 231.

²⁴ Ibid. Vol. VI, p. 10.

²⁵ Ibid. Vol. V, p. 366.

²⁶ Ibid. p. 342.

LETTERS OF A SAINT

THE LORD MY REFUGE

Kankhal
14.6.1914

Dear—

I am glad to receive your letter dated the 9th instant. The body happens to be like that. One gets perfect health as a result of great religious merit.

रोगशोकपरितापबन्धनव्यसनानि च ।

आत्मापराधवृक्षाणां फलान्येतानि देहिनाम् ॥ 1

These are the words of hoary wisdom. One, however, can be saved much trouble by taking refuge in the Lord and declaring, with the snapping of fingers: 'Let the afflictions and the body take care of themselves, O my mind, you stay in bliss.' For to be sure, you get no results by fretting and fuming, only the suffering of afflictions being the outcome; further this causes the forgetfulness of the supreme spiritual objective of life. Only, when we have inner hankering for enjoying the pleasures of life, we are much aggrieved if our health is not all right; otherwise, what is needed for the adoration of the Lord is the healthy state of the mind; the body need not necessarily be in the soundest state. One has to practise the adoration of the Lord through one's mind. When our acts are pure, the mind stays in a sound state, no matter what be the condition of the body. This is why one needs to be specially watchful about the purity of one's actions. The body is gradually moving daily towards its dissolution; nobody can stop this process. But the mind will last for limitless time, while bodies will be coming and going. Until full illumination is attained the mind will stay on and cause the repeated assumption of the body.

1 Disease, bereavement, affliction, bondage and misfortune are the fruits of the tree of one's own offences—*Hitopadesa*.

Therefore the essential task is to strive for attaining the purification of the mind.

Dvaita (dualism), Advaita (non-dualism), etc. or any other philosophy you may mention—all are concerned with the mind. When one can experience oneself as Ātman, Advaita is established of itself. Again whenever there is the consciousness of the body and the mind, Dvaita is established. When one experiences oneself as Ātman, the sense of duality (Dvaita) at once leaves. Then only the awareness of undifferentiated consciousness remains. Are not all the troubles centred in *Upādhis*²? I am so and so, son of such a person, of this caste, endowed with these qualifications—such ideas give rise to the sense of dualism. I am not the body, nor mind, nor the intellect, I am Ātman, pure, untainted by sin, of the nature of Existence-Knowledge-Bliss. When we can conceive of ourselves like this, where then is Dvaita? But it will not certainly do to merely mouth such words, one must realize these truths in experience, and then alone will one attain self-fulfilment. Now (in our unregenerate state), we have such a firm faith that this name is I or mine; when we shall have such a firm faith in Ātman, then alone Advaita will be revealed. It is for being established in Advaitic consciousness that we practise *Upāsana*³ in a dualistic attitude, because we are already habituated in the dualistic attitude. This attitude has to be gradually purified by cultivating a close relationship with God. Now our relationship is with the world. We must break it and establish

² A term of Vedanta philosophy denoting limitations imposed upon the Self or upon Brahman through ignorance.

³ Worship associated with meditation on the deity.

our relationship with God. And when this can be fully done, dualism leaves of itself. Only God, only the Supreme Spirit, will remain. This little 'I' will vanish. This is the process of attaining the non-dualistic experience through *Upāsana*.

There is another approach: to attain the non-dualistic state of being through the practice of discrimination—'not this, not this', denying everything here and now, this very moment; as for example, I am not the body, I am not the mind, I am the Ātman, Existence-Knowledge-Bliss absolute. With the destruction of the body I am not destroyed. Happiness, misery, etc. are the characteristics of the mind and not of me. I am the Ātman, full, one without a second, incomprehensible to speech and mind. When one is firmly established in this conviction one attains the non-dualistic experience. But is this an easy affair? Will mere talk do? Not at all. Sri Ramakrishna used to say, 'What will happen if you simply close your eyes and say, no thorn, no prick, no thorn, no prick? Whenever you place your hand on the thorn it pricks. What will happen if you simply say I am of the nature of the sky? When you have to pay taxes⁴ you are agonized.' Therefore all cannot attain the non-dualistic experience at one

⁴ Reference here is to Sri Ramakrishna's following conversation:

'Krishnakishore used to say that he was "Kha". One day I visited him at his home and found him worried. He would not talk to me freely. I asked him: "What's the matter? Why are you brooding like this?" Krishnakishore said: "The tax-collector came today. He said my pots and pans would be sold at auction if I didn't pay my taxes. That's what I am worrying about." I laughed and said: "How is that? You are surely 'Kha', the akasa. Let the rascals take away your pots and pans. What is that to you?"'

Vide: 'M.' *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, Tr. by Swami Nikhilananda, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras 4, p. 668.

stroke, This is why Śrī Kṛṣṇa says to Arjuna in the twelfth chapter of the *Gītā*:

अव्यक्ता हि गतिर्दुःखं देहवद्भिरवाप्यते ।

The goal of the unmanifested is very hard for the embodied to reach.⁵

ये तु सर्वाणि कर्माणि मयि संन्यस्य मत्पराः ।

अनन्येनैव योगेन मां ध्यायन्त उपासते ॥

तेषामहं समुद्धर्ता मृत्युसंसारसागरात् ।

भवामि न चिरात्पार्थ मय्यावेशितचेतसाम् ॥ ⁶

If one can truly depend on Him, one receives this help—the Lord Himself sets all things right for him. But is even this easily attained? Can all and sundry do even this? Not at all. Even this can happen only when by the grace of God one gets the holy company of a great soul. Otherwise not. What will mere verbiage accomplish? One will have to learn to see within one's mind to discern the embedded (spiritual) attitude therein. That attitude has to be purified and offered to the Lord without ceasing. Is this easily done? If one can attain to this state even through the labours of one's whole life, even then one becomes blessed. In fine, this is no joke. Whether it is through the method of dualism or non-dualism, it is extremely difficult to acquire and master the right attitude. Bhagavān Śaṅkara points out the distinction between dualism and non-dualism in the following manner:

तवास्मीति भजन्त्येके त्वमेवास्मीति चापरे ।

इति कश्चिद् विशेषोऽपि परिणामः समो द्वयोः ॥ ⁷

The purport of the verse is: The dualist says I am Yours, and the non-dualist says

⁵ *Gītā* 12.5.

⁶ But those who worship Me, resigning all actions in Me, regarding Me as the Supreme Goal, meditating on Me with single-minded Yoga—to those whose mind is set on Me, verily I become ere long, O son of Pritha, the Saviour out of the ocean of the mortal Samsara. *Bhagavad-Gītā*, 12.6, 7.

⁷ Bodhasāra, Bhaktiyoga 6.

I am verily You. Though there is this slight distinction (between the two attitudes and experiences) the end of both is the same: annihilation of ignorance and suffering. There is no difference in this regard. So one can adopt one of these two attitudes, which appeals to oneself.

But the (chosen) attitude must be pure. 'It will not do to take the name of the Lord and also to lift one's cloth.'⁸ If I have adopted the non-dualistic attitude then I must deny the body, mind and intellect. The moment I shall say: 'I am Ātman', all awareness of happiness and misery must vanish. And at once there will be the experience of being 'without parts, without actions, tranquil, blameless, unattached'.⁹

⁸ The reference here is to Sri Ramakrishna's parable: 'A milk-maid used to supply milk to a Brahmin priest living on the other side of a river. Owing to the irregularities of boat service, she could not supply him milk punctually every day. Once, being rebuked for her going late, the poor woman said, "What can I do? I start early from my house, but have to wait for a long time at the river bank for the boatman and the passengers." The priest said, "Woman! they cross the ocean of life by uttering the 'name' of God, and can't you cross this little river?" The simple-hearted woman became very glad at heart on learning this easy means of crossing the river. From the next day the milk was being supplied early in the morning. One day the priest said to the woman, "How is it that you are no longer late nowadays?" She said, "I cross the river by uttering the name of the Lord as you told me to do, and don't stand now in need of a boatman." The priest could not believe this and said, "Can you show me how you cross the river?" The woman took him with her and began to walk over the water. Looking behind, the woman saw the priest in a sad plight and said, "How is it, Sir, that you are uttering the name of God with your mouth, but at the same time with your hands you are trying to keep your cloth untouched by water? You do not fully rely on Him." Entire resignation and absolute faith in God are at the root of all miraculous deeds.' Vide: *Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna*, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras 4, saying No. 1093.

⁹ *Svetāsvatara Upaniṣad* VI. 19.

Or else if I say: I am His child, His servant—then with this firm conviction that whatever He ordains or in whatever state He may keep me, is for my supreme welfare, I must stay fully resigned with my consciousness riveted on Him alone. Attainment of perfection in either of these two attitudes is extremely difficult. For either of these one must practise the required spiritual disciplines. But the results of both are the same: cessation of the necessity of being reborn and attainment of supreme bliss. There is no doubt whatsoever about this. Let one adopt the attitude which is suitable for one, but it must be done whole-heartedly. One must practise the respective disciplines with one's concentrated strength, heart and soul. Otherwise one will not succeed in either of the ways.

The Lord while instructing Uddhava on yoga in the eleventh skandha of the *Bhāgavata*, clearly specifies who is fit for practising which yoga. I am mentioning this here for your information:

योगास्त्रयो मया प्रोक्ता नृणां श्रेयोविधित्सया ।
 ज्ञानं कर्म च भक्तिश्च नोपायोऽप्योऽस्ति कुत्रचित् ॥
 निर्विण्णानां ज्ञानयोगो न्यासिनामिह कर्मसु ।
 तेष्वनिर्विण्णचित्तानां कर्मयोगस्तु कामिनाम् ॥
 यदृच्छया मत्कथादौ जातश्रद्धस्तु यः पुमान् ।
 न निर्विण्णो नातिसक्तो भक्तियोगोऽस्य सिद्धिदः ॥ ¹⁰

The purport of the verses quoted is as follows: Desiring the welfare of mankind I have taught three kinds of yoga, viz. Jñāna, Karma and Bhakti. Jñāna-yoga has been taught for those whose minds have been completely withdrawn from the sense-objects. Karma-yoga is necessary for those who are immersed in sense-objects. And to them who are not fully averse to sense-objects and at the same time who have reverence for the discourses on the Lord with

¹⁰ *Srimat Bhāgavatam*, XI, 20.6-8.

the result that they are not inordinately attached to the worldly objects,—Bhakti-yoga brings success in spiritual life.

By carefully pondering over these teachings of the Lord one can easily ascertain for which of the yogas one has the requisite fitness. The number of persons whose minds have been completely withdrawn from sense-objects is not very large. Therefore, very few indeed are the persons who are fit to practise Jñānayoga. Those who are inordinately attached to worldly objects, they just cannot do without work. Therefore, those in the middle path, in other words, those who are not completely averse

to worldly objects and at the same time are not also inordinately attached to worldly objects and who have reverence and devotion for the Lord, if they practise Bhakti-yoga they may soon attain knowledge. The practice of this Bhaktiyoga alone is easily done and is also productive of quick results. And the dualistic attitude is the beginning of the practice of that spiritual discipline. Afterwards, when by the grace of the Lord this attitude ripens, non-dualistic awareness develops of itself. So far today.

My health continues to be as before.

SRI TURIYANANDA

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S GIFT TO INDIA AND THE WORLD

SWAMI VIRESWARANANDA

Unlike his predecessors, Swami Vivekananda, though a man of religion, had expressed his views on all aspects of our national life so much so that we often find him depicted as a great patriot, an educationist, a social reformer and so on. He was not merely this much, but something more. He was a man of realisation and he looked at life and all spheres of our national life from this viewpoint. He had realised that throughout her history and during all periods of her national life India had a peculiar way of looking at life. She had stood for a spiritual ideal. Swami Vivekananda had realised that there was a degeneration in this ideal, which had created all kinds of problems for her. So he wanted to invigorate the national life by a great spiritual upheaval. He was therefore fundamentally concerned with awakening each soul to realise the divinity within him. He wanted to tune all aspects of our national life to this ultimate spiritual goal.

India could be rebuilt only on this spiritual basis and on no other. Neither politics nor economics would serve the purpose. Swamiji therefore had warned that if India went in for any other ideal it would lead to her destruction.

By religion, however, he did not mean the common view we have about it, viz, a body of beliefs and practices, institutionalised and approved by a priesthood. Swamiji condemned such a view of religion. To him religion was experience, realisation. He defined religion as follows:

'Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this divine within by controlling nature, external and internal. Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy—by one, or more, or all of these—and be free. This is the whole of religion. Doctrines, or dogmas, or rituals, or books, or temples, or forms, are but secondary details.'

The essence of religion is to deliver us

from bondage and suffering. What constitutes our bondage? It is the sense of 'I' and 'mine', in other words, selfishness. Selfishness is bondage, unselfishness or love is freedom. All the four yogas are paths to attain freedom or God-realisation. In each the spiritual content is the same, the destruction of 'I' or 'mine', or selfishness.

This definition of religion serves also as a basis for religious toleration and understanding. Every religion aims at the destruction of this selfishness, and the method prescribed also is one of these four yogas or a combination of more than one of these yogas. So in essence all religions preach the same thing though there may be some differences in rituals and symbology which depend on the racial background of the people amongst whom any particular religion comes into existence. Just as language is evolved by any particular race, so also symbols and rituals are evolved by races according to their own psychological background. There are therefore differences in symbols and rituals. But since the essence of religion is the same in all religions the quarrel between religions is meaningless.

Another great gift of Swamiji is his doctrine of service. In India we find that whenever a great spiritual personality came, a monastic organisation came into existence after him, the members of which lived up to the ideals preached by their founder, and propagated them amongst the people. After Sri Ramakrishna also a monastic organisation has come into existence but there is a slight difference between the old monastic organisations and the present one founded by Swami Vivekananda. The old institutions excluded work and were solely dedicated to contemplation which was the only way to God-realization. It was only continuous con-

templation without a break that led to God-realisation. Work therefore was an impediment as it distracted or broke this continuity. But Swami Vivekananda found that there was a great need for work to be done by Sannyasins also for the rebuilding of the nation in various fields of national life. But this would, as pointed above, break the contemplative life and there was the risk of losing sight of the ideal or goal if they got involved in secular work. Swami Vivekananda bridged the gap by raising work to the level of worship or *upasana*. He said: God is both transcendental and immanent. Contemplation of God in His transcendental state can be continued by service to man by seeking God in His immanent aspect in human beings. So service done from this angle of vision would be *upasana* or worship and there would be no break in the continuity of the contemplation on God. This is Swami Vivekananda's unique gift to the world. *Atmano Mokshartham Jagaddhitya ca*—for one's own salvation and for the good of the world. The first one is the main thing and the 'good of the world' is secondary in the sense that it is automatically there, as a by-product, as it were, of the main *sadhana* for God-realisation.

In the present-day world there is so much of strife and bitterness about our rights, without any reference to our duties in life as it was in ancient India. Stress on our rights—human rights, fundamental rights, etc.—has made us very selfish and we are having all its results by way of strife, covetousness, jealousy and so on. This doctrine of service, service to God in man, would go a great way to correct our outlook on life and would be a potent factor in our nation-building work.

Om Shantih! Shantih!! Shantih!!!



WHAT
INSPIRES ME
MOST IN
HOLY
MOTHER'S
LIFE

LETA JANE LEWIS

What inspires me most in Holy Mother's life is her complete, undying devotion to Sri Ramakrishna. When she was only a child, she recognized Sri Ramakrishna's unique spirituality and dedicated her life to him. From that time on, her one goal in life was to worship and serve him to the best of her ability.

Sri Ramakrishna chose Holy Mother (Sarada Devi) to be his wife when she was six years old and he was twenty-four. They were then married ('Betrothed' is a more accurate word), but they did not live together until she was permitted to spend several months in his home at the age of thirteen. At that time she had the remarkable experience of feeling her consciousness rise to higher and higher levels as she witnessed the ecstasy of Sri Ramakrishna's God-intoxicated states. 'From that day onward,' she explained later, 'I always felt as if a pitcher of bliss were kept in my heart. I cannot convey any idea of how much and in what manner my mind feasted on that steady, unchanging divine joy.' She listened happily while Sri Ramakrishna taught her that the knowledge of Brahman is the supreme goal of life, that detachment and self-dedication are essential to reaching that goal, and that sensual pleasure in any form is an obstacle to its attainment.

Sarada thought constantly of Sri Rama-

krishna during the five years of separation which followed these few delightful months. She tried to obey his instructions in everything she did, which included performing the spiritual disciplines he had taught her and serving her parents lovingly. She waited patiently until she was eighteen. Then she began to worry about rumours to the effect that Sri Ramakrishna had become insane. She found it difficult to believe what the gossips were saying. 'For,' in the words of Swami Gambhirananda, 'it was incredible that the Master could be mad,—he whose holy company had conferred on her immeasurable bliss only the other day, whose divine fervour infected her also to some extent and brought about an indescribable elation in her,...'¹ Nevertheless, she felt anxious. She feared that Sri Ramakrishna might be in some sort of trouble and need her. So she took advantage of an opportunity to go to Dakshineswar where she found him as sane as ever, only somewhat more given to exalted spiritual states.

Sarada now remained with Sri Ramakrishna almost constantly with some intervals when she visited the village homes at Jayrambati and Kamarpukur until his death in 1886, cooking all of his meals—no one

¹ *Holy Mother Shri Sarada Devi, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, First Edition, p. 40.*

could do this as satisfactorily as she—and caring for him in whatever other ways were needful. In order to serve him quickly and efficiently, she gave up the opportunity to live in relatively comfortable quarters and chose to remain in the Nahabat (Music tower), which, although it was close to Sri Ramakrishna's room, was almost too cramped and crowded to be habitable. But she did not complain, so great was her joy in serving Sri Ramakrishna and being near him. 'What a lot of difficulties I had to live in at the Nahabat for the service of the Master; and yet there was no consciousness of any inconvenience, the day passed off merrily without notice.' Because she was modest and shy, she would keep herself hidden when Sri Ramakrishna's devotees and disciples were talking about God in his room. But she watched them through a hole in the screen surrounding the Nahabat. 'In what bliss I was! What a curiously mixed crowd of people came to see him then! Dakshineswar used then to be a mart of joy.'

Sarada's association with Sri Ramakrishna so intensified her innate craving for purity and goodness that she would look up at the moon and pray, 'Make my heart as white as your rays;' or, watching the moon reflected in the Ganges, 'Even the moon has its spots—may my mind have no spot at all.' Nothing could have been farther from her innocent, God-centered mind than the desire to seek the consummation of her marriage to Sri Ramakrishna on the physical level. She did, however, experience their spiritual union on the occasion of the *Soḍaśī pūjā*² when he enshrined her and worshipped the Divine Mother in her form. Then both Sri Ramakrishna and she went into samadhi, realizing their oneness with

Brahman and their oneness with each other in Brahman. At the close of the ritual, Sri Ramakrishna offered the Divine Mother within Sarada everything he possessed, the fruit of all his spiritual practices, his rosary, and, finally, himself. Swami Ghana-nanda tells us that 'when she came to, she did not lose sense of her identity with the Divine but retained it throughout her life. Further, the worship symbolized her participation in Ramakrishna's life, in the fruits of his own austerities, and in his spiritual ministry. Henceforth her body and mind became the instruments of that Energy which is known as the Divine Mother and which played through the body and mind of Ramakrishna.'³

Sarada knew from the time of the *Soḍaśī pūjā* that her relationship with Sri Ramakrishna was one of the spirit, which survives death. Nevertheless, when he died, she grieved for the comforting physical sign of his presence. But before long, he began to appear to her in the visions which continued as long as she lived. He comforted her, encouraged her, and helped her to make the proper decisions in critical situations. When she was about to remove the bracelets which indicated that she was married, he appeared to tell her not to do so. Realizing that he was right, that they were still together in the only way that had ever really mattered, she courageously defied tradition and obeyed. In another vision he also comforted her, this time with the reminder that he had merely passed 'from one room into another'.

And, yet, Sarada was not completely satisfied. She wanted to feel Sri Ramakrishna's presence continually without any petty interruptions from everyday living. So she began to think about giving up the

² Worship of the Mother of the Universe in the form of a most beautiful woman in the prime of her youth, exquisitely attired and seated on a throne.

³ *Women Saints of East and West*, The Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre, London, First Edition, p. 101.

body, not by suicide, but by an act of free will which is possible only for illumined persons like herself. Since her spiritual experiences had destroyed what little interest she had had in ordinary worldly existence, the world without Sri Ramakrishna had little attraction for her. He had told her that her mission in life was to aid in bringing the blessing of his grace to others, but she was too modest to think that this could actually be the case. So it happened one full moon night that she was standing outside watching the Ganges shimmering in the beautiful silvery moonlight, when she saw Sri Ramakrishna come running from behind her. He ran past her into the river, 'and', in the words of Swami Gambhirananda, 'his body of pure spirit got dissolved in the holy waters of the river.'⁴ Then Swami Vivekananda came shouting, 'Glory unto Ramakrishna.' He joyfully sprinkled the water over millions of people, who were instantaneously freed from worldliness. Thus, Sri Ramakrishna impressed Sarada with the importance of passing his spiritual gifts on to others.

Sarada began her part in his work by assuming the role of mother to his young disciples. 'I love you,' she told them. 'You are my own boys.' She encouraged and guided these spiritual sons whom she looked upon as embodiments of the Lord Himself and who often came to her for advice whenever they were about to begin something new and untried. In 1893, when she was apprehensive about Swami Vivekananda's daring proposal to attend the World Congress of Religions in distant Chicago as an uninvited stranger, Sri Ramakrishna again appeared to her in a dream. She saw him walking on the ocean in the direction of America beckoning Swami Vivekananda to follow him. Thus reassured, she sent her beloved son to the United States with

her blessing and was not surprised to learn that he was by far the most successful speaker of the Congress.

Because of her innate modesty, Holy Mother was reticent, at first, about initiating people into spiritual life. It was difficult for her to think of herself as a spiritual teacher. But she loved humanity too much to refuse anyone whom she might help spiritually, and she had begun to realize that she was one of Sri Ramakrishna's instruments. 'The Master is sending these candidates,' she explained. 'It's the Master who graciously blesses them. I am only his instrument.' Like the great god Śiva, she assumed responsibility for ill-favoured persons who were rejected by society. Thus, she initiated everyone who asked for it, including extremely wicked persons whom Sri Ramakrishna's direct monastic disciples could not bring themselves to accept. She refused to find fault with anyone, for she saw the Lord's presence so vividly in even the worst human beings that their weaknesses faded into insignificance for her. She lovingly served all who came to her just as she had served Sri Ramakrishna, cooking for good and bad alike, inviting them to stay in her home, and doing what their mothers might have done to make them comfortable and happy. As a result, many people had the impression that she looked like their mothers whether she actually did or not. Some felt strangely convinced that she *was* the very mother who had given them birth. And others, who had been less fortunate in life, found in her the affectionate mother whom they had never had.

Holy Mother showered her grace upon everyone equally, whether they were Brāhmaṇas or untouchables, natives or foreigners. It pained her to hear anyone speak unkindly of the English, who, at that time were generally unpopular in India, for,

(Continued on Page 557)

⁴ *Holy Mother Shri Sarada Devi*, p. 174.

THE MIND AND ITS CONTROL—III

(Continued from the previous issue)

SWAMI BUDHANANDA

IMPORTANCE OF HARMONIOUS HUMAN RELATIONSHIP

In the Sermon on the Mount Christ says:

'... if thou bring thy gift to the altar and there remember that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother and then come and offer thy gift.'¹

This is a very important teaching of Christ. Our human relationships have much to do with our states of mind which are very important for building up a spiritual life.

Those who want to control their minds must not store up ill-feelings or grievances or other wrong impulses in the mind, which is to be used for higher purposes. Through doing one's duties to others, practice of detachment, forgiveness and humility we must keep our human relations straight.

Holy Mother says: 'Forgiveness is *tapasyā* (austerity).'

²

Here is a case history which will indicate how forgiveness helps in restoring the health of the mind. A healthy mind is much easier to control than an unhealthy or broken mind.

Years ago, writes Swami Yatiswarananda, Dr. Jung suggested that psychologists and clergymen should join hands in alleviating human suffering. *The American Magazine* of October 1947 published an article describing a remarkable clinic of this kind designed to mend broken souls and restore shattered faith:

'A thirty-four-year-old woman came to this clinic. She looked like a woman of

fifty and had for months suffered from insomnia, nervousness and chronic fatigue. She had consulted doctors, but to no avail. Religious at heart, she tried to pray but without success. She finally became so depressed that she wanted to commit suicide. The clinic psychiatrist discovered the real cause of her illness: a deep resentment towards her sister who had married the man she herself wanted to marry. Outwardly she was kind to her sister, but deep in her subconscious mind she cherished a terrible hatred which ruined her mental and physical health. Then a minister came to her aid. "You know it is evil to hate. You must ask God to help you to forgive your sister in your heart; then God will give you peace." She followed this advice. "Through prayer and faith in a power greater than herself she has been able to forgive her sister. Her depression and insomnia are gone. She is a new person and happier than ever before."³

HEALTHIEST OCCUPATION OF THE MIND NEEDED

The common saying 'idle brain is the devil's workshop' is very true. Therefore the mind must be given healthy and creative occupation. It should be fed with high thoughts and noble inspiration. Otherwise it will drift to low things and become scattered. In its scattered state the mind cannot be controlled.

If we can penetrate the core of the unsteadiness of our mind, there we will discover as its cause a thought, a wrong thought, or many wrong thoughts, one acting upon another. So, for steadying the

¹ Matthew 5 : 23-4.

² Sri Sarada Devi: *The Holy Mother*, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 1949, p. 457.

³ Vide : Swami Yatiswarananda: *Adventures in Religious life*, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 1959, pp. 159-60.

mind we need to guard our thoughts with maximum steadfastness.

There are these Buddhist teachings:

'As a fletcher makes straight his arrow, a wise man makes straight his trembling and unsteady thought, which is difficult to guard, difficult to hold back.

'Let the wise man guard his thoughts, for they are difficult to perceive, very artful and they rush wherever they listeth; thoughts well-guarded bring happiness.

'If a man's thoughts are not dissipated, if his mind is not perplexed, if it has ceased to think of good and evil, then there is no fear for him while he is watchful.'⁴

Right introspection will reveal that inadvertence is at the root of much of our mental turmoil. And inadvertence comes to us so naturally because we are not trained in cultivating our mind for higher inner occupations. Śrī Śaṅkarācārya teaches:

'One should never be careless in one's steadfastness to Brahman. Bhagavan Sanatkumara who is Brahma's son, has called inadvertence to be death itself.

'There is no greater danger for the Jnanin than carelessness about his own real nature. From this comes delusion, thence egoism, this is followed by bondage, and then comes misery.

'Finding even a wise man hankering after the sense-objects, oblivion torments him through the evil propensities of the Buddhi, as a woman does her dotting paramour.

'As sedge, even if removed, does not stay away for a moment, but covers the water again, so Maya or Nescience also covers even a wise man, if he is averse to meditation on the Self.

'If the mind ever so slightly strays from the Ideal and becomes outgoing, then it goes down and down, just as a play-ball inadvertently dropped on the staircase bounds down from one step to another.'⁵

Steadfast cultivation of the awareness of highest objective of life, which is the Supreme Spirit, is one of the potent methods of steadying the mind. In fact, when we practise this discipline we shall derive greater benefit from other practices.

IMPORTANCE OF RIGHT USE OF THE FACULTY OF IMAGINATION

Man is endowed with a unique faculty called imagination. A great deal of our mental troubles and our difficulties in controlling the mind arises from our habitual wrong uses of this great faculty. It is common practice with many of us to indulge in what is called emotional kite-flying, day-dreaming, wild, inconsequential, meaningless and purposeless speculation of various sorts. Our expectations may be imaginary, without any basis in fact, but they bring us real disappointments. Our fears may be baseless, but they cause genuine trepidations in our heart. Through exercising our power of imagination we make unreal things real for us. And we become victims of worries and concerns for which there is no factual basis. When this habit becomes a hardened one, it is extremely difficult to control the mind. Sometimes we may not even be aware of the fact that for a good part of our day we live in a dreamland, in a world of shadows and not in that of truth and facts.

Unless we get rid of this habit we shall find it extremely difficult to control the mind.

How do we do it?

The following story will give us an important clue:

A somewhat inebriated gentleman was slowly moving along the street, carrying in his hand a box with perforations on the lid and sides. It appeared he was carrying some live animal in the box. An acquaintance stopped him and asked, "What have you got in the box?"

⁴ Vide: *Dhammapada*, verses 33, 36, 39.

⁵ *Vivekacūdāmani*, Tr. by Swami Madhavananda, Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta 14, verses 321-25.

"It is a mongoose" replied the tipsy man.

"What on earth for?"

"Well you know how it is with me; I am not really drunk now, but soon I shall be. And when I am, I see snakes all around and I get awfully scared. That is what I have the mongoose for, to protect me from the snakes."

"Good heavens, those are all imaginary snakes!"

"This also, is an imaginary mongoose!"
The box was in fact empty.⁶

Similarly we require one imagination to counteract another. We require a right imagination to throw out wrong ones.

The purest of imagination is the thought of God. The more we cling to the thought of God, the less will be our trouble with the mind.

IMPORTANCE OF THE PRACTICE OF MEDITATION

Therefore in a strange manner of saying one may hold that meditation on God is the most effective way of controlling the mind. Meditation and control of the mind go hand in hand. Truly speaking the highest objective for which one controls the mind is meditation on God or Ātman as the case may be. However, meditation also helps control of the mind.

Mind must be riveted on something which is not only pure in itself but can also purify our mind through its power. Meditation on God is advised, because one imbibes the quality of the object on which one meditates. In meditation whenever the mind strays away one should indefatigably bring it back and place it on the object of meditation.

Swami Brahmananda, one of the great direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna says:

"Unless you meditate, the mind cannot be controlled, and unless the mind is controlled, you cannot meditate. But if you think, "First let me control the mind

and then I shall meditate," you will never enter the path of spiritual life. You must do both at the same time—steady your mind and meditate."⁷

So, when once a disciple asked Swami Brahmananda, "Maharaj, how can one control the mind?" the teacher, in answer, hardly saying anything exclusively about mind only instructed the disciple how to practise spiritual disciplines. He said:

"Through gradual practice the mind has to be concentrated upon God. Keep a sharp eye on the mind so that no undesirable thoughts or distractions may enter in. Whenever they try to crowd in your mind, turn it toward God and pray earnestly. Through such practice the mind comes under control and becomes purified."⁸

It should never be forgotten that the ultimate objective of controlling the mind is realization of God, or attainment of illumination.

GUARD AGAINST DESPONDENCY

These are the basic disciplines of the first set of inner checks which should be regularly practised by those who intend to control their minds.

While steadfastly practising these disciplines, the aspirant's motto should be: struggle, struggle and struggle, never give in.

We must not allow despondency to eat into our earnestness and energy. Despondency is the worst enemy of spiritual life. So it should be cast out whenever it presents itself.

When it is the worst of mental states and we feel as though we will never rise again to meet the demands of inner struggle, we are advised to pull ourselves back, at the back of the mind, and see the worst mental

⁷ Swami Prabhavananda: *The Eternal Companion: Spiritual Teachings of Swami Brahmananda*, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras 4, 1945, p. 229.

⁸ *Ibid.* p. 197.

⁶ *Vide*: Swami Yatiswarananda, *Op. Cit.* p. 263.

state as a picture painted by the senses on the mind, from which we *are* separate.

One should never identify oneself with any of the mental states, good or bad, for Ātman is not the mind.

In a low state one must drive out all negative thoughts by repeatedly declaring unto oneself one's own might:

'I am divine, identical with the Supreme Spirit. No misery can ever touch me; I am ever free, infinite and immortal.'⁹

Or one can repeat oneself with firmness of conviction:

'If God be for us who can be against us.'¹⁰

Thus the low state of mind will pass away.

HIGH-POWER EMERGENCY CONTROL DEVICES

It will be within the range of almost everyone's experience that even while earnestly practising the basic disciplines, we come in for headlong clash with powerful inimical forces, thoughts, urges, and tendencies, and emotions which tend to tear down all our good work in the mind.

To deal with this critical situation we have to develop some high-power emergency control. Like the fire fighters of the city our methods must be ready at hand during all day and night.

Patañjali, the teacher of Rāja Yoga, calls this method as *pratipakṣabhāvanam*, or thinking of contrary thoughts. In the relevant aphorism he says:

'When thoughts obstructive to control of the mind arise, contrary thoughts should be employed.'¹¹

For instance, you notice that a big wave of anger is just rising in your mind, which will not only upset your peace for long but

cause you great harm. What should you do at this juncture to neutralize this wave? You have to raise a contrary wave, the wave of love. If lust assails you, you have to raise the contrary wave of purity. This can be done by intensely thinking on the pure heart of a saint.

But contrary thoughts have to be raised at the very inception of inimical ones. There is a stage when your anger is just a bubble in your mind. And there is a stage when you are anger itself. Contrary thoughts should be raised when the first bubbles arise. Otherwise the method will not work. Contrary thoughts will be powerless before the menacing ferocity of the harmful ones.

From this we can understand what a close watch we have to keep on our thoughts and emotions.

It is possible we do not notice the first few bubbles and are aware of the situation when the waves are pretty well risen. What will you do in this situation? Find it possible to tear yourself away from the situation. Go to a lonely place for self-confrontation. There catch your mind by the throat as it were and say to it:

'Oh my mind, this will ruin you altogether. Don't you see that?'

Impress upon the mind the idea forcefully and the mind will behave. For the mind does not want self-destruction.

When a disciple once asked Swami Brahmananda:

'What should I do if a distracting thought persistently arises in my mind?' the teacher said:

'“This thought is immensely harmful to me. It will be my ruin”. Impress this idea again and again upon your mind. The mind will be freed from that distracting thought.

'The mind is susceptible to suggestions. It learns whatever you teach it. If through discrimination you can impress upon it the joy and fullness of life in the spirit and the folly of worldly attach-

⁹ Swami Virajananda: *Towards the Goal Supreme*, Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Almora, Himalayas, 1949, p. 23.

¹⁰ Epistles of St. Paul to Romans, VIII. 31.

¹¹ Vide: Yoga Sūtras: II. 33, 34.

ments, then your mind will devote itself more and more to God.'¹²

Nothing is more exhausting than wrestling with the mind. And the more we are exhausted the more turbulent the mind becomes. And ultimately we are swept away.

In such a situation frontal attack on the mind is not very helpful. What should we do then? We shall cease to identify ourselves with the mind. And a tremendous work will be done.

As long as we identify ourselves with the mind we cannot control our minds. The moment we succeed by a philosophic thought to separate ourselves from the mind, it is forced to stand on a void from where it cannot make troubles effectively.

But the most finished permanent work in this regard is done only when the ignorance of egoism is destroyed. Patañjali defines egoism as the identification of the seer or Ātman with the instruments of seeing, which are the senses, intellect and mind.¹³ All our sins and troubles are rooted in this egoism.

Therefore the effective way of controlling the rebellious and wayward state of the mind, is to dissociate oneself from the mind.

CONTROL OF THOUGHT: THE SECRET

These two sets of disciplines, when practised properly can take care of the conscious level of the mind. The special discipline for urgent operations will function smoothly only in case the general disciplines for basic control are taken proper care of.

The most fundamental thing in the general discipline is the *control of thought*. One who knows how to regulate his thinking will know how to control his mind.

How do we control our thoughts?

Thought control in the initial step does not mean there will be no thought in the

mind at all. A thoughtless state may be a very stupid state which we are not very particular to be in. In the initial stage thought control means developing the capacity to deliberately think good thoughts by desisting from thinking bad ones or wrong ones.

In one of his sermons, after preaching in some details the method of thought control Buddha summarized his own talk saying:

'Remember, bhikkhus, the only way to become victorious over wrong thoughts is to review from time to time the phases of one's mind, to reflect over them, to root out all that is evil and to cultivate all that is good.'¹⁴

To the believers in God, another method of controlling thought always remains open. They can earnestly pray for clarity of understanding and purity of thought. Sincere prayers are answered. They can also daily surrender the fruits of their thoughts and actions, good or bad, to the Lord. This practice cannot fail to help an aspirant to control the mind.

Repetition of *Gāyatrī mantra* is greatly helpful for controlling the mind. The meaning of the *mantra* is as follows:

'We meditate upon that adorable effulgence of the resplendent vivifier, Savitr; may He stimulate our intellect.'¹⁵

This in effect is a prayer for clarity of understanding, which grows out of the attained purity of mind. A purer mind, as said before, is easier to control.

According to Patañjali repetition of the sacred *mantra Om* helps the control of the mind in a fundamental way. He teaches:

'He (God) is indicated by the mystic syllable *Om*. The repetition of that *Om* and the contemplation of its import (God) are means of achieving concentra-

¹⁴ Vitakka-Sanatana-Sutta Vide : Sudhakar Dikshit : *Sermons and Sayings of the Buddha*, Chetana, Bombay.

¹⁵ Vide : *Rg-Veda*, III, 62. 10.

¹² Swami Prabhavananda : Op. Cit. pp. 135-6.

¹³ Vide : *Yoga Sūtras* II. 6.

tion. Thereby is gained inwardness of thought and freedom from obstacles to concentration.’¹⁶

Inwardness of thought and concentration are gained when the mind is controlled. Commenting on the second and third of these aphorisms of Patañjali, Swami Vivekananda writes:

‘Why should there be repetition? We have not forgotten the theory of *Samskaras*, that the sum total of impressions lives in the mind. They become more and more latent but remain there, and as soon as they get the right stimulus, they come out. Molecular vibration never ceases. When this universe is destroyed, all the massive vibrations disappear; the sun, moon, stars, and earth, melt down; but the vibrations remain in the atoms. Each atom performs the same function as the big worlds do. So even when the vibrations of the Chitta subside, its molecular vibrations go on, and when they get the impulse, come out again. We can now understand what is meant by repetition. It is the greatest stimulus that can be given to the spiritual *Samskaras*. “One moment of company with the holy makes a ship to cross this ocean of life.” Such is the power of association. So this repetition of Om, and thinking of its meaning, is keeping good company in your own mind. Study, and then meditate on what you have studied. Thus light will come to you, the Self will become manifest.

‘But one must think of Om, and of its meaning too. Avoid evil company, because the scars of old wounds are in you, and evil company is just the thing that is necessary to call them out. In the same way we are told that good company will call out the good impressions that are in us, but which have become latent. There is nothing holier in the world than to keep good company, because the good impressions will then tend to come to the surface.

‘The first manifestation of the repetition

and thinking of Om is that the introspective power will manifest more and more, all the mental and physical obstacles will begin to vanish.’¹⁷

CONTROL OF THE SUBCONSCIOUS MIND

We now turn to the control of the subconscious mind, as a natural extension of our work on the conscious level of the mind.

We all have experienced this strange phenomenon in our life. We know what is right, but we cannot act up to it. We know what is wrong but we cannot desist from doing it.

We make very good resolutions, but before we are aware of it, like the sand dyke before a tidal wave, they are washed away. We stand bewildered and frustrated.

An examination of this situation will show that we are making resolution with our own minds, with a part of it known as the conscious mind, and we ourselves are frustrating our resolution with another part of it, of which we know little. It is an unlighted dark region of the mind, generally called the subconscious or unconscious.

The moment we seriously try to control our minds we are beset with howling inner difficulties. The more we persist, for a time the greater may be our difficulties. In surprise we ask ourselves ‘What, am I getting worse day by day and that since taking religion seriously?’

We have not to be worried if the situation is like this. This is exactly what it should be with us.

What happens is this: In the event of deliberately trying to control our conscious mind, we come in clash with the opposing forces of our subconscious mind. These opposing forces are nothing but our stored up *pūrva-samskāras*, past impressions and tendencies. Whatever we think and do

¹⁷ *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Almora, Himalayas, Vol. I (1962) pp. 219-20.

¹⁶ Vide: Yoga Sūtras I. 27, 28, 29.

leaves a potent impression in our mind. These impressions pop up from the subconscious mind and seek expression and remanifestation. That causes the strife, in case they are opposite to what we have been thinking with the conscious mind.

The subconscious mind is like a cellar in the house. You don't know how much junk there is. You know it when one day you think you would clear it. As you begin to do it, you are not sure what kind of things and bugs you will encounter. Soon you are tired and leave the work unfinished. So the cellar is always a cellar, it is seldom a living room.

But unless we clear the cellar of the subconscious mind we can never be sure of controlling the conscious mind. Therefore we must find ways of clearing the subconscious mind, which is a dark region. How do you do it?

Suppose you want to cleanse an inkpot. How do you do that? You pour clean water in the pot. As the dry ink gets soaked darker and darker water comes out for some time. Gradually clear and thinner ink-water comes out. And at last you do not find a trace of ink. Clear water brings forth the clear water from within the pot.

One of the ways of clearing the subconscious mind is to pour holy thoughts in one's own mind and allow it to go deep down within oneself. Holy thoughts are like pure water. Only we must not get frightened when we find dark ink coming out from within ourselves at a particular stage. If we persist in pouring holy thoughts, a time will come that we shall find holier thoughts getting out from within. The subconscious mind can then be taken to have been cleared. Control of the conscious mind will not be difficult then.

We must not think that the subconscious is the storehouse of evil only. Factually the subconscious also stores up all our past good and noble thoughts and actions in

seed forms. So in the subconscious we do have stored up help and opposition to our efforts at controlling the mind. Our precise task will be to reduce the opposition and increase the help. Śrī Kṛṣṇa assured Arjuna in the *Gītā*¹⁸ that the yogi who strays away from the path does not come to eternal grief, for his good work is stored up and in the next birth he is united with the intelligence acquired in his former body. This union with the intelligence acquired in the previous body can be a powerful unknown factor in this life's attempts at controlling our mind. This union can well be a materialized fact of the unconscious or the subconscious. So, for controlling the mind important work needs to be done in the subconsciousness.

On the other hand, if we do not aim at the attainment of life's goal which is the experience of the superconscious state, we cannot really control our mind. It is only the experience of the superconscious state or vision of God that destroys all our attachment, aversions and delusions, which cause all the disturbances and disquiet of the mind.

Therefore, our attempts at controlling the mind, must have reference on the one hand to our subconscious mind and on the other to the superconscious. In other words our entire existence is involved in the operational process of controlling the mind.

Laying the required stress on the vastness of our undertaking in trying to control the mind, Swami Vivekananda points out why our study and efforts cannot remain confined only to the conscious plane. He says :

“The task before us is vast ; and first and foremost, we must seek to control the vast mass of sunken thoughts which have become automatic with us. The evil deed is no doubt on the conscious plane ; but the cause which produced the evil

deed was far beyond in the realms of the unconscious, unseen, and therefore more potent.’¹⁹

He therefore underscores the importance of controlling the unconscious for reasons irrefutable. He teaches :

‘Practical psychology directs first of all its energies in controlling the unconscious, and we know that we can do it. Why? Because we know the cause of the unconscious is the conscious; the unconscious thoughts are the submerged millions of our old conscious thoughts, old conscious actions become petrified—we do not look at them; do not know them, have forgotten them. But mind you, if the power of evil is in the unconscious, so also is the power of good. We have many things stored in us as in a pocket. We have forgotten them, do not even think of them, and there are many of them, rotting, becoming positively dangerous; they come forth, the unconscious causes which kill humanity. True psychology would, therefore, try to bring them under the control of the conscious. The great task is to revive the whole man, as it were, in order to make him the complete master of himself. Even what we call the automatic action of the organs within our bodies, such as the liver etc., can be made to obey our commands.’²⁰

But control of the unconscious does not accomplish the entire task on hand. There is more to it. So Swami Vivekananda teaches :

‘This is the first part of the study, the control of the unconscious. The next is to go beyond the conscious. Just as unconscious work is beneath consciousness, so there is another work which is above consciousness. When this superconscious state is reached, man becomes free and divine; death becomes immortality, weakness becomes infinite power, and iron bondage becomes

liberty. That is the goal, the infinite realm of the superconscious.’²¹

So, clenching his teachings on this subject he says :

‘So, therefore, we see now that there must be a twofold work. First, by the proper working of the *Iḍa* and the *Pin-gala*, which are the two existing ordinary currents, to control the subconscious action; and secondly, to go beyond even consciousness.

‘The books say that he alone is the *Yogi* who, after long practice in self-concentration has attained to this truth. The *Sushumna* now opens and a current which never before entered into this new passage will find its way into it, and gradually ascend to (what we call in figurative language) the different lotus centres till at last it reaches the brain. Then the *Yogi* becomes conscious of what he really is, God Himself.’²²

The reference here is to the awakening of *Kuṇḍalinī* through the *Raja yoga* method of *Prāṇāyāma*, which gives one perfect control on one’s mind. *Prāṇāyāma* however, as we have mentioned before, is to be learnt personally from an expert teacher, who is not easy to find. Those who are continent and earnest aspirants and who are fortunate to have one such teacher, may well learn from him and their task of controlling mind will be surely made easier. But the vast multitudes of human beings who struggle with their mind and want to control it may neither be living in a very congenial atmosphere for practising *prāṇāyāma*, for example in smog-filled modern cities, nor having the opportunities of learning the discipline from an expert teacher. Perforce, therefore, most of us, must depend upon other disciplines which can be as effective with faith and diligence.

Repetition of *Om* while meditating on its

¹⁹ Swami Vivekananda: Op. Cit. Vol. II, (1963) p. 34.

²⁰ Ibid. p. 35.

²¹ Ibid. p. 35.

²² Ibid. pp. 35-6.

meaning is the simplest and most efficacious of these practices.

When the Kuṇḍalinī, the latent power of spiritual potency is awakened in a person, the subconscious mind which is hard to handle is well taken care of by way of controlling. But, in fact, the Rājayoga method of awakening Kuṇḍalinī cannot be easily practised by the vast majority of people seeking to control their minds.

Fortunately, there are other disciplines through the practice of which one's spiritual consciousness can be awakened. About Patañjali's teaching on the efficacy of repetition of the mystic syllable *Om* while meditating on its meaning reference has already been made. Sri Ramakrishna teaches :

'One's spiritual consciousness is not awakened by merely reading of books. One should also pray to God. The Kundalini is roused if the aspirant feels restless for God.'²³

'... Kundalini is speedily awakened if one follows the path of bhakti.'²⁴

One day a disciple asked Swami Brahmananda 'Sir, how can the Kuṇḍalinī be roused?'

The Swami replied :

'According to some there are some exercises, but I believe it can be best done through repetition of the Divine Name and meditation. Specially suited to our age is the practice of Japam or constant repetition of God's name and meditation upon it. There is no spiritual practice easier than this. But meditation must accompany the repetition of the Mantra (or the mystic word).'²⁵

These teachings by implication present this helpful guidance for controlling the subconscious : that by the practice of spiritual disciplines of the path of bhakti, like prayer,

repetition of Divine Name and meditation, our spiritual potency is awakened. And this awakened power easily takes care of the difficulties of the subconscious mind.

So no one need be in despair thinking that because he is unable to practise Rāja yoga disciplines his way to controlling the subconscious mind is closed. No, it is not, for there is none so helpless in this world who cannot repeat even the Divine Name. If there is, his time for controlling the mind is not yet.

BEWARE OF A TRICK OF THE MIND

We may know that the mind sometimes plays a trick on itself, the subconscious mind on the conscious mind. When we are struggling with a temptation or weakness on the conscious level, suddenly the picture of a more difficult situation flashes before our mind's eye, and fear-stricken we wonder : 'What shall I do if I am beset with such difficulties!' And when we are worrying about our future, our present topples over. Being off our guard, we are swept by the present temptation.

How do we prevent this sabotage? We can do this by simply clarifying to ourselves the concept of time. As Meister Eckhart, the German mystic says : 'In the heart of this moment is eternity.'

We must clearly see this point that every moment is only *this moment*. If we have taken care of this moment, we have taken care of our entire future. If we do not submit to temptation, only for this moment, and always only for this one moment—we will not submit to it through all future.

Therefore whichever situation we may be in, let us stand firm in our resolution only this moment, and we will succeed. The future is nothing but Maya. It is foolishness to worry about the so-called future while allowing the devil to take the very foremost of the present.

The challenge of spiritual life is very

²³ M' : *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* : Tr. by Swami Nikhilananda, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 1964, p. 814.

²⁴ Ibid. p. 310.

²⁵ Swami Prabhavananda : Op. Cit. p. 149.

simple : to be good, truly moral and master of ourselves for only this moment.

Where is time outside this moment that we should worry about it ?

THE SIMPLEST AND THE SUREST METHOD OF CONTROLLING THE MIND

We have said a few things about the methods of controlling the mind. But one truth will bear repetition. And this truth comes to us in this form from Holy Mother's life and teachings:

Thus it is recorded in her life:

'The Mother was seated on her bedstead. The disciple was reading to her letters written by her devotees. The letters contained such statements as: "The mind cannot be controlled etc." The Holy Mother listened to these and said in rather an animated voice, "The mind will be steadied if one repeats the name of God fifteen or twenty thousand times a day. It is truly so. I myself have experienced it. Let them practise it first; if they fail, let them complain. One should practise Japam with some devotion, but this is not done. They will not do anything, they will only complain, saying 'Why do I not succeed?'"²⁶

²⁶ Sri Sarada Devi : *The Holy Mother*, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 1949, p. 489.

Any easier and more potent method of controlling the mind, than the one explained by Holy Mother is not known to man. It is an infallible method. But one must be simple in heart to be able to accept this as such. Let us accept the challenge of the Holy Mother and see whether or not her words come true in our lives.

But this warning should be given that for a beginner to repeat the name of the Lord twenty thousand times a day suddenly will not be advisable. One should begin modestly and through regular practice steadily increase the number under the guidance of the Guru. The most important thing is to begin doing something in the right direction from right now.

Earnest prayers to God every day at regular hours for good intents and a controlled mind will greatly help. Sincere prayers are answered, says Sri Ramakrishna.

There is no greater blessing of life than the controlled mind. Let us do our very best to acquire this greatest of blessings and every thing else will be added unto us.

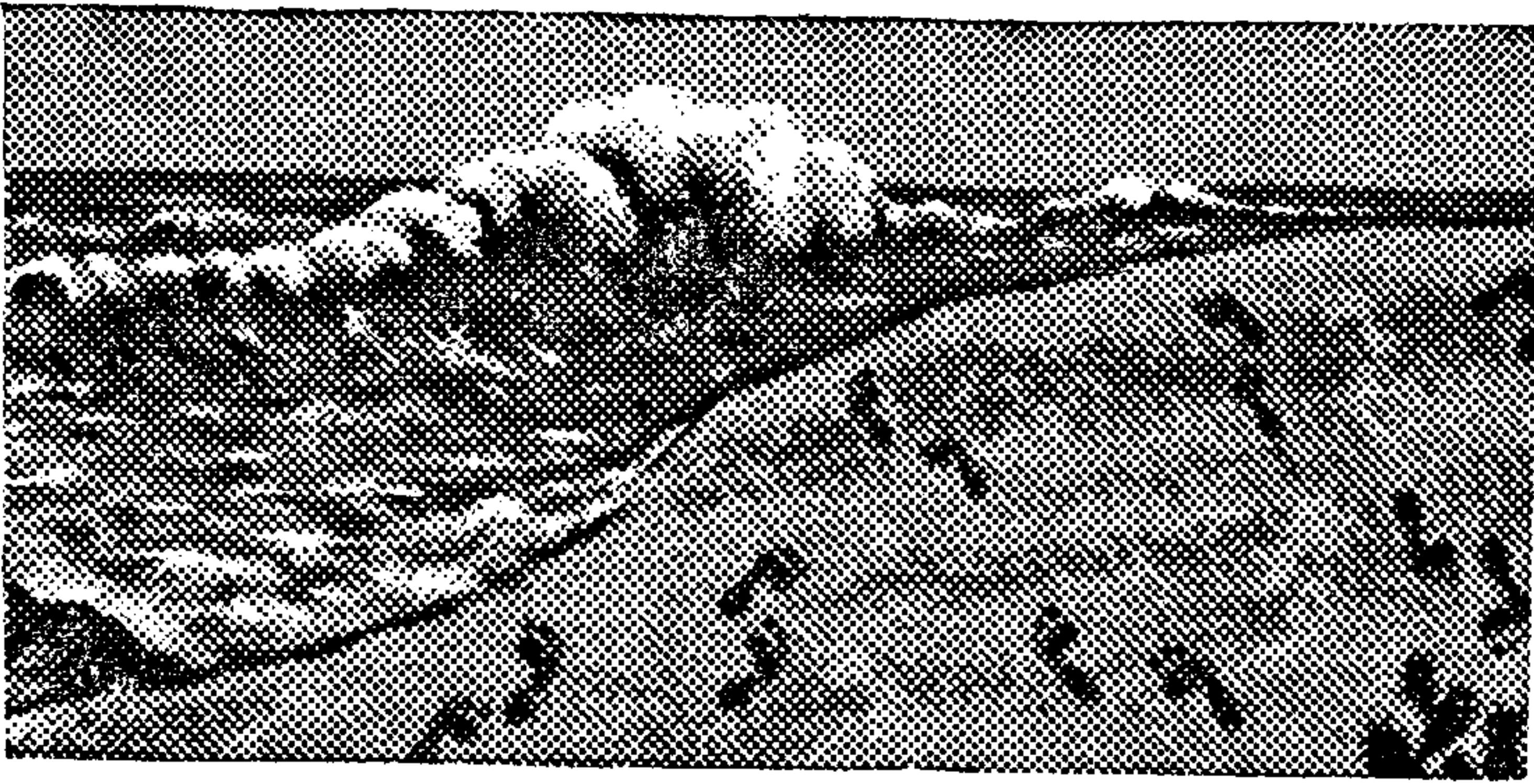
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as she explained, they, too, were her children. Although she had to defy tradition to do so, she accepted European-born Sister Nivedita as her own daughter. And she even asked the young brahmacāris to learn English so that some of them would be able to carry Sri Ramakrishna's message to her unknown children across the ocean.

Thus, because of her undying devotion to

Sri Ramakrishna and the vision of God he had given her, she herself exemplified the loving advice she gave a woman devotee shortly before she died : 'But one thing I tell you—if you want peace, my daughter, don't find fault with others, but find fault rather with yourself. Learn to make the world your own. Nobody is a stranger, my dear ; the world is yours.'



HUMAN TRENDS

(YOUTH AND THE DRUG SCENE)

Recently newspapers across the nation carried reports that two teen-age boys, cousins, belonging to one of America's most prominent families, both socially and politically, had been charged with possession of marijuana, use and possession of which are illegal in the United States. On seeing the captioned headlines of the article, one could not help reflecting on how widespread the drug problem has become. At one time it was chiefly confined to poverty-stricken ghettos, but this is no longer true. Now it cuts across social classes, across colour lines, and is no respecter of persons, rich or poor, educated or uneducated. Drug usage appears now as a problem in public and private schools, in the grade schools, high schools, and colleges. It is also cropping up in the business world, so much so that many large corporations have found it necessary to institute programs to deal with the problem of drug use and abuse on their premises, and there have been instances where individuals have lost their jobs because of using drugs. The military, too, finds drugs infiltrating the ranks and the competency of combat soldiers thereby impaired. Only a short time ago a report appeared in the daily papers that drugs were sold and used surreptitiously in one of this country's largest military hospitals. Sadly

enough, if this is true about one military hospital, it quite possibly is true of others. Understandably, with a war behind them and dreary, long days of recuperation ahead, soldiers might easily turn to drugs for the temporary relief from weariness and pain they bring. It is understandable, too, when individuals mired down in poverty and despair seek surcease from their unhappy lot in drugs. But why do wealthy teen-age boys and other advantaged young people with the adventure of life stretching out before them fall prey to the tempting, but only temporary, euphoria of drugs? This is a question that has no simple answer and is most difficult to cope with, but let us try.

There is no denying that we are living in an almost libertine society. Entertainment and literature of the times are predominantly sensual. There is much defiance of authority in all walks of life. Crimes, such as burglary and assault, are common and prevalent. An increasing awareness of this strikes home as more and more one observes stores and business houses, as well as private homes, resorting to having windows and entrances reinforced with heavy metal bars to discourage forced entry. There is also an increasing demand by small store owners and home owners for large dogs

that have been trained to guard premises. Even gas stations have watchdogs on duty round-the-clock to discourage robbery. And in the so-called better neighbourhoods people cannot now safely walk the streets either day or night. These conditions, especially in the large cities, are unhealthy and affect everyone, but there are two unpleasant present-day matters which primarily affect young people, namely, this country's involvement in a war that has long been unpopular and abuse of the environment which threatens extinction of all life on planet earth if not halted and reversed.

Most of the youth of the world are idealistic and, hence, advocates of peace. Perhaps their yearning for peace is due in no small measure to the fact that all their lives war has been too much with them and because they have lived always with the threat of atomic warfare hanging over them. This current war, in which young men must serve, is strongly disliked. For many years, lives of young men are disrupted because of the war and, of course, the lives of young women are also affected and disrupted. This state of affairs, understandably, produces much unrest. Add to this growing predictions by eminent scientists the the world over that the earth is being destroyed by pollution and abuse of the environment, and there is little wonder that young people are disturbed and unhappy. Certainly they have a right to feelings of anxiety and disquietude, for it is their world, the one they should inherit, that is being destroyed and it is their future that is imperilled. Overpopulation comes in for a share of the blame for harm to the earth because of its excessive drain on natural resources and is considered by many to be the greatest problem facing the entire world at this time. Thoughtful young men and women as a logical consequence question their right to add to this problem by having

children, long considered the birthright of marriage.

A prime manifestation of dissatisfaction generated by all the aforementioned matters has been the countless protest demonstrations, both peaceful and violent and, quite conceivably, indulgence in drugs by certain segments of the youthful population is also a protest and a means of expressing dislike for what is happening all around them. The drug most frequently used by the young people is marijuana, probably because it is easy to obtain and least expensive. Strong arguments are put forth, not only by young users, but by medical men and by members of the legal profession, that marijuana is not as harmful or as addicting as alcohol and its use should be made legal. In fact, it is anticipated that a new drug bill, soft on marijuana users but hard on pushers, will clear Congress in the United States this fall. This new law is an important one, signalling a subtle shift in attitude toward the youth subcultures and, it is hoped, will save occasional marijuana or 'pot' (to use the colloquial term) smokers from a criminal record. It expresses the Attorney General's changed approach to drugs, an approach designed to isolate the criminals who traffic in drugs for profit and to help fight drug abuse nationwide. In line with this approach, the two boys referred to previously were placed on probation for a year and, barring no further skirmish with the law, will be spared a criminal record.

Whether or not marijuana is harmless and non-addicting is something about which a lay person cannot intelligently argue pro or con, inasmuch as those knowledgeable on the subject cannot agree on this point. What strikes one as sad, however, is that youth anywhere in this world should find it necessary to resort to drug usage, either as an escape or as a means of relieving the tensions and frustrations of living. It is a readily admitted fact by many users of

hard drugs, such as heroin and cocaine, that they started innocently enough with marijuana after which they were introduced to the hard drugs. Parents and elders may not like to admit the fact, but common knowledge is that most of the young people at some time or other succumb to smoking 'pot' as a lark or because they do not wish to be labelled 'different' by their peers. Fortunately for most of them, experience with drugs begins and ends here. Unfortunately for others, however, experimenting with marijuana is the beginning of a downhill course that too often ends in tragedy of one sort or another. But even if the danger of addiction to hard drugs could be entirely eliminated, a Berkeley psychiatrist who has worked with hundreds of marijuana users for five or six years concludes that its continual usage impairs the thinking process—that marijuana users just can't think straight.

The problems that beset the world today are varied and complex and if they are to be rectified, clear thinkers are needed to do it. If youth does not wish to lose its idealism and really wants to work intelligently toward diminishing and solving today's pressing problems, it will not seek the temporary feeling of well-being or the feeling of spurious freedom induced by drugs, and it will not risk impairing the mind, the very instrument so vitally needed to combat and correct the ills of this age.

America is a young country and in its short span of existence its history has had some glorious pages. There is no denying

that today's page is not a glorious one. Lack of leadership and vision added to aforementioned conditions, all tend to disenchant and disillusion the brightest and most idealist youngsters, making it easy for them to succumb to the temptations of the times of which, of course, a prime one is drug usage. A Kṛṣṇa of the modern times is needed to urge them, as Śrī Kṛṣṇa did Arjuna on the battle-field of Kurukṣetra, not to 'yield to unmanliness' and not to become 'faint-hearted' at the task before them, the momentous one of bringing about a new era which will write a glorious new page in America's history. Self-discipline is the necessary first step in this direction for it is only through self-discipline that an atmosphere of personal responsibility and moral living can be created. It is only in an atmosphere of moral living that right thinking and right actions can prevail. Only then can wrongs be righted and a new golden era be ushered in, a golden era which will produce leaders of high morality and spiritual greatness. Surely this is a rewarding and wonderful goal for which to strive and, indeed, they fail and they alone, who have not striven.

Let us hope that when historians write of this fantastic age, they may say, with Dickens: 'It was the best of times, it was the worst of times; everything was over and yet everything was just beginning.'

Anna Nylund

NOTES AND COMMENTS

IN THIS NUMBER

The questions and answers are from : 'M.', *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* : Tr. by Swami Nikhilananda, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras 4, 1964. References : Questions 1 and 2 p. 23 ; 3. pp. 5-7.

In this year designated as International Education Year by the General Assembly of the United Nations, the editorial outlines Swami Vivekananda's concept of education to help us meet the present crisis in education.

'Swami Vivekananda's Gift to India and the World' is the text of a radio talk given by Srimat Swami Vireswarananda, President, Ramakrishna Math and Mission, on 1 September 1970. It is edifying in that it brings into focus the core of the profound philosophy of Swami Vivekananda. At the present time when Swamiji's sublime personality is, oftener than not, misconceived and his pronouncements are made to yield meanings beside the mark, Swami

Vireswarananda's enlightening exposition is welcome as a clear and concise elucidation of the light of truth enshrined in Swamiji's message to India and the world.

It is reproduced with the kind permission of All India Radio, Madras.

Dr. Leta Jane Lewis of Foreign Language Department, Fresno State College, Fresno, California, U.S.A., records 'What Inspires me most in Holy Mother's Life'.

Swami Budhananda concludes the serial 'The Mind and Its Control'.

In 'Human Trends', Anna Nylund poses a question: Why does the youth—even the wealthy one—fall a prey to the drug today? Whatever the answer—youthful temptation or protest against what is happening all around—indulgence in drugs impairs the mind and weakens the system. On the other hand what is needed of the youth is strength if they are to combat the complex ills of society. 'Self-discipline is the necessary first step in this direction,' avers the author.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

CROSSCUTS THROUGH HISTORY BY DAGOBERT D. RUNES, The Wisdom Library, A Division Philosophical Library, 15 East 40th St., New York, N. Y. 10016, pp. 118, price \$ 2.75.

The author, as the publisher's blurb rightly says, turns the search-light to the dark corners of history we seldom hear about in our class rooms and which we would perhaps often like to forget. Of the truths and lessons history has to teach us those contained in *Crosscuts through History* 'are most important for the understanding of the issues of today.'

History in the last analysis is the story of the common man—of his joys and sorrows, his hopes and fears, his achievements and failures. But it

has been unfortunately treated so far as the chronicle of the deeds and misdeeds of the high and mighty, of kings and courtiers, of their grandeur and glamour. It emphasizes the frolic and froth above and ignores the sobs beneath. It is blind to 'man's inhumanity to man', which 'makes countless thousands mourn.'

Crosscuts through History seeks to bring before its readers the true face of history. It points out that the few plan wars 'by yelping for peace' and drive the masses into a frenzy with hate—appeals against the supposed enemies. No matter who win, the people always lose. It further points out, 'The glory of the old aristocracy was just the other side of the misery of the people and all the perfumes

of the court and castles, the mansions and manors, cannot drive away the stench of poverty and disease that permeated the peasants' and workers' living quarters.' (p. 43) The author shows with success how the many suffered while the few masqueraded as gods and demi-gods on the stage of history. 50,000,000 Negroes died at the hands of the slave-traders in the pay of white monarchs and potentates. Whole civilizations—the Inca, the Aztec and the Maya civilizations—were obliterated by the agents of the gold-hungry kings of Spain and Portugal. The edifice of human civilization, in other words, was reared on the skeletons of the dumb, unknown and unnamed millions. There is thus a contradiction in all civilizations. A perusal of the volume under review will be of help in understanding this contradiction.

SRI SUDHANSU BIMAL MOOKHERJI

RELIGION IN PRACTICE BY SWAMI PRABHAVANANDA, published by George Allen and Unwin Ltd., Park Lane, Hemel Hempstead, Herts, London, pp. 260, price 40 s.

The lectures which Swami Prabhavananda delivered at the temples of the Vedanta Society of Southern California and which were later published in *Vedanta and the West* have now been published under the title *Religion in Practice* by George Allen and Unwin Ltd. Though these lectures were delivered over a period of more than a decade, they focus upon one central theme, viz. realization of God, and so the book as a whole has a unity of outlook. The chapters have been so arranged that the central theme unfolds itself step by step in all its various aspects till at last the reader is made to realize that the essence of religion consists in God-realization which is the goal of life, and that activity and outward achievements are only means to the end.

The book consists of five parts. After stating the problem in part I, Swami Prabhavananda explains the nature of the goal to be attained in part II. Part III is concerned with the different spiritual disciplines which will help one to reach the goal. The next part gives an account of the teachings of Buddha, Christ, Vivekananda, and Sri Ramakrishna, the exemplars of the eternal religion, who made their advent 'to deliver the holy, to destroy the sin of the sinner, and to establish righteousness'. Part V is in the form of questions and answers relating to religion.

Swami Prabhavananda points out that Vedānta which preaches a universal message is as much intended for the West as it is for the East. 'Vedānta', says the Swamiji, 'is not a particular religion, but a religion which includes the basic truth of all religions. It teaches that man's real nature is divine; that it is the aim of man's life on earth to unfold and manifest the hidden Godhead within him; and that truth is universal.' It is a mistake to think that Vedānta is opposed to the spirit of rationalism and the philosophy of humanism.

Swami Prabhavananda sums up the teaching of religion in three propositions: (1) God is; (2) God can be realized; and (3) God-realization is the supreme goal of human existence. What is the means to God-realization? The Vedānta formulates a three-stage method comprising hearing, reasoning, and meditation as well as a certain spiritual discipline necessary for the purification of the mind (*citta-suddhi*). As long as there is ignorance (*avidyā*) which conceals the real and projects the false, spiritual practices are necessary; there is the need for teacher, teachings, and the practice of spiritual disciplines. 'To say, while still in the state of ignorance, that such aids are unnecessary is ignorance indeed.'

This book of Swami Prabhavananda will be an invaluable guide to any one interested in the problems of religion, both in its theoretical and practical sides.

DR. R. BALASUBRAMANIAN

THE POSTURE OF CONTEMPLATION BY FREDERICK C. LYMAN, JR. Publishers: Philosophical Library, 15 East 40th St., New York, N.Y. 10016, pp. 123. Price: Dollars: 3.95.

The author of this readable book approaches the subject of meditation from the physical end. The right habits of diet and sleep, bodily movements that promote calm and lightness in the system and incline it towards the deeper pursuits of life, are dwelt upon in a methodical manner. Exercises of relaxation, postures that put the body and mind in a receptive mood curing them of their habitual restlessness, are described in detail. Breathing exercises, fasting under certain rules, concentration exercises moving from the gross to the less gross and thence to the subtler objects form other useful topics. Dangers of drugs which weaken the will and lay one at the disposal of any foreign invaders

from the vital or mental world are underlined.

A book that is specially suitable to the modern mind.

SRI M. P. PANDIT

(1) ŚRĪ ŚANKARA VIJAYAM with Appendices I-III, pp. 56, Price Rs. 1-50; (2) STHITA-PRAJNA, BY SRI R. N. AGARWAL, illustrated, pp. 18, Price, 0-50 P., both published by Messrs. Ganesh & Co., (Madras), Private Ltd., Madras-17.

Though the first booklet has the usual elegant get-up of the publishers yet the numerous printer's devils are simply bristling. It has, however, a good portrait of Śrī Śaṅkara on its jacket. The booklet deals with the life, miracles and the final spiritual achievement of Śrī Śaṅkara together with his mythic origin, and also those of his first disciples Padmapāda, Sureśwarācārya, Hastāmalaka together with those of his own Gurus, Gouḍapāda and Govinda Bhagavadpādācāryās. But no justifiable reason or convincing material is furnished for shifting Śrī Śaṅkara's Parakāyā-praveśam from its natural and usual place—the eve of his final vanquishing Mandanamiśra—to his installation as the Ādi-guru of Śrī Kāmakoti Pīṭham (Ch. X). Besides, the reference to Śrī Śaṅkara's flourishing during the early times of the Chola King Rājasena of Kanci (pp. 31-32) may cut the ground from under the booklet's feet in its finding that Śrī Śaṅkara was born about 509 B.C. as per the Paramparā of the Gurus of The Kāmakoti Pīṭham. According to Sringeri and Badari Paramparās his birth is in 36 B.C. while according to Jagannath Mutt and Dvāraka Mutt it is in 516 and 541 B.C.s, not to say the least about Prof. Sri Athavale's finding (Kurukshetra: P.B.) the date comes in between about second century B.C. and second century A.D. According to Pañcāṅga it is 72 B.C. while according to the pseudo modern pandits depending on the Western research it is in between eighth and ninth centuries A.D. Even if 509 B.C. is finalized according to the India-minded savants the divergence between 509, 516, 541 B.C.s will have to be satisfactorily explained. The chronology of Chola Rājasena is still under a cloud, and the earliest Chola period is put between 850 and 1100 A.D. The date of the early Chola Rājasena will have to be fixed; if done, and if it falls between the pre and the post-Christian eras, it will certainly support Śrī Śaṅkara's existence in the pre-Christian period.

Kāmakoti Pīṭham having been the place of the final exit of Śrī Śaṅkara from the world; but with regard to the reason why and how Śrī Sureśwarācārya could not be the pontiff of the Kanci Mutt, the ground he had been a saṁsārin earlier is lame and halting and against the general conception of Sannyāsa (Muṇḍakopaniṣad), and for what we could understand of Śrī Śaṅkara's catholicism. All the Śaṅkarmutts are the recipients of Candramowlīśwara Liṅga and have attorned to Bhārati, to adore Her besides. Thus the story of Bhārati presiding over the pontiffs of the Kanci Mutt alone cannot be of any peculiar significance. Among the Śaṅkar Mutt Swamijis there are people with the suffix of Saraswati too. We are credibly informed that the Saraswatis are usually Deyyopāsikas worshipping Śrī Cakra besides Candramowlīśwara and Bhārati. If this holds good with the Kanci Mutt how could Sringeri pontiffs be also Bhāratis?

The appendices are significant. Going through the list of *Śaṅkaravijayams* of Kerala, Chidvilasa and of Mādhava (not Vidyāraṇya), and of Ānandagiri, and of Śiva Rahasya Purāṇa of Vijayanagar times, together with Vyāsa-Śuka-Bādarāyaṇa paramparās (Athavale's Kurukshetra), paramparās of Badari, Dvāraka, Sringeri, Jagannath and Kanci, and the sculptures adverted to in pp. xvi of Appendix II, it is felt that there is sufficient material for further and more dispassionate authoritative research into the date and the spiritual achievement of Śrī Ādi Śaṅkarācārya. Even as it is there is an overwhelming evidence for holding that he belonged more to the pre-Christian era than to the period between eighth and ninth centuries A.D.

The second tiny booklet containing English translation of verses 54-72 ch. 2, of Bhagavadgītā focusses our attention on the fundamentals of the holy text, and elucidates in clear and concise terms who 'Sthita-prajña' (the spiritually self-poised one) is. He is one who is steady like the flame in a windless place, and is perfectly contented in his own self having realised it as none other than the Universal: ('Ātmanyevātmanātustaḥ'). To such a one everything else is transcient and non-blissful. If proper understanding of these verses is made one could boldly declare that the rest of the Bhagavadgītā is but an elucidative commentary thereon, all verging towards Advaita, and illustrating the Mahāvākya, I am Brahman.

Sufficient case has been made out for Śrī Kanci

P. SAMA RAO

THE ESSENTIALS OF PSYCHOLOGY BY DR. R. N. VYAS, Lakshmi Narain Agarwal, Agra 3, pp. 131, 1966, Price Rs. 5/-.

The study of psychology is spreading rapidly in our universities and colleges, and even professional and technical institutes are prescribing this discipline as a part of their regular courses. Besides, the intelligent lay reader is also taking interest in this science. Naturally books on psychology to meet the needs of the different grades and levels of readers are pouring into the market. Of these, books on General Psychology are numerous. The volume under review belongs to this class. The author keeps well within the guide-lines set by the traditional psychologists of the older generation. The usual topics on the cognitive, conative and affective aspects of man's nature are covered by the author. A special feature of the book is a brief chapter on Indian psychology. The book is brief, readable and easily intelligible to the lay reader. It deserves a perusal by all those interested in psychology.

PROF. P. S. NAIDU

RAMANUJA ON THE BHAGAVATGĪTĀ: J. A. V. VAN BUITENEN. Motilal Banarasidass, Delhi, 1968. Pages 187. Price Rs. 20/-.

ŚRIMAT BHAGAVATGĪTĀ: English rendering by Mrs. Bani Basu and Mrs. Kajal Sen Gupta from the original Bengali of Srimat Yatindra Ramanujacharyya, Sree Balaram Dharmasopan, Khardah, (West Bengal).

The first book is a reprint of the original edition printed abroad. It has an elaborate introduction of 41 pages; it is followed by a condensed rendering of Rāmānuja's *Gītābhāṣya*. The author in his introduction, says that Yāmuna was the first to introduce the conception of Bhakti into Vedānta. Prior to him Nāthamuni introduced Bhakti into Vedānta. There is reason to believe that even before Nathamuni Vṛttikāra Bodhāyana, Vākyakāra Tanka Brahmānandin and Bhāṣyakāra Drāmidāchāryya did the same thing. The principle of *Aikārthya* is common to all the commentators. In it an attempt is made to explain as consistently as

possible the different parts which make up the whole in the light of the context. If the context is ignored any meaning can be given based on etymology or semantic development of a word. This may appear to modern scholarship that a commentator forces his explanation and overstresses a point.

However, the author agrees with the general trend of Ramanuja's interpretation as he believes that the commentator does full justice to the intentions of the author of the *Gītā*. The condensed rendering of the *Gītābhāṣya* is adequate though one may feel a full verbatim translation does justice to Ramanuja's *Gītābhāṣya*. Undoubtedly this work constitutes a major contribution to *Gītā* literature in English. The publishers should be thanked for issuing an Indian edition of the book.

The author of the second book has done pioneering work in translating Śrivaishṇava literature in Bengali. In this book he follows the lines as laid down by Śri Yamuna, Śri Ramanuja and Śri Varavara Muni in the interpretation of the *Bhagavadgītā*. At the beginning of each chapter, a brief summary has been given of the main subjects taught therein. This is followed by the syntax of the verses with their English renderings. Then comes the general meaning of a verse. Where necessary, the author clearly brings out the inner meaning of a passage in the light of the tradition of Viśiṣṭādvaita.

The rendering is faithful to the *Gītābhāṣya* of Rāmānuja though some discrepancies are seen; for instance in the substance of Chapter XI, verse 44, it is given as follows 'Forgive me ... as the lover forgives his beloved.' It should be: 'You, the lover, bear with me, your beloved.' According to Sri Ramanuja, this is not a simile like the first two are. Sri Ramanuja has given two interpretations on the verse 66 (Chapter XVIII); the first meaning is clear and not the other; it requires some explanation. Similarly the substance of verse 43 (Chapter III) is not clear. It should be 'Steadying the mind by your will'. These remarks will not detract the value of the work. It is a valuable contribution to the *Gita* literature. The translators have done their job satisfactorily.

SWAMI ADIDEVANANDA

NEWS AND REPORTS

THE GENERAL REPORT OF THE RAMAKRISHNA MATH AND MISSION

FOR APRIL 1968—MARCH 1969

(With some later information)

(We are presenting here a brief summary of the latest report of the 'Ramakrishna Math and Mission' which will give our readers some information about the activities of these twin organizations. The report was issued by the General Secretary in August 1970 from the Headquarters at Belur Math P.O., District Howrah, West Bengal, India.—Ed.)

The Ramakrishna Math and The Ramakrishna Mission

Though the Ramakrishna Mission and the Ramakrishna Math, with their respective branches, are distinct legal entities, they are closely related, inasmuch as the Governing Body of the Mission is made up of the Trustees of the Math; the principal workers of the Mission are mostly members of the Ramakrishna Math; and both have their Headquarters at the Belur Math. This distinction should be borne in mind though the name 'Ramakrishna Mission' is loosely associated by people with Math activities also. It is necessary moreover to point out that the appropriation of the name of Sri Ramakrishna or Swami Vivekananda by any institution does not necessarily imply that it is controlled by the central organisation at Belur.

The Math and the Mission own separate funds and keep separate audited accounts of them. The Math fund consists of subscriptions and donations from friends and devotees and is sometimes supplemented by the sale proceeds of publications, while fees from students, etc. as well as subscriptions and donations from the general public constitute the Mission fund, grants from the Government and public bodies often being common to both. Both the Math and the Mission funds are annually audited by qualified auditors.

Summary of Activities

The year 1968-69 was a period of stress and strain like the previous one. Although beset with financial and administrative problems arising out of economic and political instabilities in certain States of India, greater emphasis was paid during the period to relief and rehabilitation work as well as activities in rural and tribal areas. Thus a youth training centre, meant mostly for Adivasis, was started at the Ranchi Ashrama and nine major relief operations were conducted in different parts of India. Besides, two new centres, one in Gauhati

and the other in Raipur, were affiliated to the Mission during the year.

The new constructions during 1968-69 comprised the Swami Vivekananda Centenary Memorial Block at the Kankhal Sevashrama, a shrine and a prayer hall at the Salem centre, a guest house at the Ranchi T.B. Sanatorium, an operation theatre block at the Varanasi Home of Service, a Botany block of the Vivekananda College in Madras, a science block of the Thyagarayanagar North Branch School in Madras, library building, monks' quarters and extension of a dining hall at the Deoghar Vidya-pith and a new recreation-cum-dining hall at the Mission centre in Puri.

Under the Math section, the Ramakrishna Math, Madras, had a new extension of its dispensary building and the Kalady Ashrama had a new kitchen and dining hall for its Students' Home.

As in the previous year, our connection with the East Pakistan centres was very tenuous. The five monastic workers of Pakistan nationality and local friends and devotees somehow continued the usual activities, though on a reduced scale.

Ramakrishna Mission Society, Rangoon, our only surviving centre in Burma, was managed as before by some local friends, constituted into a Managing Committee by the Headquarters.

Centres

Excluding the Headquarters at Belur, there were in March, 1969, 114 branch centres in all, of which 52 were Mission centres, 21 combined Math and Mission centres, and 41 Math centres. These were regionally distributed as follows: 2 Mission centres, 5 combined Math and Mission centres and 3 Math centres in East Pakistan; 1 Mission centre each in Burma, France, Ceylon, Singapore, Fiji and Mauritius; 1 Math centre each in Switzerland, England and Argentina; 10 Math centres in the United States of America; and the remaining 44 Mission centres, 16 combined Math and Mission centres and 25 Math centres (85 in all) in India. The Indian

centres were distributed as follows: 29 in West Bengal, 11 in Uttar Pradesh, 11 in Tamil Nadu, 7 in Bihar, 5 each in Kerala and Assam, 4 in Mysore, 3 in Orissa, 2 each in Maharashtra and Andhra, and one each in Gujarat, Rajasthan, Delhi, NEFA, Madhya Pradesh and Chandigarh. Moreover, attached to the branch centres there were over 23 sub-centres, where monastic workers resided more or less permanently.

Types of Work

Medical Service: Most of the Math and the Mission centres in India and Pakistan conducted various activities ministering to the physical needs of the public in general, irrespective of creed, colour or nationality. Typical of these are the indoor hospitals in Calcutta, Varanasi, Vrindaban, Kankhal, Trivandrum and Ranchi. In 1968-69 there were altogether 10 full-fledged Indoor Hospitals with 1,227 beds, which accommodated 29,638 patients and 68 Outdoor Dispensaries, which treated 32,25,493 cases, including old ones. Besides, the centres at Salem, Bombay, Kanpur, New Delhi, etc. had provision for emergency or observation indoor wards attached to their dispensaries. The Veterinary section of the Shyamala Tal Ashrama treated 683 cases. The Sanatorium at Ranchi treated T.B. cases alone and a large section of the Seva Pratishthan of Calcutta was devoted to maternity and child welfare work.

Educational Work: The twin organisations ran during the period 4 Degree Colleges at Madras, Rahara (24 Parganas), Belur (Howrah), and Narendrapur (24 Parganas)—the last two residential—with 3,445 students on their rolls. A Pre-university College at Perianaickenpalayam (Coimbatore) with 381 students, 2 B.T. Colleges at Belur and Perianaickenpalayam with 266 students, 2 Basic Training Schools at Perianaickenpalayam and Madras with 233 students, one Post-Graduate Basic Training College at Rahara with 98 students, 4 Junior Basic Training Colleges at Rahara, Sarisha and Sargachhi with 342 students, a College for Physical Education, another for Rural Higher Education, and a School of Agriculture with 105, 243 and 137 students respectively at Perianaickenpalayam, one Agricultural Training Centre at Narendrapur with 92 trainees, 4 Engineering Schools at Belur, Belgharia, Madras and Perianaickenpalayam with 1,362 students, 14 Junior Technical or Industrial Schools with 856 boys and 488 girls, 90 Students' Homes or Hostels, including some Orphanages, with 8,414 boys and 592 girls, 3 Chatushpathis with 35 students, 14 Multi-purpose Higher Secondary

Schools with 5,728 boys and 448 girls, 8 Higher Secondary Schools with 3,600 boys and 1,788 girls, 16 High and Secondary Schools with 7,430 boys and 4,318 girls, 36 Senior Basic and M.E. Schools with 4,865 boys and 4,824 girls, 46 Junior Basic, U.P., and Elementary Schools with 7,235 boys and 2,136 girls and 131 L.P. and other grades of Schools with 6,032 boys and 3,565 girls. The Seva Pratishthan, Calcutta, and the Math Hospital at Trivandrum trained nurses and midwives, the number of trainees being 221. Thus there were altogether 50,757 boys and 18,522 girls in the educational institutions run by the Math and the Mission in India, Pakistan, Singapore, Fiji and Mauritius. Besides these, the Institute of Culture in Calcutta conducted a Day Hostel for 800 students, a School of Humanistic and Cultural Studies and a School of Languages for teaching different Indian and foreign languages with 42 and 1,296 students respectively. The Ashrama at Narendrapur conducted a Blind Boys' Academy with 95 blind students, and the centres in Raipur and Ranchi (Morabadi) ran a 'Panchyati Raj Training Centre' and a Social Service Training Centre ('Divyayan') respectively.

Recreational activities: Some of the Math and the Mission centres have been providing scope for recreational, cultural, and spiritual activities to young boys at stated periods outside their school hours. The 'Balaka-sangha' of the Bangalore Ashrama has a fine building of its own. At the Mysore Ashrama also a considerable number of boys take advantage of the various kinds of facility provided for them, and the 'Vivekananda Yuva Samiti' of the Belgharia Ashrama is engaged in similar activities.

Work for Women: The organisation has ever been conscious of its duties to the women of India. Typical of the work done for them are the Maternity Sections of the Seva Pratishthan, Calcutta, and the Hospital at Trivandrum, the Domiciliary and Maternity Clinics at Jalpaiguri and Khetri, the women's sections of the hospitals at Varanasi and Vrindaban, the attached Invalid Women's Home at Varanasi, the Sarada Vidyalaya at Madras, the Girls' High Schools at Jamshedpur, the Sarada Mandir at Sarisha (24 Parganas) and two training schools for nurses in Trivandrum and Calcutta. Besides, there are special arrangements for women in other hospitals, dispensaries and schools, and some institutions are conducted especially for them. The Madras Math also conducts a High School and a Primary School for girls.

Rural Uplift and Work among the Labouring and

Backward Classes: The Math and the Mission have all along tried their best to serve those unfortunate countrymen who have fallen back culturally or otherwise. In addition to the more prominent village Ashramas like those at Cherrapunji, Sarisha, Ramharipur, Manasadwip, Jayrambati, Kamarpukur, Sargachhi, Along (N.E.F.A.), Perianaickenpalayam, Kalady and Trichur, quite a number of rural sub-centres—both permanent and semipermanent—are run under the branch centres at Belur, Sarisha, Tiruvalla, Kankurgachhi (Calcutta), Malda, Narendrapur and Cherrapunji. Of these special mention may be made of the numerous village sub-centres started for educating the hill tribes in Assam and a youth training centre in Ranchi meant for local Adivasis. Our educational and cultural activities in the NEFA region are also proving very useful and popular. During the period under review, in the rural and backward areas the organisation ran 7 Multipurpose Higher Secondary Schools, 2 High Schools, 39 Senior Basic, M.E. & U.P. Schools, 37 Primary Schools, 61 Night Schools for adults, 8 Vocational Training Centres—with a total of 11,040 students. The organisation also conducted 13 Outdoor Dispensaries and 2 Mobile Dispensaries (serving more than 30 villages) with a total of 1,67,765 patients treated during 1968-69 besides running 139 Milk-distribution Centres all located in the rural and backward areas. In addition to such numerous activities, preaching and educative tours with magic lanterns, movie-films and such other means are also undertaken frequently. For the labouring classes in industrial areas the Mission conducted a number of night schools, etc.

Mass Contact: From the foregoing account it will be evident that the organisation's activity is not concentrated in urban areas alone; it is spread over other fields as well. It will be wrong, again, to suppose that the organisation has no real contact with the masses. As a matter of fact, the message of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda is spreading steadily in all parts of India, which fact is evident from the participation of innumerable people during the annual celebrations. The temples and Ashramas also draw thousands of people throughout the year. Besides these there are a number of medical institutions where millions get free medicines, and thousands are treated in the indoor departments. In the educational institutions also, a considerable number of poor students get free education, board or lodging. The organisation is also running a good number of free libraries in the rural areas. The

publication centres, sometimes sell booklets at nominal prices to suit the pockets of the masses.

Relief and Rehabilitation Work: The Mission was engaged in continuous and extensive relief and rehabilitation activities throughout the year serving nearly one lakh distressed families affected by various calamities in the States of Gujarat, Maharashtra, Orissa, West Bengal and Assam. In all Rs. 27,98,117.64 p. was spent including the value of gifts. Throughout 1968-69 nine major and two minor relief operations were conducted as recorded below.

(i) *Orissa Cyclone Relief* started in 1967, continued till the middle of May, 1968. Rs. 16,165.65 p. was spent during 1968-69 apart from 4,425 kg. of milk powder distributed (appx. value Rs. 22,125/-).

(ii) *Orissa Drought Relief* was conducted in the district of Dhenkanol during the period from 23rd May, '68 to 13th September, '68 at a total cash expenditure of Rs. 1,00,453.47 P. 2,703 families of 186 villages were benefited.

(iii) *Hooghly Flood Relief Work* started in the Arambagh sub-division of Hooghly district on 18th July, '68, was continued upto 2nd September, '68. 2,000 quintals of rice worth Rs. 2,55,400/- was distributed amongst 9,298 families apart from cash expenditure of Rs. 5,773.76 p.

(iv) *Midnapore Flood Relief* was conducted in the four thanas—Sabang, Bhagawanpur Nandigram and Mayna—during the period from 14.8.68 to 31.12.68. Rs. 45,551.95 p. in cash was spent apart from food-grains and other commodities worth Rs. 14,09,179.67 p. distributed amongst 14,191 families in 177 villages.

(v) *Cloth Relief* was conducted in the districts of Bankura and Midnapore from May, '68 to September, '68. New cloths and garments worth Rs. 12,500/- were distributed.

(vi) Relief in the form of *repair of school buildings* was conducted in the district of Midnapore during 13th May, '68 to 30th January, '69 at an expenditure of Rs. 11,510.20 p. In all 7 school buildings were repaired.

(vii) *Assam Scarcity & Flood Relief*, conducted from May, '68 to September, '68 in Barama and Hailakandi towns of Kamrup and Cachar districts respectively, involved a total expenditure of Rs. 23,348.20 p.

(viii) *North Bengal Flood Relief*, which was started on 13th October, '68, in the Jalpaiguri district, continued in the next year. During the year under report Rs. 1,41,903.25 p. in cash was spent apart from the distribution of food-grains,

text books, agricultural implements, etc. worth Rs. 2,71,240.60 p.

(ix) *Maharashtra Earthquake Relief* at Koyna, in the district of Satara, was conducted from 13th January, '68 to 12th July, '68. In all 41,482 families were benefited by this relief. Food-grains, blankets, clothings and many other articles of necessity including drugs were distributed.

(x) *Gujarat Flood Relief*: The Mission started relief and rehabilitation work in Surat district in August, '68. A scheme of Rs. 20,00,000/- was taken on hand for the construction of 1,460 pre-fabricated cement concrete hutments to accommodate 1,460 families. 75 such houses were completed during 1968-69 while 80 houses were nearing completion.

(xi) Besides the above, a minor flood relief work was conducted in the low-lying areas of Beliaghata and Topsis localities of Calcutta from 14th to 21st July, '68, when cooked food was served to 2,201 persons daily.

In all the above relief operations the Mission distributed amongst other things food-grains 28,605 quintals, biscuits 1,745 kg., milk powder 205 quintals, colths and garments (new) 30,318 pcs., blankets 8,833 pcs., aluminium utensils 11,514 pcs., agricultural implements (spades) 2,000 nos., 1,419 pieces of C.I. Sheets for roofing purpose, school text books 6,133, students' note books 13,890, lanterns 230 and multivitamin tablets 2,25,090.

Spiritual and Cultural Work: Both the Math and the Mission centres laid emphasis on the dissemination of the spiritual and cultural ideals of India, and through various types of activity tried to give a practical shape to the teaching of Sri Ramakrishna that all religions are true. The

centres established real points of contact between people of different faiths through public celebrations, meetings, classes, publications, etc. They also conducted Libraries and Reading Rooms. A number of Sanskrit Chatuspathis too were run. At least ten centres published books on religious subjects and ten magazines in different languages. The Math centres at Mayavati, Baghbazar (Calcutta), Madras, Nagpur, Mysore, Rajkot, Bhubaneswar and Trichur in particular, have to their credit a considerable number of useful publications. Special mention should also be made of the Institute of Culture in Calcutta, which has been trying to bring together eminent men and women of India and other lands in cultural fellowship.

Annual Celebrations: Most of the Math and the Mission centres ceremonially observe the days sanctified by the advent of great saints and prophets. The general features of the celebrations of the birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother and Swami Vivekananda are: Special worship, Homa (making offerings in the sacred fire), chanting of scriptural texts, Bhajan and Sankirtan (devotional music, often in chorus), distribution of Prasad (sacramental food) to the devotees, feeding of the poor in large numbers, and lectures on the lives and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother and Swami Vivekananda by eminent speakers, including Swamis of the Order. Thus the message of Sri Ramakrishna and his associates is steadily spreading and many young and ardent souls are coming into closer touch with the ideals of the Math and the Mission. In cooperation with the local public some centres celebrate the more popular Hindu festivals, accounts for these being maintained separately.

OUR THANKS AND APPEAL

We express our deep sense of gratitude to all those kind contributors, friends and sympathisers, who by their ready assistance, financial or other, have helped us to carry on our different activities. Our thanks are also due to the editors of various newspapers for kindly publishing our appeals and reports, and also to the gentry, official or non-official, in the relief areas for their timely help. We also express our gratefulness to those local physicians, engineers, lawyers and other gentlemen who kindly volunteered their services to the different centres.

We hope the generous public all over India and abroad will continue to help the Math and the Mission unstintedly, to enable us to respond to the cry of distress, from whichever quarter it may come. All well-wishers of India and friends of the afflicted may find here a golden opportunity to earn the eternal blessings of the Lord by trying to alleviate the sufferings of their less fortunate sisters and brothers.

Our appeal is also to intelligent, high-minded youngmen, who understand and appreciate the life-giving message of Swami Vivekananda, to respond to his clarion call by dedicating themselves to the service of their fellow beings, who are grovelling in ignorance and misery.