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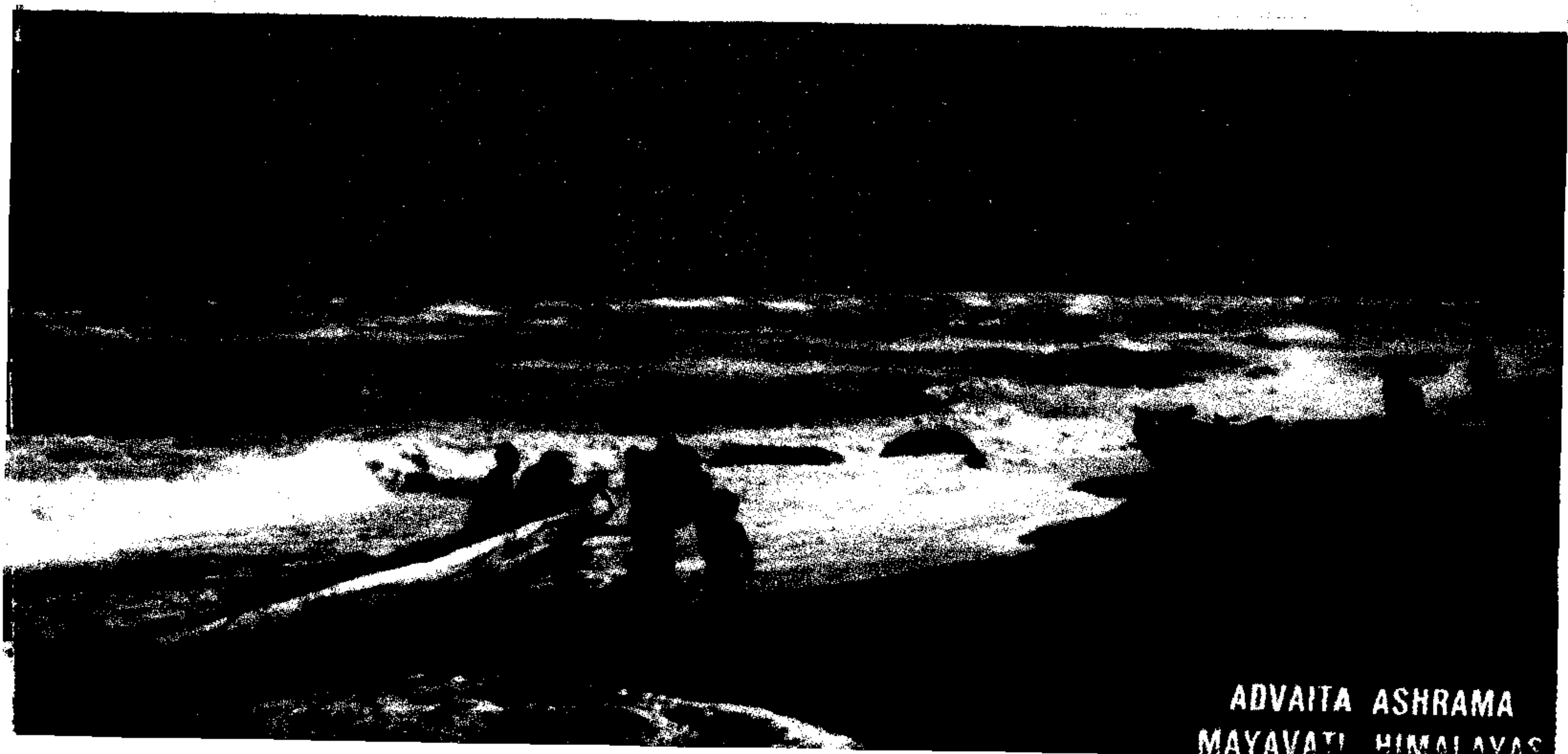
Prabuddha Bharata

OR

AWAKENED INDIA



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



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MAYAVATI HIMALAYAS



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Prabuddha Bharata

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FEBRUARY 1971

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Prabuddha Bharata

VOL. LXXVI

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No. 2

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

SRI RAMAKRISHNA ANSWERS

Question (asked by Vijay): 'Sir, why are we bound like this ? Why don't we see God ?'

Sri Ramakrishna : 'Maya is nothing but the egotism of the embodied soul. This egotism has covered everything like a veil. "All troubles come to an end when the ego dies." If by the grace of God a man but once realizes that he is not the doer, then he at once becomes a jivanmukta. Though living in the body, he is liberated. He has nothing else to fear.

'This maya, that is to say, the ego, is like a cloud. The sun cannot be seen on account of a thin patch of cloud ; when that disappears one sees the sun. If by the grace of the guru one's ego vanishes, then one sees God.

'Rama, who is God Himself, was only two and a half cubits ahead of Lakshmana. But Lakshmana couldn't see Him because Sita stood between them. Lakshmana may be compared to the jiva, and Sita to maya. Man cannot see God on account of the barrier of maya. Just look : I am creating a barrier in front of my face with this towel. Now you can't see me, even though I am so near. Likewise, God is the nearest of all, but we cannot see Him on account of this covering of maya.

'The jiva is nothing but the embodiment of Satchidananda. But since maya, or ego, has created various upadhis,¹ he has forgotten his real Self.

'Each upadhi changes man's nature. If he wears a fine black-bordered cloth, you will at once find him humming Nidhu Babu's love-songs. Then playing-cards and a walking-stick follow. If even a sickly man puts on high boots, he begins to whistle and climbs the stairs like an Englishman, jumping from one step to another. If a man but holds a pen in his hand, he scribbles on any paper he can get hold of—such is the power of the pen!

'Money is also a great upadhi. The possession of money makes such a difference in a man! He is no longer the same person. A brahmin used to frequent the temple garden. Outwardly he was very modest. One day I went to Konnagar with Hriday. No sooner had we got off the boat than

¹ Limiting adjuncts.

we noticed the brahmin seated on the bank of the Ganges. We thought he had been enjoying the fresh air. Looking at us, he said : "Hello there, priest! How do you do?" I marked his tone and said to Hriday : "The man must have got some money. That's why he talks that way." Hriday laughed.

'A frog had a rupee, which he kept in his hole. One day an elephant was going over the hole, and the frog, coming out in a fit of anger, raised his foot, as if to kick the elephant, and said, "How dare you walk over my head"? Such is the pride that money begets!

'One can get rid of the ego after the attainment of Knowledge. On attaining Knowledge one goes into samadhi, and the ego disappears. But it is very difficult to obtain such Knowledge.'

Question (asked by Vijay): 'How can one see God?'

Sri Ramakrishna: 'One cannot see God without purity of heart. Through attachment to "woman" and "gold" the mind has become stained—covered with dirt, as it were. A magnet cannot attract a needle if the needle is covered with mud. Wash away the mud and the magnet will draw it. Likewise, the dirt of the mind can be washed away with the tears of our eyes. This stain is removed if one sheds tears of repentance and says, "O God, I shall never again do such a thing." Thereupon God, who is like the magnet, draws to Himself the mind, which is like the needle. Then the devotee goes into samadhi and obtains the vision of God.

'You may try thousands of times, but nothing can be achieved without God's grace. One cannot see God without His grace. Is it an easy thing to receive the grace of God? One must altogether renounce egotism; one cannot see God as long as one feels, "I am the doer." Suppose, in a family, a man has taken charge of the store-room; then if someone asks the master, "Sir, will you yourself kindly give me something from the store-room?" the master says to him: "There is already someone in the store-room. What can I do there?"

'God doesn't easily appear in the heart of a man who feels himself to be his own master. But God can be seen the moment His grace descends. He is the Sun of Knowledge. One single ray of His has illumined the world with the light of knowledge. That is how we are able to see one another and acquire varied knowledge. One can see God only if He turns His light toward His own face.

'The police sergeant goes his rounds in the dark of night with a lantern² in his hand. No one sees his face; but with the help of that light the sergeant sees everybody's face, and others, too, can see one another. If you want to see the sergeant, however, you must pray to him: "Sir, please turn the light on your own face. Let me see you." In the same way one must pray to God: "O Lord, be gracious and turn the light of knowledge on Thyself, that I may see Thy face."'

² A reference to the lantern carried by the night-watch, which has dark glass on three sides.

THE GOSPEL OF A GOD-MAN TO MAN IN A GODLESS AGE

EDITORIAL

I

The beautiful legend of the sage Dadhīci in the Hindu mythology¹ enshrines a great truth. Indra and the other gods were routed by the demons led by the valiant Vṛtra. The gods sought help from Bhagavān Viṣṇu. He advised them to go to 'Dadhīci, the best of the sages, the very essence of knowledge, vows, and austerity'² and beg for his body. Out of his bones were to be made weapons including the most powerful 'vajra', the thunderbolt, to destroy Vṛtra and his hosts. When approached by the gods, Dadhīci gladly entered Samādhi and gave up the body. From his bones the gods forged the thunderbolt and other missiles, challenged the demons in a battle, and defeated them, killing the almost invincible Vṛtra.

Stripped of its fictional fabric, this legend yields us the truth of an eternal conflict raging between the divine and demoniac forces in human life. Sometimes the demons win and at other times the divine forces are victorious. Behind the victory of the divine forces there is invariably the hand of God, the Supreme Self. But this power of the Supreme becomes manifest through the instrument of a pure personality. Such persons are known as avatāras or incarnations of God. They are the very embodiment of 'knowledge, vows, and austerity'. It is their personality and teaching which become the mighty weapons for counteracting the forces of darkness.

In our own age, this truth has been redemonstrated in the life of Sri Ramakrishna. The powerful tide of atheism and sensualism of the modern era, reinforced

by the determinism of dogmatic scientists and psychologists, posed the greatest danger to religion and spirituality witnessed in recorded history. Creed-bound, institutional religion was utterly undermined. It looked as though the ideas of soul, God, and spirituality would be swept away once for all. Against this materialistic tide, Sri Ramakrishna and his disciples have stood like a bulwark. The Supreme Power has, as it were, forged the powerful weaponry out of the bones of Sri Ramakrishna to subdue the forces of evil and unrighteousness.

II

Let not the anti-God modern materialist think that his outlook and ideology are his own discoveries and so entirely newfangled. No matter where he stands—whether on stark or dialectical materialism—he belongs to a tribe that antedates the Vedas. Materialism is as old as the mountains, as old as man himself. The *Bhagavad-Gītā*³ gives a graphic account of the materialists' outlook which can be summarized thus:

"They say that the universe is without truth, without a moral or spiritual basis, without a God, brought about by mutual union, with lust for its cause. What else can be the explanation? Holding such a view, these persons of little intellect and fierce deeds rise as enemies of the world. Possessed of egoism, power, insolence, lust, and wrath, these malicious people hate the self within their own bodies and those of others."

Since there is no non-material existence or truth as the basis of the cosmic phenomena, make the best of the body and the world, says the materialist. Thus sense-enjoyment and selfishness become the goal

¹ *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, VI, Chapters ix-xii.

² दध्यञ्चमृषिसत्तमम्, विद्याव्रततपःसारम् । ib. ix, 51

³ XVI, 8, 9, 18.

and wealth coupled with luxury the means to it. 'The face of the Truth is covered by a golden vessel,' says the Upaniṣad.⁴ The golden vessel is selfishness, sensuality, and greed. A man victimized by these can never see the Truth. The materialist is blinded by the golden radiance of sense-glamour.

Materialists are not to be found for-gathered in a particular enclave. They are everywhere, sometimes concealing even under pious cloaks. When a person in-ordinately clings to the body, craves for unbridled sense-gratification, denies the Supreme Truth, and is egocentric, he is a materialist, notwithstanding his swearing by the highest heaven or the biggest church. It is these materialistic ideas and men that comprise the forces of evil and darkness.

III

Very few persons have expressed the essential content of Sri Ramakrishna's life and message as well as Mahatma Gandhi. In the Foreword⁵ he wrote to a biography of Sri Ramakrishna, he says:

'The story of Ramakrishna Paramahansa's life is a story of religion in practice. His life enables us to see God face to face. No one can read the story of his life without being convinced that God alone is real and that all else is an illusion. ... In this age of scepticism Ramakrishna presents an example of a bright and living faith which gives solace to thousands of men and women who would otherwise have remained without spiritual light.'

Swami Vivekananda, the greatest exponent of his great Master, speaks in a similar strain:

'In the utter darkness of the world this great man is like a shining pillar of illu-

mination in this age! And by his light alone man will now cross the ocean of Samsara.'⁶

'In this Incarnation atheistic ideas ... will be destroyed by the sword of Jnana (knowledge), and the whole world will be unified by means of Bhakti (devotion) and Prema (divine love). Moreover, in this Incarnation, Rajas, or the desire for name and fame etc., is altogether absent. ...'⁷

From these statements of two master-minds emerges a vignette of Sri Ramakrishna which is the exact antipode of a materialist. The darkness of scepticism and atheism is left far away, to be sure, destroyed. The existence of a non-material Reality or God is a surety beyond the least breath of doubt. He holds up,—in fact has become identified with—the light of Truth to guide people out of the gathering gloom of materialism. Egoism and conceit, born of Rajas, are entirely absent. He has cast aside the golden disc that covers the face of Truth and realized a radiance which is the light of all lights.

IV

We are accustomed to hear assertions and slogans against God. Arguments flanked and fortified by statements of scientists and philosophers are put forward against the existence of God. Some people have exhibited a good measure of boldness in asking the question 'Is God dead?' and answering it, according to their light, in the affirmative. God of a particular type, e.g. a bearded venerable-looking old gentleman sitting above the clouds, is surely dead. Possibly that event is for the good of humanity. That only means a particular conception of God is dead. But God as the substratum of internal and external phenomena, the unchanging and undecaying essence of knowledge and bliss, what about

⁴ *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, V. 15.1.

⁵ *Life of Sri Ramakrishna*, Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, 1964, p. vii.

⁶ *The Complete Works*, Vol. VI, 1963, p. 480.

⁷, *ib.* p. 328.

Him? If the now world-famous question refers to such a God of Truth and Bliss, then we have to point our finger to Sri Ramakrishna and a whole constellation of illumined saints and answer: 'No, God is not dead. He is ever-present. If there is any one really alive, it is He.' Because He is immortality itself.

A sincere seeker of God is very likely to pass through the phase of scepticism. It is only the half-hearted dabbler in religion who will turn back and make a claim that there is no God. In his search after the Divine Mother, Sri Ramakrishna passed through this scepticism: 'Is it true that Thou existest, O Mother? Why dost Thou not speak? Art Thou dead?'⁸ He did not halt with this questioning, whether the Mother was dead. He was convinced that the life of the senses was utterly hollow and deadly. He could not rest until he had realized Her. And he did find Her.

To the sceptical but sincere young man who asked him if he had seen God and how one could see Him, Sri Ramakrishna replied:

'Yes, I see Him just as I see you here, only in a much intenser sense. God can be realized, one can see and talk to Him as I am doing with you. But who cares to do so? People shed torrents of tears for their wife and children, for wealth or property, but who does so for the sake of God? If one weeps sincerely for Him, He surely manifests Himself.'⁹

Once a scholar, a master's degree holder, of an agnostic turn of mind, came to Sri Ramakrishna and frankly spoke to him about his disbelief and the restlessness of his mind. He would not pray to God, because, as he said, there was no proof of His existence. Sri Ramakrishna did not despise him or turn him out. Instead he taught him an agnostic prayer. He said to

him: 'Well, I suppose you have no objection to praying like this, "If Thou really art, O God, then listen to my prayer." If you pray like this it will do you good.' The gentleman pondered and said that he had no objection to such a prayer. He was asked to come again. When he returned, he was a changed man. Touching Sri Ramakrishna's feet, he wept as he said, 'You have saved me.'¹⁰

V

The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna has a frequented phrase which would easily irk a feminist. That phrase is 'woman and gold'. Sri Ramakrishna says unequivocally and emphatically that if one sincerely wants to know God, one has to renounce completely 'woman and gold'. By this phrase Sri Ramakrishna no doubt meant 'sex and greed', two of the most implacable enemies of spiritual life. His men-devotees he warned against women and his women-devotees against men.

But if we look around at our contemporary world, we have to appreciate Sri Ramakrishna's forethought in warning a spiritual seeker with that phrase 'woman and gold'. As it is with the subhumans, sex-urge is one of the strongest instincts in humans. But is that any reason to turn man or woman into a sex-symbol? The unscrupulous purveyors of cheap excitement, grabbing control of mass media of communication, are dragging men and women into the swirling waters of sex. The calamitous consequences of such unethical commercializing of sex are blatantly obvious in the present-day society, Western and Eastern. The only corrective to this perversion lies in cultivating the attitude Sri Ramakrishna provides regarding human beings of both sexes: to regard every

⁸ ib. Vol. IV, 1962, p. 168.

⁹ His Eastern and Western Disciples: *Life of Swami Vivekananda*, 1949, p. 47.

¹⁰ Vide: *Prabuddha Bharata*, Vol. XLI, No. 2, p. 109.

woman as the symbol of the Divine Mother and every man as a child of God. How purifying and elevating is this attitude! It will release the Mūlādhāra¹¹-locked mind and send it sky-rocketing to higher planes of consciousness where everything is divinely blissful and nothing vile.

The double cable of desire for pleasure and progeny has woven a strong snare for men and women in the sex-instinct. There are some shallow-minded psychologists who have added by their misguiding theories to the toughness of the snare. Sense-pleasures invariably bring painful reactions, followed in the long or short run by physical and mental ravages. And no desire is satiated by its indulgence. Sri Ramakrishna points to an incomparable and absolutely non-sensual pleasure in divine communion. His own life is a vigorous vindication of the possibility of attaining such a joy. The desire for progeny was also fulfilled in a non-carnal way when he was approached and accepted as the guru by pure-souled young men, the children of his spirit. The leaders of the anti-chastity movement in certain quarters of the Roman Catholic Church would do well to ponder deeply and devoutly on the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, besides those of Buddha, Śaṅkara, and Vivekananda.

Man is acquisitive by nature. Gold is the symbol of greed in man. But as long as a man is a slave of greed, he is not attracted to God. With his heart glued on material gain, how can a man love God? Sri Ramakrishna practised to perfection complete detachment from greed and dependence on God. He exhorted spiritual seekers to cultivate contentment and discrimination. Once he taught a sincere disciple thus :

¹¹ The psychic centre, according to the yogis, at the sacral plexus, where Kuṇḍalinī, the coiled spiritual energy, lies dormant in all individuals.

‘... you must practise discrimination. “Woman and gold” is impermanent. God is the only Eternal Substance. What does a man get with money? Food, clothes, and a dwelling place—nothing more. You cannot realize God with its help. Therefore money can never be the goal of life...’¹²

Besides the renunciation of the passions of lust and greed, Sri Ramakrishna taught the eradication of egotism. The sense of ‘I and mine’ weaves a cosy cocoon for the individual soul wherein it remains imprisoned. To get rid of the bondage of ego-consciousness, Sri Ramakrishna prescribed a two-fold discipline. One is to cultivate discrimination and an analytical approach as to the nature of the ego-consciousness, i.e. in the Jñāna-yogic way. ‘What is this ego, the sense of “I”? Is it the body, mind, intelligence, etc.?’ And finally arrive at the pure Ātman, unswathed by any sheaths. The other method is to link the ego-sense with God in the Bhakti-yogic way, by cultivating a particular attitude toward God such as ‘I am a child of God’, ‘I am a servant of God’, etc. Sri Ramakrishna took drastic steps to extirpate his egoism and cultivate perfect humility.

VI

The Divine Mother manufactured a powerful armoury out of the purified personality of Sri Ramakrishna and his apostles. Sri Ramakrishna combines in himself the twin aspects of the thunderbolt, power and luminosity. With the former, atheism and materialism are silenced completely, and with the latter, sincere spiritual seekers are guided and illumined. The message of godliness from this ‘shining pillar of illumination’ will thunder across the gulf of centuries and inspire men with courage and hope to tread the path of Truth.

¹² M. : *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras 4, 1944, p. 6.

LETTERS OF A SAINT

THE LORD MY REFUGE

Kankhal

17.6.1914

Dear Sri—,

On receiving your letter of the 8th I came to know all news. ... All's well here.

But recently the quarters of the cobblers adjacent to our Ashrama have been completely gutted by fire. Ah! I can hardly tell you about the wretched condition of these helpless people. These extremely poor people who have to live from hand to mouth—you can easily imagine how very afflicting and frightening this disaster is for them. We are trying to raise some subscriptions to help them. But the attitude of the locals being what it is, one of utter hatred toward these low caste people, there is doubt if they will come forward with much help. However, the Mission also offers its help in such works. So a letter has been written to Sarat Maharaj¹ asking for some funds. We are also appealing to our friends for help. If we can collect a sum of about four hundred rupees we shall be able to provide substantial help for building shelters for these poor, distressed, helpless people, now without shelter. Let us see, what help comes from the Lord. Even the heart of a very cruel-hearted person will melt in compassion, if he witnesses their suffering. Living as they do, under the open sky, they have been withstanding the sun and rains. How much longer they will have to do so, no one knows. For, they have no means to be able to construct homes such as they had. We have been trying, success or failure is in the Lord's hands.

My love to you all. Do the Lord's work with full attention. He will protect you in every way.

SRI TURIYANANDA

¹ Swami Saradananda, then General Secretary of the Ramakrishna Mission.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S INTERPRETATION OF VEDĀNTA

SRI M. K. VENKATARAMA IYER

By Vedānta is here meant that particular branch of it known as Advaita Vedānta. Swami Vivekananda's spiritual teacher was Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. Though he was essentially a devotee, he certainly had his philosophical leanings and Advaitic intuitions. Such intuitions occur of their own accord in minds cleansed of all impurities. Śrī Śaṅkara bears testimony to this phenomenon. Commenting on *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* he writes : Visions of the seers relating to the Self etc., occur to him, who, free from desire and aspiring to know Brahman, is devoutly engaged in the obligatory works enjoined in Śruti and Smṛti.¹ In his commentary on the *Gītā* he writes : 'The mind refined by the subjugation of the passions and the body and equipped with the teachings of the scriptures and the teacher firms the sense by which the Self may be seen.'² There is also the *Śvetāśvatara* text³ to the effect that where Dharma and ritual are practised, there inspiration is born. The same Upaniṣad says in a later chapter⁴ that the sage Śvetāśvatara is able to perceive Brahman owing to his contemplation and God's grace. It is needless to add that Sri Ramakrishna fully satisfied these conditions. He had perfect control over his physical body and his senses. Passions were dead in him. He was athirst for the realization of Brahman. He had won the grace of Goddess Kālī of whom he was a devout worshipper. That he was given to contemplation from his very early years

and that he used to forget himself in it is vouched by his biographers.⁵

Though it may appear a divagation, it is necessary to sound a note of warning in this connection. Let no one imagine that he can come by enlightenment without any preparation on his part. We must not conclude that the study of the scriptures and the guidance of the teacher can be dispensed with. Let no one therefore rush to the conclusion that enlightenment and the liberation consequent on it will be offered to him on a silver platter as a gift from above and that no previous preparation is necessary.

Apart from the fact that his Guru had adopted Advaita Vedānta as his philosophy of life, there were also other solid reasons for Swami Vivekananda accepting it as his way of life. It was not only most faithful to the Upaniṣads but also the most completely reasoned out system. It was satisfactory from the purely intellectual point of view and also satisfying from the purely religious point of view. It came not to destroy other faiths but to fulfil them. In his opinion Advaita Vedānta was the summation of all faiths, the crown and consummation of all other half-baked systems.

Further, Swami Vivekananda had great

⁵ It is to be noted that Sri Ramakrishna also fully practised the specific spiritual disciplines enjoined in the scriptures of Advaita Vedānta under the guidance of his Guru Totapuri and attained the highest spiritual experiences vouchsafed in that Sadhana. He was a *Brahma-jñānī par excellence* and hence a perfect exemplifier and teacher of non-dualistic way of attaining spiritual illumination, so much so that by a mere touch he could communicate that supreme knowledge to qualified aspirant. —Ed.

Vide : Swami Saradananda : *Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master*, Tr. by Swami Jagadananda, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 1952, pp. 245-66.

¹ I. 10.

² The Complete Works of Sri Sankara, Vani Vilas Press Edition, Vol. XI. p. 37.

³ II. 6.

⁴ VI. 21.

admiration for Śrī Śaṅkara's profound scholarship in the sacred lore of India, his sharp intellect, his skill in dialectical reasoning, and his incisive way of expressing his views. Addressing a London audience on 'The Absolute and Manifestation' in 1896, he said: 'By Buddha the moral side of the philosophy was laid stress upon and by Shankaracharya the intellectual side. He worked out, rationalized, and placed before men the wonderful system of Advaita.'⁶ In another connection he said: 'In Shankaracharya we saw tremendous intellectual power, throwing the scorching light of reason upon everything.'⁷ To Śrī Śaṅkara who gave shape to Advaita Vedānta as a system of philosophy, Swami Vivekananda had therefore the highest respect.

There were also other invisible links between them. Both were crusaders. If Swami Vivekananda waged unceasing warfare against the social evils prevailing in the land at his time, Śrī Śaṅkara did the same thing in his day. He had to fight the degenerate forms of Buddhism, Jainism and also the partial and unsound philosophical doctrines of the Vaiśeṣika, Sāṅkhya and Mīmāṃsā systems. He had also to fight social evils like human sacrifice, branding the body with red-hot metallic discus and so on. It is said in his biographies that he suppressed seventy-two pernicious beliefs prevailing in the country at his time. Both Śrī Śaṅkara and Swami Vivekananda were powerful campaigners against social evils.

Both were conscious that they were born with a mission in life. Imbued with this feeling, both addressed themselves to its fulfilment with a high seriousness of purpose. Hence both were able to accomplish great things

passed away when he was just thirty-two and Swami Vivekananda when he was thirty-nine. It is generally believed that a man has to complete forty before he turns his attention to things of the spirit. But these two mighty giants had completed their work of spreading spirituality through the length and breadth of this vast subcontinent and even beyond its confines before they saw the age of forty. They literally flooded the land with great ideas while yet they were so young.

Swami Vivekananda said: 'Throughout the history of mankind, if any motive power has been more potent than another in the lives of all great men and women, it is that of faith in themselves. Born with the consciousness that they were to be great, they became great.'⁸ What the Swami says in an all-too-brief span of life. Śrī Śaṅkara of other great men of history is true of himself also. He had immense faith in himself even as Śrī Śaṅkara had. In pursuance of his faith and the great mission they had to fulfil both elected very early in life to tread the path of Śreyas (good) in preference to the path of Preyas (pleasant).

The parallel between Śrī Śaṅkara and Swami Vivekananda has been drawn in so much detail with a view to present the role of the latter in the religious and spiritual history of India in its proper perspective. The genius of India has always shown itself in the direction of absorption and assimilation rather than in breaking with the past and starting new cults. Though Śrī Śaṅkara's new ideas amounted to a revolution in the realm of thought, he made it clear that he was only continuing the trend of thought initiated by his great forbears. The same was the feeling of Swami Vivekananda also. Of his Master it has been said that he summed up in himself the spiritual history of two thousand years of three

⁶ *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Almora, Himalayas, Vol. II (1963), p. 139.

⁷ *ibid.* p. 140.

⁸ *ibid.* p. 301.

hundred million people. Swami Vivekananda went about explaining and elaborating the great truths that his Master taught more by example than by precept. Just as Śrī Śaṅkara wrote elaborate commentaries on the Vedānta Sūtras of Bhagavān Vyāsa, even so Swami Vivekananda went about, proclaiming to the world the deep philosophy imbedded in the Vedānta. The sages of the Upaniṣads, Bhagavān Vyāsa, Śrī Śaṅkara, Sri Ramakrishna, and Swami Vivekananda, all fall into line. Each succeeding thinker made it clear that he was only continuing the work of his illustrious predecessors. Swami Vivekananda was quite alive to his kinship with Śrī Śaṅkara. If Advaita Vedānta was placed on an unassailable logical basis by Śrī Śaṅkara, its application to the solution of the practical problems facing the country was left to Swami Vivekananda. The latter made it clear that this part of the work devolved upon him.

Swami Vivekananda subscribed to all the metaphysical doctrines of Advaita Vedānta without reservation of any kind. A few of his words quoted here will bear this out :

‘There is, therefore, but one Atman, one Self, eternally pure, eternally perfect, unchangeable, unchanged ; it has never changed ; and all these various changes in the universe are but appearances in that one Self. Upon it name and form have painted all these dreams ; ...this name and form is the outcome of what is called Māyā. It is this Maya that is making individuals, making one appear different from another. Yet it has no existence. Maya cannot be said to exist. Form cannot be said to exist, because it depends upon the existence of another thing. It cannot be said not to exist, seeing that it makes all this difference. According to the Advaita philosophy, then, this Maya or ignorance—or name and form, or, as it has been called in Europe, “time, space, and causality”—is out of this one Infinite Existence, showing us the manifoldness of the

universe ; in substance, this universe is one. So long as any one thinks that there are two ultimate realities, he is mistaken. When he has come to know that there is but one, he is right.’⁹

The Swami spoke to the effect : You are already that (Brahman), only the intervention of the non-intelligent mind, called Māyā, is hiding that knowledge. When the mind, composed of subtle matter, is quelled, the Atman is effulgent by its own radiance. The mind by itself is non-intelligent and of the nature of darkness. It is the light of the Atman that makes it appear as intelligent. The mind has to be killed. The impressions stored in it can be burnt only by the rise of Self-knowledge. When the mind dies, all limiting adjuncts vanish and you are established in Brahman. Like Śrī Śaṅkara who said that it was the height of folly to mistake the body for the self, Swami Vivekananda also said that we have become bodies, that we are souls which we have forgotten entirely, and that we are neither the gross physical body nor the mind but the pure, unchanging Self. To a learned professor who said that social service, acts of charity and the doing of good to the world belonged to the realm of Māyā and consequently not the concern of the Sannyāsin who was expected to be solely concerned with the path of knowledge as the means to Mokṣa, Swami Vivekananda gave the smashing reply that the ideal of Mukti and the striving for it also belonged to the realm of Māyā for the Ātman was ever free. It was never bound and consequently no one need work for its liberation. So long as we are in the realm of ignorance, there is no inconsistency in a Sannyāsin preaching social service and taking a hand in it himself. To Swami Vivekananda there is no such thing as sin or virtue, there is only ignorance and consequent error. By

⁹ *ibid.* pp. 275-6.

the realization of non-duality, ignorance is dispelled and in its wake, error. The monistic Vedānta is the simplest form in which one can put truth. It is the only way to reach the goal.

Advaita Vedānta has a practical side even as it has an ethical and intellectual aspect. Lord Buddha emphasized the ethical aspect and Śrī Śaṅkara its intellectual. The Swami felt that it was left to him to work out its practical aspect. He accordingly addressed himself to the work of applying its great truths to the solution of the social problems of his day. This was his distinctive way of interpreting Vedānta.

The people of the land were steeped in ignorance, superstition and false beliefs. They were terribly poor. They were also in the grip of disease. Natural calamities like flood, famine, and plague added to their misery. Their condition was most pitiable. The Swami's wanderings through the length and breadth of this land brought him face to face with the deplorable condition of the masses. It was the same wherever he went. No one with a heart to feel could remain unmoved by the sight of the famished and ill-clad creatures who were to be found everywhere. Once when Sri Ramakrishna was on a pilgrimage to Banaras, he came to a place called Deogarh where the sight of the poor so moved him that he sat by their side and refused to move until his care-taker, Mathur Babu, made arrangements to feed them.

Sri Ramakrishna wanted his disciples to take up the service of the stricken and the poor, not in a spirit of condescending pity or compassion, but in the spirit of service to God in the form of human beings. The service of Daridranārāyaṇa was the important and urgent work that demanded the attention of his disciples. He did not, however, want them to think that God had abdicated His duties and they had to step into the breach. Men who engaged in the

work of alleviating the sufferings of the low and the fallen were not to become arrogant or conceited on that account. Service to humanity was to be undertaken in a spirit of utter humility. They were to engage in it as servants of God.

It was exactly in this spirit that the Swami addressed himself to the work of ameliorating the condition of the weaker sections of humanity. He said :

'For the next fifty years this alone shall be our keynote—this our great Mother India. Let all other vain gods disappear for the time from our minds. This is the only god that is awake, our own race, everywhere his hands, everywhere his feet, everywhere his ears, he covers everything. All other gods are sleeping. What vain gods shall we go after and yet cannot worship the god that we see all round us, the Virāt? When we have worshipped this, we shall be able to worship all other gods. Before we can crawl half a mile, we want to cross the ocean, like Hanumān! It cannot be. Everyone going to be a Yogi, everyone going to meditate! It cannot be. The whole day mixing with the world, with Karma Kānda, and in the evening sitting down and blowing through your nose! Is it so easy? Should Rishis come flying through the air, because you have blown three times through the nose? Is it a joke? It is all nonsense. What is needed is Chittashuddhi, purification of the heart. And how does that come? The first of all worship is the worship of Virāt—of those all around us. Worship it. Worship is the exact equivalent of the Sanskrit word, and no other English word will do. These are all our gods—men and animals; and the first gods we have to worship are our countrymen. These we have to worship, instead of being jealous of each other and fighting each other. It is the most terrible Karma for which we are suffering, and yet it does not open our eyes!'¹⁰

He was deeply pained to see men professing lofty Vedānta and yet remaining callous to

¹⁰ *ibid.* Vol. III (1960), pp. 300-1

the sufferings of the poor. In a letter that he wrote in 1893 he said : 'No religion on earth preaches the dignity of humanity in such a lofty strain as Hinduism, and no religion on earth treads upon the necks of the poor and the low in such a fashion as Hinduism.'¹¹ His emotion at the thought of the poor and distressed was so roused on one occasion that he said to Girish Chandra Ghosh : '...even if a thousand births have to be taken in order to relieve the sorrows of the world, surely I will take them. If by my doing that, even a single soul may have a little bit of his grief relieved, why, I will do it. Well, what avails it all to have only one's own liberation? All men should be taken along with oneself on that way. Can you say why a feeling like this comes up foremost in my mind?'¹²

The philosophical basis for the Swami's concept of social service is to be found in the utterances of the Upaniṣads : 'All this is Brahman.'¹³ 'All this is Atman.'¹⁴ 'This Self is Brahman.'¹⁵ Dozens of other utterances could be cited. In fact, the main theme of all the Upaniṣads is that Man is essentially Divine. All men are children of immortality.

With a view to bring relief to people afflicted by drought, famine, flood, or some dire contagious disease, the Swami founded the Ramakrishna Mission. The members of this mission were to have immense faith in themselves and in their capacity to organize relief measures. Wherever there was plague, famine, flood, or distress due to the fury of nature, the members of this mission were to rush to the spot, form some idea of the extent of the relief that will be required, appeal to the public and philanthropic institutions for help, and plunge into the work. They had to show exemplary

patience in the discharge of their work. The Ramakrishna Mission is doing the work allotted to it by the Swami with the utmost efficiency even today. It is the first to take the field wherever there is distress. It has great achievements to its credit. Any philanthropic institution may well be proud of it. The founding of the Mission is the Swami's monumental contribution to the service of stricken folk. He wanted young men, strong of body and mind, to dedicate themselves to this noble work.

Nothing could be done by the weak and the faint-hearted. '*Nāyamātmā balahīnena labhyaḥ*'—'This Ātman is not attainable by the weak man'—was a statement that was frequently on his lips. 'Be fearless' (Abhīḥ) was the *mantra* that he taught to the members of the Mission.

Side by side with external help, there must be self-help also. When all is said and done, people must learn to stand on their own legs. They must develop inner strength and face their problems with courage. They must not allow the feeling of helplessness to overpower them. Weakness, physical or mental, worked more havoc than external calamities. Therefore he said :

'Tell it to men who are weak and persist in telling it. You are the Pure One; awake and arise, O mighty one, this sleep does not become you. Awake and arise, it does not befit you. Think not that you are weak and miserable. Almighty, arise and awake, and manifest your own nature. It is not fitting that you think yourself a sinner. It is not fitting that you think yourself weak. Say that to the world, say it to yourselves, and see what a practical result comes, see how with an electric flash everything is manifested, how everything is changed. Tell that to mankind, and show them their power. Then we shall learn how to apply it in our daily lives.'¹⁶

¹¹ *ibid.* Vol. V, (1959), p. 15.

¹² *ibid.* Vol. VI, (1956), pp. 502-3.

¹³ *Mundaka Upaniṣad* II. ii. 11.

¹⁴ *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* VII. xxv. 2.

¹⁵ *Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad* II. v. 19.

¹⁶ *op. cit.* Vol. II (1963), p. 304.

To become more and more self-reliant, the people had to come together, cultivate the feeling of oneness, and integrate themselves into a nation. Team-work and the dedication to a great cause will help the process of nation-building. The Swami was painfully aware of the lack of unity among his countrymen. Though he studiously kept out of politics, he yet tried to build up the nation by teaching the people to develop inner strength, to shed suspicion and fear, to obey commands and work in a spirit of self-sacrifice. It will be remembered that in his day Śrī Śaṅkara also tried to weld the people of India into a nation by the founding of religious institutions called Maths in the four corners of the country.

But the Swami's nationalism had no narrowness or exclusiveness in it. Intense as was his love for his country, his love was not confined to his country alone. There was nothing chauvinistic about his patriotism. His heart was large enough to take within its embrace the whole of humanity. His ultimate ideal was internationalism and brotherhood of man. He loved the whole of mankind as if they belonged to one big family. To the ideal enshrined in the statement,—‘to large-hearted people the whole human race is like one family’—he paid not merely lip service but believed in it as an article of faith and worked for it with religious devotion. When he was in America and Europe he never felt that he was in a strange land amidst aliens. His opening words, ‘Sisters and Brothers of America’, at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893 showed the warmth of his love. Those words came out spontaneously. They were not premeditated. Not only the people of America and Europe were his brothers and sisters but also the people of Africa, Mongolia, and China. When he was refused admission in a hotel in a southern state of America under the mistaken belief that he was probably a Negro, he could have denied

it and gained admission, but the idea was repugnant to him. He said: ‘What, rise at the expense of another! I was never born for that.’ His feeling of kinship with the whole of the human race brings to our minds the concluding lines in Śrī Śaṅkara's ‘*Annāpūrṇāstotram*’: ‘My mother is goddess Pārvatī, my father is the great god Īśvara; all devotees of Lord Śiva are my relatives and all the three worlds are my native land.’

Vedānta with Swami Vivekananda was not merely a creed based on intellectual conviction. It was a way of life with him. He applied its great principles to every department of life, private and public, and showed how one who lived by it could transform this world into the very paradise on earth. It was not for nothing that he had sat at the feet of his great Master who lived Vedānta every moment of his life. The result was that Vedānta became the flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone. To live in accordance with it was as easy for him as breathing is to all of us. It cost him no effort at all. Association with such a mighty seer as Sri Ramakrishna for five years had transformed him into the likeness of his Master. In the very first stanza of his ‘*Śataśloki*’ Śrī Śaṅkara says that the great distinction of the ‘sadguru’ is that he works this miracle of transforming his disciple into a likeness of himself.

A direct consequence of accepting Advaita Vedānta as one's way of life is the instinctive feeling of respect for all religions. The Master used to say: ‘As many faiths, so many paths.’ From his personal experience he vouched for the truth of all religions. Though the paths were different, the goal that was attained was the same. Having lived the life of a devout Hindu and reached God by strict adherence to the disciplines laid in the Hindu scriptures, the Paramahansa wanted to make sure if the disciplines laid down in other religions like Islam and Christianity also led to the same goal. Being

a daring experimenter he straightway adopted the way of life of the devout Mohammedan. He also had the vision of Christ. Finally he was satisfied that the goal they led to was the same.

With this great example before him, the Swami cultivated equal respect for all religions. He knew also that theological pluralism was the direct consequence of philosophic monism. Addressing a congregation in the Universalist Church in California on the 28th of January 1900, on 'The Way to the Realization of Universal Religion', the Swami said:

'I accept all religions that were in the past and worship with them all; I worship God with every one of them in whatever form they worship Him. I shall go to the mosque of the Mohammedan, I shall enter the Christian's church and kneel before the Crucifix; I shall enter the Buddhistic temple where I shall take refuge in the Buddha and in his Law. I shall go into the forest and sit down in meditation with the Hindu, who is trying to see the Light which enlightens the heart of every one.'¹⁷ Needless to say that this was a practical demonstration of the truth contained in R̥g-Veda. 'That which exists is One; sages call It by various names.' In 'Haristuti' Śrī Śaṅkara has also said: 'Owing to divergences in their outlook, people speak of the One Reality under many names.'

Swami Vivekananda firmly believed that this was the distinctive message that India had to deliver to the world. She could justify her existence only by teaching this great lesson both by example and by precept. She had to proclaim from the house-

tops: God is one though the paths are different. Let us therefore not quarrel in the name of religion. Let no one swear by his own religion and seek to maintain that its followers alone will be saved. Let there be no bigotry or fanaticism in regard to religious beliefs. Let us not merely tolerate other religions as a matter of policy but develop positive respect for them.

This was the grand dream of the Swami. He expected it to be implemented by the future generations of his countrymen. Towards the close of his life he said: What does it matter! I have given them enough for fifteen hundred years. What he meant was that the task of carrying out his dream in its entirety will keep his countrymen fully occupied for fifteen hundred years. Śrī Śaṅkara could have said the same thing with regard to the movements that he set on foot. Great ideas take time to be transformed into living realities.

Thus it will be seen that the Swami's ideas are not altogether new. They are to be found in the Veda, the Upaniṣads, the Gītā and the writings of Śrī Śaṅkara. The Swami's distinctive contribution is the new emphasis that he placed on them and the forceful manner in which he gave expression to them. Coming from the depths of his heart, his words were like winged messengers whose appeal no one could resist. Romain Rolland wrote of the Swami's words: 'His words are great music, phrases in the style of Beethoven, stirring rhythms like the march of Handel choruses. I cannot touch these sayings of his, ... without receiving a thrill through my body like an electric shock.'¹⁸

¹⁷ *ibid.* Vol. II. (1963), p. 374.

¹⁸ *Life of Vivekananda*, Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Himalayas, (1947), p. 162.

FROM DOGMATISM OF PHILOSOPHIES TO DEMOCRACY OF RELIGIONS

DR. A. C. DAS

As we know, the word 'Philosophy' is nowadays taken in some different senses. For this paper, however, philosophy means what it meant for the first philosopher in ancient times. It, in short, means quest for the source of the world, that is, for ultimate reality.

As philosophy is concerned with the ultimate, it seems very difficult to make a beginning in it. But, as Bosanquet points out, philosophy may begin anywhere¹. Some philosophers, in fact, begin with the world of ordinary experience, and proceed by way of analysis of its nature and constitution. Aristotle, for example, takes the things of the world under ten heads², and causality as the fundamental law of Nature³, and proceeds to philosophize on them. Descartes, on the threshold of modern philosophy, nevertheless, denies everything and persists in his denial in his quest for certainty. And he has three reasons for his denying. First, we receive ideas and beliefs from others when our intellectual powers are not developed. So erroneous ideas and beliefs settle down in our minds and in the end become prejudices that stand between us and truth; so we must discard old ideas and beliefs and begin afresh. Second, sometimes our senses deceive us; that is, sometimes we are subject to illusion; so what is the guarantee that they are not always deceiving us? Third, we in our sleep dream of things that exist nowhere. There is, then no guarantee that we are not always dreaming⁴.

Descartes, therefore, adopts denying as the method of absolutely rational criticism. And he is not to accept anything until he has found it to be absolutely certain. But he does not need to doubt or deny long. On reflection he finds that the act of doubting posits the doubter. Thus in doubting he becomes certain of the existence of his self as the doubter. The self-certitude of the thinking ego as the implication of his overall scepticism is thus established for Descartes. That indeed becomes the starting-point for his philosophizing.

But how to make a beginning in philosophy if it is the quest for the first principle? This beginning in any case must be objective and not subjective—not a feeling or a preconceived idea. Some identify speculation with reflection and maintain that philosophy starts with a problem or in a problematic situation. But the question remains: What problem, or what problematic situation? Such a beginning, if any, must obviously be arbitrary and so other than a logical one⁵. Again the problem in question, may proceed, as Positivists point out, from prejudice or linguistic confusion. In Hegel's words, 'What is determinate contains an other for a first element.'⁶ In the beginning of philosophy, then, there should be no need to refer to anything beyond it, and the beginning must be the absolute abstraction from the determinate, and would be just Being.⁷

¹ *Science and Philosophy*, George Allen & Unwin, London 1927, p. 22.

² *Categories*, Chap. 4.

³ *Metaphysics*, A, Chapters 1-3.

⁴ Ed. N. K. Smith: *Descartes' Philosophical writing*, Macmillan & Co., Ltd., London, 1952, p. 198.

⁵ Hegel's *Science of Logic*, Volume One, Second Impression, translated by W. H. Johnson and L. G. Struthers, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London, 1951, p. 82.

⁶ *Op. Cit.*, p. 84.

⁷ Wallace: *The Logic of Hegel*, Oxford, Clarendon Press 1894, p. 302.

In Hegel's dialectic, which is conceived as the pathway to the Absolute, thought begins with Being, as it is not contaminated by any presupposition whatever. The Absolute is admittedly ultimate reality and can be grasped by thought, says Hegel, when it has been purged of all prejudices and preconceptions. Determinate things are given in experience but are not logically established. This is one reason why metaphysics cannot start with the world of experience. The metaphysician, therefore, ought to begin by negating all determinations. According to Hegel, as according to Plato, pure thought or thought as it is in itself, free from empirical contents, begins with the absolute negation of all that is found in experience.⁸

Hegel now analyzes Being, which is the least conception of reality, and finds that it is absolutely without determination, i.e. without content. Being thus shows itself to be Nothing or Non-being, which, though indeterminate, like Being, is apparently the negation of Being and is on that account, the opposite Being. Non-being is nevertheless thought of as something and is, on that score, Being. Being and Non-being, though opposites, thus pass into each other. Pure Being is obviously infected with Non-being.

Jean Paul Sartre, however, brings some severe criticisms against Hegel's dialectical concept of Nothingness.

These I summarize as follows:

1. For Hegel the true concrete is the whole or system. So Being, being 'the most abstract of abstraction' from the whole is the poorest possible conception if we separate it from 'surpassing towards essence'. Contentless Being, then, passes into its opposite Non-being. But the relation between Being and phenomena

is not the same as that between an abstraction and the concrete whole. Being is indeed the ground of the characteristics of the phenomena themselves.

2. It may be said in defence of Hegel that every determination is negation and that to affirm what a thing is, is to say what it is not. So the thought of Being involves the thought of what it is not, i.e. Non-being. Non-being is verily what Being is not. Thus Being and Non-being, they say, 'link up'. But it is not that an object is known by way of denying that it is other than what it is itself. An object is on the other hand directly fixed on and known by itself. In a like manner, we know Being by fixing upon it. To reach it we do not have recourse to any process of negating.⁹
3. Now consider Hegel's view that Being and Non-being are two opposites. If they are really opposites, they must be contemporary; that is to say, they must exist side by side to be compared. But, strictly, Non-being is not the opposite of Being. The former is simply the contradiction of the latter.¹⁰ And, if Being is ever negated, it is because Being is wholly indeterminate, empty. One may introduce negation into Being from outside and then see or say that Being passes into Non-being. But nevertheless Being is. 'Negation cannot touch the nucleus of the being of Being which is absolute plenitude and entire positivity', though negation aims at Being. According to Hegel, Being is as empty as Non-being. But bare emptiness is meaningless. Emptiness is emptiness of something, and if Being is empty, it is empty of determination except its identity with itself. It is to be stated against Hegel that Being is, while Non-being or Nothingness is not. There is indeed a fundamental difference between the two, and there is no point in saying that the one passes into the other.
4. We should take care not to posit Noth-

⁸ Ed. by Wanda Oryuski: *Hegel*, New York, 1960, p. 143; *Hegel's Science of Logic*, vol. I, 1929, pp. 80-86.

⁹ Jean-Paul Sartre: *Being and Nothingness*, Methuen Co. Ltd., London, 1957, pp. 13-14.

¹⁰ *Op. Cit.*, p. 15.

ingness 'as an original abyss' from which being takes its rise. We, of course, often say 'I know nothing.' But here 'nothing' does not mean absolute naught but the totality of Being considered as truth. Reversing Spinoza's dictum *determinatio est negatio*, we should say that Nothingness posits Being, whereas 'Being has no need of Nothingness in order to be conceived. Non-being exists only on the surface of Being'.¹¹

Sartre's criticisms of Hegel's theory of Being and Nothingness have much force. But we believe he has not considered one side of Hegel's position which relates to the method whereby Hegel formed the conception of Being. He negated all determinate things and was in the end left with nothing. He only discovered Being in Nothing on second thoughts: as he argued, Nothing was after all something. So for Hegel Nothing or Non-being is original, and Being derives from Nothing. Sartre might, however, say that it is absurd to say that Nothing is something. According to him, Nothing is simply not. Therefore, there is no question of Being deriving from Nothing. And, if we in any case start with Nothing, we remain with it, and fail to reach out to Being. Nevertheless Sartre's position that Being has a positive core, that we fix upon it directly, is dogmatic. If we do not quite know, or if Sartre does not quite say, what the positive core of Being is like, Being remains indeterminate despite his protestation. And Being as absolutely indeterminate is indistinguishable from Nothing. However, Sartre's point that Being and Nothing are not opposites can be established from a new angle of view. As Being passed into Non-being (Nothing), Being is not there to be contrasted with Non-being; so also conversely.

There is another way of conceiving Being and Nothing. In his *What is Metaphysics?*

Martin Heidegger conceives them as two necessary components of the real.¹² 'Nothing is that', says Heidegger, 'which makes the revelation of what is as such possible for human existence.'¹³

Husserl made an attempt to reach the transcendental realm by a super-psychological withdrawal from the world, including the self, by rising above the common-sense as well as the scientific standpoint. He endeavoured to build up a universal philosophy by a universal method, which could command universal assent. But the question was: What would remain over when the world, including the individual selves, was bracketed?¹⁴ Heidegger and Sartre have between them attempted to answer this question and to define 'the region of Being' which Husserl's bracketing would open to us.

We often make negative statements like 'This is not blue', 'He is not stoutly built', 'There is no jar on the ground'. Suppose that there are no negative facts corresponding to these statements. But Heidegger disagrees with the view that negation is construction. He points out that Being and Non-being are no abstractions and that negation is not confined to propositions, but covers many an attitude, such as hate, prohibition, regret, fear etc.¹⁵ In Heidegger's view, there is a 'preontological' comprehension of Being involved in the conduct of the human reality as well as or Non-being involved in the negative propositions it makes and in the negative attitudes it adopts. According to Heidegger, however, one becomes immediately aware of Nothing or Non-being in the experience of what is called Dread.

¹² Sartre: *Being and Nothingness*, p. 17.

¹³ Michael Wyschogrod: *Kierkegaard and Heidegger*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1954, p. 73; Heidegger: *What is Metaphysics?* p. 42.

¹⁴ E. L. Allen: *Existentialism from Within*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1953, p. 17.

¹⁵ *Op. Cit.*, p. 20.

¹¹ *Op. Cit.*, p. 16.

But Dread is distinct from fear. Fear is concerned with definite particular things or interests. Thus we fear to lose the purse, to get lost in the wood, to lose our friends, families, and so forth. Dread on the other hand is indefinite feeling in the sense that it is not linked to any definite thing. Dread is indeed the experience of the Nothing. In this Heidegger draws upon Kierkegaard's conception of Anguish.

Kierkegaard compares Anguish to the feeling of dizziness on a great height. 'Anguish is different from fear on account of the indetermination of its object. It is like the vertigo which we feel on top of a precipice. Anguish is the vital tone of existence—bound to the feeling of temporality and stretches towards the future, where the possibles bifurcate and ramify.'¹⁶ All determination, according to Heidegger, is surpassing in the sense that it involves a withdrawal from a particular point of view and the world Dasein posits by surpassing towards itself. But surpassing as such is based on, or conditioned by, Nothing. Being is organized into the world from the point of view of Nothing. There is, then, Nothingness around Being, though Being expels the Nothing from itself. Being, including the self and the world, is somewhat like an island in the sea of Nothingness.

Sartre in his own way criticizes this view of Heidegger. I may indicate his analysis thus. If the world appears as the world, it gives itself as being, and the emergence of the human reality (Dasein) is indeed the necessary counterpart of the apprehension of the world. But how does Dasein emerge in or out of Non-being?

Heidegger may be right in his contention that Nothingness is the foundation of nega-

tion. But if Nothingness is really the ground for negation, it is because the 'not' represents its essential structure, which is taken to be just emptiness or disguised otherness. Now how about Dasein? We are told that Dasein is 'outside of itself, is in the world', and is open to possibilities. But possibilities open out of Nothing and are conditioned by it. All this, then, means that Dasein is not itself and that it 'surpasses' the world because it posits itself as not being in itself and not being in the world. This is selfness. The self is self-transcending. Hegel takes mind as negative in this sense. Sartre now puts to both Hegel and Heidegger the same question, though he phrases it differently in the two cases.

To Hegel, Sartre says :

'It is not sufficient to posit mind as mediation and the negative. It is necessary to demonstrate negativity as the structure of being of mind. What must mind be in order to be able to constitute itself as negative?'

And to Heidegger : 'If negation is the original structure of transcendence, what must be the original structure of "human reality" in order to be able also to transcend the world?'¹⁷

If Nothingness is original and is the soul of transcendence itself, how can this extra-cosmic Nothingness furnish a foundation for 'the little pools of non-being' we come across in the negative judgements that we make in ordinary life? It is absurd to think that in negations like 'Mr. Smith is not in this room', 'I have no fever', etc. we rise to ontological Nothingness and then return to normal empirical life again.

Sartre suggests that man himself is the creator of Nothingness and that nothingness arises in the world through the negations he makes. And it is on Being that Non-being is based, he says. But Being in any

¹⁶ Guido de Ruggiero : *Existentialism*, Secker & Warburg, London, 1946, p. 27; of S. Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Dread*, Princeton University Press, 1957, p. 38.

¹⁷ *Being and Nothingness*. v. 19.

case remains indeterminate except for its working in the human as well as the objective world.

Kierkegaard indeed speaks of Being but he identifies it with the eternal God. According to him, existence exhibits itself as the meeting point of the eternal and the temporal. 'Existence is at the same time the closing of individuality within itself and its opening to Divine, it is the finitude of man and his immersion in the infinitude of being.'¹⁸ For Heidegger and Sartre, as for Nietzsche, God is dead. All three interpret Being non-theistically, and Heidegger for this part posits Nothingness behind or at the basis of the world, so that everything, including the selves, arises out of, and is in the end lost in, the inane of Non-being, how, even he, obviously, does not quite know. This Heidegger's position is clearly analogous to that of the nihilist Buddhist, according to whom, there is a Void out of which the procession of things and beings unintelligibly emerges and in which the procession unaccountably terminates: annihilation is the destiny of all. The upshot of these atheistic and nihilistic views is this, that there is no ontological foundation for the values human beings strive to realize in their lives. They as they are, are simply to become and to be lost in Nothingness. Philosophers talk big about men and things, and the difference between them shows that they are far from Truth. Philosophy nonetheless has its value. It represents an attempt to understand the universe. But reason, which as its organ, is discursive and comes short of transcendence. Even if it is true to say that we cannot grasp the ultimate, the question remains: Can we, creatures of time, ever experience the Eternal?

Kierkegaard has an answer to this question. He says:

¹⁸ Ruggiero, p. 27.

'The eternal is conceived in a perfectly abstract way. Like the blue mountains the eternal is the confine of the temporal, but he who lives energetically in the temporal never gets to the confine. The particular individual who reconnoitres it is the soldier who stands outside of time.'¹⁹

Kierkegaard means to say that the eternal is not altogether beyond the temporal. The temporal, on the other hand, is 'permeated by and conserved in the eternal, but here there is no trace of the cosmical'.²⁰

It must, however, be admitted that the eternal in its ultimate nature transcends the temporal, though the former does not quite fall beyond the latter. How can man, in that case, belonging as he does to the temporal order, ever aspire to reach or realize the eternal? Kierkegaard straightway says that there is, or can be, no realization except through revelation. God is eternal and infinite, and 'we are ignorant and are in sin'.²¹

Braman is like an ocean which is too vast for human speech to describe. We are overwhelmed by a portion of it that we see. So the ultimate reality, God or Brahman, as we may call it, is far too vast for human speech to describe. To take a parable from Sri Ramakrishna, once some ants came on a mountain of sugar; they wanted to carry the mountain home,²² not knowing that the mountain consisted of an infinite number of particles, and that it could not be exhausted by their limited mouths. And why should they carry the mountain at all? Each of them is filled by a particle of sugar that it takes.

Such indeed is the condition of those

¹⁹ *The Concept of Dread*, Princeton University Press, 1957, p. 135.

²⁰ *Op. Cit.*, p. 137.

²¹ *Philosophical Fragments*, Oxford University Press, London, 1936, p. 10.

²² *Op. Cit.*, p. 90; 'M'. *Kathamrita* (in Bengali), II, VIII, 3.

who have realized the supreme Being. Most of them are left with the impression that they have realized the whole Reality, or that Reality is as they have realized it. But the truth is that a human being, being finite, can only get hold of a modicum of Reality. A little of it fills and overwhelms him. Why is there, then, a fuss about Reality? Some say that it is one and without form, others that it is personal and has forms.

According to the Advaitist, Reality is absolutely indeterminate, and in the state of *nirvikalpa samādhi* the individual self becomes one with Reality. If to realize reality, the indeterminate, is to become it, how could there be any talk about it? If the conditioned being, somehow sheds his individuality and merges into the unconditioned, he is lost forever and cannot return to mankind with a message of the Absolute. Once a doll of salt went to fathom the sea.²³ But it melted away altogether. Therefore, if the Absolutist's account of the nature of Reality and of the state of realization be final, there is no coming back from that state which is professedly one of absolute identity.

There is no denying, however, that the *sādhaka* (spiritual seeker) often returns from *nirvikalpa samādhi* to the empirical plane. But what makes him do so? In *nirvikalpa samādhi*, the aspirant as an individual is wholly lost; on the other hand, as the Absolute is transcendent, no activity can be ascribed to it. In the circumstances, the return of the *sādhaka* from *nirvikalpa samādhi* to the plane of empirical life is an enigma.

In every religion there is a record of the realization of God. Christianity, as we know, is based on the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. Apparently Jesus was a human being; but in his inner nature he was a spiritual form of God. His disciples saw when he once transfigured himself be-

fore them. God also appeared in luminous forms to the Jewish patriarchs.

In the *Pāñcarātra* or *Bhāgavata* religion, five basic forms of God are mentioned, namely, *Sūkṣma* or the Subtle, *Vyūha*, *Vibhava*, *Arcā*, and *Antaryāmī*. The subtle form is eternal and is the form of God as He is in Himself. *Vyūha* means the first spiritual manifestation of God and comprises of three stages: From Vāsudeva, God Himself, proceeds the form called Saṅkarṣaṇa from which emerges Pradyumna, and from this arises a third form named Aniruddha. All three forms are confined to the spiritual world. *Vibhava* is a revelation of God in earthly form and primarily means an Incarnation. Sometimes God descends to the human world through human birth in order to fulfil the yearning of His devotees. God, again, appears in an invisible form wherever He is worshipped. Further He is infinite and as much as immanent in the finite selves.²⁴

In the Tantra, ten forms of the Divine Mother are mentioned, namely, Kālī, Tārā, Soḍaśī, Bhuvaneśvarī, Bhairavī, Chinna-mastā, Kamalā, Bagalāmukhī, Dhūmāvatī, and Mātangi. There are many other forms of the Deity mentioned in the Hindu scripture, such as Śiva, Durgā, Nārāyaṇa, and others.

Sri Aurobindo in his *The Mother* speaks of four powers of the Mother, which are indeed 'forms of her outstanding personalities, portions and embodiments of her divinity through whom she acts on her creature, orders and harmonises her creations in the worlds and directs the working out of her thousand forces'.²⁵ The Mother is one but diverse in her forms or aspects. There are four great aspects, however. One is her perso-

²⁴ F. Otto Schrader: *Introduction to the Pancharatra and Ahirbudhnya Samhita*, Adyar, 1916, p. 35.

²⁵ Sri Aurobindo: *The Mother*, Arya Sahitya Bhawan, Calcutta, 1928, p. 35.

²³ *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, Vol. I, p. 91.

nality marked by absolute calm, all comprehending wisdom, all benevolent compassion and sovereign power. Another is her personality of all surpassing strength and overwhelming passion and will. The third aspect or form is the form of vivid, sweet beauty and harmony, rhythm and grace, while the fourth is the form of unlimited capacity for intimate knowledge and perfection in everything. To the four forms or aspects Sri Aurobindo gives the names—Maheśvarī, Mahākālī, Mahālakṣmī and Mahāsarasvatī.

Ramakrishna nevertheless pointed out that the spiritual forms in which God revealed or might reveal Himself are infinite, and that we could not limit down the number of the forms of God. He also made it clear that if an aspirant came to realize God in one form, he was filled and overwhelmed. That was quite enough for a finite being, though he might be put into other forms of realization as He pleased. He might be through His grace lifted into the state of *nirvikalpa samādhi* to realize the formless. Brahman-realization or the realization of indeterminate Brahman as well is in the gift of God. An aspirant by himself cannot possibly rise into that state. The Divine Person is therefore the pivot on which the absolute and relative worlds turn. He is the unity that goes into differentiation and at the same time transcends it. God cannot possibly be exhausted by His manifestations.

One may still raise the problem of relation between God and the Absolute. By God we assuredly mean the supreme Being or Reality, eternal and infinite. So if the Absolute is the Ultimate Reality, it is identical with God. If indeed there is a distinction between God and the Absolute, it is the distinction between the Absolute as uncreated and uncreating, and God as uncreated and creating. But this distinction is one without a difference. It all means that God creates the universe and transcends creating and whatever is created. That is to say,

God, though the supreme person ordering everything in the universe, ever has a transcendent aspect of His nature, which is sought to be described as undifferentiated or indeterminate. If we then identify the Absolute with the indeterminate, it becomes only an aspect of the divine Being. Ramakrishna tells us that the Divine cannot be exhausted by any finite spirit in any spiritual experience. He reveals Himself in a twofold way nevertheless, as both personal and impersonal, the one to the devotee and the other to those who seek the indeterminate.

Realization on the part of the devotee is confined to divine forms or to divine personality. This is nonetheless enough for him; it fills his whole being. But the divine forms are not false or illusory. To repeat, they are the forms in which God reveals Himself to the devotee, for God the Infinite could not be nakedly presented to any one. We cannot, of course, validate the forms by any speculative criterion. There is, however, a practical criterion to follow, in regard to them, to show that they are not illusory presentations. It is that one who realizes or experiences a divine form is transformed and filled with unspeakable joy. Similarly, the realization of the formless is enough for the aspirant concerned.

With some metaphysicians illusion and appearance are two categories by which they try to understand the universe. Revelation is indeed a third category by which spiritual experiences, especially experiences of divine forms are sought to be grasped. And the two forms of revelation and realization mark the limits of the human realization of the Deity. One who is blessed with these two kinds of realization Ramakrishna calls the *Vijñānī*, the most perfect man, since he has realized what of God is possible, to realize. Such is his state as combines within itself the realization of the personal and that of the Impersonal. He goes into *nirvikalpa*

samādhi and comes out of it again with a purified ego to realize that he has realized the Formless or Impersonal, and that the things and beings of the world are the manifestations of the Supreme. He also realizes God with a form or forms in *savikalpa samādhi*. He may start with either of these and end with the other. His experience marks the consummation of the human realization of the Deity.

Karl Jaspers distinguishes between being-there, being one-self and being-in-itself. Being-there is the objective world, being-oneself is Dasein (human life), and being-in-itself is the ultimate²⁶. One indeed seeks to realize oneself in the world, and being-in-itself is authenticated by the impulse in the self to transcend itself and the world. But every self works under necessary limitations. If we posit being-in-itself, we do so only through personal experience, and philosophy is not to prove, but only to point the way to it. We may say that according to Jaspers, there is something or Being which exceeds us and the world, and one 'bears witness' to it through one's impulse to transcend one's situation. 'God is reality absolute', he says, 'and cannot be encompassed by any of the historical manifestations through which he speaks to man.'²⁷ Jaspers means to say that there can be no direct knowledge of God; there can be only faith. Philosophy nonetheless represents the impulse to know and grasp transcendence. But the philosopher is ever foiled in his attempt to reach it, though he is ever impelled to transcend the world. 'We are creatures of this sort', says Jaspers, 'and we are lost if we relinquish our orientation to the dry land. But we are not content to remain there.'²⁸ Our state is like that

of the sea-gull who flies out to survey the sea. He after some time becomes fatigued and rests on the mast of a ship. But he is not content to remain there. Being called by the sea, he again starts out. And the same process he repeats endlessly. Similarly, we are not satisfied with our state. We are impelled to transcend it. We rise to reach that which encompasses our empirical being. But we are foiled in our attempt and return to empirical life which is secure with us. But we again feel dissatisfied with our situation and are drawn by the transcendent. Still, we again fail to grasp it. We are thus ever tossed between the empirical and the transcendent.

Sri Aurobindo, for his part, is sceptical of the power of the intellect to reach the supreme Being. He emphasizes the point that the finite being cannot possibly exhaust the Infinite. He says, 'There is then a supreme Reality eternal, absolute, and infinite. Because it is absolute and infinite, it is in its essence indeterminable. It is describable neither by our negations, *neti neti*, nor by affirmations, for we cannot fix it by saying it is that, it is that, *iti, iti*.'²⁹ Sri Aurobindo is, however, all for gnosticism. According to him, though we cannot comprehend reality by intellect or thought, we have or can have complete knowledge of it by the form of knowledge which he calls knowledge by identity. As he says, reality determines itself by the fundamental laws of its being, and these truths are 'directly seized' by a spiritual intuition or a spiritual experience.

There is, as we see, a world of difference between Karl Jaspers, on the one hand, and Sri Aurobindo, on the other. Sri Aurobindo's view that we can have complete or integral knowledge of Reality by a spiritual experience is obviously opposed to Ramakrishna's

²⁶ Karl Jaspers: *Way to Wisdom*, Yale University Press, 1954, pp. 31-35.

²⁷ *Op. Cit.*, p. 47.

²⁸ *Op. Cit.*, p. 131; *Philosophy*, Review of Jasper's *Reason and experience*, vol. xxxiii, 1958.

²⁹ Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*, Vol. II, Part I, Calcutta, 1940, pp. 41-2.

teaching that Reality cannot be exhausted by a finite being in any spiritual experience. The positions of Karl Jaspers and that of Sri Aurobindo are two extremes which are nullified by Ramakrishna's spiritual experiences and experiments. Ramakrishna is far from the sceptical position of Karl Jaspers, for he himself realized God in many forms. Apart from revelation what God is like nobody can tell. He is ineffable. What He is in Himself beyond the personal and the impersonal no one can say.³⁰ *Sadhakas* realize or can realize either or both of these aspects, but, being human and finite, they cannot exhaust God. That is all.

Here Ramakrishna's parable of the chameleon is in point. There was once a quarrel about the colour of a chameleon. Some said that it was red; others claimed that it was green; yet others contended that it was yellow. Then someone came up and said that he used to reside under the tree on which the chameleon in dispute lived, and that, as he observed the animal assumed alternately some colours—red, green, etc. Sometimes, however, as he told the disputants, it had no colour whatsoever.

Some may argue that this is only an analogy and cannot help us much, for a particular colour is true of the chameleon at a time. But we cannot afford to miss the point of the parable. It is that the colours the animal assumes in succession cannot exhaust its nature. The chameleon is there, even though it is without any colour whatever. And it is not correct to say that the chameleon with a particular colour is less real than the chameleon without a colour. Nor does it follow that the chameleon without any colour is the real chameleon and that whatever colour it assumes is illusory.

³⁰ *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, Vol. I, p. 150; cf. Swami Saradananda: *The Life of Sri Ramakrishna* (in Bengali), in two volumes, Vol. I, part I, p. 91, Udbodhan, Calcutta, 1362 B.S.

Obviously, Ramakrishna's is revolutionary teaching. It surpasses all scriptures, the Veda, Vedanta, and the rest. The problem of two Brahman mentioned in the scriptures is easily solved in the light of Ramakrishna's teaching. The two Brahman really mean two states of realization, in one of which God, the Infinite, reveals Himself in a spiritual form and in the other as the formless, which together mark the consummation of human realization.

The word 'Democracy' is relevant to Ramakrishna's teaching regarding the religions.

But Democracy is variously defined.³¹

According to some it is a form of government, which is based on the self-rule of the people. According to others it is a way of social life. No definition can, however, be adequate to the long history which the word covers. Democracy was there in ancient Greece. But that was direct Democracy in which the whole people discharged the legislative function. This form of Democracy was possible in those days, because the state was generally a City state with a population of not more than 10,000 citizens. Every citizen was entitled to attend a legislative meeting and to vote on an issue discussed at the meeting.

There is a vast difference between ancient and modern democracy, however. The latter tended to be wide in its scope; and sought to abolish all differences and privileges—those of birth, class, race, sex and creed. The conception of equality points to the essence of Democracy. It in any case emphasizes the equality of all individuals and their equal rights to life, liberty, property, free worship, and the pursuit of happiness. Democracy is, in short, the form of the State in which the individuals as political units

³¹ *Vide Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. 7, 1959, p. 180; also *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, Vols. V-VI, New York, 1954, p. 76.

are on the same footing; one is not inferior or superior to another.

When we speak of Democracy of religions all we mean is negatively this, that the religions are not opposed to each other, and positively that they are on the same footing in so far as their goal and achievement are concerned. The ignorant people nonetheless extol their own religion at the expense of the others. According to Ramakrishna, as we have seen, we, being finite, can never reach or realize God, the Infinite, as such. We can realize God only in the form in which He reveals Himself. But, as Ramakrishna tells us, the spiritual forms in which He reveals or may reveal Himself are finite, though infinite in number. After having realized one form one may be overwhelmed and be obsessed with the idea that that form conveys the full nature of God. But this is a mistake. The forms in which the devotees of the different religions realized God were indeed forms of God, and they were equally real. One was not more real than another. Even the realization of the Formless was a form of the realization of God. So no religion or religious experience can claim finality, for God, as apart from and beyond His revelations, is transcendent, and nobody can say what God is like in His ultimate nature. In the light of Ramakrishna's teaching, then, we can bring about a revolution in our religious or spiritual outlook, in the sense that opposition between one religion and another would disappear and we would on a legitimate basis build relations of fellowship and mutual admiration between the different religions. In our spiritual pursuits we would indeed be comrades both in our failure and success, failure to exhaust God and success in realizing what of God is vouchsafed to us. This is Democracy of Religions in the full sense of the term.

As we see, every religion seeks to reach

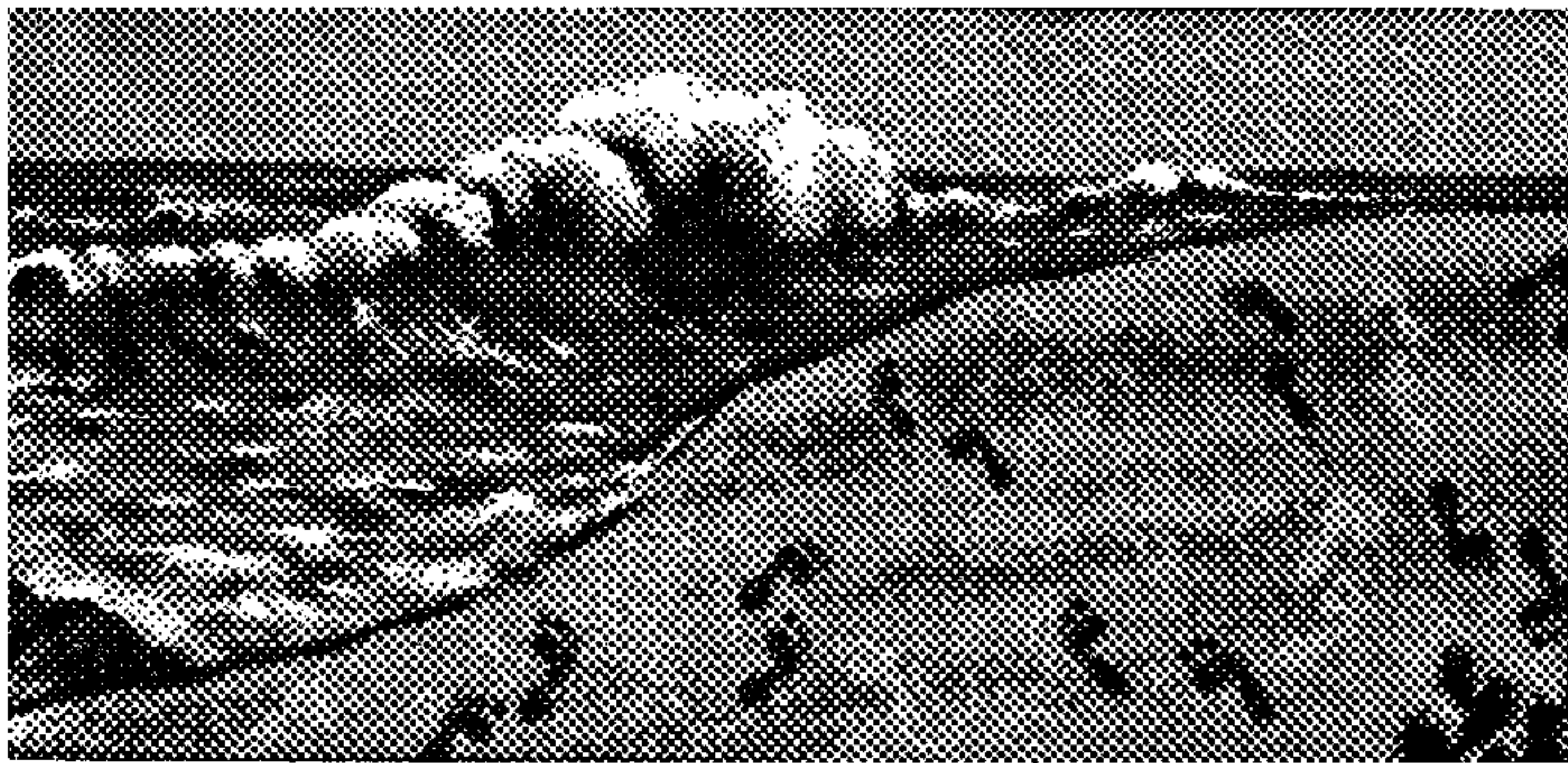
or realize God, who is admittedly infinite and eternal. God is then the only object of the religions, because there cannot be many Infinites. There should therefore be no quarrel about this point.

But people do quarrel about their experiences or realizations of God. One group contends that their experience of God is complete and final, and that other people, or other groups have only fragmentary experience of Him. This view cannot bear analysis. God is infinite, while man is finite, and man, being finite, can never exhaust God. And, what is more, man by his own effort cannot know anything of God. He knows only when God reveals Himself to him. But, again, no revelation can give integral knowledge of God, for revelation is for a finite spirit and is presented through a specific form.

A plurality of revelations, nevertheless, does not mean that there is progress in religious experience, so that one religious experience is lower or higher than another and, for that matter, one religion is lower or higher than another.

Revelations, being revelations of God, are on the same footing. Therefore, the religions cannot be arranged in a hierarchy, one religion being placed at the base and another as the summit. As we see, there is no finality in any religion.

All this shows that even Vedantic realization does not represent a spiritual experience which is final. If no religion or spiritual experience be final, we have non-finality and oneness of the ideal they pursue as the pivot, on which Democracy of religions turns. And this opens up a new vista before us. Believers, sponsors of the Secular State in the sense in which India is a Secular State, and Spiritualists should join hands to bring about a new order by establishing Democracy of religions as has been described here.



HUMAN TRENDS

WHY NOT TRY VEDANTIC HUMANISM ?

Life is short, but problems are many and intricate. Therefore, we must be accurate and quick in catching and solving our problems as we live. That is possible only if we have a correct philosophy, which, in the words of Herbert Spencer, is the science of sciences.

Humanitarianism, as we see from its history, denied divinity even to Christ, not to speak of humanity as a whole and limited its sphere to duties to man to the exclusion of spirituality. What in Locke's words is prescribed as 'the common offices of humanity and friendship,' does not come to the rescue of man wholly. And we, overridden with problems, go on

'hearing oftentimes,

The still, sad music of humanity,'
in the worthy words of Wordsworth. 'Humanistic approach' is an aphoristic phrase and needs some commentary to bring to light what it should mean to us.

Pardon me if I pretend to talk on behalf of philosophy, which is a little proud of its own superiority over other methods and sciences, in so far as their discoveries and truths are, in its opinion, subject to its scrutiny and approval. But what is there to give philosophy this superiority and its boast of the capacity not only to tackle its

own problems, but also to solve problems in all other fields ?

Hamilton said, 'Man philosophises as he lives. He may philosophise well or ill, but philosophise he must.' So we find there is no escape from philosophy for one who lives. That which is not science but like science seeks truth, that which is not a blind follower of religion but is complementary to religion, that which is not art but like art creates and appreciates beauty in truth, that which is above life but moulds, guides, and destines life to its fruition steering clear of all problems, that magnificent mental creation of man is philosophy. From its Greek derivation, etymologically, a philosopher is wise and loving. With his wisdom he diagnoses and out of his love he heals. In that sense we have no philosophy before us today.

Unless this whole nature of philosophy is understood it remains barren and useless. Philosophy in its true sense is practical wisdom. It is said, 'Even after studying the śāstras one may be a fool ; a *vidvān* (truly educated) is he, whose learning is conducive to action.' A real philosopher is he, who lives philosophy. The greatest problem in the present time in the field of philosophy, and hence in the life of man

as a whole, is that there are men who are deeply engrossed in the wordy gymnastic of philosophy, but there are few to follow and practise in life what is instructed or deliberated. Philosophy and life are getting divorced from each other. An old verse quoted in a commentary of the *Paramahansa-sopaniṣad* says, 'When *Kaliyuga* or the age of inertia of rest comes everybody will talk of Brahman, but people who will be slaves of passions and hunger only, will not practise what is held high.' That is the unkindest calamity that has befallen us. And that is why Swami Vivekananda taught Practical Vedanta.

The traditional topics of philosophy, such as God, soul, world—that is knowledge of the knowable and of knowledge itself—do not any longer fascinate or satisfy the professional philosopher. Sometimes with an uncomprehensive pragmatic outlook he fills his philosophy with freedom and comfort of man only—material prosperity of individuals and of nations, physical needs of man, just for his body shorn of his soul, while confusing civilization with comfort.

This shift obtaining currency in the West has crossed the seas and has come over to the East to eat into the very vitals of our life and culture. Veritably this is a death-trap and accepting this is sure to be suicidal.

Does that mean that we shall neglect man? Certainly not. Man has nowhere been praised so highly as in India. It is said, *Jīva* is *Śiva* Himself. Indians not only praise man as he is, but show the direction in which he may develop. They hold that each soul is potentially divine. When

we forget this we become mere animals in the form of man. We lose the real impress of man in us. We can be good 'candidates to humanity' and overcome all obstacles and solve all problems only if we remember the divinity of man and have a right philosophy built upon this.

Did not Swami Vivekananda exclaim, 'Ye divinities on earth—sinners! It is a sin to call a man so; it is a standing libel on human nature. Come up, O lions, and shake off the delusion that you are sheep; you are souls immortal, spirits free, blest and eternal; ye are not matter, ye are not bodies; matter is your servant, not you the servant of matter'? This is Vedantic Humanism, the right philosophy which we need. Unless we build our Humanism upon the solid rock of divinity of man, the rain of selfishness will descend, and the flood of materialism will come, and the wind of disbelief will blow and beat upon the weak structure of that Humanism, in which mere man is the measure of all things (*homo mensura*), and the structure, like one built upon the sand, will fall and great will be the fall of it.

With such a practical philosophy of Vedantic Humanism to which the attention of the rational mind of the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries was drawn by the great Teacher of our age, Swami Vivekananda, should we go to seek any other Humanistic Approach to our present-day problems or can we have any problem whatsoever in any field, which still staggers us?

—*Satya-tapas*



C. V. RAMAN : A JEWEL OF INDIA

A jeweller in a special sense, for he worked a good number years of his life with diamonds—, Sir C. V. Raman (1888-1970) was in the truest sense of the term a jewel of India, Bharata-ratna. And any true jewel of India is also a jewel of mankind.

His death at the age of 83 on November 21, 1970, after he had accomplished so much of such high order in his chosen fields, did not really leave the country and the world poorer. Those who die so beautifully as did Raman, contribute through their death a living resonance of a qualitative continuity, which is more than mere fame. When the shadow of death had unmistakably fallen on him, when someone mentioned within his hearing that the reports of his illness were appearing in the papers, his characteristic response was, 'Well, are they saying that I am popping off?' Only one who had lived heroically would have welcomed death with such robust humour.

Competent people have written about the greatness of Raman the scientist, about his original contributions and about his versatility. More than his original discoveries, his greater contribution has been in the manner he cultivated the spirit of science, and inspired a young band of disciples to carry forward the torch of science. Thus his greatness has skipped over the barrier

of death and continues to flow in the cultural soil of the world.

In the pursuit of science he not only brought an unbounded curiosity, but whole-souled absorption and ecstasy which made of him a worshipper in his own manner at the altar of the Ineffable. No temptation or privation could deter him from his chosen pursuit. His sacrificial ardour for science was so great that he would not tolerate even the least violation of its true spirit for the sake of anything in the world. He not only did not seek demeaning patronage, but threw off all "mental crutches" inimical to the cultivation of the true spirit of science.

In the collective scientific ventures of the nation, he was the most illustrious and wanted leader and guide of his time. But whenever he marked the slightest deviation from the true spirit of science as kowtowing before the holders of political power, he completely cut himself off from such association, for he knew too well that you cannot serve two masters: Science and the Government. You must choose one between the two and be honest about it.

He was asked, 'Every year a session of the Indian Science Congress is held, but you don't attend it. It is like playing *Hamlet* without the Prince of Denmark? What is the reason?'

His reply to the question, which was given more in sadness than in self-consciousness, is characteristic of his highly developed scientific temper which he wistfully and zealously guarded all his life. He said, 'Can you give me the example of any other country, in which Science Congress as are inaugurated by politicians? Every year, for seventeen years continuously, the organizers of the Indian Science Congress could think of only Prime Minister Nehru to inaugurate it. Now they have caught hold of his daughter to do it. How self-respecting scientists can go on listening to piffle spouted by politicians in a Science Congress is something which I have never been able to understand. This was the provocation to start the Indian Academy of Sciences.'

The scientists, particularly the great ones, have abiding faith in reason. But Raman also found reason for placing his faith high above all sordid worldliness in the pursuit of science. This is so movingly revealed in the testament of his faith written in his handwriting in a document of the Institute of Research he dedicated. He wrote:

'It is my earnest desire to bring into existence a centre of scientific research worthy of our ancient country where the keenest intellects of our land can probe into the mysteries of the universe and by so doing help us to appreciate the transcendent Power that guides its activities. This aim can only be achieved if by His Divine Grace, all lovers of our country see their way to help this cause.'

These few words take us directly to the core of the man who could sometime appear mysterious and enigmatic, if not forbidding in his outspokenness and curt in his brusqueness. In him, search for the secret of nature became the mode of his worship of the 'transcendent power'. It is obvious from his testament that while he would not accept defeat at the hands of any scientist in the world in regard to his zeal for what

is called pure science, he did not also want to keep this pursuit unconcerned with the appreciation of 'the transcendent Power that guides' the activities of the universe.

Raman knew how to domesticate science in the parlour of transcendent reality. Here comes in his true Indianness, which might appear controversial from the academic pure-science point of view. But it must not be forgotten that in Raman's veins tingled the blood of a living faith which had been in deep communion with the Divine down the ages. So this great scientist had no difficulty in being moved by music which is cultivated in India as another mode of the adoration of the Divine.

What was unique about Raman among the contemporary great scientists of the world was that there took place in him an amazing fusion of refined essence of orthodoxy and dynamic scientific temper.

After he was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1930 for his discovery of the *Raman Effect*, at the prize-awarding ceremony in Stockholm, Raman demonstrated the 'Effect' using a number of liquids, one of which was liquor. In the evening at the cocktail reception an invitee passed a glass to Raman with the smiling remark: "This morning Raman demonstrated his effect on alcohol. Now we would see alcohol's effect on him." But alcohol had no effect on him, for teetotaler Raman returned the glass with a polite thanks. While everybody in the hall sipped the inebriating liquid, there sat through the brahmin from India watching, his tuft of hair under his turban awake as a sentinel of his hoary culture.

He did not wear his orthodoxy like an offensive prude but took it along with him as quiet power of conviction and an unbreakable character. His culture and knowledge became his character—powerful, noble and dynamic. He believed firmly

that character was greater than learning. A man of learning without character was not a good building material. But if a man had character, on that foundation you could build an enduring edifice.

An applicant came for an interview for a post in Raman's Research Institute. From interview and test he was found unsuitable for the post and so he was given the travelling allowance and asked to leave. But the person lingered on and was noticed by Raman. Not knowing the applicant's intention he sharply told him, 'I told you that we cannot take you in. Why do you linger here?' 'I know that, Sir,' answered the applicant. 'But I came back that I might return the excess money paid to me by mistake by your office.' 'Come in,' exclaimed Raman, 'You have been accepted. It matters not if your Physics is inadequate, I can teach you that. You are a man of character!'

This high-serious scientist of granite character was not a grim stone man as one might suppose. He could blossom delight-

fully free and frank. And his humour smacked of wide horizons towards which he always travelled through his life and search.

Some two decades back Raman invested Rs. 75,000 with a 'financial wizard'. After the Bank went into liquidation, when the smiling scientist met the wincing wizard he greeted him with the words, 'For having duped a Nobel Laureate like me, you should be awarded a Nobel Prize.'

It is reported that moments before his passing the only thing Raman wanted out of this world for himself was *Ganga-jal*, a few drops of Ganges water for his final sip.

To many of his western admirers particularly the scientists, this conduct of the elder scientist before passing may appear puzzling. But to the Hindu this final asking of Raman is so revealing and touching!

—A Pedestrian

Source: *Bhavan's Journal*

December 27, 1970.

Art, science, and religion are but three different ways of expressing a single truth. But in order to understand this we must have the theory of Advaita.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA



IN THE LIGHT OF THE DHAMMAPADA

HOW CAN WE GOVERN OUR THOUGHTS

Thus teaches the *Dhammapada*:

'As a fletcher makes straight his arrow, a wise man makes straight his trembling and unsteady thought, which is difficult to guard, difficult to hold back.
Verse 33

'As a fish taken from its watery home and thrown on dry ground, our thought trembles all over in order to escape the dominion of Mara (the tempter).
Verse 34

'It is good to tame the mind, which is difficult to hold in and flighty, rushing wherever it listeth; a tamed mind brings happiness. Verse 35

'Let the wise man guard his thoughts, for they are difficult to perceive, very artful, and they rush wherever they list; thoughts well-guarded bring happiness.
Verse 36

'Those who bridle their mind which travels far moves about alone, is without a body, and hides in the chamber (of the heart), will be free from the bonds of Mara (the tempter).' Verse 37

A man is never more nor less than what his thought is. The outer visible man is the product of the inner invisible thought. If the thought is stricken with fear even a hefty man with big moustache trembles. He cannot help it, because thought is the motor which operates the man. Thought can take you up and make you run about and do things as if you were an errand boy. Have you not noticed this? You may be lying in bed, quite idle, reluctant even to move from one side to another. But suddenly a thought arises in your mind and you find your limbs becoming active; you begin running, for you had an urgent errand which you had forgotten to do.

Before a man does right or wrong through his sense or motor organs, his mind has done it. The outer man always follows the inner operation of thought. The subtle always moves the gross. The man is moved by something invisible, called force. That force within man which is called thought makes or unmakes everything in

the world including the man himself. Man did not reach moon earlier than his thought reached there. A-bomb did not devastate Hiroshima before man's thought had done it. A man does auspicious or wicked things with his sense or motor organs after the fly-wheel of thought has set them in motion in a particular way.

Have we not seen it happening any number of times? A thought takes up a man and he is in time in the gutter; again a man taking up a thought is on the crest of the Everest. If the thought is one of flaming love for mankind and that thought has become the very man, he will give away his life for others as if it were a trifle.

Generally speaking, in most cases the thought operates the man. And the man has little say over the thought, which comes to him from his ingrained past tendencies, the atmosphere he inhales, the company he keeps, the group or party he belongs to. After thought has started operating the man, if the man tries to have a say over the thought, the thought frowns him down. When the thought has become a hardened party or a creed and the man belongs to it, he must slave it all the way through or else he is finished. This situation of man can go by some glorified name.

But man cannot suffer this ignominy for ever. One day he awakes and disconsolately asks: Where am I? I do not seem to do anything myself; I am being operated by some extraneous agency not necessarily to my advantage or for my good.

No one, however, can be held responsible for the situation except himself. Things went wrong and against himself when instead of operating his own thought he allowed his thought to operate him. Man remains a common man as long as his thought operates him. He then always needs an outer agency for being operated. And the environment supplies that agency. Such a man is utterly helpless when left to himself.

He does not know how to act but only how to be acted upon.

Things, however, begin to take a different shape when the man begins to operate his thought. From here begin to sprout tender shoots of greatness and wisdom, the common man starts growing uncommon.

For an unregenerate man it is not at all an easy process to operate thought. The fly-wheel of thought which operates the entire psycho-physical mechanism has itself to be operated by the essential man who is distinct from the sensory or motor organs.

How is this done? One has first to stay awake, aware and watchful. His attention should be such as to detect the movement of thought like vibrations of sound within. His awakened faculty of discrimination will then tell him from within which movement of thought is to be given his volitional support and which has to be treated with indifference, or forcefully opposed.

There are thoughts which will enslave, bind, distort or destroy a man. And there are thoughts which will uplift, ennoble and free a man. One must know how to cultivate and operate thoughts which would make him great and take him far. This is not easily done. For thoughts are sly and they are masters of guerilla fight. They know how to go underground and mount sudden attack on the unwary.

Not all can teach how to master thought. Only those who have themselves mastered the technique of operating thoughts instead of being operated by them can teach us how to do it.

Though it is more difficult to control and operate thought than going to the moon, an awakened intelligent man should engage himself in this with enthusiasm and firm faith. Once he can master thought, he can master all inimical forces of the world and all situations of life, as far as he himself is concerned, for the world or thought will not operate him any more.

So it is of utmost importance to learn from a master of thought how to control and operate thought. Not many in this world have taught this art. The Buddha for one, taught the technique of governing thought in a lucid manner. It will be beneficial for all who seek to operate their own thoughts to learn this technique.

The Vitakka-Sanathana-Sutta records these most helpful guidance of the Buddha on how to govern thought:

‘Once the Blessed One addressed the bhikkhus thus:

‘Bhikkhus, those who apply themselves to higher thought should review from time to time the following five phases of mind:

1. When there arise in your mind wrong thoughts associated with hatred and anger, you should divert the mind to a phase associated with what is right. By doing so, wrong thoughts will disappear and the mind will become firm and steadfast and devoted to concentration.

2. If, even after diverting the mind to a right phase, the wrong thoughts continue as before, then you should try to study the evils such thoughts may cause. By such study the wrong thoughts will disappear and the mind will become firm and steadfast and devoted to concentration.

3. If, in spite of a study of the evils that wrong thoughts may cause, such thoughts persist, then you should ignore them and not allow your mind to dwell on them. By such ignoring, the wrong thoughts will disappear and the mind

will become firm and steadfast and devoted to concentration.

4. If, even in spite of such ignoring, the wrong thoughts continue, then you should try to know in what mould they are cast and how they are caused. As you do so, the wrong thoughts will disappear and the mind will become firm and steadfast and devoted to concentration.

5. But if, in spite of all this, the wrong thoughts arise and persist, then with teeth clenched and with full determination you should dominate them. By so doing, the wrong thoughts will certainly disappear and the mind will become firm and steadfast and devoted to concentration.

‘When at last a bhikkhu has become victorious over his wrong thoughts, by adopting any of these five ways, he becomes the master of his mind, conquering desire and thus ending all evil for all time.

‘Thus spoke the Blessed One and the bhikkhus rejoiced in what he said.

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

Those who have mastered the technique of governing their own thought and help others in doing the same are the best friends of themselves and the world.

* Vide : Sudhakar Dikshit : *Sermons and Sayings of the Buddha*, Chetana, Bombay.

A TRAVELLER LOOKS AT THE WORLD

(Continued from the November 1970 issue)

SWAMI RANGANATHANANDA

Question: Is the poverty in America more cruel than the affluence in India ?

Answer: Affluence in India there is. Many Americans do not believe that there is any poverty in America. It is only during this decade that this truth has dawned upon the American mind in a striking manner. Last year several newspapers publicized the poverty in America with pictures etc. Real poverty and suffering are there. Twenty-five per cent of the American population is really poor ; but there is a relativity about it. In America the cost of living is high. If a man earns, say, Rs. 2500/- a month, it is a poor level because the cost of living is very high. The poorest of people in America gets about Rs. 2500/- a month ; but that cannot provide for basic needs. They receive financial assistance from the Government, whereas in India wages are extremely low. Our poorest man gets Rs. 62/- a year according to the latest estimates, and the result is that we have tremendous poverty here ; but we have riches here also. The gulf between the rich and the poor is so high in India—I do not think that in many nations you have this kind of gulf between the rich and the poor, the illiterate and the educated.

In America they have this problem of poverty. It can be removed only by greater efforts on the part of the State to bring economic opportunities to these people. It is mostly the black people that are poor ; but a proportion of the white population also is poor. For the first time the American nation has been confronted with the problem of poverty in the midst of affluence.

In India this is an old story. Here there

is a wide disparity between the poor and the rich in economic terms. That is why our greatest problem here is to bridge the gulf by raising the poor to a higher level. The minimum demands of health, education, general well-being have to be satisfied. Our problems are really very serious because in the poverty of India millions are involved. Out of the 540 million people in India at least per cent will be on an extremely low level ; so our problem is very big.

In America it is not so difficult. If the money spent on the Vietnam war were directed to removing this poverty by giving them industrial opportunity, it could be solved. That is why, in student protests, this is always pointed out. Billions of dollars a year are wasted there. In our own country there is so much of poverty ; why not divert that money here ? That is one of the prime questions of the dissidents and the protestors in America.

Question: Could not Vedanta serve the coloured people of America in a very substantial manner by putting across to them the idea that it is better to strive for the manifestation of divinity than to strive for equality ?

Answer: The black population of America is passing through a tremendous phase, a revolutionary phase, just now. For the first time they are realizing their identity as a human population. Till recently they were just classed as what are called 'the masses' in India. But since the second world war a tremendous awakening has come among the black people of America. They do not want to become like the white people—second-class citizens of a

white nation. They want to remain black ; they are proud of being black, of having a black history and a black tradition. They want to develop their black manhood and womanhood. Within ten years this philosophy has created a tremendous energy resource among the black population.

It is something amazing to see their energy, their resources, their sense of confidence. In fact, Swami Vivekananda's message of Vedanta, without being taught them, is finding a pronounced expression among the black people of America. Have faith in yourself: this is the first teaching of Vedanta. The black man today has faith in himself ; and the black woman today has faith in herself. Out of that will come the new development of black society in America.

Eventually there will be an integrated society: I fully believe it. In the beginning all developments in establishing their own identity are being handled by the blacks. There are many whites who want to help the blacks ; but there are many blacks who do not want anybody's help. We shall stand on our own feet, they say. Vedantic teaching is actually in operation in its earliest stages. Man is essentially Atman: that is the truth. Its first manifestation is faith in oneself, and not depending upon somebody else.

This is happening in a tremendous manner among the black people today. I read their literature and was particularly impressed by the famous *Autobiography of Malcolm X*. It is a remarkable book evincing a powerful faith of the black man in himself. But it is a terribly anti-white book. Any white person reading it is apt to feel frightened. These are the sort of words used : Yes, the whites came from England and landed on Plymouth Rock ; but the blacks were brought as slaves from Africa and the Plymouth Rock landed on them. This is the type of language that is

used all through the book—most frightening language, because it is truth.

So in America today there is the experience of a volcano of human hatred, human feelings, human pressures rising and engulfing the whole society. That is the feeling you get. American wisdom and energy can contest these forces and create a new integrated society, that will be a great contribution ; but it is still far away.

I spoke in a negro college in Dallas, in Texas State. I had lectured some months earlier in the year. Then they decided to have a second lecture. So the friends there, Indians and Americans, decided to present some literature to the students of the college ; it is called Bishop's College. As it happened, this Dallas was the place where President Kennedy was murdered. In this Bishop's College, a negro college, we presented the students each with a copy of *Thus Spake Vivekananda* and of *The Ramakrishna Movement: Its Ideals and Activities*.

And there in the course of the lecture we placed before them the Vedantic idea and quoted Swamiji—the idea of manliness and strength, of depending on one's own strength and so forth. It was a great inspiration to them and they eagerly put relevant questions. That was just a beginning.

A few black people came to the services of our Vedanta Societies in America. In course of time when they come to know of the message of Vedanta, more of them will surely come. The great philosophy of Swami Vivekananda and his personality are bound to attract those who are seeking a new light and higher life: this philosophy is so strengthening, so purifying. Eventually they will come up to this high philosophy, where we go beyond these little hatreds of everyday experience and try to find our unity with the other man for integration that must come one day.

Question: Is it a fact that American labour has the best of socialism without its sting, in the sense that it has trade unions with the right to strike, unlike unions in communist countries ?

Answer: American trade unions have the right to strike ; and American labour is highly advanced not only in technical efficiency but also in actual economic terms. They are all highly paid. That is why they are not politically active. A trade union movement is generally a movement for improving the economic and cultural condition of the labour class itself. According to Lenin, the trade union movement by itself cannot capture political power unless it is aligned with the other political forces of a nation. The American trade union is very much concerned only with the economic and cultural development of its own members. It is not much interested in the political aspect. That is why it is very much just a trade union movement. As a labour movement it has all the power to strike, to bargain for wages ; and it always has bargained for better and better wages. Fortunately, some of the American industrialists themselves have been pioneers in increasing the wages of the labourers in the interests of the industry itself by increasing the purchasing power of the people.

The economic and material level of the working class is very high. American workers go on vacation to Europe, on Mediterranean cruises, and so forth—even a simple carpenter or plumber or bricklayer earns about ten or twelve dollars per hour and enjoys these holidays. That is the position of American labour. Economically it is very high ; but if the spiritual and cultural level is to be raised something more than mere economic or industrial development is necessary. Here comes the place of religion, not just as a creed or dogma but as the means to the spiritual enrichment of the human personality. There is

very little of this nourishment evident there. Much of their prosperity is wasted on drinks and on other wasteful items under the pressure of a philosophy of man that knows nothing beyond his physical dimension and the need for organic satisfactions.

This is a contemporary world-wide problem. I think it is beginning to confront India also, little by little. That is why Swami Vivekananda gave us the motto: 'Elevation of the masses without injuring their religion.' If we destroy their religion, their spiritual life, we will bring them down to the animal level. Swamiji had high praise for the Indian working class people because they are cultured, refined beings though poor and often illiterate. They are not drunkards, they are not criminals. We do not post policemen to watch over the poor people in India, whereas in other countries poverty is often associated with crime. This is because spiritual culture was given to our people throughout the ages by our great saints and sages. And there is a light in their eyes which one misses in the working class in many countries in the west, as remarked by Professor Galbraith.

So, in our industrial development, let us improve the economic standard of our labour and also raise their educational level ; but let us not forget that it is spirituality alone that will raise their cultural level and make them decent human beings.

Question: Do you think that the people of Latin America (Central and South America) can more easily enter into the spirit of Indian thought and culture than those of European countries and of North America ?

Answer: I travelled in eight countries of Latin America, including communist Cuba, in August-September 1969. Their catholic tradition, which is a *bhakti* tradition, makes the people in these countries very emo-

tional. There is in them great response to Indian thought today. No racial discrimination is noticed in Latin America. That is one important difference in comparison with the North American tradition, which is an Anglo-Saxon one. In North America, one gets the impression that the whites feel they are racially superior to the black and brown; but not so the Spanish and the Portuguese who colonized Latin America. Latin America has this impress of racial equality in a big way. In a country like Mexico, in a country like Brazil, they would not ask who you are. Many colours are there. They mix well. There is no racial problem.

As I said, the *bhakti* tradition makes them emotionally rich. I was deeply touched by the love and emotional warmth of the Latin American peoples who thronged to hear me in many universities and public meetings. I was simply overwhelmed by their love. It is to be found in other parts of the Western hemisphere also; but it is present in a big way in Latin America. Just as in India some provinces are more emotional, some less, so also is it in the Western hemisphere.

Question: What do you think is the secret of the strength of the Jewish faith and the Jewish people?

Answer: The philosophy of the Jewish religion itself makes for hard work and confidence in oneself. It is a small community and a select one and normally it does not admit any other people into its fold. It is racially more pure than other groups. The Jews have remained essentially an exclusive community. That is the source of their group strength and that is also their problem in the world. The greatest number of Nobel prize winners are amongst the small Jewish community in the West. They have been pioneers in many fields and have had plenty of opportunities in recent times to express themselves.

In various parts of the world long-standing restrictions on them have been removed in recent centuries. As a result, they have come up again in a big way. And his philosophy tells the Jew to work hard; to have faith in himself. God has given them a mission, they believe. Their sense of mission brings out tremendous energy in the Jewish community. This sense of a world mission, the ethical fervour of the community, and the Jewish faith, these give the Jews a dynamism which expresses itself in spite of oppression and hatred by other races. The Jews have risen up again and again. How many destructions, how many dispersals over the world they have suffered again and again! Still they are strong, vigorous, and progressive; and often envied by others. Suffering has given them a dynamism. In America there is a movement, a small movement just now, a fringe movement of the extreme rightists, on the lines of the Nazi movement in its racial overtones. One of its important objects is to drive away all the Jews from America. It is anti-semitic. It is a small movement as yet; let us hope it will never gather strength.

Question: Did you visit any Sunday Schools in America? In view of the fact that the religious training of children at home is neglected in India today, do you think that it will be spiritually helpful to Indian children if this programme is adopted in India?

Answer: The Sunday School system is quite good. But what is taught in Sunday Schools in the United States and other countries I am not very happy about. In the past, most of the wrong ideas about other religions used to be inculcated in the Sunday Schools. Today, of course, there is less of that; not from choice, but because nobody cares for that sort of thing.

I was taken to a Sunday School of a

Catholic Church in U.S.A. There is less and less spiritual sermons in U.S. churches, including the Catholic ones, these days. The people find it too 'heavy'. But there are discussions of current social problems in sermons, including the Viet Nam war. I spoke for just two minutes only to the children of that Sunday School. I told them a few spiritual truths—the divinity in the heart of man and how it can be manifested in one's life. The children responded wonderfully to these ideas and their enthusiasm was evident in the light in their eyes. The Catholic Father who conducted me was much impressed by their response to these spiritual ideas.

In India there is tremendous scope for the spiritual education of our children through Sunday Schools. Already they have been started in some of the Ramakrishna Mission centres in Calcutta, Delhi, Bangalore and Colombo. There are five hundred children attending the school in our Colombo Centre. But that means that a lot of teachers possessing the new understanding of teaching religion with a view to developing personality and character on a broad basis are necessary. I have addressed many such teacher groups in India when I have emphasized the need not to teach a child any

of the traditional ideas of religion which may be questioned and may be found untrue by the child when it becomes older; otherwise it will make the child atheistical and agnostic. We should teach children only things which they will increasingly realize to be true as they grow in age and understanding.

That means that most of the mythical ideas in religion must not be imparted except those which are illustrations of essential spiritual truths, of which the central ones are the ideas of the innate divinity of man and his organic capacity to realize this truth. Children have to be told that the manifestation of this innate divine nature in life and action makes for ethical awareness, social feeling, a sense of dedication and efficiency—these are the central themes of a spiritual education. And through the examples of great spiritual characters the world has produced, these truths can be impressed on the minds of our children. We have to refashion our whole approach to child education in the sphere of religion and character development. Christianity also has accordingly to revise its Sunday School syllabuses and programmes.

(To be continued)

That society is the greatest, where the highest truths become practical. That is my opinion, and if society is not fit for the highest truths, make it so, and the sooner, the better. Stand up, men and women, in this spirit, dare to believe in the Truth, dare to practise the Truth!

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

NOTES AND COMMENTS

IN THIS NUMBER

Questions and answers are from: 'M': *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*: Tr. by Swami Nikhilananda, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras 4, 1957. Reference: question I, Pp. 101-2; 2, Pp. 106-7.

In this month, when millions all over the world will celebrate the nativity of Sri Ramakrishna, the Editorial seeks to spotlight some salient aspects of Sri Ramakrishna's life and message vis-a-vis contemporary trends in the human context.

In contradistinction to Śaṅkara, Swami Vivekananda claimed that his mission was to bring out the Advaita philosophy from hills and forests and scatter it broadcast before the work-a-day world and society. Students of Swami Vivekananda's works know that on theoretical grounds he entirely agreed with the old masters of Advaita. Sri M. K. Venkatarama Iyer, M.A., formerly professor of philosophy, Annamalai University, handles the tough subject of 'Swami Vivekananda's Interpretation of Vedānta' very ably against the background of the personality and realizations of Swami Vivekananda and his great Master. While making an appropriate comparison between Śrī Śaṅkara and Swami Vivekananda, the learned writer clearly points out the distinctive contribution of the latter to Advaitic thought.

'From Dogmatism of Philosophies to Democracy of Religions' is the presidential

address of Dr. Adhar Chandra Das, M.A., Ph.D., (formerly Head of the Department of Philosophy, Calcutta University) who was the General President of the 44th Session of the Indian Philosophical Congress held at Poona from 5th to 8th Nov. '70. We are thankful to the Local Secretary of the Indian Philosophical Congress for his permission to publish the presidential address in the *Prabuddha Bharata*.

In Human Trends, *Satya-tapas*, one of our welcome new contributors makes a plea for a humanistic approach to our present-day problems from the standpoint of philosophy.

Sir C. V. Raman passed away on November 21, 1970. As one of the great among the world's illustrious scientists he will be remembered long. His contribution to the development of sciences in India is of the highest order. The Nation is grateful to him for what it has received from him.

'A Pedestrian' has portrayed with a few strokes of his brush some facets of this 'Jewel of India'.

'Musings of the Musafir' are on thought itself, on how to govern it.

Questions answered by Swami Ranganathananda at a Brothers' meet at Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta, after his return from a long lecture tour of nearly one year and a half in 25 countries continues to be serialized here from the month of July 1970 with gaps in the months of December 1970 and January 1971.

THOUGHTS ON STATUE-BREAKING

The city of Calcutta has generally been at the van of modern renaissance. Let us hope that the state and its capital are still

at the vanguard, bearing the torch of progress.

To all observers Calcutta at present

seems to be a seething cauldron of various political and sociological forces. Occurrences which adversely affect the daily life of millions of decent city-dwellers are becoming national headlines. One of the recent features that has shocked many of our countrymen is the mutilation and disfiguring of statues of great Indians.

These acts have been rightly condemned by well-meaning public men and papers. This, however, occasions also a little heart-searching on the part of every right thinking person.

Surely, one of the number of ways of honouring the great men of a country is by installing their statues in suitable places. But it is to be resorted to in a limited way, without losing sight of practising their precepts. This custom of honouring the great with statues seems to have come to us from Europe and Greece.

However, we seem to be overdoing this by erecting statues in street corners and public squares. Is it because we want to console a troubled conscience? On their birthdays or during their centenaries, spirits of these great men—unselfish, patriotic, and poor-befriending—seem to accuse us for selfishness and callousness. Our conscience becomes uneasy at that accusation. Well, the easiest way to quieten it is to install granite or marble statues—petrify the men and our conscience at one stroke. Then go about with an air of supreme satisfaction of having fulfilled a commitment and discharged a sacred duty. We thus turn deaf ears to the voices of these great men while

preserving the stone symbols. Those mighty men remain silent and helpless witnesses of the pitiable emptiness of their professed followers. They possibly serve as perches for the feathered dwellers of the cities.

But, if we are faithful to the spirit of these great men, they hardly need any stone statues. Every one of our countrymen will then become a mobile memorial, living and dynamic. What can be greater joy to the souls of our departed leaders than to witness their children practise what they, while alive, embodied and taught? Let us stick to the spirit and be a little less preoccupied with physical symbols. Let us refrain from being shocked and enraged by these acts of wanton and irrational people. That takes the starch out of their sadistic joy at our scandalized sentiments.

A couple of years ago, after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, an American Newspaper, *Chicago Sun-Times*, published a cartoon in which Dr. King meets Mahatma Gandhi in the other world. Gandhiji says to his American counterpart: 'The odd thing about assassins, Dr. King, is that they think they've killed you.'

We may contextually modify these words of the cartoonist put in Mahatmaji's mouth: 'The odd thing about statue-breakers is that they think they have destroyed the great men.' Let us cease to be disagreeably surprised at a broken or beheaded statue. Let us enshrine the ideals of the great man in our life and heart. That is the best way to honour our great leaders and frustrate the statue-breakers.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

CHAITANYA : HIS LIFE AND DOCTRINE, By A. K. MAJUMDAR, Published by Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Chowpatty, Bombay 7, 1969, pp. 392, Price : Rs. 25/-.

In this scholarly treatise, Dr. Majumdar gives the historical background of the Vaishnava movement prior to Sri Chaitanya, a detailed account of his career and a study of the Doctrine of Love preached by the Saint and systematized by his immediate disciples.

Pancharatra, Ekanta, Satvata, and Bhagavata movements are examined in detail and their contributions to the Vaishnava system are assessed. Sources in Bengali and Sanskrit are drawn upon for an authentic biographical account of Sri Chaitanya, including his wide travels, his discussions with notable adversaries etc. The last section on the Sampradaya, tradition, established by the Teacher, particularly the chapter on Radha-Krishna, expounding the higher symbolism of the concept of the Divine Pair, is remarkably lucid and informative.

This book will always remain a standard work on the subject.

M. P. PANDIT

MUGHAL EMPIRE IN INDIA: By S. R. SHARMA, Published by Lakshmi Narain Agarwal, Agra 3, 1966, pp. 655, Price Rs. 20/-.

Prof. S. R. Sharma of the Fergusson College, Poona, must be congratulated on having brought out an immensely readable volume on a brilliant epoch in the history of India, which is, at the same time, an important land-mark in the evolution of Indian culture. It will go a long way in removing a very real want of students of Indian history—examinees and otherwise. That the volume has already gone through four reprint and revised editions speaks a lot for its utility and readability.

The volume in question is the result of long years of painstaking research. All available materials in English have been utilized. The author skilfully pieces together all available matter and weaves the same into a connected account. His integrity is evident from the care taken by him in representing views on controversial topics.

PROF. SUDHANSU BIMAL MOOKHERJI

NEWS AND REPORTS

THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION, MANGALORE REPORT FOR 1969-70

This centre was started in 1947 and came to occupy its permanent site on Mangaladevi Road in 1951. The activities of this centre during the period under review were as follows:

The Boys' Home: It maintains poor and meritorious students irrespective of caste or creed by providing them free boarding, lodging, stationery, clothing, etc. The number of boarders studying in different schools and colleges was 51.

In the Balakashrama an attempt is made to impart integral education through inculcation of spiritual values in their widest sense. Boys are encouraged to cultivate virtuous tendencies, sense of social duty, etc. The boys are also allowed to

manage the affairs of the Home gaining thereby the spirit of self-reliance, co-operation, and creative personal effort. A weekly discourse was conducted for the boys by the Swamis. They were also taught to chant *Bhagavad-gita*, *Vishnu-Sahasranama*, etc. The important festivals and the birthdays of saints were celebrated in a fitting manner.

The Charitable Dispensary: 29,363 patients were treated out of which 6742 were new cases.

Needs: (1) Endowments for maintenance of poor students. One boy can be maintained by an annual contribution of Rs. 600/- or by an endowment which will fetch that interest. (2) New bedding and clothing for the boys. (3) Since there is scarcity of water in the Ashrama, it has been planned to sink a bore-well. Rs. 20,000/- are urgently needed for this purpose.
