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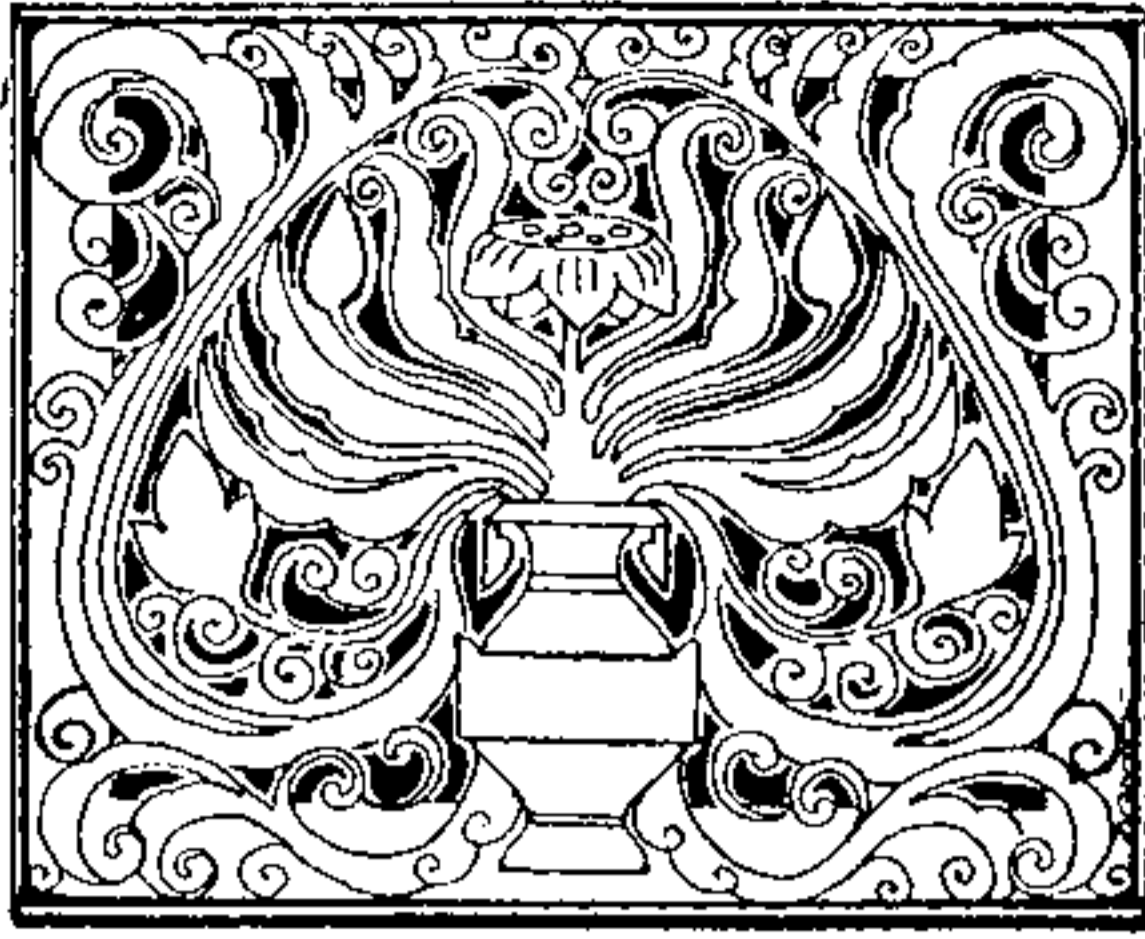
Prabuddha Bharata

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VOL. LXXV

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No. 3

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

THE UNIVERSAL CALL OF RELIGIONS

The Ātman is never born, nor does It die. It is not that, not having been, It again comes into being. This is unborn, eternal, changeless, ever-Itself. It is not killed when the body is killed.

Bhagavad-Gītā 2.20

Ceremonial is the invention of man.
Our original purity is given to us from God.

Kwang Tze 31

By nature, men are nearly alike.
By practice, they get to be wide apart.

Analects 17.2

All that we are is the result of what we have thought.
It is founded on our thoughts.
It is made up of our thoughts.

Dhammapada 1

He hath made everything beautiful in its time.
Also He hath set eternity in their heart.

Ecclesiastes 3.11

God formed him and fashioned him,
and made him twain, male and female.

Koran 75.38,39

ONWARD FOR EVER!

To go and say, 'Lord, take care of this thing and give me that ; Lord, I give you my little prayer and you give me this thing of daily necessity ; Lord, cure my headache, and all that'—these are not Bhakti. They are the lowest states of religion. They are the lowest form of Karma. If a man uses all his mental energy in seeking to satisfy his body and its wants, show me the difference between him and an animal. Bhakti is a higher thing, higher than even desiring heaven. The idea of heaven is of a place of intensified enjoyment. How can that be God? Only the fools rush after sense-enjoyments. It is easy to live in the senses. It is easier to run in the old groove, eating and drinking ; but what these modern philosophers want to tell you is to take these comfortable ideas and put the stamp of religion on them. Such a doctrine is dangerous. Death lies in the senses. Life on the plane of the Spirit is the only life, life on any other plane is mere death ; the whole of this life can be only described as a gymnasium. We must go beyond it to enjoy real life.


SRI RAMAKRISHNA
THE HELPER IN YOGA

To the ocean we may go and bring a cup of water. While we know that we have not brought the ocean in the cup, we are sure we have brought brine in it. Of this there can be no doubt that we have brought genuine salt water which not only smacks truly of the ocean, but is really a part of the ocean, however small a part that may be.

But how are we going to be sure that when we are going to write on a God-man, we have brought a cupful from his divine being and not a cupful from our imaginings about that entity ?

And yet if we are able to do that rightly, we will have done a great spiritual work. For the Lord says in the *Gītā* :

'He who thus knows, in the true light, My divine birth and action, leaving the body, is not born again ; he attains to Me O Arjuna.'¹

What is needed, therefore, is to know the Lord in the true light. Now how to get this true light for knowing the Lord ?

For true light for understanding a God-man we must turn to the apostles. For understanding Sri Ramakrishna true light comes to us from the Holy Mother and his direct disciples. Barring Holy Mother, Swami Vivekananda is our greatest helper in understanding Sri Ramakrishna. The whole life of the Swami is an exposition of the life of Sri Ramakrishna.

In a hymn to his Master, Vivekananda has given us many flashes of true light for understanding Sri Ramakrishna. Here we shall briefly try to understand a particle of Sri Ramakrishna through one flash of the true light.

In this hymn Sri Ramakrishna is adored as '*Yogasahāya*', helper in yoga. We shall

¹ *Gītā* IV. 9.

deliberate here on *Yogasahāya* Sri Ramakrishna.

At this distance of time, no one, who is open to fact and reason, need be in doubt as to the nature of the phenomenon we are facing in Sri Ramakrishna. If we believe that Sri Ramakrishna was a truthful person, then we must take his own words about himself as literally true. Either accept everything he said—that is on authentic record—as true, or reject everything as false. If we accept Sri Ramakrishna's words about himself, if we accept Holy Mother's and Swami Vivekananda's words about their Master—the simple truth is that he is Lord incarnate on earth. If we do not take proper and full cognizance of this fact, by mere intellectualizing we shall never understand Sri Ramakrishna in true light. Let us therefore keep this fact at the back of our head and this will enlighten our understanding.

He who is Jagadīśwara, the Lord of the universe, is also the *yogeśwara*, the Lord of yoga. It is the Lord who provides the missing link, or in electrical terms, connection with the main, for enlightening the soul. By rubbing darkness against darkness you can make greater darkness but you cannot make light. Light has to come from the regions of light.

This the Lord has always done. Sri Krishna says in the *Gītā* :

'I told this imperishable yoga to Vivaswat. Vivaswat told it to Manu and Manu told it to Ikṣvāku.

'Thus handed down in regular succession the royal sages knew it. This yoga, by long lapse of time, declined in this world, O burner of foes. 'I have this day told thee that same ancient yoga, for thou art My devotee and My friend, and this secret is profound indeed.'²

The *Yogeśwara*, the Lord of yoga, incarnates himself as the teacher of man, in different cycles of time. This time as

Ramakrishna he not only taught yoga by practising it but also taught it to Vivekananda and others who taught it to the world. He did many more things as *yogasahāya*, the helper in yoga.

This time the Lord's main mission in the world seems to have been to clarify and simplify yoga. He defines yoga merely as uniting the mind with God.

He came to provide the link of union with God to those who stood sundered in awareness from the source of their being. Strange, almost everyone is forgetful about his most intimate relationship, which is with God.

It is through God that we know anything but God we know not. It is through Him that we love the beloved but God we love not.

What Sri Ramakrishna did in the assembly of people, while talking, traveling in a cab, walking on the road, in passing a joke, through smiles and tears, through sudden lightning touch of his personal being, or through instantaneous entry into stillness of samadhi—was to reveal God in the heart of everything and open every heart to God.

This was not achieved by any planned doing. His every action and movement flowed from the state of yoga. And so Sri Ramakrishna's most powerful teachings about God were not given through words. These were imparted by being in God, being God, and through those states of being in which he was utterly forgetful of the world, of his own psycho-physical existence and of the watching people around. These came to be communicated due to an overflowing inner fullness when he could not utter one word about God. His profound silence while in samadhi was his most eloquent preaching of God.

If you were in that presence, you watched him in wonder, you did not notice anyone else, he was so arresting and interest-

² *Gītā* IV. 1-3.

ing, so pleasing and inspiring, so beautiful and elevating; and so you looked on. You could not remove your eyes—now look here, what were you doing then? Well, were you not then practising concentration on living God sitting before you?

In this tremendous manner he is the helper in yoga—even today, and he will be so for all tomorrows to come. Is it a small thing to have a photo of Sri Ramakrishna? The manifest all-powerful God has this one incapacity: he cannot take back from the devotee the form he has once released from the inner chamber of the timeless to the outer shores of time.

Hence Ramakrishna sparkles in millions of hearts of devotees all over the world. How many wonderful devotees can we not see if we go round the world!

In the *Yogasutra* of Patañjalī we read about *cittavṛtti nirodha*, controlling the modifications of the mind. We know how difficult it is to achieve this. But when we read the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* we find how spontaneously it comes about.

Sri Ramakrishna had not to argue with the non-believer, blast the agnostic, or smash the atheist, to prove that God is. He simply said: I saw, I see. On rare occasions he also said to a fortunate few: I am: and, further, said he: you can see. And if you disbelieved too much, argued foolishly, you received his sudden lightning touch and you just saw. It was that simple. And when you saw what could you do but believe?

We read in *The Life of Swami Vivekananda* how one day Sri Ramakrishna tried to bring home to Narendranath the identity of the individual soul with Brahman without success. Unconvinced, the disciple went out of the room and remarked to another person that this doctrine about everything's being God was simply preposterous. And there arose laughter. Hearing this Sri Ramakrishna came out of his room in a semi-conscious state. 'Hallo, what

are you talking about?' he said smiling. He then touched Naren and plunged into Samadhi. The effect of this touch is better described by Naren himself:

'The magic touch of the Master that day immediately brought a wonderful change over my mind. I was stupefied to find that really there was nothing in the universe but God! ... Then it struck me that the words of the scriptures were not false. Thenceforth I could not deny the conclusions of the Advaita philosophy.'³

Sometimes it was even simpler. Not even a touch was needed. A look, a wish was enough to set your kuṇḍalinī rushing up through your spine, creating upheavals in your consciousness.

Swami Shivananda, a brother disciple of Vivekananda, thus described his own experience:

'I often felt inclined to cry in the presence of the Master. One night I wept profusely in front of the Kali Temple. The Master was anxious at my absence and when I went to him he said, "God favours those who weep for Him. Tears thus shed wash away the sins of former births." Another day I was meditating at the Panchavati when the Master came near. No sooner had he cast his glance at me than I burst into tears. He stood still without uttering a word. A sort of creeping sensation passed through me and I began to tremble all over. The Master congratulated me on attaining this state and said that it was the outcome of divine emotion. He then took me to his room and gave me something to eat. He could rouse the latent spiritual powers of a devotee at a glance.'⁴

There were those who got stuck in pious platitudes, sanctimonious sentimentality or shallow religiosity. To them he imparted the blazing inspiration for absolute dedication to divine life. Those who skimmed on the surface and got involved in shams and shoals he tearfully entreated, in the

³ Vide: His Eastern and Western Disciples: *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta, 1960. pp. 65-66.

⁴ Vide: *The Disciples of Sri Ramakrishna*, Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta, 1955, p. 121.

words of a well-known song : Dive deep, dive deep, O mind. There were those who had strayed away from the path, or got fettered in the invisible chains of non-progress. He lifted them on to the path unawares and cut unseen the chains which are not seen. Those who did not know that there was gold buried in their backyard, to them he quietly passed on the intimation couching it in inspiring words which were irresistible. If some worshipped their psychic powers in place of God, all on a sudden he snatched their powers away so that in destitution they might again cry a real cry for God. Those who had lost true humility of spirit, and thought that they decided the spiritual destiny of others—they he gave a hard blow out of infinite compassion, which suddenly opened their inner eye. In those who counted eighteen months in a year and thought of moving towards God at leisure, he inculcated the whole-hogger's intense passion for God. By his electrifying enthusiasm, he infused positive hunger for God in those whose lukewarmness made them as spineless as jellyfish.

He went about seeking people who had prayed and cried earnestly for God, and yet did not have the response which filled their hearts. Indeed he brought to their lives immeasurable solace in himself coming—he, the Lord in human form—to wipe away their sorrows.

You might not have been a seeker, but a vile sinner. How then could he be a helper in yoga for you? Who could not help those who were ready to be helped—the pure hearted, longing for God? But as the *yogasahāya*, the helper in yoga, he could help those who were in all possible ways *viyukta*, separate from God, far removed from the path of yoga?

The greater the sinner, the more is the grace. Sri Ramakrishna did not utter one harsh word to the sinner for having com-

mitted sins. He simply wept. And their sins were washed away. Girish Ghosh who claimed to have committed so many sins as to even pollute seven cubits of earth where he stood, said in his afterlife: look at me for the miracle of Ramakrishna; what I had been and what I have become by simply thinking of him!

And how many of us can really claim so many sins to our credit as Girish? Then what ground have we for despair?

The challenge is here: let any one intensively think of Sri Ramakrishna and see what happens to him.

To preach God, Sri Ramakrishna did not frame suffocating rules for your soul. His joy was so great in communion with God as man, and with man as God, that you were simply tempted to grab that joy. He was never drab. If he hated anything in the world, it was monotony in spiritual life. Yoga, for him, was somehow or anyhow getting to God. So his was the as-many-views-so-many-paths multitone approach. He brought God home in so many varieties of ways that one way is sure to click for you.

He loved you more than you loved yourself. This was one of his most powerful secrets of being helper in yoga. Girish Ghosh said:

'I do not know what the scriptures say about God, but I believe that if Sri Ramakrishna was able to love me in the same way that I love myself, then he must be God. He loved me in this way.

'I never had a true friend; but he is one because he transformed my faults into virtues. In a way, I feel he loved me more than I loved myself.'⁵

Sri Ramakrishna loved everybody more than a person loved himself. If he had not done so he simply would have or could have said: 'Come only this way to God, or

⁵ Vide: *Minutes of the Ramakrishna Mission*: July 25, 1897, (14th meeting).

go to hell!’ He did not say so. He simply said, come, just come, come any way suitable to you. Only ‘you must feel love for Him and be attracted to Him. ... you must cultivate intense zeal for God.’⁶ So yoga has become such a delight of the soul in Sri Ramakrishna’s teaching and not a straining of nerves. Loving God is the thing. And who could love under duress? Love of God springs spontaneously when exposure to God takes place in a holy atmosphere. This is what Sri Ramakrishna provided to the world—an atmosphere where nothing was so real as God, and God was so real.

What will you do by merely torturing your nose or sitting straight like a piece of dry wood? Open your heart. Expand your consciousness. Be simple. Discard crookedness. Be straight and true. Be up and doing—single-minded. Go forward. Rise upward. Ask like the thunder and you will receive like the shower. Yoga has not to be a lumbago in your back. God is *ānanda*, joy unbounded. How then can you get Him there where there is no entry of joy?

Sri Ramakrishna laughed and joked, danced and mimicked—there was explosion, new rhythm, of joy infinite—and then suddenly he entered into samadhi.

Did we realize what was happening? All the time he kept our mind focussed on the Divine, who was himself. So painlessly he was the helper in yoga.

We might not have known that before us God was laughing, joking, dancing or mimicking. Notwithstanding our not-knowing, was it not truly so? And then out of his compassion he made it known too.

He not only provided the general atmosphere for spiritual awakening of souls, he also took special particular care of individuals so that ‘nobody’s spiritual attitude of

mind should be interfered with’,⁷ so that every one could grow on his own roots according to the law of his growth and reach self-fulfilment in the quickest possible time.

Today we need not cling to the not-knowing, *ajñāna*, as to who really Sri Ramakrishna was, especially after he had himself broken the pot in the market-place, about his own identity. We cannot really feel on our soul the full impact of Sri Ramakrishna the helper in yoga unless we take him simply as what he really is, the supreme Lord incarnate.

On the other hand through utter self-simplification he became man, and such a man as man himself wonders at, reveres as his own highest state of being—*Sat-cit-ānanda*, existence-knowledge-bliss. Through seeing Ramakrishna man has regained grounds for self-confidence, self-actualization. He had lost himself in the wilderness of bewilderment. Today he knows whither sparkles the pole-star in the darkness of the noon. So man is unafraid again; he is no longer terrified by his own ugliness and insignificance. He knows back home, and here and now, he is divine.

Sri Ramakrishna not only proved God to man, he equally forcefully proved man also to God: he demonstrated how man can storm the citadel of God, tear the veil of *Māyā* and verily become That. He showed that man can make God run about through his power of love—as he himself did quite a bit of running about pining for the devotees!

And what is infinitely more, he showed that God so much reveres man, loves man—that he becomes man.

Thus Sri Ramakrishna, as *yogasahāya*, helper in yoga, has brought yoga home both

⁶ Vide. ‘M’: *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 1957, p. 69.

⁷ Swami Saradananda: *Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master*, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras 4, 1956, p. 330.

ways: God to man and man to God. One does not know for whom he wept more: Kālī or Naren? As man, he wept for God; and as God, he wept for man. Yoga was thus brought home to man in this reinforced manner.

Teachings on yoga and demands of disciplines frighten so many. But how simply Sri Ramakrishna gives the essence in his teachings on the silk thread and the sacrificial lamp. He said to the devotees who believed God had form:

'At the time of meditation think that you have tied with a silk thread your mind to the lotus feet of God, so that your mind may not stray from there. Why do I say "silk thread"? Because those lotus feet are indeed very soft and delicate. They will be hurt if any other kind of thread is used.'⁸

He further said:

'Should one think of the Chosen Ideal at the time of meditation only and then forget Him at other times? You should always keep a part of your mind attached to Him. You must surely have noticed that a sacrificial light has to be lighted at the time of the worship of Durga. That light should always be kept burning near the Deity, it should not be allowed to go out. If it does, it augurs ill for the householder. Even so, after the Chosen Ideal is brought and seated on the lotus of the heart, the sacrificial lamp of meditation on Him should always be kept burning. While one is engaged in worldly duties, one should watch at intervals, whether or not the lamp within is burning.'⁹

⁸ Ibid. p. 374.

⁹ Ibid. p. 374.

We have not only in the form of words a stupendous amount of help in yoga from Sri Ramakrishna, but also the life and teachings of the Holy Mother, the works of Swami Vivekananda and his brother disciples. And all these are the instruments of the helper in yoga. But pervading everything and transcending everything we have Sri Ramakrishna himself. And what a Ramakrishna! Is there anyone in the world who has known him and not loved him? By being so simple, unadorned, open, guileless—in fine so lovable, Sri Ramakrishna has made yoga so homely an affair, for when one cannot do anything else, one can get everything by just intensely remembering him, thinking of him just as Girish Ghosh did. He who will think of him will surely get his treasures, just as the son inherits the patrimony. His treasures are discrimination, devotion, knowledge and yoga.

And who would not like to remember this lovable Ramakrishna? How aptly Girish Ghosh says:

'It is not difficult to adore, love and worship Sri Ramakrishna; what is difficult is to forget him.'¹⁰

Sri Ramakrishna, the helper in yoga, has made yoga that spontaneous and inevitable in the life of an aspirant.

¹⁰ *Minutes of the Ramakrishna Mission*: August 15, 1897 (17th meeting).

LETTERS OF A SAINT

THE LORD MY REFUGE

Kankhal
31.1.1913

Dear Sri—,

I have received your card dated the 24th instant. ... I am sorry to learn that you are not in a very happy situation.

How do you think of coming away to Kasi Sevashrama ? You were not feeling so much inconvenience and restlessness there. People over there did surely take care of you and also love you. It seems to me that you have fallen into this plight due to seeking more pleasure and convenience. One has to depend on the Lord. Of course it is good to seek holy company, but at Kasi you had no dearth of holy company. Do what you think is good for you ; what else shall I say ? It is a difficult work to consecrate one's life in the work of service. Those who are more concerned about their own pleasure and convenience, they cannot be fit for observing the religion of service.

With my good wishes and love,

SRI TURIYANANDA

P. S. To help serve the sick and the afflicted is a very efficacious work. If one is able to do this work in the right spirit, one's mind becomes purified as a result of which the heart is also uplifted and broadened.

T

MOTHERHOOD OF GOD AS REVEALED BY SRI RAMAKRISHNA—I

SWAMI TAPASYANANDA

MOTHER CONCEPT AND SAGUNA BRAHMAN (PERSONALIZED ABSOLUTE) OF THE VEDANTA

Although the idea of the Motherhood of God is today a speciality of Hindu religion, it had wide prevalence in the ancient world. The religions of Egypt, Babylon, Assyria, Greece and other ancient centres of civilization had their Mother Deities and systems of worship connected with them. But these ancient religions were swept away by the two faiths of Semitic origin, Christianity and Islam. The masculine predilection of Semitic thought would not tolerate any feminine element in the Deity. For Islam, it is completely abhorrent, while in Christianity, which absorbed much of Greco-Roman religious heritage, it survives in a fugitive form as reverence for the Virgin Mother of Christ. Consequently like many other institutions of the ancient world, India is the only land where Motherhood of God has received continued recognition and flourished as a cult with a background of high philosophy and rich devotional tradition.

Indian culture is a composite one. The texture of this wonderful civilization has been formed by the mingling of the ideas and heritages of various peoples that have poured their blood and thought into this melting pot of human races. The culture of Mohenjo Daro had Mother Deities. The ancient Dravidian people were votaries of Mother Goddess *par excellence*. In the Vedas we find mention of Aditi the Mother of the gods, of the Mother Deity Umā Haimavatī and of the woman Rsi Vāk who declared the glory of the Divine as Mother and identified herself with that Deity.

Every religion can be analysed, as Swami Vivekananda points out, into a composite pattern of thought and life consisting of three elements—a philosophy, a mythology, and a system of rituals inclusive of methods of worship and practices for attaining communion with the Divine. While philosophy deals with principles, mythology elucidates and illustrates those principles through symbolic accounts of Gods and god-men and through legendary history. The Āgamas and the Yogas give the rituals and disciplines for the training of the aspirant in Divine communion and help him realize the principles inculcated in philosophy. The Veda is the same for all Hindus, but the Purāṇas and the Āgamas differ for different cults according to the form in which the Deity is invoked, be it Viṣṇu, Śiva or the Divine Mother. The cults centering round the Divine Mother come under the common name of Śāktism.

The concept of Śakti is the central philosophical principle of this religious cult. To the Indian mind the Supreme Being is the Absolute—the Infinite and Indivisible Being. It is beyond thought and word. The categories of time, space and causation cannot comprehend It. While the transcendence of all limitations is thus a necessity of thought regarding the Absolute, the human mind also looks to It as the ultimate source of this inconceivably mighty universe of name and form. The Absolute will be tantamount to a non-entity, a fiction indistinguishable from a Void, if it is not conceived as endowed with the power of manifesting this universe of inexhaustible might and mystery. This Power, inherent in the Absolute, of manifesting names and forms is the Personal God (Saguṇa

Brahman, literally, God with attributes). Without the Personal God, the Impersonal Absolute will be a Void, and without the Impersonal Absolute as the ultimate Ground, the Personal God will only be a limited being. Hence both these constitute the nature of the same Reality, which is best described as Personal-Impersonal.

In the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, the Divine Mother, who is described as the Power (Śakti) of the Absolute, is identified with the Personal God (Saguṇa Brahman) of the Vedānta, and is not a mere female counterpart of a male Deity, as conceived in many schools of Śakti cult. He says : ‘... Brahmaṇ and Śakti are identical. If you accept the one, you must accept the other. It is like fire and its power to burn. If you see the fire, you must recognize its power to burn also. You cannot think of fire without its power to burn, nor can you think of the power to burn without fire. You cannot conceive of the sun’s rays without the sun, nor can you conceive of the sun without its rays. ... You cannot think of the milk without the whiteness, and again, you cannot think of the whiteness without the milk. Thus one cannot think of Brahmaṇ without Śakti, or of Śakti without Brahmaṇ. One cannot think of the Absolute without the Relative, or of the Relative without the Absolute. The Primordial Power is ever at play. She is creating, preserving and destroying in play, as it were. This Power is called Kālī. Kālī is verily Brahmaṇ and Brahmaṇ is verily Kālī. It is one and the same Reality. When we think of It as inactive, that is to say, not engaged in the acts of creation, preservation, and destruction, then we call It Brahmaṇ. But when It engages in these activities, then we call It Kālī or Śakti.’¹

The conception of Śakti, as stated here,

¹‘M’: *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, Tr. by Swami Nikhilananda, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras 4, 1944, pp. 58-9.

is the same as of Saguṇa Brahman in the Vedānta. Saguṇa Brahman means, literally, God with attributes, in contrast to Nirguṇa Brahman, the technical name for the Absolute, meaning God without attributes. They are not two Gods or two parts of God, but form one and same Supreme Being as described in the passage quoted above from Sri Ramakrishna’s Gospel. Thought of in relation to the world as its cause, It is Saguṇa (‘with attributes’ or Personal); but when thought of as unrelated to the world, but as merely self-subsisting, the same Being is Nirguṇa, without attributes. It is also described as Impersonal Absolute which is all-inclusive but undivided and unlimited existence, consciousness and bliss.

India is a land of many cults. Each cult has got its own Deity—Śiva, Viṣṇu, Devī, etc. The cults are elaborated in the Purāṇas (spiritually oriented mythologies) and Āgamas (ritualistic scriptures) special to each cult. But all the cults are in a way unified by the acceptance of the Vedānta philosophy in some form or other. It is done by equating the Deity of the cult with the Saguṇa Brahman of the Vedānta. The Upaniṣadic texts like the Śvetāśvatara, which depict the Saguṇa Brahman, do so without any special cult significance and with the minimum of anthropomorphism. He has no particular location, no form, and no particular character, except that He is the seat of all power, knowledge and excellences. But when the Purāṇas and Āgamas amalgamated the Saguṇa Brahman with the cults that they represented, He assumed all the particularizations of the cult Deities without losing the spiritual implications of the Upaniṣadic characterization of Him as the all-pervading Being who is the source, the resting place and the end of all manifested phenomena. In the Śiva cult, He is equated with Śiva, in the Vaiṣṇava cult, with Viṣṇu, and in the Śakti cult, with Śakti. But in the course of this

equation, anthropomorphism, which is at its minimum in the Upaniṣadic Saguna Brahman, expressed itself in all its luxuriant abundance. Personality is the highest form of existence known to the human mind, and it is always associated with a form which is either of a man or a woman. He from whom all forms have come, can very well be assumed to have an archetypal form, and the forms of the Deity, represented in Hindu cults, are symbolic of it. Each cult, however, claimed its Deity with a particular form to be the very Saguna Brahman. Elaborate myths and devotional compositions on the doings and cosmic histories of the gods gave each of them a special characterization, personality, abode, associates, paraphernalia and so on, and presented the votary with a much more well-defined and concrete person than any historical figure of note and renown.

It is to be noted that in most of the cults the Father element is predominant, and Śiva and Viṣṇu are male, conceived as Lord and Father of the universe. But if God can be called father, it is equally legitimate to call Him mother too, and the cult of Śakti is noted for the fact that it conceives the Supreme as the Mother of all. It is from the earthly mother that the offspring comes out. So according to this school the concept of Motherhood is more appropriate to describe the Power of the Absolute, out of whom the world-offspring has come. It is Father too, but Mother predominantly, according to the devotional attitude inculcated by this school.

In the culture of devotion the attitude maintained by the devotee towards the Supreme is of very great importance. The Supreme Being is not only Power but a power that is beneficent to the votary. It is held that the Mother concept brings out this beneficence in the most prominent way, and as such offers a very potent means of spiritual progress. Mother signifies to the

child trust, protectiveness, sweetness, forbearance and wisdom. He feels the mother to be his very own and can even press his demands on her. One who invokes the Deity as Mother and looks upon himself as Her child directs all such sentiments towards Her and quickly attains loving devotion, the essence of which consists in experiencing a sense of Her 'being one's own' and consequent intimacy with regard to the Supreme.

SOME ABERRATIONS OF MOTHER CULT

Hence in the Mother cult, the Saguna Brahman, the personalized Absolute, is considered as the Mother of the universe. The conception has two implications—that She is infinite power, and also infinite love, being the Mother of all. In the course of the long history of the Śakti cult, there have been very wide variations in the emphasis laid on these two aspects. The Mother aspect has sometimes receded into the background in the eye of some schools of its votaries, and Śakti became a real Śakti, a source of power, for them. The consequence has been the development of schools of occultism with attainment of psychic powers as their goal.

In the Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali, psychic powers are mentioned as manifestations in the course of an aspirant's development and attainment of self-mastery. But every genuine spiritual aspirant is warned against them, as they are sure to side-track him from the real path. But these warnings have usually been forgotten by people, and the mass mind has usually taken the possession of psychic powers as the measure of one's spiritual greatness. In the course of the developments of Mother cult, the Tāntriks popularized the idea of psychic powers and supplemented the practices of the yogins with their own technics of repetition of Mantras or occult sound combinations which have the capacity to stimulate psychic powers.

The inevitable consequence of these developments was that large numbers of purely worldly-minded people, without any touch of renunciation or spiritual aspiration, happened to be drawn by this bait of psychic powers into the sphere of the practitioners of Mother cult. Between men seeking psychic powers and ill-gotten wealth, there is very little difference as far as their mental make-up and outlook are concerned. Only the latter's worldliness is plain and candid, while the occultist puts on a mask of supernaturalism and pseudo-divinity. The drafting of vast numbers of such worldlings into the ranks of the worshippers of Śakti resulted in practically smothering the devotional spirit underlying it and degraded it into a system of occult practices that bordered on black magic. The history of occultism in medieval India demonstrates the validity of Patañjali's warning that it is a great pitfall in spiritual life. Powers of bewitching people by spells, causing death of enemies, making the body light or invisible, travelling anywhere at will, getting all objects one desires—these and several such attractive attainments were what occultism offered to the votaries of Śakti. An atmosphere of fear, superstition, credulity and gross materialism was the final outcome of these developments.

Patañjali's warning against the snare of supernatural powers, woefully forgotten by medieval India, was again voiced forth by Sri Ramakrishna in the present age. It is said that in the course of his Tāntric Sādhanā, various psychic powers manifested in him, but he never allowed his mind to go after them. He found that for one who had the experience of the Divine Mother as the goal, psychic powers are offered as temptations to test one's adherence to the ideal. Unless one's spirit of renunciation is genuine and spiritual aspiration powerful, one is certain to succumb to them. Knowing that he had these Sid-

dhis (psychic powers), his nephew and care-taker Hriday began to persuade him incessantly to use them for worldly advantages. The Master, with his childlike devotion and faith, beseeched the Divine Mother to show him the right way in this difficult situation when a vision dawned on him in which he saw an ugly person relieving himself in the field. A divine voice proclaimed to him that these psychic powers are as despicable as that dirty refuse. Years after when Swami Vivekananda was undergoing spiritual disciplines under him, he offered to confer on him these psychic powers which he possessed but never used. The Swami thereupon asked him whether they would be helpful in realizing God. On being told that these had no place in spiritual realization but might be helpful to him in working among men, the Swami refused to have them.

Sri Ramakrishna's life and teachings have thus liberated the Mother cult from the dominance of the craze for psychic powers.

Another aberration in this school has arisen from the forgetfulness that the Supreme Being is the Mother and not merely the *female counterpart* of a male Deity. In both later Buddhism and Medieval Hinduism the cult of Śakti has taken the form of Tāntrikism which is noted for its sexo-mystical practices. These are based on the conception that Reality is a male-female Principle and that in the meditation leading to at-one-ment with that Principle, the physical and mental association with an opposite sex-counterpart is an essential requisite. The main distinction between Hindu and Buddhist Tāntrikism consists in the role given to the two elements in Reality. In the Hindu Tāntric conception of Śiva-Śakti, Śiva, the Male element, is the static and quiescent factor, and Śakti, the female element, the dynamic factor. Tāntric Buddhism, however, reverses this. The Female element, called Prajñā or Śūnyatā,

is conceived as the static principle, and this Male element, called Karuṇā or Upāya, becomes the dynamic principle. The sexo-mystical aberrations resulting from these conceptions known as Vāmācāra, have made Tāntrikism, both of the Hindu and Buddhist brands, a synonym for licentiousness. It is also probable that the development of such rituals was entirely due to the urge of natural impulses to find for themselves a cloak of sanctimonious respectability by invoking high sounding metaphysical doctrines as a justification.

Anthropomorphism is no doubt a necessary and unavoidable condition of human thought. But at the same time it must be borne in mind that it is a concession to human frailty and can be adopted only in a limited sense. In this connection it is relevant to quote a well-known verse attributed to the famous Vedantic scholar Appaya Dīkṣita, which says :

'O Lord, in my meditation I have attributed forms to Thee who art formless. O Thou Teacher of the worlds, by hymns sung in Thy praise, I have, as it were, contradicted the Vedantic dictum that Thou art beyond all descriptions and definitions. By worshipping Thee as installed in temples and holy places, I have acted in contradiction to Your real nature as the all-pervading Spirit. O Lord, pardon me for these three offences, considering that they are the result of my incapacity to adore Thee in Thy real nature as the Infinite and Absolute Being.'

If the idea set forth in this grand verse is clearly held in mind, much of the excesses that anthropomorphic processes have brought into devotional cults could have been avoided. Humanizing God is allowed to the extent that the needs of worship and meditation compel weak man to adopt it in his spiritual infancy, provided it is done with full knowledge that in His real nature God transcends all human limitations, and that if He appears human before a devotee it is out of condescension to him. In conceptualising Him as human,

we have also to think of Him in terms of the highest in human nature, eschewing all disvalues, just as we will offer Him only pure and good things in worship and never bad or foul offerings. Hence to call God personal, does not mean that He is an exalted human being only, but that man, owing to his human weakness and incapacity, is forced to think of Him in terms of the highest he knows within himself, namely, personality, the substratum of all the excellences and values he is aware of. It is therefore a perversion of the spirit of true anthropomorphism when the Tāntrik speaks of the Supreme as masculine-feminine in a *sexual sense*, thus depicting the Supreme Being not in terms of the highest but the most primitive and brutish in human personality. At least it is unworthy of a philosophy that accepts the Motherhood of God. For in the 'mother' idea, sexuality associated with the 'female' is transmuted into self-abnegating filial love. 'Mother' is essentially female without sexuality.

Sometimes it is pointed out that the Absolute, equated with Śiva, is the male principle, and Śakti, the personality aspect, the female principle. This way of stating it seems to overlook, and necessarily contradict, the glaring fact that the Absolute is metaphysical and cannot by any means come within the scope of anthropomorphization. Śakti, the Saguna Brahman, alone can be anthropomorphized and given a human conception. Call God either Father or Mother or Father-Mother without conceptualising Him as male-female in a sexual sense. In every cult that has adopted the mere male-female conceptualisation, Vāmācāra has developed, leading to sexo-mystical rituals.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA'S CONTRIBUTION TO
MOTHER CULT

By identifying the Mother Deity with the

Saguṇa Brahman, Sri Ramakrishna has given an entirely new direction to that system of devotion. His life and sādhanā have reinstated this ancient conception of Godhead in its pristine purity and sublimity, raising it from the debasement it had undergone in the hands of the Tāntriks. For him the necessary implication of the Motherhood of God is the acceptance of womanhood as a symbol of that Motherhood. So he saw the Mother in every woman irrespective of her status or character. When Sri Sarada Devi, his wedded wife, asked him what he thought of her, he said: 'The Mother who is in the temple, the Mother who gave birth to me and is living in the Nahabat, is verily standing as you before me.' Speaking to devotees he says: 'Even the slightest suggestion would awaken my spiritual consciousness. I worshipped the "Beautiful" in a girl of fourteen. I saw that she was the personification of the Divine Mother. ... At that time I used to invite maidens here and worship them. I found them to be the embodiments of the Divine Mother herself. One day I saw a woman in blue standing near the Bakul tree. She was a prostitute. But she instantly kindled in me the vision of Sītā. I forgot the woman. I saw it was Sītā herself on her way to meet Rāma after her rescue from Rāvana in Ceylon.'

It was with this lofty conception of womanhood ingrained in his mind that he performed all the Sādhanās inculcated in the Tantras, including those that countenanced the Vāmācāra. But while faithfully following the rituals, he unflinchingly maintained the filial attitude towards all woman-kind and did not associate with a female counterpart as the Tāntriks do. Yet he attained to Siddhi (Perfection) in all those disciplines in an incredibly short time, demonstrating once for all that the notions of the old Tāntriks in this respect were quite misplaced, if not a mere pretext for

allowing themselves indulgences that would otherwise be stigmatized as immoral.

From the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna what appears is that these texts of the Mother cult want to raise an aspirant to a level of insight in which he comes to recognize the Divine Mother as the background of all contradictory experiences and values of life. Vidyā (spiritually elevating values) and Avidyā (spiritually degrading tendencies), life and death, beauty and ugliness, health and illness, prosperity and adversity—in fact all these opposites with which our relative experience is riddled, are the manifestations of the Divine Śakti. For She is the source of all, and nothing can be excluded from Her. The contradictions felt in regard to the pairs of opposites stand resolved in the realization of their Divine background. The highly advanced Sādhaka who has reached this conviction through discrimination and meditation is tested and helped to be convinced of his attainment by being put into ritualistic situations that may be terrifying, disgusting, seducing, threatening, exciting, overwhelming and so on. If his wisdom is really ripe, he will see the same Divine Mother, the source of all, even behind all these dis-values of Avidyā as in all the manifestations of Vidyā which comprise the positive, enlightening and sublime values of life. These rituals are more of the nature of tests and not occasions for indulgence. They are permitted only to those Sādhakas who have reached the fringes of perfection (Divya) through long practice of the mental and moral disciplines of Dakṣiṇācāra, designed for the eradication of animality in him and the attainment of illumination. From the example of Sri Ramakrishna it is also clear that even in these disciplines, association with womankind in any relationship other than that of a child is contradictory to the fundamental assumption behind Mother cult, and that quick success in them is

attained only by those Sādhakas who uniformly keep up this attitude. The contrary practice among some Sāktas must be regarded as another instance of the human tendency to make noble ideas subserve ignoble ends, especially when the former fall into incompetent hands.

SIGNIFICANCE OF KALĪ SYMBOLISM

Another contradiction that is often felt in regard to the cult of Mother worship is the apotheosis of the gruesome and the fierce in the person of Kālī, the familiar conception of the Mother associated with Sri Ramakrishna. It is often asked how the mild Ramakrishna worshipped the fierce Kālī. One answer to this question is that, as explained already, one of the presuppositions of the Sakti cult is to see the Divine behind all the antinomies of nature. Kālī, likewise, combines in Herself ferocity and beneficence. She holds in one pair of hands the destructive sword and severed head, while the other pair is in the pose of protection and boon giving.

The Kālī conception, however, seems to have much deeper symbolic significance. It is noteworthy that Sri Ramakrishna always addresses Kālī as Ānandamayī, the embodiment of Bliss. It is evident from this that there is no contradiction in his eyes between Her apparent fierceness and Her inherent blissfulness. It should be understood from this that the Kālī conception is a symbolism to indicate the Supreme Mother in one of Her functions—that of involution. Kālī is sometimes spoken of as Tāmasic, a word which, when applied in an individual sense, indicates a dis-value—ignorance, dullness, inertia. But in a cosmic sense Tamas is the power of involution which dissolves the manifested effects into, and holds them invisible in, their finer causal condition and ultimately dissipates them in the Supreme Non-dual Substance. To the ego-bound individual consciousness which

clings to its sense of narrow self and all that appertains to it, Kālī, the Power of involution, looks like terrifying Death. But the spiritual aspirant who wants illumination has necessarily got to face Kālī and learn to love Her as the very Divine Grace that bestows salvation through the effacement of the false ego and all the edifice of objects and attachments built on it. A true spiritual aspirant has to witness his own death, not necessarily of the body but of the ego, which is more precious to man than the body itself.

In the life of Swami Vivekananda, the great disciple of the Master, this truth is found strikingly illustrated. Sri Ramakrishna, out of his high appreciation of young Narendranath, wanted to confer illumination on him by an act of will. At the touch of the Master, whose will was one with the Divine, Kālī, the Power of Involution, set in motion the process of involution in the consciousness of the Swami. He felt that all the diversified objective phenomena were being reduced into the homogeneous fineness of the causal substance, and that even his sense of individuality was dissolving. Caught up in the process of that effacement, he was overcome with fear at what he felt to be impending death. Not being prepared yet to see his own death, the process of involution seemed unbearably terrific for him, and Sri Ramakrishna had to withhold the experience from him for the time being. An identical experience is recorded in the *Bhagavad Gītā* in the case of the great hero Arjuna. When the form of all-consuming Time—Kāla (the masculine of Kālī)—engulfing everything in the process of dissolution was revealed to him, he was terror-struck, and requested the Lord to manifest His human form as before.

From the foregoing considerations it is clear that Kālī looks fierce or blissful according to the point of view of the votary. To the self-centred man seeking only power

and pleasure, Kālī, the Power of Involution, is necessarily terrible, but to the true spiritual aspirant, who finds no value in ego-centred life, and seeks to dissolve the little self in the Universal Mother, She is the shatterer of ignorance and bestower of supreme bliss. Thus involution is death externally and illumination internally, and Kālī is that Power of Involution. This ex-

plains how of all conceptions of the Divine Mother, Sri Ramakrishna, who banished all other values than Jñāna, Bhakti and Vairāgya from his life, centred his devotion round Kālī, so frightfully terrible to the world-bound soul, but the quintessence of Bliss (Ānandamayī) to his transfigured vision.

(To be continued)



To find God as good in the tiniest and most ordinary events as in the greatest is to have not an ordinary but a great and extra-ordinary faith. To be content with the present moment is to appreciate and adore the divine will in all we have to do and suffer in the events which reveal it to us. Souls in these dispositions adore God with redoubled love and respect in the most humiliating circumstances; nothing hides him from the piercing eye of their faith.

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The life of faith is nothing else than a continual pursuit of God through everything that disguises, misrepresents and, so to speak, destroys and annihilates him. ... Men of faith pass through and beyond a continual succession of veils, shadows, appearances and, as it were, deaths, all of which do their best to make the will of God unrecognizable, but they pursue and love the divine will unto the death of the Cross.

—J. P. de CAUSSADE

(Self-Abandonment to Divine Providence)



PHYSICIAN EXTRAORDINARY

There are physicians and physicians—the exploiters of human sickness as well as the compassionate healers. There are those who devote themselves to healing the body only while ignoring the needs of the soul, the well-being of the spirit. There are also a few who minister to the whole man, specially to the most acute of human problems, the sick 'ego'. And then again, there are the rare ones who scrupulously heed the advice : 'Physician, first heal thyself' in relation to their own ego, achieve their own spiritual health and become fit instruments for bringing healing and nourishment to others as well.

To this last group of a distinguished minority belonged Durga Charan Nag, otherwise known as Nag Mahashay.

He was a homoeopath. His academic attainment was not much but that was made up for in more than ample measure through his personal qualities, a burning desire to serve and an innate knack of right prescription. This marvellous capacity for successful prescription earned him a great reputation and brought to him patients in great numbers. It was most easy for him, if only he cared, to make a big fortune out of his rightful practice but his heart was not after that. It was very much in the direction of serving the poor and needy.

Treating the poor people of the neighbouring localities and distributing free medicines was his happy hobby as well as great concern.

As the head of his family, responsible for taking care of its expenses, he had to accept fees from his patients but never demanded anything from any one ; only what was offered to him out of grateful love did he take. Free from notions of vain prestige and status, extremely simple in dress and habits, when he went visiting patients he did that mostly by walking, even to distant places. Most of his time was given to helping out the diseased destitutes. The poor patients received from him not only free medicine but also food and monetary help out of his own meagre resources. One cold winter night, finding a patient ill-clad and shivering, Dr. Nag wrapped the man with his own shawl and quietly came away while the overwhelmed patient was protesting. Some patients he would bring to his own home for nursing. He would not feel like eating before giving them some relief. On one occasion, in spite of all his concern and care when a boy attacked by cholera succumbed, the doctor was so overwhelmed that he could not take even a drop of water that night.

No wonder that the affluent Pal family

appointed him as their family physician. 'There was not a single premature death in our family as long as Nag Mahashay was our physician' was their later grateful testimony.

Once a lady of the family was attacked with deadly cholera, and in spite of Dr. Nag's great skill, care and attention, the situation obviously took a turn for the worse. So a great homoeopathic expert of the time, Dr. Bhaduri was called in but all that he did after a thorough study of the case was only to endorse Nag Mahashay's handling and to warn against changing the physician in panic. Eventually the treatment started giving results, the patient began to recover and after a time was restored to complete health. The astonished and grateful Pals sought to give expression to their feelings by presenting Dr. Nag a silver box full of rupees. The doctor would not accept it, requesting that it may be given to his father. The Pals, according to their own thinking, concluded that he thought the remuneration was not sufficient and so increased it substantially and again pressed him to accept.

At this Nag Mahashay was truly distressed and began to remonstrate: 'Sir, the price of the medicine and the entire amount of my fees together cannot be more than twenty rupees.' Finally, at their insistence, he accepted that much amount and

not a penny more. The Pals could only make over the balance as a donation to Durga Puja (annual worship of the Divine Mother).

When Nag Mahashay's father, who had set his heart on his son's worldly prosperity, heard this, he just burst out. 'Foolish! Absurd! Suicidal!' was his reaction. But the son calmly observed, 'Father, it is you who always have instructed me to tread the path of righteousness. I know for certain that the price of the medicines given, will at the most be six rupees and my fees for these seven days can't be more than fourteen rupees. So I have taken rupees twenty in all. To take more would be a sin. And I request that you also shouldn't accept any more on this account.'

The father retorted, 'Why can't we accept it, if it is offered by the Pals as a loving present, out of their satisfaction? If you behave like this, you will never progress in your profession!' Nag Mahashay, however, clinched the issue, saying, 'Let it be so then. I for my part, cannot help it. What I think wrong I shall never do, come what may. God is truth and any departure from it will only mean harm and ruin!'

EXPLORER

Source: *Saint Durgacharan Nag*, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras.

STRENGTH DOCTRINE : ITS RATIONALE SIMPLIFIED

SWAMI PARAHITANANDA

INTRODUCTORY EXPLANATION

Many of us, in one way or another, have an instrumental role to play in the character-formation of children in our care. And we have learnt by experience and take for granted, even if we have not thought out, the truth of a fundamental principle: the more comprehensive the kind of teaching, the more the teaching relates to the whole of the pupil's nature, the greater the part played by indirect teaching—teaching by example and implication. To give extreme examples, to produce in the taught the apprehension that two plus two equals four, little more has to be done than to say 'Two plus two equals four.' But to produce in the taught the integral intuition 'That thou art' the teacher normally has to do something very much more than say, or repeatedly say, 'That thou art.' The teaching is done by personal example and by other indirect means, using most delicate shades and touches. Words are too slow, gross, and imprecise. And the quality of the relationship between the teacher and the taught counts for a great deal, while in teaching arithmetic it does not.

In character-training the relevance of the general principle just mentioned has always been tacitly acknowledged; for in character-training the most important phase is recognized to be the personal example of parents and teachers. The teaching is mainly indirect. Action, example, is the chief medium of instruction. In the following notes we shall *not* be concerned with this form of training.

The other chief form of training we may call, for present convenience, spoken

training. Here the training is through the meaning of what is said, through the content of the teacher's words. Some of this spoken instruction is indirect, by implication. Some of it is more explicit, by way of explanation and a rational approach in general.

The kind of spoken training suitable for young children is obviously the first, the indirect. Stories, incidents in the lives of the great, historical events, are the means of teaching. The purpose of the stories or incidents is to convey a moral. But nowadays we are more cautious than formerly about overtly drawing the moral of a story, especially with older children. The older we grow the less we want stories with a moral; or rather, we want to be left free to draw the moral in our own way. The teacher's or parent's duty is to do what he can to ensure that the pupil does draw a moral, and draws the right one—almost without noticing that he is doing so, or at least without feeling that something is being stuffed down his throat.

All this, stated summarily, is well enough known. The situation to which the following experimental notes may be relevant is this. On occasion, the need or opportunity may arise, when dealing with older children, to be more explicit; in other words, to use spoken training of the second kind mentioned above. The youngsters in question have heard that they must develop character. They have heard of the need for moral strength. For instance, they may have heard of Swami Vivekananda. He tells them to be strong. What is the why and wherefore of this teaching construed at their level? Their questions,

to be answered, involve giving, clearly and simply, the rationale of the idea of strength—strength of character.

To do this the teacher or parent has to be clear in his own mind about the essentials of Vedantic teaching as crystallized, simplified, and stated in the modern context. The character-trainer, man or woman, needs to have a grasp of the essential connections—and a grasp, too, at the level of the taught. It is not always the case that the teacher does have the desired clarity and simplicity of understanding. He may himself be somewhat lost in the maze of teachings which the Indian tradition faces him with—always supposing he is wise enough to wish to be true to the essentials of that tradition in the first place!

Or the parent's or teacher's problem could arise in a slightly different way. He appreciates where the rationale of the Upaniṣadic doctrine of the *dhīra* or hero, the strong man, really lies: it lies in the Ātman doctrine. Now how is he to speak of the Ātman to children of fourteen or fifteen? Is talk of the Ātman going to mean much to them? If an effort is made to put things simply, it is sure that such talk will not be entirely meaningless. Nevertheless, such a way of speaking, if persisted in, has its limitations as well as its benefits. The more appropriate method for younger minds, it is generally admitted, is to speak in terms of God—again, assuming that other influences have not already operated to cripple the religious approach from the outset.

One of the glories of the highest Indian teaching is that there is no unbridgeable chasm between talk of God and talk of Ātman, provided the speaker knows his business. This means that interpreting the character-training solution in terms of God will not be inconsistent with subsequently interpreting it, for those of more advanced

age, in terms of Ātman. Swami Vivekananda translated, as it were, the highest teachings of the Upaniṣads into modern terms which an adult can understand. He crystallized them at the level of adult modern life. And there is no doubt that a great deal of what he said—so simply yet so forcibly—can be understood by older children. In the case of slightly younger children, the teacher and parent may have to effect a further translation, a crystallization into yet simpler and more connected language.

The notes that follow are an attempt to do this. They are an experiment in giving a simple, connected theoretical outline of the Upaniṣad-Vivekananda doctrine of strength in theistic, rather than trans-theistic, terms. For some teachers, they may provide raw material to shape or to build on; for others, formative ideas to give shape to raw material they already have. The notes are not comprehensive. They are one way of drawing the ground-plan. They are intended to be suggestive, not definitive. In them, 'He' has been used of God: 'She' could equally well have been used.

THEME: TRAINING FOR STRENGTH OF CHARACTER

Swami Vivekananda says we must be strong.

What does he mean?

Being strong means having a strong body—but it means more. It means being alert and educated—but it means more than that also. These help us to be truly strong, but they are not essential. We can be strong even though our body is not strong, even though we are too poor to be educated.

Being strong means having strength of character. It means standing on our own feet, not expecting everything to be done for us. To stand on our own feet is to have faith in ourselves, to believe that we

are strong and pure and good. If we believe we are weak and bad, we shall become weak and bad. If we remember we are strong and good, and go on remembering it, we shall become still stronger and better.

But shall we not become proud if we think like that?

No, not if we think we are strong and good for the right reason. The right is this:—We are strong and good because God is within our hearts. God is intelligence and power, love and goodness. He is in us: therefore intelligence and power, love and goodness are in us.

Our strength is God's strength; our goodness is His goodness. Being strong is remembering that God is in us, though hidden. Having faith in ourselves is having faith in God. We become heroes by remembering that God is within our hearts. When we become heroes, we shall surely live like heroes.

How do we know that God is in our hearts?

The scriptures say so. Kṛṣṇa says so. Christ says so. Ramakrishna says so. Mohammed and others speak in the same strain. From them we get clues in our search for God. By following those clues we shall ourselves come to know that God is within us. This is hard to understand now: but is it not just as hard to understand that a solid table is made of electricity, that it is nearly all empty space? By training we shall gradually find that the scriptures are right—God is in our hearts.

Standing on our own feet, then, means standing up with God's strength. He is always beside us and in us and around us. How can we understand this? We cannot—not now. But we shall come to feel God in our hearts. Remembering Him, we shall not be afraid. He is our real Father

and Mother, our Friend and Helper. He will never leave us. We must never leave Him by forgetting to depend on Him.

If God is really in my heart, is He not in everybody's heart?

Yes. That is why we must respect others and care for them. What is in our hearts is in theirs. So, having faith in God means having faith in others—our parents, our teachers, and other people.

Being strong, then, means having respect for others, living at peace with them, serving them when they need help. One of the signs of the strong man, the hero (*dhīra*), is that he cares for others. He has a large heart.

What are the other signs of a hero?

He has a deep mind. When his heart becomes large, he begins to think deep. If he is to help others, to serve others, he has to think wisely. If he helps his family, that must not cause hardship for others in the same street, or same village. If he serves his own community, say Khasis or Christians, that must not cause trouble to non-Khasis or non-Christians. If he serves his Motherland, that must not create misery outside his Motherland. Thinking deeply is the sort of thinking from which all people benefit.

To the hero, the world is his family. He avoids doing what might separate people from each other. He tries to do what will bring people together. The hero serves other people because God is in them, though hidden.

The God that is in him, and the God that is in them, is one and the same God. He worships God by serving Him in other people. That is his *pūjā*, his worship. Helping them, he helps himself. This is what all religions say. Gradually we shall

see that it is true, if we go on with our training.

Are there any other signs of a hero?

Yes, there are. But let us mention just one more. When we become large-hearted we want to make ourselves useful. When we become large-minded, when we think deep, we see how to do it. And when we are developed both in heart and mind, then our will becomes strong.

This is the third sign of the hero: he is strong-willed. Though serving others may be troublesome and wearisome, he presses on. All great works are beset with immense difficulty; but the hero presses on, unperturbed. He faces difficulties, depending on God.

What is the good of being strong? Why should we train for strength of character?

We all want to be happy. Only the strong man is happy. Why? Because he alone is free from selfishness: he alone is fearless. It is fear that causes unhappiness.

The strong man has the head, heart, and will to help others to be happy. And if they are not happy, how can he be happy in his mind? True, in himself, in his inner self, he is not unhappy even though others may be unhappy; but in his mind he is not happy. His inner self is God. So when the strong man turns inwards he turns to God. How can he then be unhappy? For God is happiness—true happiness—and absolutely beautiful.

This is a mystery. We never shall *understand* it, however learned and clever we may be. But if we train with determination, we shall become strong ourselves—and then it will cease to be a mystery.

What about people who cause unhappiness to us or to others? Are we to resist them? Are we to resist evil?

We are to defend ourselves, our families,

our community, our country. We are to resist the evil in others, but we are not to resist the God in them; rather we are to worship the God in them by caring for them.

In all of us, except the hero, God is hidden and covered up. In the really strong man or woman, the hero, God is not covered up.

The covering consists of mind and body. When there is much ignorance and selfishness in the mind the covering is thick. If the covering is very thick, there will be more of positive evil, such as cruelty, greed, and hatred. When we resist, it is the evil covering we are resisting. We do our best not to be aggressive. We do not attack—but we defend when attacked; and defend with our lives if necessary. We do not use more force than is necessary.

When we do not know what to do, we pray to God for guidance. We ask God to make us act rightly. If we wait, guidance always comes.

Does the hero resist evil?

The hero does not protect himself. He does not resist evil for his own preservation. If he does resist evil, it will be because it is God's will. It will be because it is for the good of the world. His resistance will be for the benefit of others.

Who can be a hero?

Very few of us can be Prime Ministers, or generals, or sadhus (monks); but all of us can be heroes if we try. We all want to be heroes. We are born to be heroes. And we *can* be heroes if we train for it.

To be heroes we do not have to be rich or well-educated. We do not have to belong to any special creed, race or class. To be heroes we have only to be strong. If a poor man is strong, he is a hero. If a poor woman is strong, she is a hero. A

strong Hindu is a hero; a strong Christian is a hero. A Muslim, a soldier, a negro, a nurse—they are all heroes if they are strong.

How do we train to be strong?

1. We have to remember always that we are strong, because God is in us. Better still: let us simply remember God in our hearts. If we do this we shall forget about ourselves and what we are. We shall concern ourselves only with God and doing what God wants. And if we actually do this, the strange thing is, we shall gradually become strong automatically.

2. Along with remembering God, we must study what real strength is. Thought and study are needed if we are to understand it. We need models to copy—examples of real strength. The lives of heroes are such models.

Remember, they may have done big things; but doing big things was not what made them heroes. The love, wisdom, and determination with which they did those things—that is what made them heroes. It was the way they did things, great or small, that mattered. It was the spirit in which they acted that made their actions heroic. If we do the ordinary duties of our daily life in that spirit, we shall be heroes too.

Tell us of a model hero?

There are a number. Swami Vivekananda is a modern hero. What he said and did has great meaning for us today.

Why do you say Swami Vivekananda was a hero?

Because he was truly strong. He was strong in small actions as well as in big. He was born in Calcutta in 1863, and educated in both Eastern and Western ideas. He searched all Calcutta for a strong man. At last he found Sri Ramakrishna, and

from him learnt how to be a hero. Vivekananda became a sadhu, a monk; but that does not mean that only sadhus are heroes. We can all be heroes if we work hard for it, whatever our mode of life.

Swamiji tramped all over India, studying its problems. In 1893 he went to Chicago and spoke at the World Parliament of Religions. There, the preachers from different religions were glorifying their own religions. Vivekananda told them that all religions are glorious, because they all teach men to find God. There is only one God, so all those religions must be speaking of the same God.

Stick to your own religion, said Swamiji, and train in that. By following your own religion you will become strong.

Afterwards, he travelled and lectured much in the West. He studied Western problems too. His teaching, both to Eastern and Western people, can be condensed into two words: Be strong. This does not seem to say much; but if we study his lectures and life, we shall come to see that it means and includes a great deal. The West is strong in science and social welfare; but that is not enough. The East is strong in religion; but that is not enough. Real strength is being strong in all ways, at all times.

Vivekananda founded the Ramakrishna Mission to serve all people in a spirit of worship, whatever their creed, race or class. It has been serving them at all levels—physical, educational, spiritual—for seventy years. It has been helping them grow strong.

In 1902 Swamiji passed away; but he continues to serve the world in many and various ways.

It is hard to be a hero. Take Vivekananda as a model. Study his life and teach-

ings. Try to copy his spirit, his attitude, in the humble actions of your daily life. That will help you grow strong.

(N.B. In this last answer no attempt has been made to develop in detail the life of Swami Vivekananda as an example of heroism. To illustrate the particular qualities pertaining to the strong character, a treasury of incidents will be found in his

life : incidents to illustrate concentration, courage, determination, faith, profundity of understanding, breadth of vision, as well as love for all, service of all, selflessness, purity of heart, and so forth. Our concern has been to provide some general rational basis in the simplest terms, on which the more particular aspects of the heroic life can be developed.)



The history of the world is the history of a few men who had faith in themselves. That faith calls out the divinity within. You can do anything. You fail only when you do not strive sufficiently to manifest infinite power. As soon as a man or a nation loses faith, death comes.

Whatever you think, that you will be. If you think yourselves weak, weak you will be ; if you think yourselves strong, strong you will be.

Be free ; hope for nothing from any one. I am sure if you look back upon your lives, you will find that you were always vainly trying to get help from others, which never came. All the help that has come was from within yourselves.

After so much austerity, I have understood this as the real truth—God is present in every jiva ; there is no other God besides that. ‘Who serves jiva, serves God indeed.’

This is the gist of all worship—to be pure and to do good to others. He who sees Siva in the poor, in the weak, and in the diseased, really worships Siva ; and if he sees Siva only in the image, his worship is but preliminary.

Let us calmly and in a manly fashion go to work, instead of dissipating our energy in unnecessary frettings and fumings. I, for one, thoroughly believe that no power in the universe can withhold from anyone anything he really deserves. The past was great no doubt, but I sincerely believe that the future will be more glorious still.

—SWAMI VIVEKANANDA



ILLUMINATING DIALOGUES FROM INDIAN LORE

SRI CAITANYA AND RAI RĀMĀNANDA

SWAMI CHETANANANDA

Smoking alone, a smoker does not get pleasure. He is on the look-out for a companion. A man of realization, likewise, longs for a lifted-soul, who can understand him properly. From that time on, his expression, behaviour, movement, etc. become wonderful and cannot be grasped by the ordinary intellect. He likes to evaluate his own, realization, lest it should turn out to be a hallucination, and compare his spiritual experiences with those of other holy souls.

Śrī Caitanya, the incarnation of love, was born in Bengal in 1486. There is an adage amongst the Vaiṣṇavites that Śrī Kṛṣṇa came as Caitanya to experience the pangs of separation from Rādhā. So Caitanya was outwardly Kṛṣṇa and inwardly Rādhā. Much of his life passed in divine ecstasies. Even words are impotent to relate them.

Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj, the author of the *Caitanyacaritāmṛta*, has beautifully depicted the dialogue between Caitanya and Rāmānanda. Caitanya was then going to South India on a pilgrimage and met Rāmānanda at Vidyānagara (now Rajahmundry). Rāmānanda was the governor of that place, and was loved and honoured

by all for his erudition and spiritual fervour. Caitanya heard his name at Puri. And now the two illumined souls, as predestined, met together and started their immortal conversation :

Caitanya : Please say something about the ultimate goal of life according to the scriptures.

Rāmānanda : One can obtain devotion to Viṣṇu (God) by performing one's caste-duties properly.

Caitanya : This is a superficial criterion. Please proceed further to the core of the problem.

Rāmānanda : Dedication of (the fruit of) all action to Kṛṣṇa is the final goal.

Caitanya : It is superficial. Please proceed further.

Rāmānanda : Renouncing caste-duties is the limit which a man can attain.

Caitanya : It is also an outward thing.

Rāmānanda : Faith based on Knowledge is the terminal value.

Caitanya : This is also superficial.

Rāmānanda : Pure *bhakti* without a trace of knowledge is the omega of human attainment.

Caitanya: I know it. Please tell me something more.

Rāmānanda: *Bhakti* (*śānta-bhāva*) derived from *prema* (love) is the ultimate goal a human being can reach.

Caitanya: It is not new to me. Please proceed further.

Rāmānanda: The acquisition of the attitude of the servant for the Lord (*dāsya-bhāva*) is the quintessence of love.

Caitanya: Yes, it is true, but let us hear something more.

Rāmānanda: Devotion in the form of comradeship (*sakhya-bhāva*) is the ultimate within the reach of a human being.

Caitanya: Excellent! But let us dive deeper.

Rāmānanda: Parents' love for the child (*vātsalya-bhāva*) is the highest goal of the devotee.

Caitanya: It is remarkable! But let us penetrate yet deeper.

Rāmānanda: Passion as for a lover (*madhura-bhāva* or *kānta-bhāva*) is the highest form of devotion that a man can attain.

Rāmānanda continued: Various are the means of attaining Kṛṣṇa, and degrees of such attainment. But whichever means (*bhāva*) is natural to a particular man is best for him. He then elucidated the real nature of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā and explained the mystery of *Rāsalīlā*. The *Bhāgavata* says: During the *Rāsa* festival, the gopīs of Vṛndāvana attained their heartfelt desire when He embraced them. Kṛṣṇa said to those simple, guileless, unsophisticated village girls: O gopīs! Blessed am I that you love me so; it will make you immortal. You have proved your devotion to me by breaking the ties of home; my love for you can never match your intensity of feeling even if I were to try for an aeon. May your love to me be its own reward.

At this, Caitanya was moved and said: Speak on; it is a delight to hear you.

Caitanya again asked: What is the difference between *kāma* (lust) and *prema* (love)? How is the love of the gopīs free from lust?

Rāmānanda: Gratification of one's own senses is *kāma* and the fulfilment of the desire for Kṛṣṇa is *prema*. The gopīs belonged to the latter group and they were immersed so much in the thought of Kṛṣṇa that they had no body-idea. *Deha smṛti nāhi jār, kāma kūp kāhā tār* i.e. where there is no body-idea, how can there be sex-conception? (According to the *Bhāgavata*, at the time of *Rāsalīlā*, Kṛṣṇa was only eight years old.)

Caitanya: At this stage, I think an aspirant becomes inactive.

Rāmānanda: Yes, it is true. But by the grace of God, his body moves, takes food as a momentum of the past.

At this, Caitanya went into an ecstatic mood. Rāmānanda looked at him agape. He had only read about *samādhi* in the scripture and now witnessed it. After a while, Caitanya came down and said: I have realized that. Please proceed further.

Rāmānanda: This is the first time I hear this. The human intellect can proceed up to this and no further. Anyhow, I know only another thing, i.e. *Prema-vilāsa-vivarta*. (This is a technical term. It indicates a type of love which is capable of inducing simultaneously the joy of union and the pangs of separation, with complete oblivion to selves and surroundings, and imbuing the lovers with a sense of identity with each other. This is beyond the reach of a human being and is only possible for Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.)

In the light of *Prema-vilāsa-vivarta*, Rāmānanda sang one of his own compositions: *Na so ramaṇa na hāma ramaṇi, Duho mana manobhāva peṣala jāni*, etc.

It means that in the culmination of love no idea of man or woman remains. The idea of dualism vanishes and the realization of Oneness prevails.

At this, Caitanya could not check himself. He pressed the mouth of Rāmānanda, because that idea of Oneness would induce him to be one with Kṛṣṇa. A devotee does not like to be sugar, he wants to taste it. It was a sight to see. Even the author of the *Caitanyacaritāmṛta* could not check himself in depicting this incomparable scene of the two God-lovers, and he was compelled to admit it in his book.

Next day Caitanya asked Rāmānanda: What is knowledge?

Rāmānanda: There is no knowledge except devotion to Kṛṣṇa.

Caitanya: Who is the most illustrious among men?

Rāmānanda: The man famous as a devotee of Kṛṣṇa.

Caitanya: Which is the most valuable possession?

Rāmānanda: *Prema* for Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

Caitanya: Which is the worst enemy?

Rāmānanda: Separation from Kṛṣṇa's devotees.

Caitanya: Who is the freed soul?

Rāmānanda: He who has Kṛṣṇa-*prema*.

Caitanya: What song is best to a man?

Rāmānanda: Those which describe the secrets of dalliance of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

Caitanya: Which is the most beneficent (course of conduct)?

Rāmānanda: Association with Kṛṣṇa's devotees.

Caitanya: What should we constantly remind ourselves of?

Rāmānanda: Name, qualities, and incidents from Kṛṣṇa's life.

Caitanya: What is the highest object of meditation?

Rāmānanda: Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

Caitanya: Where should a renunciant live?

Rāmānanda: In Vṛndāvana, the *Vrajabhūmi* where the *Rāsalilā* is eternal.

Caitanya: Which is the sweetest melody?

Rāmānanda: Those which are tuned to the love-songs of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa.

Caitanya: What is the foremost object of worship?

Rāmānanda: The coupled name Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa.

Caitanya: What are the respective destinations of those who desire liberation (*mukti*) and those who desire devotion (*bhakti*)?

Rāmānanda: Those who desire liberation become like inert objects, while those who desire devotion, assume celestial bodies. The stupid crow pecks at the bitter ash-fruit (*nimba*) while the gourmet of a cuckoo feeds on the fragrant mango-blossoms of *prema*. The ill-fated scholar is doomed to taste arid knowledge, while the lucky ones (the devotees) sip the nectar of Kṛṣṇa's *prema*.

Thus that unforgettable conversation continued for ten days—from dusk to dawn. Rāmānanda was the governor, so he was busy with his work in the daytime. But at nightfall, these two God-intoxicated men would meet on the bank of the Godāvarī and talk about God; and thus they not only relieved the burden of their hearts but also sprinkled the nectar of love amongst the dry, deserted souls of humanity.

Source: *Caitanyacaritāmṛta*: Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj and *Caitanya: His Life and Doctrine*: Dr. A. K. Majumder,

SELF-HELP : AN INTERPRETATION

PROF. O.P. GUPTA

Self-help is decidedly the best help that one can seek or get from any quarter. It is just counting upon one's own self which emerges stronger, clearer and more enduring in a period of emergency. Self-help is no mean help; rather there is no end to it for the simple reason that man's self itself is vast, nay endless and limitless. Obviously if the potentiality of self can be stretched to any length, how can there be some foreseeable end to one's sense of self-help? Man's self is supreme and sublime and so is the extent of self-help which a man may invoke in a time of crisis. It is quite simple that man is his own first and last helper and that a dependent man is in no way better than a straw. Self-help is the best prayer that one can say at any time. It is worship in the sense in which all work is.

Self-help is the plea for work, manual work, all types of work. One who can help himself is a semi-God, as it were. Such a man from time to time is his own coolie, his own tailor, even his own barber. Here mention is made of self-help on the physical plane. A self-helper obviously recognizes the dignity of labour and finds all work dignified and sacred, although it may soil his hands and even garments.

When a coolie is not available on the railway platform, he will gladly like to lift his own bag and baggage on his own shoulders. He may do so, even if a coolie is available. Such a type of self-help brings one's success or one's destination nearer. Those who wait for coolies to carry luggage, sometimes do miss the train and thus incur some loss. One should not be ashamed of manual labour, which is as

much God-ordained as any type of mental and spiritual labour.

Self-study is a well-known type of self-help. It is help to one's own self on the mental plane. A university degree may lead to something or not (and often such a degree does not yield much); but self-study has produced the greatest writers and thinkers of the world. Poets and philosophers of all times have attached little significance to university degrees and diplomas; they have grown to eminence by dint of only self-study. Only such truths matter as are self-realized. Only such facts count as are self-experienced. As a matter of fact, a man is ever a student. Once the period of his studenthood is over, he is once again thrown upon self-study if he does not want to lose touch with the currents and cross-currents of his time. Shakespeare, the greatest playwright of the world, in the words of Matthew Arnold, was 'self-schooled' as well as 'self-scanned'. Rabindranath Tagore cultivated self-study to a maximum degree. The teacher's task in a school or college is only to suggest, to throw a hint to the wise, as it were; the rest is to be done by the student himself through self-study. What a school or a college teaches is a limited entity; self-study on the other side has vaster dimensions, even unlimited scope. Self-study is a means to self-discovery—the discovery of all that is potential in man and has not been explored and exploited so far, the discovery of the greater Self within man.

On the other side, self-indulgence is the mere negation of self-help; it is only a variety of self-annihilation. Self-indulgence involves a good deal of dissipation of energy which, if preserved, can always be

utilized for higher and nobler ends. It saps all powers of intelligent reactions and stable movements. One is soon afflicted with a sense of futility and disillusion. There is nothing wrong with the body. In the words of Walt Whitman, it is as significant and sacred as soul. It is only when body is misused that self-indulgence comes into being and may even grow. All self-indulgence is deemed to be self-hindrance, a mighty obstruction in the way of self-fulfilment and self-realization.

In fact self-fulfilment or self-realization is also a kind of self-help; but it is help on the spiritual plane. As Lord Buddha has put it, everybody is to seek his own path to salvation after studying and even adopting the hitherto explored and even oft-exploited methods of salvation. No particular path can be imposed upon a devotee of truth; paths are evolved from within. A devotee, under the circumstances, is required to undergo a few already known spiritual disciplines and after a good deal of ordeal and experimentation and even re-experimentation find out for himself which amalgam of disciplines will suit his unique temperament and environment. The American bard of democracy Walt Whitman also insists upon the same self-realized truth that everybody is to find out for himself. No two geniuses have traversed the same road or can, in future, be expected to travel the same road. Every genius has his or her own equation. Of course an average type of person may not be able to lay claim to a sort of distinctive equation of his own. He lacks equation because he lacks self-study and self-examination. Incidentally self-examination is a species of self-help on the mental plane. Through self-introspection one can have regular peeps into one's inner being, resulting in a broad knowledge of one's strength and weakness. A reflective ten-

dency of the mind is certainly rewarding if it is not excessively indulged. Self-knowledge is the beginning as well as the end of all knowledge. It is a species of self-help on the plane of mind as well as spirit.

Self-help does not rule out human interdependence or breed some sort of egotistic exclusivism. It does not in any way mean self-sufficiency: none could be sufficient in all respects. Self-help does not in any way go against mutual interdependence; but actually, it makes interdependence a really worthwhile, practical and solid conception. In a society in which self-help is only an exception, human interdependence only boils down to the counting of idleness upon idleness. A community of idle people cannot contribute much to the concept of human interdependence. Only a community in which self-help is effectively prevalent can render human interdependence a really practical proposition. What sort of help can A expect from B if B is not even in a mood to help himself?

Auto-suggestion is again a form of self-help on the psychological plane. Here one is required to suggest to oneself again and again that day by day one is growing better and better. Others are not usually generous and charitable to you. They will certainly find fault with you in a hundred ways. Don't be misguided by others' condemnation of you. If others condemn you, you are not harmed to the extent to which you will be if you start condemning yourself. Self-condemnation and self-help are poles apart. The first could one day result in committing suicide.

Let us not forget that man is the captain of his own ship. If it were not so, the doctrine of self-help would lose all validity and solidity and so turn out to be a futile myth. If man is helpless in the face of nature, self-help means no help at all. As a matter of fact, there is nothing predeter-

mined in human affairs. The law of Karma has its proper force and validity, but man is still free to get rid of Karma and transcend its limits by spiritual realization. Man's past is bound to chase him, but still with a supreme effort of will man can reform himself and make a fresh start. If a man has been idle for the last seven days, he will surely feel inclined towards idleness on the eighth day. But this does not mean that idleness has been thrust upon him for all times to come. If he musters his will at a strong point of some intensity, he will surely be able to shake off his idleness and lethargy overnight.

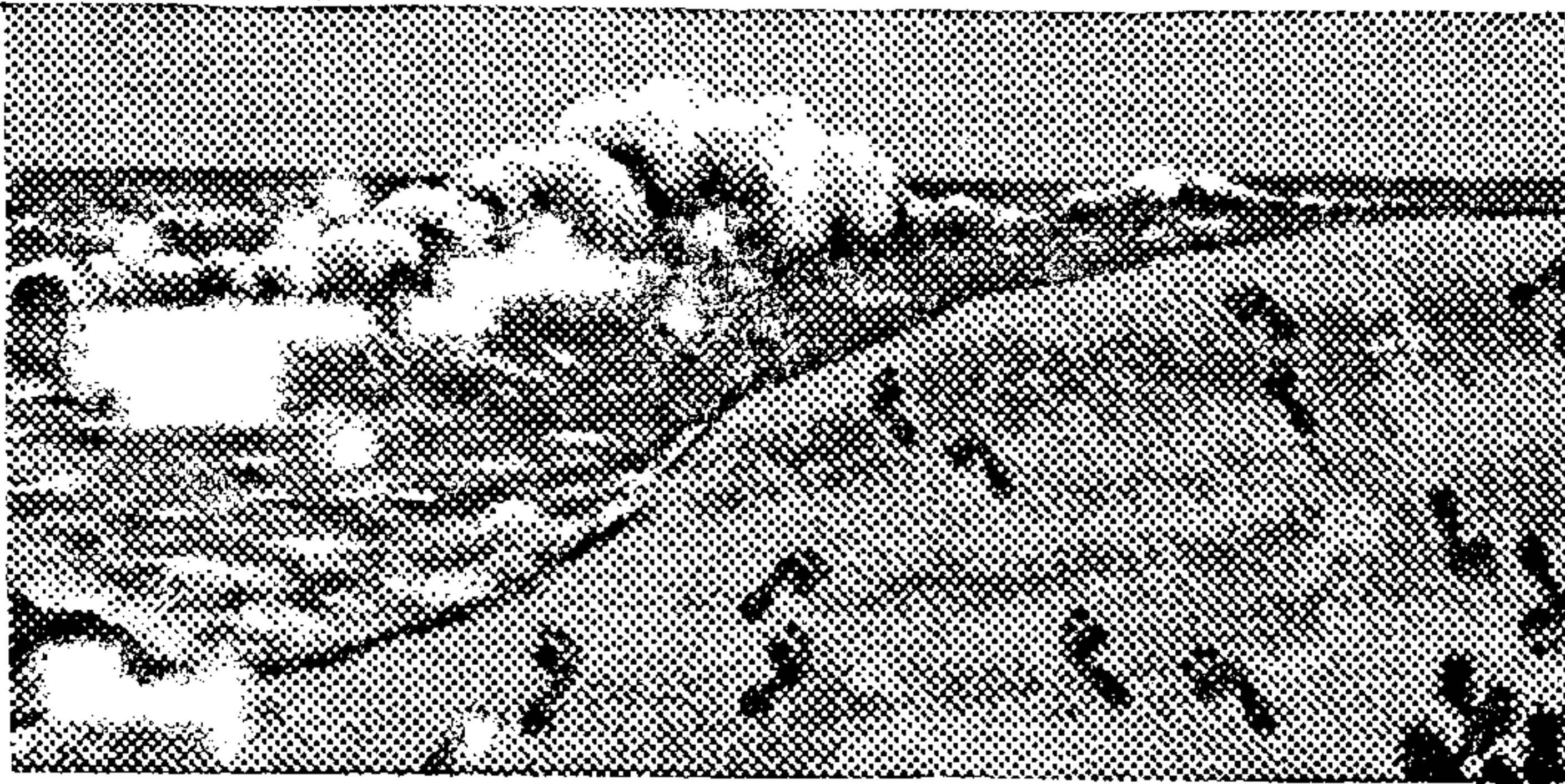
He must have been a far-visioned wit who coined the saying: 'God helps those who help themselves'. The first and foremost thing is self-help. God's help comes later. Or, in other words, it can wait. From a deeper or spiritual point of view there should not be much difference between self-help and God's help, as according to Indian thought self is manifestation of God, nay, God Itself. Self-help, in fact, is capable of achieving wonders. One cannot demarcate where self-help ends and God's help begins. Anyhow, the most important thing is that first one should put in maximum labour to achieve a certain purpose and then fold his hands in prayer for some grace from God.

Here I am reminded of Santiago, the most heroic protagonist of Hemingway's novel, *The Old Man and the Sea*. He seems to me an impenetrable and uncon-

querable embodiment of self-help and all that human will is capable of achieving. His triumph is one of the human spirit. Unaided on the wide and deep ocean, he is able to seize Marlin, a prize fish. And though the parasitical sharks reduce it to a mere skeleton, he does succeed in carrying it to the shore. In ever-ringing words he says: 'It is silly not to hope.' Self-help is a natural offshoot of optimism. A pessimist takes it for granted that neither self-help nor God's help can improve things in any way. According to him, no sooner is a man born than he stands doomed. Santiago's self-help is a necessary corollary of his optimism. Man cannot be defeated; he may be destroyed, he says.

Sometimes self-help takes the form of 'patience', as it does in the case of Milton's sonnet on his blindness. On growing blind, Milton is terribly upset. He does not know how to serve his 'taskmaster' under these circumstances. He, for the time being, finds little justification in the ways of God to man. He grumbles mightily and in a way fails to find any law or moral order in this universe. But, after some time 'patience' comes to his aid and makes him reconciled to his new fate. Suffering is man's lot. But with self-help he can mitigate his suffering and the suffering of those with whom he has something to do. He can wage an eternal war with those blind and cruel forces of nature which do not allow him even some rest. In doing so, he may go down, but his spirit should never give in.





HUMAN TRENDS

THE NATION IN THE INDIVIDUAL

SWAMI SMARANANANDA

If you look at the Indian scene today, it is one of inner anguish. Everyone seems to be a helpless witness to what is happening around him, reminding one about the famous line in the *Gītā*, '*Indriyāṇi Pramāthīni haranti prasabham manah*—The turbulent senses do violently snatch away the mind'. If you meet the average educated Indian, he will talk wisely almost like a saint. It would appear surprising that a nation that is populated by such people should be facing any problem at all!

But, alas! it is in the field of collective behaviour, India as a nation has been found wanting. The turmoil all round—not only political, but economical and social—seems to be the order of the day. Groups in every state are busy agitating and members associated with the group think momentarily that theirs is the supreme goal of life. In a country where, for the first time in history, non-violence was attempted as a political weapon, sentimental outbursts of violence seem to be the order of the day.

What is significant is that these outbursts are not the result of any mature thinking, as in the case of a French Revolution or the Russian Revolution. It is mostly irrational, carried away by the slogans of self-

appointed leaders, who can incite a mob at a moment's notice. The incidents themselves may be disturbing the smooth-running of public activity, but what is more disturbing is that a nation that becomes a prey to unreason of this kind will have to end up in a state of anarchy and chaos.

It is such a state of affairs that the sane common man is forced to look on helplessly. It may be said in favour of the agitators—let them be anywhere—that frustration caused by economic and political failures is throwing up these outbursts. It may be said that the masses are being taken unawares by the turn of events; they have no time to think. But various questions arise. Are the events a result or a cause? Are these events external to the country or internal? Are these disturbances caused by the international political climate or by the age-old inherent weaknesses in the nation itself? If we look at it this way, we shall have to put the blame on our internal weaknesses, rather than on external events. We, as a nation, have failed to feel a sense of urgency to promote the welfare of the nation. In short, those endowed with power, those who are leaders of the people, have failed. And if the leaders of a nation fail, the nation fails. What

was expected of the leaders was a sense of sacrifice and zeal for the uplift of the masses, for the nation as a whole. But many of them, or rather most of them, put their individual or party interests above national interests.

And then, in this period of twenty-two years since Independence, the common man has not been educated about his responsibilities to the nation. Not only should he feel his responsibility, but this sense of responsibility should be harnessed to create a collective sense of responsibility. The hurry to collect the dividends of Independence will have to be replaced by a patient waiting for the company to become solvent and strong. Such a feeling of responsibility towards, and love for, the country can be found to a surprisingly high degree among individuals. It is in such persons we find a sense of inner anguish about the mood of destructive irrationalism prevailing in the country today. This anguish springs from the feeling that all accepted values are being thrown off, while no new abiding values are found. Human energy and time are being dissipated in acts of indiscipline and a wantonly antagonistic attitude to existing social norms and behaviour. This antagonism is not a result of intense patriotic fervour, but often caused by a perverted sense of frustration and selfishness.

These apart, everywhere in the country, group loyalties and group nationalisms have given rise to demands in the names of such groups, often to the detriment of overall national interest. Such loyalties and movements have also affected the political and economic stability of the country and have caused great destruction to national property, besides breach of peace, and bitterness.

Some may argue that these are the pangs of a nation in transition from medieval age to space age. May be. But the present

events in the country are often reminiscent of the blunders of the past in Indian history. We seem to forget that it was internal squabbles and weaknesses that were the cause of foreign rule in India for many centuries. We do not seem to observe that set patterns of national behaviour, which exhibit our inherent weaknesses as a nation, are showing up all around.

The zeal and patriotism which characterized pre-Independent India seem to have given way to inertia and group patriotism. After a few decades during which giant all-India leaders strode over the national scene, we face today the phenomenon of a leadership vacuum. Of course, every crest of a wave will be followed by a hollow. Perhaps, we are today in one such hollow in national leadership. But these consolations should not cause complacency in thinking men.

The age of greatness in the few will have to be replaced by greatness in the many, which means the individual's owning of national responsibility. This can come about only through education that will be not only widespread but also will be capable of awakening in the individual a sense of responsibility as a citizen.

Foreign rule for a thousand years has deprived us of the sense of citizenship in a free nation. This sense can come about only when we understand, individually, that we are in an expanding universe, where narrow tribal outlooks have to give way to inclusive nationalism. Twenty-two years of freedom is too short a period in a nation's history to right the wrongs of a millennium. Our inherent national genius may yet throw up a great leader who can instil this sense of nationhood and citizenship into the average Indian.

But we are in a world that is constantly on the move and we cannot afford to stand still and wait for the future leader. So let us also move on, hearkening to the call of the ancient *ṛṣi* : *Caraiveti* !

ON FACING THE FUTURE

PROF. WILLIAM HOOKENS

There is the type of person who is so busy doing his work that he looks for tomorrow with hope and such a person lives for many, many tomorrows. But there is, again, the type who for some reason or another is afraid of life and living. He finds it a nightmare and his waking and sleeping moments bear witness to life as he imagines!

Not all can continue to do their work without being aware of what is going on in the world. Those who are of the sensitive type, as literary and artistic persons are, find themselves plunged in sorrows from day to day, not only in their own sorrows but also in those of others they hold near and dear. They are, alas, like Shelley's sensitive plant and die young. They find the world too cruel to live in it.

There are, again, those who see life in its seamy side but are tough enough to live through difficulties. They tell none of what they suffer because they believe in keeping their sorrows to themselves. In course of time they get a strength they had not known and become habituated to life in all its violent moods. But there is no knowing when they could go off, as did Ernest Hemingway who was a he-man all his life. Rather than whimper as he found himself doing, he put an end to himself, maintaining the he-man tradition of living and dying.

How about those who are always wanting victories and earn the esteem of their fellow men that they were born to lead and who live victoriously? And one day when things don't go to plan and there are signs of being conquered by another, rather than submit to the stigma of defeat, they would end their lives with their own hands.

It all boils down to what persons expect of themselves and others or what they think and feel of life. Some will be content to live uneventfully, whereas others would want to live recklessly or adventurously, as they would put it. But once a person has set the pattern of living, either for himself or for others, there is no drawing back, people being what they are! And a brave man has always his followers, as a coward has a gathering of people to cry 'shame' on him.

Life's not easy, and all that one can do is to buoy oneself at every turn. How can this be done? There is no royal road to success, and each has to find his own way to life and living. For great as books and men are, they are not so great as experience, one's own experience of life. Some are content to live according to this book or person, as there are others who trust none but the book of life which they are daily opening to ferret out the secrets of living. There is no one formula to living and one has to discover it for oneself.

Wordsworth moaned in his sonnet on Milton that he was living at a time when life was at its lowest ebb, but only a soft man will moan for people greater or mightier than himself. Others will either try to live as best as they can or get out of the running, for there is no other way out. As it has been well said by someone who believed in himself and in his times: 'No man thinks of the past and glories in it, only the fools do!' But it has become the fashion among people of all ages to think of the ages gone by as the golden age and to run down the age in which they are. Such people are not only putting the clock back for themselves and for those of their

way of thinking and feeling, but, what is worse, they are not enjoying themselves. The present is all we have and all we know, and the more we live it, the greater and better is the future. For those who think of the past only, the future is almost bleak, they being enemies, as it were, to things and people and events as they are and move.

Much as people appreciate the simplicity of the people of previous generations they cannot try to be like them in all respects for the obvious reason that one's salvation does not lie in simplicity alone, nor in faith, howsoever great both are, but in so many other factors, of which we know nothing. What we can do is to live in harmony with ourselves, and this is not as easy as it sounds. It is not that easy to get ideal conditions and people around us. Adjustment in one form or another is vital and this means seeing things as they are, as neither big nor small, but in perspective. Much as Wordsworth thought Milton a grand soul, there is no doubting that the conditions of the age brought out the Milton as much as his epic. Milton, if he were living in Wordsworth's age, might have ceased to be Milton as we know him and become some other person. The same can be said of Swift. Each age brings out a man or woman of stature, and the greater the difficulties such persons confront, the greater they become till they find themselves on top of the world, doing the impossible! Every age, therefore, has its own heroes and villains though human nature continues to be the same all through the ages and this makes for the continuity of life, literature and religion.

There are those who see life as a senseless thing, mowing people down at every turn. To such people life is a blind alley, and what is called initiative or ambition is dead because they are at heart and in mind

fatalists. 'What will be will be!' is what they tell themselves and others and life becomes what they want it to be. They are lost souls because they see themselves fettered at every turn by invisible barriers, like caste, creed or colour. Much as they want to cling to this religion or that, to worship one God or many, they find themselves helpless in all that they think, feel or do. They cease to live in so far as they lack the courage or confidence to go beyond the routine life. At best they are stagnant and make all others who come into contact with them like themselves, helpless, melancholic.

On the other hand, there are others who see in life reason, law and do all they can to live according to reason and the sense of law. They believe in the law of cause and effect or in the saying: 'As you sow so shall you reap!' They, therefore, build up a brave world for themselves and find themselves at their best in such a world. They see themselves through the eyes of the mind, as it were, and are not swayed by emotions which they find erratic or unreliable. And they are all for living at their very best, in consonance with the law of life, as they see it, and are daily keeping a check on themselves. They are at no time content to live listlessly, as the blind or the ignorant do, but are ever alert to the movements or nuances of life. Nothing is too great or unbearable to them because they are daily measuring themselves with the progress achieved. Such are living dynamically, alert to the finer things of life and nothing is common or low. In fact such people find life always grand and even silence has a message for them of love and goodwill. That they find themselves in agreement with all that they see only means that they have allowed their infinite selves to lead the world for them, as it were, and not to show fear at all.

The calm people that they usually are, with nothing to stir them to anger or gladness, they are balanced, poised and such people know the art of attracting the good people, things and events to themselves and warding off the evil forces. How they do this is, alas, their own secret, but that they have achieved mastery over themselves and life is certain because they are masters at every turn! Life is a miracle for them, and as they think so it is!

Is it that they pray to a particular deity at a particular place or time? Is it that they have a master-key book to guide them? Is it that they are born different, on a higher level of human understanding than all others? One can never be too dogmatic on any one thing or person as the safe guide to living though there is no denying the efficacy of prayers. Church-attendance may not lead to the desired results because all who are church-goers are not equally motivated. Yet it is not wrong to say that those who disbelieve in themselves also disbelieve in God, seeing as they do the helpless beings that they are, with nothing to connect them to their Creator. There are others who do not talk of God or His Church but make themselves the abode of the Almighty wherever they are! How is this done? Again, it is a secret which everyone has to find for himself, and which is a better way than through prayers, fasting, meditations. It is not easy but then which great thing is easy?

As for faith, one can never be certain of it. It has to be re-awakened in us at every turn or it dies of disuse. Faith is a gift that one can never be proud of, but grateful for, or one loses it and then realizes the irreparable loss. There is the story of the Reverend Mother who was ailing in bed and all the priests and nuns who knew her prayed for her recovery. And as she recovered, she lost her faith and walked out

of the convent where she had been all these years, as model of her kind to her followers. Needless to say the priests and nuns were shocked. They wished that she had died rather than lost her faith. How about her? Would she constantly pull herself up for the guilty person that she was and make of her life an utter misery or, say, as Job said: 'The Lord has given and the Lord has taken away!' and have no regrets whatsoever? Being pure is the best thing in life that one can be, but then being sin-conscious is to make oneself miserable beyond words and God wants none to be unhappy on any grounds! But only the foolish have fixed ideas and are obstinate to reason, digging premature graves for themselves and others at every turn. Others are ever alert against the scorpions and lizards of life, and they live, with neither murmur nor groans, ever happy with themselves and those they know or meet. They are like the Wise Virgins who brought the light of understanding with them rather than be dimmed with darkness, expecting miracles from God as the Foolish Virgins were inclined to do. Life is lived at different levels, as only the wise and men of faith know. For others—the vast majority—life is a sheer drag.

What is faith but another word for trust? If we trust someone or something very much and are not selfish at heart, how can we be disappointed? Faith is a great mover. The impossible is made possible—mountains are cleared and rivers are made walkable. But then one must have intense faith and this is not easily obtainable in a month or year. It is the work of a lifetime. We see this in the nun of Manchester whom I saw dying and who was happy to die because she would see her Lord and Maker face to face. She was, she knew, seeing on earth her God as through a veil but in Heaven she would

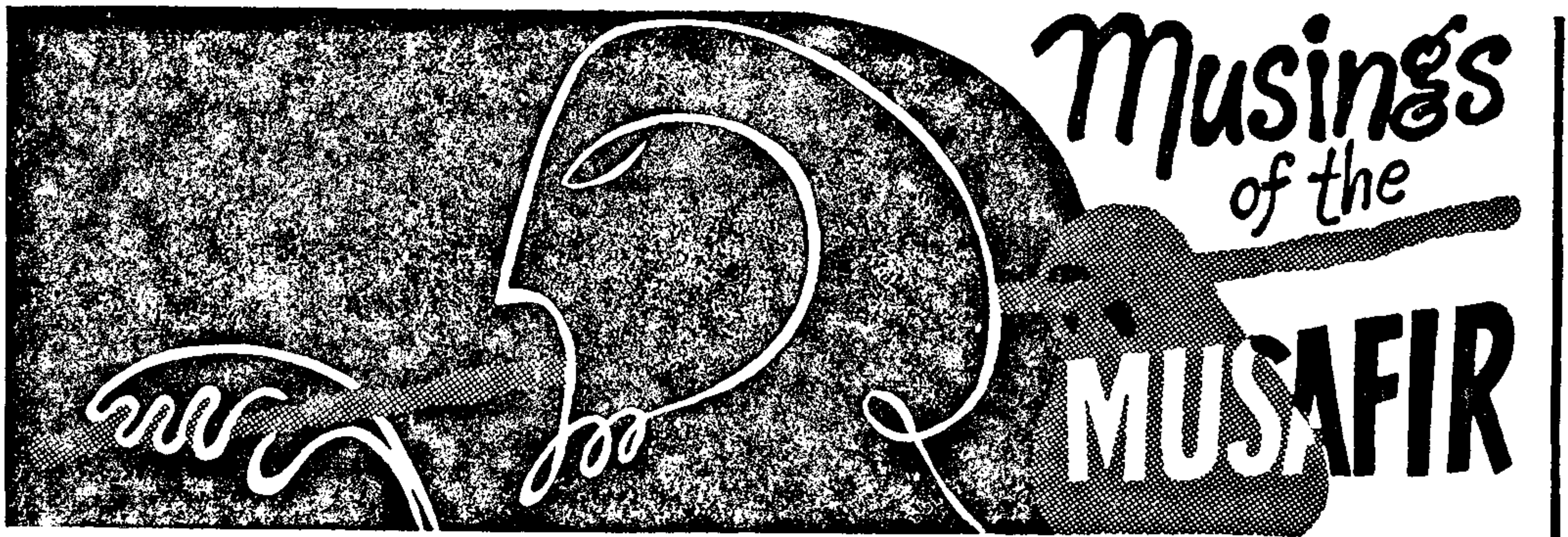
see Him in all His Glory and Majesty. But she would have to die for this realization—to die to life as she knew it—to live in communion with Him for ever! To such a person death was no obstacle nor the grave. It was the beginning of a new life. Her belief in her resurrection was, to say the least, a great consolation to her.

Faith is indeed a great thing, but one cannot rest on it as if it were a mere prop. It has got to be tested and re-tested to be a living force. And the great believe in this spirit-force within themselves. Such was Joan of Arc, and she happened to be the only heroine of the rationalist Shaw, who saw in her something he could not explain but which he admired all the same in his drama *St. Joan*. It was faith that made Winston Churchill fight the Nazis to the bitter end and it was faith again that made Gandhiji live and die for a cause. As the saying is: 'To the great all people and things and events are great.'

Such people live on a higher realm of life, and when they get a glimpse of the tomorrow today, how great is their joy! To such people nothing is impossible, the persons of infinite courage and faith and energy that they are. They live as Abraham Lincoln did, as best as they can, with hypocrisy towards none and with goodness towards all. Their lives are verily temples of the living God and their sayings and deeds are a veritable paradise for the common men to see. They are men of tradition, of culture, with ill will towards none and friendliness for all. They are the embodiments of the good, like trees that give cool and shade to weary travellers. They live in harmony with all the good and beautiful things in life, and when the day of reckoning comes they are not found wanting in anything. In fact they go out of this earth all the richer, clothed in grace and leave behind the fragrance of a well-lived life.

Blessed sister, holy mother, spirit of the fountain, spirit of the garden,
Suffer us not to mock ourselves with falsehood
Teach us to care and not to care
Teach us to sit still
Even among these rocks,
Our peace in His will
And even among these rocks
Sister, mother
And spirit of the river, spirit of the sea,
Suffer me not to be separated
And let my cry come unto Thee.

—T. S. ELIOT
(from *Ash Wednesday*)



THOSE INEVITABLE HARVESTS OF SUFFERING AND HAPPINESS

Thus teaches the *Dhammapada* :

'The evil-doer mourns in this world, and he mourns in the next ; he mourns in both. He mourns and suffers when he sees the evil (result) of his own work. Verse 15

'The virtuous man delights in this world and he delights in the next ; he delights in both. He delights and rejoices, when he sees the purity of his own work. Verse 16

'The evil-doer suffers in this world, and he suffers in the next ; he suffers in both. He suffers when he thinks of the evil he has done ; he suffers more when going on the evil path. Verse 17

'The virtuous man is happy in this world, and he is happy in the next ; he is happy in both. He is happy when he thinks of the good he has done ; he is still more happy when going on the good path. Verse 18

'The thoughtless man, even if he can recite a large portion (of the law), but is not a doer of it, has no share in the priesthood, but he is like a cowherd counting the cows of others'. Verse 19

'The follower of the law, even if he can recite only a small portion (of the law), but having forsaken passion and hatred and foolishness, possesses true knowledge and serenity of mind, he, caring for nothing in this world or that to come, has indeed a share in the priesthood.' Verse 20

There is a common saying: as you sow, so you reap. In this unassuming saying there is a simple but comprehensive functional philosophy of life, which can be helpful to all concerned everywhere in the world. These days when we live in and as crowds, and think through unions and organizations, we perilously ignore this basic law of life: as you sow, so you reap. The law is not changed because we have sunk our individuality in the crowd, and our thinking in official resolutions of unions. We may not remember but somehow, somewhere we never cease to be individuals. This individual has no way of escaping his personal destiny of suffering or happiness. What determines this destiny is the individual's own thoughts and deeds. The law is clear and simple : the evil-doer mourns here and hereafter. He mourns and suffers when he sees for certain that evil works, that it is powerful enough to release forces which make happiness unattainable for him. When he sees potency of evil manifest in his life, perhaps unshared even by his friends of the union, his suffering has no pretence of being anything else than suffering. How can he be happy then? Seeing the triumphs of evil in one's life is suffering indeed. But the evil-doer has something more to his lot. Besides directly suffering the consequences of evil deeds as such, he also suffers agonizing pain from the thought that he has done these evil deeds. The

poignancy of the consciousness of being an evil-doer brings him down in his own estimation. And his pain is more when he finds that in spite of himself he continues to go by the evil path, unable to return to righteousness. Being a prisoner of hardened habits he has perforce to go on doing evil deeds though theoretically he knows better now. He has the intention to desist from evil but not the will.

The virtuous man delights in this world and in the next. He rejoices in the purity of his own deeds which have borne covetable, commendable and presentable results. He not only enjoys the fruits of his own virtuous deeds, he also develops a power of conviction in regard to the efficacy of such deeds. And this endows him with a special kind of happiness born of an attained power of conviction. The consciousness that he has been able to live and work in a righteous manner fills him with a feeling of triumphant self-fulfilment, for he knows that his future happiness is also secure. No other acquisition can fill a man with this type of happiness.

An automobile manufacturer, when he drives the first shining car rolling out of the assembly line, on a through way, is certainly filled with the joy of success. When he sees the glittering car running fast without a jarring sound he feels that he has reasons to be happy indeed.

You may be happy without knowing the reason, but when you are convinced that you have reasons to be happy, you are then a happier person.

The virtuous man, when he finds himself going on the good path, like driving the first glittering automobile, is specially happy. He is fully aware that he has reasons to be happy. Being established by now in virtuous deeds he is no more capable of evil-doing. In other words, the law : to him who has, will be added, has started functioning in his life. So, he is sure not only of happiness here, but also of happiness

hereafter. Nothing in this world could have given him a firmer sense of security than the feeling of being well-grounded in virtuous deeds.

One may know much about religion. He may reel out verses after verses with great fluency. He may be clever in exposition of scriptures in a variety of ways. But if he does not practise what he preaches, he is like a cowherd counting others' cows. Unfortunately, many among the so-called religious people, delight in counting others' cows only.

Another man, who may know a few teachings of a scripture, if he has made those few teachings a part of his life, he certainly fares better, spiritually speaking. In fact, even one authentic teaching, practised to perfection, may bring one salvation ; and not all the scriptures of the world committed to memory, but not practised, can help a man.

Oftener than not people taking to serious study of religions are found growing in vanity and egoism, so much so that they delight in making people appear small before their erudition. They delight in frightening simple people by a show of their pedantry. The pity is that with all their scholarship in religion, they may not have started in spiritual living. Sri Ramakrishna used to say that if he knew that a scholar did not practise discrimination, humility, and renunciation, his worth appeared to him like that of a straw. But if he had discrimination and dispassion he was indeed to be revered.

The man who knows very little of religion, if he has forsaken passion, hatred and foolishness, if he has serenity of mind, he has indeed true knowledge. And from him others can learn in regard to the true spirit of religion.

Religion is expected to free us of delusion. But if we prefer to get deluded in the process of studying religion what can really save us ?

NOTES AND COMMENTS

IN THIS NUMBER

The passage quoted in 'Onward For Ever!' occurs in *The Complete Works*, Vol. V, 1959, pp. 266-67

The editorial of this month delineates Sri Ramakrishna in one of those aspects most important to the aspirant, namely as 'helper in yoga'.

A senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order, Swami Tapasyananda is the Head of Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, Trivandrum. In his article 'Motherhood of God as Revealed by Sri Ramakrishna' the Swami shows how Sri Ramakrishna has given an entirely new direction to the ancient conception of Motherhood of God by reinstating it in its pristine purity and sublimity and raising it from the debasement it has undergone. This illuminating article is being serialized.

In 'Profiles in Greatness', the 'Explorer' focusses our attention on a physician extraordinary from whom the poor patients received 'not only free medicine but also food and monetary help out of his own meagre resources'.

'Strength Doctrine : Its Rationale Simplified' by Swami Parahitananda of the Ramakrishna Order, is an attempt to give simply, connectedly and in theistic terms, the rationale of the Upaniṣad-Vivekananda

doctrine of strength vis-à-vis the task of character-formation. For teachers and parents who are dealing with children old enough to seek explanations, this simplification may be of suggestive value.

Swami Chetanananda of the Ramakrishna Order compiles in this issue one of the most famous illuminating dialogues from the Indian Lore.

Prof. O. P. Gupta, M.A., LL.B., Head, English Department, Govt. College, Jind, in his article 'Self-help : An Interpretation' shows that self-help is 'the best help that one can seek or get from any quarter'.

Swami Smaranananda writing on the disturbing situation in which we all live in today's India points out a fundamental remedy.

Professor William E. Hookens is the Head of the Department of English, Sri Nilkanteswar Government Post-Graduate College at Khandwa, Madhya Pradesh. His article 'On Facing the Future' deals with different types of persons and shows the secret of success of those 'who build up a brave world for themselves'.

The Musafir expounds the *Dhammapada* in relation to the 'inevitable harvest of suffering and happiness' of the evil-doer and the virtuous man respectively.



REVIEWS AND NOTICES

AN INTRODUCTION TO ASIA BY JEAN HERBERT, George Allen and Unwin Ltd. Pages 410, price 42s. net.

The book under review is an attempt at understanding the soul of Asia, diversified in her myriad-minded thought processes and multi-coloured activities. It is an introduction to the people of Asia (comprising one third of the earth's surface) who contribute nearly half of the world population. The contents of the book have largely endeavoured to explain and remove for the western reader the mental and sentimental barriers which stand between the Europeans and the Asians and thus pave the way for a better understanding of the one by the other. The author herein attempted to bring out some general features which apply, if not fully to the whole of Asia, at least to a very large part of its immense population. It is quite obvious from the immensity of the task that on almost all points, the description offered has been subject to many and important exceptions which varied in their geographical extension. The author took pains to mention the main exceptions at appropriate places. He has cited in support of his assertions the most characteristic examples from one or two countries and the variants have been indicated for the most fundamental subjects or when the variants themselves were of particular interest.

The book had its inspiration from the works of noted orientalist and from a feeling that it could meet a real need. The Pierre Lotis or Rudyard Kipling attitude is there and such publications would certainly undo the mischief already done. The historico-comparative method, as was advocated by Acharya Brojendra Nath Seal, has here been taken recourse to and it has been thought possible by the author to define what is peculiar to a country or a continent only by comparing it with other countries or continents. While stressing and describing the endless variety which characterizes the inhabitants of Asia, the author has taken immense pains to bring out some deep-lying traits which are found in practically all of them. He has carefully noted their religious background, the way they view men, the world, life and also death, their mode of thinking and reasoning, their basic conceptions of ethics, their scales of values, their social relations and their sensitiveness. The so-called 'superstitions and prejudices' have been very carefully weighed and adjudged rationally. The author makes out a good case for his western readers to help them understand their relations with the Asians through their literature, art and concurrent activities. The Asians will also profit from a careful perusal of this volume, as it would help them draw a good image of their own.

DR. S. K. NANDI

NEWS AND REPORTS

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION SOCIETY, RANGOON

REPORT FOR 1965 & 1966

The activities of the Society during the years under review were as follows:

Scripture Classes: Classes on the *Bhagavad-gītā* were held on Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays and on *Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad* on Saturdays. Besides, the teachings of some saints were also discussed. The total number of classes held during the two years: 542.

Cultural Study Group: Several discussions on educational, cultural and religious subjects

amongst the small groups of educated people were conducted in a homely manner.

Celebrations: People belonging to all religions met in a cordial atmosphere at social functions or public meetings on the occasion of the birthdays of the prophets of diverse faiths and festivals in different religions.

Public Lectures, Symposia and Musical Evenings: The Society organized 58 periodic lectures on religious and cultural subjects. It also organized 8 musical evenings by leading musicians of the city and one symposium on a cultural topic.

Sanskrit Language Class: Twice a week Sanskrit language class was conducted by an experienced and qualified Sanskrit teacher.
