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Prabuddha Bharata

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No. 10

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

SRI RAMAKRISHNA ANSWERS

Question (asked by Vijay): 'If Brahman is our Mother, then has It any form or is It formless?'

Sri Ramakrishna: 'That which is Brahman is also Kali, the Mother, the Primal Energy. When inactive It is called Brahman. Again, when creating, preserving, and destroying, It is called Sakti. Still water is an illustration of Brahman. The same water, moving in waves, may be compared to Sakti, Kali. What is the meaning of Kali? She who communes with Maha-Kala, the Absolute, is Kali. She is formless and, again, She has forms. If you believe in the formless aspect, then meditate on Kali as that. If you meditate on any aspect of Her with firm conviction, She will let you know Her true nature. Then you will realize that not merely does God exist, but He will come near you and talk to you as I am talking to you. Have faith and you will achieve everything. Remember this, too. If you believe that God is formless, then stick to that belief with firm conviction. But don't be dogmatic: never say emphatically about God that He can be only this and not that. You may say: "I believe that God is formless. But He can be many things more. He alone knows what else He can be. I do not understand." How can man with his one ounce of intelligence know the real nature of God? Can you put four seers of milk in a one-seer jar? If God, through His grace, ever reveals Himself to His devotee and makes him understand, then he will know; but not otherwise.

'That which is Brahman is Sakti, and That, again, is the Mother.

He it is, says Ramprasad, that I approach as Mother;

But must I give away the secret, here in the market-place?

From the hints I have given, O mind, guess what that Being is!"

Question (asked by a Brahmo devotee): 'Is God different from His Sakti?'

Sri Ramakrishna: 'After attaining Perfect Knowledge one realizes that they are not different. They are the same, like the gem and its brilliance. Thinking of the gem, one cannot but think of its brilliance. Again, they are like milk and its whiteness. Thinking of the one, you must also think

of the other. But you cannot realize this non-duality before the attainment of Perfect Knowledge. Attaining Perfect Knowledge, one goes into samadhi, beyond the twenty-four cosmic principles. Therefore the principle of "I" does not exist in that stage. A man cannot describe in words what he feels in samadhi. Coming down, he can give just a hint about it. I come down a hundred cubits, as it were, when I say "Om" after samadhi. Brahman is beyond the injunctions of the Vedas and cannot be described. There neither "I" nor "you" exists.

'As long as a man is conscious of "I" and "you" and as long as he feels that it is he who prays or meditates, so long will he feel that God is listening to his prayer and that God is a Person. Then he must say: "O God, Thou art the Master and I am Thy servant. Thou art the whole and I am a part of Thee. Thou art the Mother and I am Thy child." At that time there exists a feeling of difference: "I am one and Thou art another." It is God Himself who makes us feel this difference; and on account of this difference one sees man and woman, light and darkness, and so on. As long as one is aware of this difference, one must accept Sakti, the Personal God. It is God who has put "I-consciousness" in us. You may reason a thousand times; still this "I" does not disappear. As long as "I-consciousness" exists God reveals Himself to us as a Person.

'Therefore, as long as a man is conscious of "I" and of differentiation, he cannot speak of the attributeless Brahman and must accept Brahman with attributes. This Brahman with attributes has been declared in the Vedas, the Puranas, and the Tantra, to be Kali, the Primal Energy.'

Question (asked by Govinda): 'Revered sir, why does the Divine Mother have a black complexion?'¹

Sri Ramakrishna: 'You see Her as black because you are far away from Her. Go near and you will find Her devoid of all colour. The water of a lake appears black from a distance. Go near and take the water in your hand, and you will see that it has no colour at all. Similarly, the sky looks blue from a distance. But look at the atmosphere near you; it has no colour. The nearer you come to God, the more you will realize that He has neither name nor form. If you move away from the Divine Mother, you will find Her blue, like the grass flower. Is Syama male or female? A man once saw the image of the Divine Mother wearing a sacred thread.² He said to the worshipper: "What? You have the sacred thread on the Mother's neck!" The worshipper said: "Brother, I see that you have truly known the Mother. But I have not yet been able to find out whether She is male or female; that is why I have put the sacred thread on Her image."

'That which is Syama is also Brahman. That which has form, again, is without form. That which has attributes, again, has no attributes. Brahman is Sakti; Sakti is Brahman. They are not two. These are only two aspects, male and female, of the same Reality, Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute.'

¹ A reference to the image of Kali.

² The images of male deities only are invested with the sacred thread.

ONWARD FOR EVER !

Take your vision of this universe, for instance. This universe, as an absolute entity, is unchangeable, and unchanged, and the same throughout. But you and I and everybody else hear and see, each one, his own universe.... So in relative perception, truth always appears various. But the Absolute Truth is only one. Therefore we need not fight with others when we find they are telling something about religion which is not exactly according to our view of it. We ought to remember that both of us may be true, though apparently contradictory. There may be millions of radii converging towards the same centre in the sun. The further they are from the centre, the greater is the distance between any two. But as they all meet at the centre, all difference vanishes. There is such a centre, which is the absolute goal of mankind. It is God. We are the radii. The distances between the radii are the constitutional limitations through which alone we can catch the vision of God. While standing on this plane, we are bound each one of us to have a different view of the Absolute Reality; and as such all views are true, and no one of us need quarrel with another. The only solution lies in approaching the centre. If we try to settle our differences by argument or quarrelling, we shall find that we can go on for hundreds of years without coming to a conclusion. History proves that.

Sri Kanchi

MOTHER HAS THE KEYS OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

EDITORIAL

I

Children often write letters to God. Whether or not the letters reach Him, He presumably gets their messages. But the elders get hold of those letters, sometimes publish them, but generally miss the messages. A little girl once wrote to God, 'Dear God, tell me who is better, boys or girls. But I know you are a boy!' All of us grow physically, most of us mentally, out of our childhood. But spiritually almost all of us remain infantile. Our ideas of God will be not far different from that found in the child's letter. We tend to believe that God is a substantial, shaggy, stern-looking man, sitting on a throne somewhere above the clouds, ready to come down heavily on wrong-doers, and governing the world with ruthless and poetic justice. If God can be a stern 'He', why not a tender, merciful 'She'? If we cannot circumvent anthropomorphism in conceiving God, why not then traverse the whole series of human sentiments, ideas, and conceptualizations? Fortunately for humanity, Hindus have done it eminently and even boldly ventured beyond anthropomorphism. Hindu saints and sages, from very ancient times to present-day, realized and taught the greatest divine truths that encompass all ideas of God, from the lowest to the highest, anthropomorphic and trans-anthropomorphic. Motherhood of God is one such spiritual discovery. They not only discovered it but also perfected its practice in an authentic way of realizing God.

Worship of God as the Mother is a sprawling banyan whose roots go as far back as the *Rg-veda*. A woman-*r̥ṣi* came to realize herself as identified with the cosmic power and burst forth into a chant: 'I am the Empress of the universe.... Whatever action men do is through My power.... Whom I love I make a powerful

man, the creator Brahmā, a sage, or a brilliant man....'¹ If the interminable and bewildering universe has emerged from and is sustained by Brahman or the Supreme Reality, then by that act of 'mothering' the universe, Brahman becomes the Cosmic Mother. Just as It is absolutely existent and blissful, It is omnipotent and omniscient. Cosmic Power and Motherhood are twin ideas which have remained inseparably associated in human consciousness. The *Devī-māhātmyam* or the *Candī*, a very popular and authoritative text on the philosophy of Mother-worship, says that the Devī or Goddess is the Power of the Supreme Being and of inexhaustible valour. She is the primeval māyā, the seed of the universe and its pervader. If She becomes gracious, She brings about men's final liberation from all worldly bondage.²

Religion—in particular Hinduism and its various branches—in recent times has received a blood transfusion through the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda phenomenon. Ramakrishna started his epochal religious career as a worshipper of Kālī, the Mother-Goddess. Though he ranged over the entire gamut of religious paths and practices, he came back to roost at Kālī's feet, as Her beloved, winsome child. Vivekananda once confided that what his Master called as Kālī entered into him sometime before Sri Ramakrishna passed away. About Kālī Vivekananda said to a western disciple: '*You see, I cannot but believe that there is somewhere a great Power that thinks of Herself as feminine, and called Kālī and Mother....*'³

Though Sri Ramakrishna throughout his life worshipped Kālī the Mother, he regarded Her as identical with Brahman, the

Ultimate Reality. While the latter is attributeless, formless and static, Kālī has a form, has various attributes—some contradictory—, and is dynamic. To him Kālī is as much different from Brahman as the burning power from fire or solar radiance from the sun. Sometimes when he put into words his realizations regarding the nature of Reality, the genders of the pronouns got mixed up! And nothing unnatural too. For instance:

'God Himself is Mahamaya, who deludes the world with Her illusion and conjures up the magic of creation, preservation, and destruction.'

'That which is Brahman is verily Sakti. I address That, again, as the Mother.'

'He who is attributeless also has attributes. He who is Brahman is also Sakti. When thought of as inactive, He is called Brahman, and when thought of as the Creator, Preserver, and Destroyer, He is called the Primordial Energy, Kālī.'⁴

In contradistinction to the opinion of saints and mystics, some psychologists assert that the conception of God is a projection or extension of 'father-' or 'mother-image', or the offshoot of an incurable hankering for immortality. Because psychologists are scientists of the mind, and a scientist *ipso facto* is supposed to be infallible, many persons take what these psychologists say seriously and try to shake off their belief in God and religion. Frankly, nothing could be more foolish than that. Psychology by its very definition deals with mind and its processes. It has neither business nor credentials to speak on transcendental and supersensuous matters. Of course, it can impartially study mental phenomena connected with religious experiences. But to deny God who is beyond the reach of mind and senses would be repudiating its own claim to be classed as a science. As soon

¹ *Rg-veda*, X. 125

² *Devīmāhātmyam*, XI. 5.

³ *The Complete Works* (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Almora, Himalayas), Vol. VIII (1959), p. 264.

⁴ 'M.': *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras 4, 1947.), pp. 43, 224, 34.

as it oversteps its limits to criticize religion and God as wishful thinking and projection, rational men and women should be able to see through its pretensions. To learn of transcendental matters we should approach 'transcendental scientists'. And these are the saints, mystics, and divine incarnations. Staking their very lives they have earned the transcendental knowledge and have extensively explored the realms beyond mind and senses. To be sure, the concept of God is not the extension of the idea of earthly father or mother. Rather the contrary. Because there is a Supreme Reality, which is simultaneously the Father and Mother of the universe, we have our earthly fathers and mothers. Further, God as Father or Mother has been a fact of experience with the saints and Godmen of all lands and times, and so is an incontestable and verifiable fact.

When God is spoken of as Father and Mother, no one should rush to apply sex distinctions to Him. Such an attempt would be naive beyond ridicule. Fatherhood and motherhood denote certain roles and traits with which we are familiar on our physical plane of life. Since man is helpless to think of God except in human terms, he tries to bring God into his life by superimposing on Him these human relationships. As a great devotee once beautifully expressed it in a hymn to the Divine Mother :

'O Mother, though youth, beautiful form, etc., are equal to You both (that is, the Mother and the Lord), still there are some differences caused by Your will. You have apportioned to the Lord such qualities as unfettered independence, subjugation of adversaries, self-possession, etc., which are natural to a man and reserved for Yourself tenderness, dependence on the Spouse, mercy, forgiveness, etc., that are natural to a woman.'⁵

⁵ Parāsarabhaṭṭa : *Gunaratnakośa*, 34.

Is this not the way that a child views its parents? The child is utterly free from any sex-idea regarding its parents. Forget for the moment the obsessions with Freudian complexes. One who wants to enter the Kingdom of God must free himself from all ideas of sex and must become pure like a child.

II

The Upaniṣads are practically impersonal and nontheistic in their approach to Reality. Only once, according to a story in the *Kenopaniṣad*, Brahman, the Supreme Reality, is said to have appeared before the gods taking a wondrous and adorable form. It is in this story, again, that we hear of the Divine Mother Umā who appears to Indra, the leader of gods, and dispels his doubts about Brahman. Śaṅkara in his commentary gives two interpretations of the Mother's appearance. In the second one he says that Umā, the daughter of the Himālayas, is ever abiding with the omniscient Lord. Indra, knowing this fact, approached Her and asked who the adorable being was.⁶

Śaṅkara again shows a remarkable insight when he interprets the last and rather recondite verse of the fourteenth chapter of the *Bhagavad-gītā*. Here Śrī Kṛṣṇa says that He is the support of the immortal, immutable, blissful Brahman. Here also Śaṅkara gives two possible meanings. In the first he says: 'The lordly Power by which Brahman sets about the task of blessing devotees etc., is Brahman Itself; It is Myself (i.e., Kṛṣṇa), because the power and its possessor are non-different. That is the import.'⁷

⁶ अथवा, उमा एव हिमवतो दुहिता हैमवतीं नित्यमेव सर्वज्ञेन-ईश्वरेण सह वर्तते इति ज्ञातुं समर्था इति कृत्वा तां उपजगाम । Commentary on *Kenopaniṣad*, III. 12.

⁷ यथा च ईश्वरशक्त्या भक्तानुग्रहादि-प्रयोजनाय ब्रह्म प्रतिष्ठते प्रवर्तते सा शक्तिः ब्रह्म एव अहं शक्ति-शक्तिमतोः अनन्यत्वाद्, इति अभिप्रायः ।

Commentary on *Bhagavad-gītā*, XIV. 27.

In both these contexts Śaṅkara clearly states the very fundamental ideas of Mother-worship. He says that the Power of the Lord is ever abiding with Him, that there is no difference between Brahman and Its Power, and that God's incarnations themselves are identical with *Śakti* or the Power of God, Śaṅkara, the great non-dualistic teacher that he was, is said to have authored some exquisite hymns on the Divine Mother. But some scholars think that they cannot be Śaṅkara's compositions. But no one denies his authorship of these comments on the *Kenopaniṣad* story or the verse of the *Gītā*. It stands to reason then that if Śaṅkara went to the extent of bringing in the *Śakti*-concept in these places, he could as well have composed and dedicated those wonderful hymns to the Mother. But that is not our present concern.

From the story in the Upaniṣad and Śaṅkara's illuminating comments on it, it becomes clear to us that the grace of the Divine Mother is necessary for the realization of God and the attainment of freedom. Those who earnestly take up religious life have very often felt that, in spite of their best efforts and intentions, the mind is unaccountably attracted and attached to the external world and its various objects. When we discriminate, we see the world as utterly hollow and insubstantial. But that understanding proves to be short-lived like a flash of lightning on a stormy night. Next moment we are again engulfed in the darkness and begin to chase a hundred worldly things and desires. Why is it so? Who causes this delusion, this almost irresistible sense-attraction?

Sages of the Upaniṣads surely knew this great fact of human depth psychology. They said that the Self-created (Lord) has struck the mind and senses with a defect and so they always go out and not inward. In later periods, as the concept of *māyā* emerged in clear outlines, other teachers identified this

as the deluding power of the Divine Mother. Sri Ramakrishna, restating what Rāmprasād hinted, says that it is as if the Divine Mother said to the human mind in confidence, with a sign from Her eye, 'Go and enjoy the world.' 'In that case how can one blame the mind?' he asks, and continues, 'The mind can disentangle itself from worldliness, if through Her grace, She makes it turn towards Herself.' That which entangles the mind in worldliness is called the *avidyā-māyā* (*māyā* of ignorance) by Sri Ramakrishna, and that which helps in disentanglement as *vidyā-māyā* (*māyā* of knowledge). While *avidyā-māyā* deludes, *vidyā-māyā* begets devotion, kindness, wisdom, and love, which lead one to God.

Well protected and deep in the cache of egoism are the roots of the *māyā* of ignorance. 'Maya is nothing', said Sri Ramakrishna, 'but the egotism of the embodied soul. This egotism has covered everything like a veil.' The ego-veil is a part of the vast, inscrutable cosmic veil of ignorance and delusion woven and spread by the Mother before man's credulous eyes. If the deluding *avidyā-māyā* were only confined to the external world, one could have got away from it by retiring into a mountain cave and closing its mouth with a boulder. But the Mother is surely cleverer than Her creatures! She has so deftly managed it all that even the man who shuts himself up in a mountain cave takes with him his ego-mind complex, which is like a built-in cosmos (or chaos?), and so he is still the helpless, fluttering fly in Her web of delusion. Even when a man thinks, 'I am meditating, so I am free from *māyā*', he is still under Mother's control. Because the sense of egoism is very much present in him who thinks like that. The following words of Sri Ramakrishna are very revealing:

'You may feel a thousand times that it is all magic; but you are still under the control of the Divine Mother. You cannot

escape Her. You are not free. You must do what She makes you do. A man attains Brahmajnana only when it is given to him by the Adyasakti, the Divine Mother. Then alone does he see the whole thing as magic; otherwise not.

'As long as the slightest trace of ego remains, one lives within the jurisdiction of the Adyasakti. One is under Her sway. One cannot go beyond Her.'

What to speak of the habitually erring mortals? Even the gods are not free from the besetting influence of the ego. In the story of the *Kenopanisad* referred to above, we read that Indra and his colleagues thought that they by themselves had routed the demons and won the victory. And so they felt intensely egotistic. It was to disabuse them of this notion that Brahman appeared before them in that inscrutable, adorable form. It was proved to them that by themselves they were powerless even to blow or burn a piece of straw. Indra, the proudest of them all, got the worst snubbing. At his approach, Brahman withdrew Its form and vanished. Once the ego was crushed, Indra became humble, devoted, and introspective. Then the Mother appeared and revealed the truth of Brahman. That Indra did not get the knowledge of Brahman independently but only through the Divine Mother Umā is stressed by the Upaniṣad and underscored by Śaṅkara.⁸

God's incarnation in a human body, to put it concisely, is to bestow on men and women the vision of God and thereby bring about the spiritual regeneration of humanity. An incarnation's every action, even the most insignificant, is motivated to that end. But God can accomplish His divine mission on earth only through the agency of *Śakti* or His Power. As Śaṅkara's comments,

⁸ ततः तस्माद् हैव विदाञ्चकार ब्रह्मेति इन्द्रः अवधारणात्ततो हैवेति न स्वातन्त्र्येण ।

referred to above, on the *Gītā*-verse make out, Brahman proceeds to act for the benefit of devotees only through Its Power. By implication it means that the incarnation of God is actually the embodiment of the Divine Mother. Sri Ramakrishna's words—and his life no less—substantiate this idea. 'The greatest manifestation of His Power', he said once, 'is through an Incarnation.... It is Śakti, the Power of God, that is born as an Incarnation.'⁹ He said on another occasion, 'It is Sakti alone that becomes flesh as God Incarnate. According to one school of thought, Rama and Krishna are but two waves in the ocean of Absolute Bliss and Consciousness.'¹⁰ As if echoing his Master's sentiments, Swami Vivekananda once declared to a group of western disciples, 'A bit of Mother, a drop, was Krishna, another was Buddha, another was Christ.... Worship Her if you want love and wisdom.'¹¹

If, then, the incarnation of God is the *Guru par excellence*, let us remember, it is the Divine Mother Herself who teaches and enlightens human beings.

III

To regard God as Mother, according to Sri Ramakrishna, is the last word in *sādhana* or spiritual striving. It is not for us ordinary men to pretend to know the full import of that opinion. Whether it is the last word or not, it is the smoothest and surest way of realizing God. First, God as Mother is more loving towards the devotee than God as Father. Yes, those who approached God as Mother and realized Him have said so. Surely, as the Mother, God can afford to be indulgent and extravagant towards His children. Second, with the child's attitude the devotee feels closer

⁹ *The Gospel*, p. 702.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 212.

¹¹ *The Works*, Vol. VII (1958), p. 27.

to Mother-God. All formalities will be swept away in the gushing waters of the child's love for its Divine Mother.

From the worshipper's point of view the child's attitude proves to be the best ego-killer. The roots of *avidyā-māyā*, we noted, lie in one's egotism. The toughest bondage and deepest delusion are created by the *māyā* of ignorance. It is common knowledge that a child has practically no egoism. What little of it is there is too feeble to create any bondage. Even that ego is centred round its father and mother. Almost effortlessly the worshipper with the child's attitude overcomes the greatest obstacle to God-vision, the Mother's *avidyā-māyā*.

Besides this filial attitude must be cultivated an intense restlessness for seeing the Mother. Like a dutiful nurse, nature, in the employ of *avidyā-māyā*, will try to pacify the eager aspirant by offering 'red toys'. The red toys in this case may be wealth, name and fame, enjoyments, or psychic powers. If the restlessness for seeing the Mother is genuine, the child will throw away the toys and yell for Her. The Mother can recognize the 'real cry' of Her baby, the 'cry of hunger', and She comes instantly and takes it in Her arms.

IV

Genuine restlessness and longing for the Mother often find their expression—and nourishment—in the pitiful prayers of the devotee. If we know how some of those children of the Mother who succeeded in reaching Her prayed, we may get some clues to make our prayers effective. The following selection will be found helpful practically.

A Vedic sage prayed to Durgā, the Divine Mother, thus :

'I take refuge in Her, the Goddess Durgā, who is fiery in lustre and radiant

in ardency, who is the Power belonging to the Supreme who manifests Himself manifoldly, who is the Power residing in actions and their fruits rendering them efficacious. O Thou Goddess skilled in saving, Thou takest us across difficulties excellently well. Our salutations to Thee.'¹²

Ācārya Śaṅkara offered this prayer to Her:

'O Mother, in this world, in the midst of Thy numerous worthy sons, I happen to be a rare specimen of wantonness. Yet, O Thou beneficent one, it is not proper for Thee to have abandoned me, Thy child. For, a bad son may sometimes be born, but never has there been a bad mother.'¹³

Sri Ramakrishna once prayed to the Mother in the presence of a number of devotees. M., who was present on the occasion, felt that the Master rather wanted to teach erring mortals the art of prayer. Addressing the Mother, Sri Ramakrishna said:

'O Mother, I throw myself on Thy mercy; I take shelter at Thy Hallowed Feet. I do not want bodily comforts; I do not crave name and fame; I do not seek the eight occult powers. Be gracious and grant that I may have pure love for Thee, a love unsmitten by desire, untainted by any selfish ends—a love craved by the devotees for the sake of love alone. And grant me the favour, O Mother, that I may not be deluded by Thy world-bewitching maya, that I may never be attached to the world, to "woman and gold" conjured up by Thy inscrutable maya! O Mother, there is no one but Thee whom I may call my own. Mother, I do not know how to worship; I am without austerity; I have neither devotion nor knowledge. Be gracious, O Mother, and out of Thy infinite mercy grant me love for Thy Lotus Feet.'¹⁴

¹² *Taittiriya-āranyaka*, X. 2.

¹³ *Devyparādha-kṣamāpaṇa-stotra*, 3.

¹⁴ *The Gospel*, p. 707.

V

It is the Divine Mother, says the sage in the *Devī-māhātmyam*, who, when propitious, becomes a boon-giver to human beings for their final liberation.¹⁵ 'She, the Queen of the Supreme Brahman,' says Śaṅkara, 'is the seed of liberation for the good.'¹⁶ In another hymn he refers to Her as the one who 'breaks and throws open the door to liberation',¹⁷ and as the 'lighter of the lamp of supreme wisdom'.¹⁸

In conclusion, again, we can recall a remarkable vision that Sri Ramakrishna had at Varanasi. Cruising down the Ganga, he came to the famous crematorium at the Maṅikarnikā Ghāt. No sooner did he look at the burning funeral pyres than he went into *samādhi*. He described the vision he had seen thus:

'I saw a tall, white person with tawny

¹⁵ सैषा प्रसन्ना वरदा नृणां भवति मुक्तये । I. 56.

¹⁶ सतां मुक्तेर्बीजं त्वमसि परमब्रह्ममहिषी ।

Ānanda-laharī, 8.

¹⁷ मोक्षद्वार-कपाट-पाटनकरा । *Annapūrṇā-stotra*, 4.

¹⁸ विज्ञानदीपांकुरी । *ibid.*, 5.

matted hair walking with solemn steps to each pyre in the burning ghat, raising carefully every Jiva and imparting into his ear the mantra of Supreme Brahman; while, sitting on the pyre on the other side of the Jiva, the all-powerful universal Mother, Mahakali, the great Kali, untying all knots of bondage, gross, subtle and causal of the Jiva produced by past impressions, and sending him to the indivisible Sphere by opening with Her own hands the door to liberation....'¹⁹

A 'division of labour', let it be noted, exists between the Lord and His Divine Spouse in liberating the *jīva* or the individual soul. The Lord gives the saving mantra. But who unties the knots of past impressions, ego, and ignorance? It is the Mother. Because the complex knots are Her fabrications, and maybe they are bewildering even to the all-knowing Lord Himself! Note again who does the opening of the doors to liberation. It is the Divine Mother. Because She has the keys of the Kingdom of God!

¹⁹ Swami Saradananda: *Sri Ramakrishna: The Great Master* (Tr. by Swami Jagadananda, pub. by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras 4, 1952), p. 569.

LETTERS OF A SAINT

THE LORD MY REFUGE

Almora

14.8.1915

Dear . . . ,

. . . . The body will be generally like this: 'Childhood passes away with years and youth with old age.'¹ Day by day it is deteriorating. 'Human body is not ever-abiding', 'If born, one has to die; who is immortal?' etc. But if one can remain unafflicted while in the body, then indeed it is a mighty blessing. To know oneself to be other than the body is not a small matter. If through the Lord's grace it can happen, then it is supreme bliss.

¹ शीर्यते वयोभिः कौमारं यौवनं वार्धक्यादिभिः ।

Why do you become anxious with the thoughts of wife and children? I have told you that, by offering everything to Him, you become freed from worry through the Lord's grace. Wife, children, etc., all these are His. On you is the responsibility of only supporting them—that is all. Sri Ramakrishna has said: 'The maid in a rich man's house will take care of the master's son, saying, "Here is my Hari!" etc., but knows for certain that her own house is elsewhere in the country.' Let there be detachment in you—to remain unattached knowing that the family is the Lord's. Struggle is not for you, that is for those who follow the path of discrimination. For people like you the Lord says:

'Solely out of compassion for them, I, dwelling in their hearts, dispel with the shining lamp of wisdom the darkness born of ignorance.'²

'To them, whose minds are thus absorbed in Me, verily I become ere long, O Arjuna, the Saviour from the death-fraught ocean of the world.'³

'I will deliver you from all sins.'⁴

And so on. For your sake the Lord Himself is bearing all the brunt. The burden of a lucky man is borne by God. You are all fortunate people. All the verses quoted by you are for those who follow the path of knowledge, those who are afraid of taking birth here. The devotees of the Lord pray to Him for divine love. They say:

'O Kṛṣṇa, even though I be born among insects, birds, beasts, reptiles, demons, ghouls, or men or wheresoever, still through Your grace may I have unshakeable and unwavering devotion towards you.'⁵

Sri Ramakrishna had said to me: 'Those who pray for *nirvāṇa* are of petty minds: they are always afraid of everything. It is as in a game of dice—someone, say, is always looking for opportunities for reaching home. Once a pawn has reached home, he does not want to bring it back into the game. Such a man is indeed an immature player. But an expert player would always bring his pawn back to the game if he gets a chance to 'kill'. The moment an opportunity comes, he casts the dice calling the number he wants and moves his pawns to the home. The dice are completely under the control of such experts. So not being afraid, they play fearlessly. I said to him, 'Does that really happen?' The Master replied: 'It happens, decidedly—by Mother's grace it does take place. The Mother loves him who plays well. Just as in the game of hide-and-seek. The 'granny' is pleased with him

² *Bhagavad-gītā*, X. 11

³ *ibid.*, XII. 7.

⁴ *ibid.*, XVIII. 66

⁵ कीटेषु पक्षिषु मृगेषु सरीसृपेषु
रक्षःपिशाचमनुजेष्वपि यत्र यत्र ।
जातस्य मे भवतु केशव त्वत्प्रसादात्
त्वय्येव भक्तिरचलाव्यभिचारिणीच ॥

Prapanna-gītā, words of Drupada.

who runs about and plays vigorously. Sometimes maybe she stretches forth her hand to receive him. If the granny is once touched, then there is no fear of becoming a 'thief'. But the granny is not so pleased with him who stays close by. Similarly, the Mother is not much pleased with those who want *nirvāna*, those who want to break up the game. The Mother loves to play. Therefore the devotees do not want *nirvāna*. They say, 'O mind, it is not good to become sugar. I like to eat sugar.'

How many times has Sri Ramakrishna said this—it is known to everybody—and used to say: 'What are your so-called scriptures? Is that not just a handy list to check whether the things have arrived or not? There is then no more use for them. Once the articles arrive, the list is cast aside. As it happens, while sweeping the room a man gets a piece of paper and says, 'Let me see what is there in it.' He finds that it is written there, 'five seers of *sandes*,⁶ one piece of cloth, etc.' After seeing it he says, 'All that has been sent, now throw it away.' The scriptures are also like that—they contain descriptions of what happens when one gets knowledge or when one gets devotion. Therefore one should look into them to check up one's spiritual attainments. If the things have not 'arrived', then one should try to attain the 'things' (namely, Truth). And if they have actually 'arrived', then the scriptures should be discarded. Therefore it is said, 'The scripture becomes like a straw when Brahman is realized.'⁷ Sri Ramakrishna used to say that the Mother had revealed to him whatever was contained in all the holy books such as the Veda, scripture, Purāna, Tantra, etc. Because of this, though he was himself an illiterate, he used to humble the pride of scholarship of even great pundits. He used to say, 'If one gets one small ray from the goddess of learning, then all knowledge becomes like a glimmer. For him then there remains no more lack of wisdom.'

You are struggling your utmost to gain the treasure of the highest knowledge. And you are loving Him after gathering the treasure of devotion. The treasure, too,—either because of our great good fortune or because of His causeless compassion, or for whatever reason—has manifested itself before us. What is wanted now is to love that treasure with our heart and soul. If that is done, all else comes about of its own accord. If one can love Him, the world will be forgotten. Further, by His grace, even the body-consciousness disappears, Gaining anything through discrimination and austerity:—those who gain through them, let them get it—we have given up all hopes in that matter and taken shelter at His lotus feet. Now, thinking that what He does is the only right thing, we are lying down at His door. I know that for you too He is the refuge; there is no fear absolutely.

Mahapurush (Swami Sivananda) is well and so also is S.... Everything else is all right. I pray for your welfare. Please accept our good wishes and love.

SRI TURIYANANDA

⁶ A Bengali sweetmeat prepared out of cheese and sugar.

⁷ ब्रह्मज्ञाने तृणं शास्त्रम् ।

CULTIVATION OF STRENGTH AND FEARLESSNESS

SWAMI BUDHANANDA

HOW TO ACCEPT LIFE'S CHALLENGE

Life is a challenge. What we are going to get out of life will largely depend on the quality of our individual and personal acceptance of that challenge. There is no limit set to what a human being can become. Do you speak of circumstances? Well, in an ancient Hindu scripture, it is said: 'A man is born in the world of his own making.'¹ And we are remaking our world of being every day by what we think and do.

Therefore circumstances can be changed. We are truly the makers and unmakers of our destiny, notwithstanding our various limitations. What we are going to become in life will depend on our own strength, individually speaking. The stronger we are, the more we will be able to wrest out of life. Strength is the secret not only of all worldly achievements but also of all spiritual attainments.

Coming to religion does not mean settling down to mope and wail, cringe and cower before the forces of the world. It means deciding to assert our inherent might against situations inner and outer, and attain that victory which is never again defeated.

Do you say you are beset with problems? Someone is suppressing you, or oppressing you: is that your complaint? Do you feel miserable? Do you feel like a sinner? Then turn round and attack your situation, however hopeless it may appear to be, with that one idea, strength, coursing through

your veins, and you will be surprised to see how soon your problems are solved.

Swami Vivekananda declares:

'It is weakness, says the Vedānta, which is the cause of all misery in this world. Weakness is the one cause of suffering. We become miserable because we are weak. We lie, steal, kill, and commit other crimes, because we are weak. We suffer because we are weak.... We are miserable through delusion. Give up the delusion, and the whole thing vanishes.'²

So, this delusion of weakness must go. It must be destroyed root and branch.

If the oppressor were strong, he would not oppress. It is his weakness that drives him to oppress. If the oppressed were strong, he would not suffer the oppression. If the starving man had strength he would refuse to starve. He would secure food from God's plenty and live. He would change such political or economic situations which tend to perpetuate his misery. If the tempted man had real strength, he would not yield to the temptation.

It is the weak body that falls a prey to any and every romping bacillus. It is the weak mind that becomes a hovel of all sorts of maladies. With our weaknesses gone at the influx of strength we would not lie, steal, kill, commit other crimes and sins. We should then know how splendid life can be, not in any shallow sunny sense, but in the sense that the captive released from a dark cell after years of stay there, finds the blue of the sky splendid.

¹ कृतं लोके पुरुषो अभिजायते ।

² *The Complete Works* (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Himalayas, Almora), Vol. II (1963), p. 198.

To derive the utmost out of life, what anyone, any time, any where, requires more than anything else is strength and more strength. With more strength this moment, next moment a man is a better, purer and happier person. Not that when we are stronger persons life's trials and tribulations will cease to visit us. As stronger persons we may even attract more problems and troubles. But with strength in our sinews, vigour in our minds expressing themselves also as indomitable wills, we shall enjoy wrestling with them and wresting the life's prizes from their reluctant hands. The timid and the weak are afraid even of shadows and rustle of leaves.

Hence Vivekananda says:

'The best guide in life is strength. In religion, as in all other matters, discard everything that weakens you, have nothing to do with it.'³

'Infinite strength is religion and God. Avoid weakness and slavery.'⁴

These words of Vivekananda are to human life what a compass is to a storm-tossed ship. Possess them firmly in your understanding and you will sail in the right direction.

This, now, we very well understand that we require strength and more strength.

But wherefrom do we get this strength?

The answer comes like a thunderclap from Vivekananda's teachings:

'All the strength and succour you want is within yourselves. Therefore, make your own future. "Let the dead past bury its dead." The infinite future is before you, and you must always remember that each word, thought, and deed, lays up a store for you and that as the bad thoughts and bad works are ready to spring upon you like tigers, so also there is the inspiring hope that the good thought and deeds are ready with the

power of a hundred thousand angels to defend you always and for ever.'⁵

What a life-giving and inspiring message: All strength and succour already within yourself! There is nothing which God has not given us as potency. The gold mine is in the backyard. Dig the mine and take the gold. Fallow lies the field of life. Cultivate it and a golden harvest is yours.

The strength that is already within will have to be manifested. That is the real task of spiritual life. Other things will follow as a matter of course. It is, therefore, a question of cultivation. So it comes to this: Anyone seeking to manifest strength and more strength will have to do all the reckoning with himself. What stands in one's way is nothing but one's own indecision and want of self-application.

The first question is: Are we determined to gain more strength? If we are, we are going to get it. But only verbal announcement will not do. Determination of the will is necessary. When the head and heart are equally persuaded, then determination will come. That kind of determination itself is a degree of attained strength.

METHODS OF CULTIVATING PHYSICAL STRENGTH

Coming to actual cultivation of strength we must remember that human personality is a complex. Man has a body, mind, and soul. The soul or *Ātman* is the core of man's being, and that is clothed by body and mind, so to say. Proper cultivation of strength will have reference to man's entire being. When we fail to do this cultivation of strength, being lop-sided may very well lead to problematic results.

In actual cultivation of strength first comes the question of physical strength.

A physically weak man or woman is a picture of pathos. We are not speaking of

³ *ibid.*, Vol. I (1962), p. 134.

⁴ *ibid.*, Vol. VII (1958), p. 13.

⁵ *ibid.*, Vol. II (1963), p. 225.

those who due to illness or advanced age have become weak in an inevitable natural process. We are speaking of those who through harmful self-neglect have become weak untimely and unnecessarily. A strong and healthy man or woman is a thing of beauty, expressing a special grace of God as it were. In their association even a weak person feels strong.

A physically weak person generally tends to become weak in all spheres of life, though it is not an absolute rule.

If we have one weakness, it is easy for us to acquire a second one. And when we have two weaknesses, it almost looks impolite not to have a third one!

The Hindu seers saw this basic factor so clearly that they went to the extent of saying: 'Body is verily the primary instrument of acquiring dharma.'⁶

Proper care does not mean coddling the body, but harnessing it judiciously in order to bring forth its maximum strength-potential into operation.

When Swami Vivekananda said, 'You will be nearer to Heaven through football than through the study of the Gita', we can well imagine how shocked his Indian audience was.

But then he himself explained what he meant. He said:

'You will understand the *Gita* better with your biceps, your muscles, a little stronger. You will understand the mighty genius and the mighty strength of Krishna better with a little strong blood in you. You will understand the Upanishads better and the glory of the Atman when your body stands firm upon your feet, and you feel yourselves as men.'⁷

This truth applies equally forcefully to women too. There is no distinction between

man and woman from the standpoint of the *Ātman*.

Some of the most oft-quoted words of Swami Vivekananda in India which have charged the whole nation with a sense of inner strength, which finally brought independence to the country, are:

'What our country now wants are muscles of iron and nerves of steel, gigantic wills which nothing can resist, which can penetrate into the mysteries and the secrets of the universe, and will accomplish their purpose in any fashion, even if it meant going down to the bottom of the ocean and meeting death face to face.'⁸

When Sri Ramakrishna accepted some of his disciples he had an eye on their physical strength. Naren, Rakhal, and Niranjan were athletes. So were Sasi and Sarat. So much importance was given to physical strength by the world-forgetting Sri Ramakrishna.

The cultivation of physical strength has two aspects: negative and positive.

Negatively speaking, cultivation of physical strength means stopping the avoidable wastage of physical energy.

Physical energy is wasted in various ways. For instance:

1. Irregular and disorganized ways of living.
2. Want of adequate nourishing food.
3. Idling about and want of useful occupation.
4. Illness and want of proper rest.
5. Immoral habits.
6. Use of intoxicating drinks, drugs, or narcotics.
7. Living in unhealthy surroundings.
8. Mental disquiet and turmoil.
9. Overwork and useless work.
10. Habit of unnecessary talking.

To cultivate physical strength, first, we must find our ways to stop the wastage of physical energy through right means. It may

⁶ शरीरमाद्यं खलु धर्मसाधनम् ।

Kālidāsa : *Kumārasambhavam* V. 33

⁷ op. cit., Vol. III (1960), p. 242.

⁸ ibid., III (1960), p. 190.

appear that some situations of life which cause the drainage of physical energy are beyond our control. The most important point to remember is that to the man who has no self-control, the whole world stays out of his control.

When we begin to exercise self-control, on examination, it will be found that there is nothing immutable in what are called 'circumstances'; in fact they always keep on self-changing. Circumstances have not always to be changed; very often they have only to be understood and worked with.

Positively speaking, cultivation of physical strength will depend on:

1. Regular ways of living.
2. Nourishing and proper food.
3. Regular work, rest, and recreation.
4. Proper physical exercise.
5. Moral habits.
6. The quiet of the mind.

Many of us, though always very body-conscious, strangely enough utterly neglect our own bodies. Some of us think that by eating good food they have done all that is needed for the body. And the result is they grow so substantial as to cause consternation to the ever-generous hearts of the anti-coronary people.

Again, there are others who, for fear of looking uninspiring, would not even take the necessary amount of food. They want to stay slim to desperation, so that they may be a kind of very sought-after actors in the theatre of the absurd in a world of cultivated despair and brilliance. But microbes, very unpoetical creatures as they are, have an extra fondness for people of weak vitality. And hence it is wisdom to eat the required food.

Overeating is stupid. Under-eating is foolish. The idea is to get a supple strong body to be an instrument for a very high purpose. Judicious and balanced feeding of the body in order to bring out its maxi-

mum strength potential is the proper thing to do.

Many of us have no idea about how much strength lies dormant in our uncultivated muscles. We have heard of mythical Hercules. His performances may stagger our imagination. In our times too, people have performed fantastic feats of physical prowess such as supporting an elephant on the chest, stopping a car running full speed etc.

Though there is no particular need of supporting elephants by human ribs, which in all probability were not meant by the Creator for that purpose, such performances indicate to what extent man, through physical exercise, can increase his strength.

Now, physical exercises have to be chosen with circumspection, according to age and physiological considerations. A man of declining age suffering from arthritis need not play rugby for his daily exercise. A vigorous young man should not stay content by driving in an automobile at seventy miles per hour and thinking that he has taken his exercise. All exercises suitable for men may not suit women. Without competing with men in this regard they may take suitable physical exercises and enormously increase their physical strength.

The main point to be remembered on this is that men and women at different stages of their lives have to take such exercises as are conducive to bring forth the latent strength and maintain the manifested strength. Of course old age comes to everyone who lives long enough, making it progressively difficult to take physical exercises, except perhaps walking.

In the affluent society, soft living becomes a pattern of life. President Kennedy was really alarmed when he noticed the state of declining physical stamina of the young people in America. Hence he introduced a programme for improving the situation. It is for the parents to see that their children do not grow like soft butter dolls, but deve-

lop something of 'muscles of iron and nerves of steel', as Swami Vivekananda wanted.

METHODS OF CULTIVATING

MENTAL STRENGTH

But when by strength one understands only physical force, it creates problems for himself and for others. Unfortunately, a large number of people have always understood only physical strength and brute force by the word 'strength'. This mistaken idea caused many tragedies in history. People who considered themselves strong destroyed others and eventually themselves. In our times what is called the 'armament race', which poses a threat to human civilization, is the most problematic development of this concept of strength.

If by strength were meant only physical force, one could not advocate its universal cultivation. We have therefore to understand the concept in its all-comprehensive connotation.

You may have a body as strong as that of a rhinoceros. What of that? That is mere brute strength. But that strength gets a new meaning, when it is guided, controlled and directed by a strong mind.

Mental strength is any day a superior force to the physical strength. A mentally strong man may or may not be physically as strong. But as a human being he will be always more effective than the person representing merely physical strength.

Vegetarian Gandhi, unarmed, challenged the mighty British imperial rule, and the British had to quit India. That is a classic example how the strength of mind can be an effective force in changing the course of history.

It will be found in life that he who fails to cultivate mental strength leads a kind of vegetating life, wherever he may be placed. But he who has taken care to develop mental strength turns everything to good ac-

count. He faces life in a frontal manner, battles with adversity manfully, and is never afraid. In victory he is humble and generous. In defeat he is introspective and optimistic. In trials he is alert and dexterous. His very life manifests a new winning quality, which the man without mental strength totally lacks. Until a man develops mental strength, he cannot even be distinguished from an animal. And on mere physical level, what chances has man to shine brighter than an animal?

Therefore anyone, seeking to live a life worthy of a human being, while cultivating physical strength, should take even greater care to cultivate mental strength.

Cultivation of mental strength too has two aspects: negative and positive.

Negatively speaking, cultivation of mental strength means stopping wastage of mental energy. Without doing that, obviously mind cannot be strengthened. Positively speaking, it means feeding the mind with wholesome food.

We are cautious about spending money but often reckless enough about spending a more precious wealth—our mind. If one loses his mind, of what use will be all the wealth of the world to him? Even his dearest ones will be anxious to get him shut up in a mental home.

Mental energy is wasted in various ways such as:

1. Indiscriminate reading.
2. Purposeless controversy.
3. Garrulousness.
4. Inquisitiveness in others' affairs.
5. Finding fault with others.
6. Over-ambitiousness.
7. Egotistic concern for perfection in others.
8. Lust, anger, jealousy, hatred, avarice, and arrogance.
9. The habit of harbouring grudge against others.
10. Daydreaming and night-waking.

11. Indulging in fantasies and emotional kite-flying.
12. What is called 'giving bits of one's mind to others'.

Drainage of mental energy will have to be stopped by giving up these habits. While indulging in these habits one cannot have a strong mind, and a man of weak mind cannot be physically healthy for long.

Modern psychologists are all agreed that in human life there is a close psychosomatic relationship. 'Psyche' means mind, 'soma' means body. How close is that relation we shall illustrate:

A young woman of thirty years of age had enjoyed a fairly happy married life until the depression of the early thirties. At that time her husband's financial security was threatened. Then her very successful father-in-law died. This woman was apprehensive lest her widowed mother-in-law should request help from the husband. The mother-in-law appeared in the picture which created serious tension in the young wife. She had a nervous breakdown and all the symptoms of serious mental disorder. She was stabilized by attaining a higher philosophy of life. She realized that the mother-in-law would not be a burden to her even if worse came to worst. She was also convinced that the life of consecration can alone remove her egocentric, selfish attitude. It took several months for her to establish herself in this new way of thinking. In the meantime, she systematically went through spiritual exercises of concentration, meditation, and so forth, and gradually developed will power.⁹

Such is the close relation between mind and body. It is a well-known fact that mental strain and maladies cause many physical ailments. For developing mental strength one must know how to look after one's own mental health.

How can we do it? There are certain simple and safe ways by which we may do effective mind-husbandry to ourselves and our family members, without having to rush in a panicky way to 'be analysed'.

In America, among sophisticated millionaires, getting regularly analysed has become one of the norms of high fashion. But, for various reasons, it is a very expensive and problematic fashion. Once you get into getting analysed, you never get out of it. For, where is the end of that kind of analysis until you are in the coffin, well-advanced in the way of all flesh? Therefore, it is wisdom to learn certain authentic simple methods for taking care of one's mental health, by which you can never injure yourself.

In life's journey, conflict within ourselves and with environments generate wrong emotions in our minds, such as hatred, jealousy, lust, anger, avarice, pride etc. What we call impurities of mind are nothing but wrong movements of our mind. These wrong emotions of the mind are like the garbage of the mind. We all know what will happen to our homes if we cannot throw out garbage from our kitchens for a week. But many of us do not seem to realize what happens to our minds if we do not throw out our mental garbage for months and years. It is known only when we develop some chronic mental troubles causing worry for everybody. But need we push the situation in that blind alley at all? What is needed is to develop the habit of introspection and learn how to detect the wrong movements of the mind, and also the method of their removal.

Patañjali, the father of Hindu psychology, suggests that these impurities of the mind which drain our energy and cause various types of mental ailments can be removed by practising these four disciplines:

1. Friendliness toward the happy.
2. Compassion to the miserable.

⁹ Swami Akhilananda: *Mental Health And Hindu Psychology* (Harper and Brothers, New York, 1951), p. 91.

3. Delight in the good.

4. Indifference to evil.

If we practise friendliness toward the happy, we shall strike at the root of our instincts of jealousy and hatred which eat away the inside of man. Compassion to the miserable will expand our heart and purify the mind when practised with humility and consecration. Delight in the good will augment our own goodness, destroy our subtle evil tendencies. Indifference to evil will save us from such contagion from outside against which we have not yet developed sufficient resistance within ourselves.

Along with these if we would also daily offer the fruits of our thoughts and actions to the Lord during the practice of our devotions, then we have a fair chance of stopping the wastage of mind and also destroying the causes of possible mental maladies.

When we practise these simple disciplines it becomes easier to bring the mind under control. The cultivation of mental strength is possible only in a controlled mind.

How do we control the mind?

Control of the mind is a vast subject by itself. For our present purpose we shall discuss only one point.

There are various methods of controlling the mind. But the most fundamental is this: we have the *indriyas* or sense-organs and also our *buddhi* or discriminating faculty. When we ally our mind with the discriminating faculty and refuse to dance attendance on sense-organs then the mind stands controlled. It cannot be done in a day. But it can be done.

Now the mind in which wastage has been stopped, which has been cleansed and controlled, should be fed with wholesome food. Indeed this threefold process of mind-husbandry should continue simultaneously, one process helping the other. The wholesome food for the mind is nothing but the noblest, highest, and purest thoughts of the

world coming from any quarter or any source. 'We must have', as Swami Vivekananda says, 'life-building, man-making, character-making, assimilation of ideas.'¹⁰ Even if we assimilate five such ideas and make them part of life and character our minds will be strong.

In Mahatma Gandhi's *Autobiography* we read, to start with, he was a man of weak mind, like any ordinary human being. But he took to feeding his mind with a few great ideas—truth, non-violence, fearlessness, selflessness, all based on faith in God. And eventually he developed one of the strongest minds of our age.

In one context Swami Vivekananda points out the technique of feeding the mind with great life-giving ideas. He says:

'Men are taught from childhood that they are weak and sinners. Teach them that they are all glorious children of Immortality, even those who are the weakest in manifestation. Let positive, strong, helpful thoughts enter into their brains from very childhood. Lay yourself open to these thoughts and not to weakening and paralysing ones. Say to your own mind, "I am He, I am He". Let it ring day and night in your minds like a song, and at the point of death declare: "I am He". That is truth; the infinite strength of the world is yours.'¹¹

In one of his lectures in California, Swami Vivekananda narrated how in his days of wandering in India his mental strength saved his life on many occasions:

'Many times I have been in the jaws of death, starving, footsore and weary; for days and days I had had no food, and often could walk no further; I would sink down under a tree and life would seem ebbing away. I could not speak, I could scarcely think, but at last the mind reverted to the idea: "I have no fear, nor death; I never hunger nor

¹⁰ op. cit., Vol. III, p. 302.

¹¹ *ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 87

thirst. I am It! I am It! The whole of nature cannot crush me; it is my servant. Assert thy strength, thou Lord of Lords and God of Gods! Regain thy lost empire! Arise and walk and stop not!" And I would rise up, reinvigorated, and here am I, living, today. Thus, whenever darkness comes, assert the reality and everything adverse must vanish. For, after all, it is but a dream. Mountain-high though the difficulties appear, terrible and gloomy though all things seem, they are but Maya. Fear not—it is banished. Crush it, and it vanishes. Stamp upon it, and it dies.¹²

Cultivated intellectual powers may constitute one of the elements which will strengthen the mind, when it has been otherwise well taken care of. And so intellectual powers should be carefully cultivated. The key to the cultivation of intellectual powers is the practice of concentration. Those who leave their mark in history, who have been great teachers or benefactors of mankind were all men of concentration.

Observance of truth and purity of character in thought, word, and deed immensely enhance the strength of mind. The true and the pure may not be gifted with many endowments, but they will shine like richest treasure of humanity. Their words may not be loud. But even their whisper will demolish mountains of falsehood. Even their detractors will trust them.

Finally, there is one singular method of gaining strength of mind which is incredibly simple, so simple that one almost hesitates to tell it. It is the repetition of God's name: *japam*. God is the source of all strength. And God and His name are non-different. Hence God's name is also the source of all strength. He who repeats the name of the Lord daily, regularly with faith and love, his mind not only never lacks strength, but it always continues to increase it, being spiritually connected with the very source

of all strength and power in the world. This is so simple a method, and we are so sophisticated that we may not believe this. But, to be sure, this is one of the greatest facts of life. It is open to all to try and see this.

In a very unassuming teaching, Sri Ramakrishna says: Clap your hands in the morning and evening and say: '*Haribal, Haribal*'. These words mean, 'Chant the name of God, Chant the name of God,' and also, 'God is my strength, God is my strength.'

The practice of the following Vedic prayer can be greatly helpful to the followers of all faiths in cultivating strength on all levels, physical, mental and spiritual:

'O Lord, Thou art the embodiment of infinite energy; do Thou fill me with energy. Thou art the embodiment of infinite virility; Thou art the embodiment of infinite strength; do Thou bestow strength upon me. Thou art the embodiment of infinite power; do Thou grant power unto me. Thou art the embodiment of infinite courage; do Thou inspire me with courage. Thou art the embodiment of infinite fortitude; do Thou give me fortitude.'¹³

This prayer should be especially taught to children at home so that they may grow not only with a *penchant* for strength and fearlessness but also for faith in divine response to their earnest prayers.

METHODS OF CULTIVATING SPIRITUAL STRENGTH

While mental strength is superior to physical strength, there is a strength which is higher than even mental strength. It is

- ¹³ तेजोऽसि तेजो मयि धेहि ।
वीर्यमसि वीर्यं मयि धेहि ।
बलमसि बलं मयि धेहि ।
अजोऽसि अजी मयि धेहि ।
मन्युरसि मन्युं मयि धेहि ।
सहोसि सहो मयि धेहि ।

Sukla Yajur Veda Samhitā, XIX.9.

¹² *ibid.*, p. 403.

the spiritual strength. There is no strength higher or greater than spiritual strength. Spiritual strength may therefore be said to be the ultimate strength.

The indestructible and real element in man is the Ātman, which is the reservoir of all power and splendour. Therefore strength born of the realization of Ātman, or one's experienced relationship with God, is the greatest and the most abiding strength. Once gained, it cannot be lost. It only increases. Strength of body and mind are almost nothing in comparison to the strength born of realization of God or Ātman. It is the attainment of such strength which enabled the Sikh Guru Tej Bahādur Singh to declare: 'I have given my head but not my valued treasure, my *dharma*.'

True spiritual life becomes the conduit for the expression of the power of Reality Itself. The Upaniṣad teaches: 'The Ātman cannot be realized by one who is devoid of strength.'¹⁴ Again, elsewhere the Upaniṣad says: 'Through realization of the Ātman one attains strength.'¹⁵ On the basis of such teachings of the Upaniṣad, Swami Vivekananda gives us the equation: true spirituality is strength, and true strength is spirituality. That strength which does not eventually lead us to the attainment of illumination is not true strength but an illusion of it. Without moving towards reality step by step we cannot have real strength. Those who seek God may appear to be very innocent people. In reality they constitute the most enduring strength of a society.

One basic factor in cultivating spiritual strength is the observance of continence. Maximum spiritual strength can never be developed without absolute continence. The gap in continence will be reflected in

the gap in spiritual strength. Therefore highest type of spiritual strength is always seen among great monks and nuns.

Married men and women—when they live perfectly chaste lives and live a truthful life in the righteous path—can develop tremendous spiritual strength. There are any number of such cases in Hindu legends and history. Take only the human aspect of the character of Sītā, the well-known heroine of the epic *Rāmāyana*, who stood alone against all the evil forces that surrounded her after she was kidnapped by Rāvaṇa, by sheer power of her chastity. Chastity is the most valued idea in the householder's way of spiritual life in India. Swami Vivekananda says in one place, unless in a society married people live chaste lives for many generations, that society cannot produce great monks and nuns.

When the spiritual strength comes to one after the attainment of the vision of God or realization of the Ātman, then he stands metamorphosed. Through him courses a superhuman strength and this distracted world is vitalized with a new power. Such a man may be physically sick, his position in the world may not be of any account, he may have no learning, but with the influx of spiritual strength he will do things not possible to be done by muscular men, generals, dictators or intellectuals.

Thus we find manifest in some of the mystics of the world 'an amazing super-abundant vitality, a "triumphing force" over which circumstance has no power.'¹⁶ It so happens to them sometimes by a certain alchemy of realization. Their erstwhile passivity drops off and they enter into history like rivers of power and transform the future of man. Lives of St. Paul, St. Joan of Arc, St. Teresa, St. Catherine of Siena, Śaṅkarācārya, Vivekananda, and a host of others

¹⁴ नायमात्मा बलहीनेन लभ्यः ।

Muṇḍaka-upaniṣad, III. ii. 4.

¹⁵ आत्मना विन्दते वीर्यम् । *Kena-upaniṣad*, II. 4.

¹⁶ Vide : Evelyn Underhill : *Mysticism* (The World Publishing Company, New York, 1967), p. 429.

will bear testimony to this fact.

A superabundant vitality, an enthralling enthusiasm, invincible will, all these can issue only from spiritual strength. These are beyond the reach of mere mental or physical strength. Just as a river attains its fulfilment when it flows into the ocean, in like manner streams of physical and mental strength attain their oceanic fulfilment when they flow into and become one with strength spiritual.

St. Paul—what was he? An obscure Roman citizen, without money, influence or even good health. But when, through spiritual realization, it came to be the case of 'not I, but Christ in me', he went forth into the world alone to set the colossal foundations of the great Roman Catholic Church.

St. Joan of Arc was a child of a peasant class. But suddenly we find her leaving her sheepfold to lead the armies of France. How did this happen? We are told that she was propelled by the voice from above. She felt herself charged with a superhuman power. Having become united with infinite life, that is divinity itself, she became the medium of its mighty expression.

St. Teresa was a chronic invalid, then over fifty years of age. But when the inward voice prompted her to go forward on the path of destiny, she unexpectedly left the convent and started a startlingly new life, coursing through Spain and reforming a great religious order in the teeth of the ecclesiastical world.

More surprising was the life of St. Catherine of Siena, an illiterate woman of humble extraction. After a few years of life in a retreat, where she had the experience of the mystic marriage, she emerges from the cell of self-knowledge to dominate the politics of Italy.

Such examples can be multiplied.

Let me give you only two examples from India. Śrī Śaṅkara, the great mystic phi-

losopher of India, died at the age of thirty-two. But by that age the work he had done was just fantastic. After attaining the highest spiritual realization of the identity of Ātman and Brahman, he wrote commentaries on the Upaniṣads, the *Gītā*, and the *Brahma-sūtras*. Besides these he composed many hymns and other original treatises on the philosophy of nondualism. This itself would have taken several lives of an ordinary person. But Śaṅkara did many things more which left an indelible impress on the history of Hinduism. He crisscrossed India a couple of times on foot, propagated the message of Vedānta—for which he had to fight many a battle with other contending philosophies—, set right the methods of worship, and organized Hindu monastic orders, trained disciples to carry forth his work, and passed even before he was fully young, so to say.

Swami Vivekananda's life is another object-lesson of what spiritual strength can achieve. He lived only for thirtynine years. The power-potency of his teachings has already not only influenced in depth the spiritual thought-current of the world, but his global ministry has also been quietly 'helping to prepare the way for the united pilgrimage of mankind towards self-understanding and peace.' By the strength of his spirituality he introduced in the life-stream of the West a saving power, that is Vedānta. In India he galvanized the whole nation and set it on the path of new adventures and attainments. His life-work has just begun to fructify.

METHODS OF CULTIVATING

FEARLESSNESS

The concept of strength is intimately associated with the idea of fearlessness. Fear impedes the inflow and outflow of strength. Want of strength again causes fear. Nothing can degrade a man so much as fear.

There is not a single sin or crime which men cannot commit out of fear. Out of fear civilized human beings can become thoroughly barbarized, and commit the worst of crimes. When this is done collectively, we may call it a war—such acts might even be called as patriotic or heroic. But basically an act of fear is below the dignity of man.

And there is such strange binding mutuality of fear in the world of today. America is afraid of Russia; Russia is afraid of America. Arabs are afraid of Jews; Jews are afraid of Arabs. Labour is afraid of management; management is afraid of labour. Black people are afraid of white people; white people are afraid of black people. Fear is cultivated on levels international, national, social, individual, racial, or religious. At least half of the difficulties and problems of mankind originate in fear.

Fear leads to suspicion, suspicious to anger, anger to violence, violence to disaster. Fear can rob us of the finest qualities of our head and heart. It can destroy our sanity, our capacity for right thinking and action, and make brutes of us. Even what we call enlightened self-interest, for which we think any action is justifiable, is nothing but gilded fear. On the personal level how many odd fears do we not have: fear of the known, fear of the unknown; fear of death, ghost, disease; fear of poverty or money, enemy or friend; fear of darkness, fear of light; fear of old age, past, present or future; fear of taxation, examination; fear of losing what we have, of not getting what we want—so much so our very lives appear to be relay-races of fears, defined or undefined, real or imaginary.

And fear expresses and impresses itself in our lives in an infinite variety of ways, and saps our strength almost imperceptibly.

Therefore it is a necessary precondition for true cultivation of strength that we take special care to eradicate fears from our

minds. And fear has to be removed from individual minds for its roots are there alone. There is no fear hanging anywhere in the sky or standing somewhere in a dark corner. Even the bomb which may fall from the sky originates in the fear of individual minds. National fears are but collectivized individual fears. If a fearless man arise in a nation he can volatilize a whole mass of national fears by his personal example. This we saw in India in the example of Vivekananda which was later followed by Gandhiji. When Indian people lost fear of British bullets, the British had to leave India.

Now, where is the root of fear?

According to Vedānta, the root of fear is in our ignorance of the true nature of the Self. Because we do not know that the core of being or the Ātman is infinite, immortal and indestructible, we are afraid of death. And from our ignorance of the true nature of the Ātman, which is one, indivisible, homogeneous consciousness arises the concept of otherness, that is, sense of differentiation. From the sense of differentiation arise the ideas of competitive exclusive self-interest, and fears of various sorts.

In the Upaniṣad it is taught: 'If the aspirant makes the slightest differentiation in It, there is fear for him.'¹⁷ Again says the Upaniṣad emphasizing the same idea in another way: 'It is only from the idea of the existence of a second one that fear arises.'¹⁸

The cause of fear being so, its final solution is possible only through the realization of the true nature of the Self, which also means direct realization of the fact of unity of existence. When we experientially know that *sarvam khalvidam brahma*—All this

¹⁷ यदा ह्यवैष एतस्मिन्नुदरमन्तरं कुरुतेऽथ तस्य भयं भवति ।

Tattirīya-upaniṣad, II. 7.

¹⁸ द्वितीयाद्वै भयं भवति ।

Bṛhadāraṇyaka-upaniṣad, I. iv. 2.

is verily Brahman'—and that '*ayamātmā brahma*—This individual self is Brahman'—then there remains none or nothing outside the self to be afraid of. In other words, true fearlessness cannot be attained except through attainment of illumination.

You know the old story of Alexander and the Hindu sage. Swami Vivekananda narrates this in one of his lectures:

'An Emperor who invaded India was told by his teacher to go and see some of the sages there. After a long search for one, he found a very old man sitting on a block of stone. The Emperor talked with him a little and became very much impressed by his wisdom. He asked the sage to go to his country with him. "No," said the sage, "I am quite satisfied with my forest here." Said the Emperor, "I will give you money, position, wealth. I am the Emperor of the world." "No," replied the man, "I don't care for those things." The Emperor replied, "If you do not go, I will kill you." The man smiled serenely and said, "That is the most foolish thing you ever said, Emperor. You cannot kill me. Me the sun cannot dry, fire cannot burn, sword cannot kill, for I am the birthless, the deathless, the ever-living omnipotent, omnipresent Spirit."¹⁹

Such fearlessness can spring only from attained illumination when a man directly perceives that his being pervades the universe and that infinite strength and power are behind him. We may not know it but behind everyone of us is God's infinite power. We are conduits of His power. How can a gun be afraid of a bullet? Yet we are. That is *māyā*. That is the tragedy.

We must volatilize this illusion in order to become fearless. As human beings who are not yet illumined we of course cannot have the fearlessness of illumined souls. But this we can surely do: we can intellectually and emotionally make the ideas of

immortality of soul and the unity of existence our own by constantly thinking of them, and thus driving out of our minds all contrary ideas. When these ideas will sink into our subconscious, our tendencies will take shape accordingly and fear will gradually leave while courage takes over. Swami Vivekananda says that there are two sorts of courage: one is the courage of facing the cannon, and the other is the courage of spiritual conviction. One is the physical courage, and the other is the spiritual courage.

We have discussed how spiritual courage may be attained. Let us take our stand on the spirit and dare to live its implications and spiritual courage will gradually flow forth within us.

Meanwhile we are indeed more concerned with the attainment of physical courage. It is shameful, it is degrading, it is stupid to live in constant fear of one thing or other on the physical plane. The most effective method of cultivating fearlessness on the physical plane is to 'face the brute'! This teaching comes to us from Swami Vivekananda's life.

It so happened in his early youth, when one day he was returning from a temple of the Divine Mother in Varanasi, he was pursued by a troop of monkeys and so he was about to run fearing that they might attack him.

Suddenly he heard the voice of an old Sannyasin calling out to him. And what the old monk said became an object lesson for Vivekananda's whole life, and it should be an object lesson of our life too, if we want to be bold and fearless.

The Sannyāsin said, 'Stop; always face the brutes!' Vivekananda turned, his fear gone. Seeing him defiant, the brutes fled. In a lecture given in the city of New York, years later, he referred to this incident and pointed out the moral of the story, saying:

¹⁹ op. cit., Vol. II (1963), pp. 84-5.

'So face nature! Face ignorance! Face illusion! Never fly!'²⁰

As long as we, out of fear, leave the causes of fear behind, so long we remain its victim. Then its poisoned arrow will pierce us from the back and we will not know when we will be down and out. But when we turn round, the cause of our fear becomes the victim of our courage and it can no longer inflict on us that amount of harm, if at all it can.

In every single case of fear we must, to the point of recklessness, turn round and stare the fear in the face with glowing eyes. It may be an ugly face, a ferocious face. Or there may be no face at all! When we turn round we may see there is nothing whatsoever, except the fertile imagination of our heated brain.

Even in case of a real cause of fear, the only way to handle it is to call forth courage and strength and subdue it with dexterity.

On two occasions the Holy Mother, the consort of Sri Ramakrishna, faced causes of fear with dexterity and courage and triumphed over them.

Once while she was on her way to Calcutta on foot from Jayrambati, she found herself alone—her companions having left her behind—in the gathering darkness of night in a vast meadow notorious for cases of plunder and murder. Suddenly a husky man with a big stick shouted at her in a most unfriendly voice: 'Who is there?' 'I am your daughter Sarada', she said. And the dacoit who would have plundered her, melted in affection to hear her sweet voice. The result was he, with his wife who soon joined him, guarded her all night after seeing that she got her night's food from a shop.²¹

²⁰ His Eastern and Western Disciples: *The Life of Swami Vivekananda* (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Almora, 1949), p. 172.

²¹ *Sri Sarada Devi, The Holy Mother*, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 1949, p. 96-97.

On another occasion, at Jayrambati, she was pursued by a cranky man. She ran around a haystack several times. Then it occurred to her, 'Why am I running? Am I not Śakti Herself?' She turned round, threw the man on the ground, and putting her knee on the chest of the man gave him such slaps that his crankiness was cured at least for the time being.²²

When the cause of fear is not faced, one may even lose one's life for no real reason at all. Here is a story:

One man who had boldly declared that he had no fear of ghosts accepted the challenge of his friends to take a marked pole and plant it in the lonely cremation ground at the dead of a dark winter night. The man valiantly went, covering himself with a warm wrapper, while his friends waited for his return. The friends waited and waited until it was morning. Then apprehensive of something ominous they went in a group to the cremation ground and found to their great sorrow that he was lying on the ground, cold, stiff and dead. What had happened?

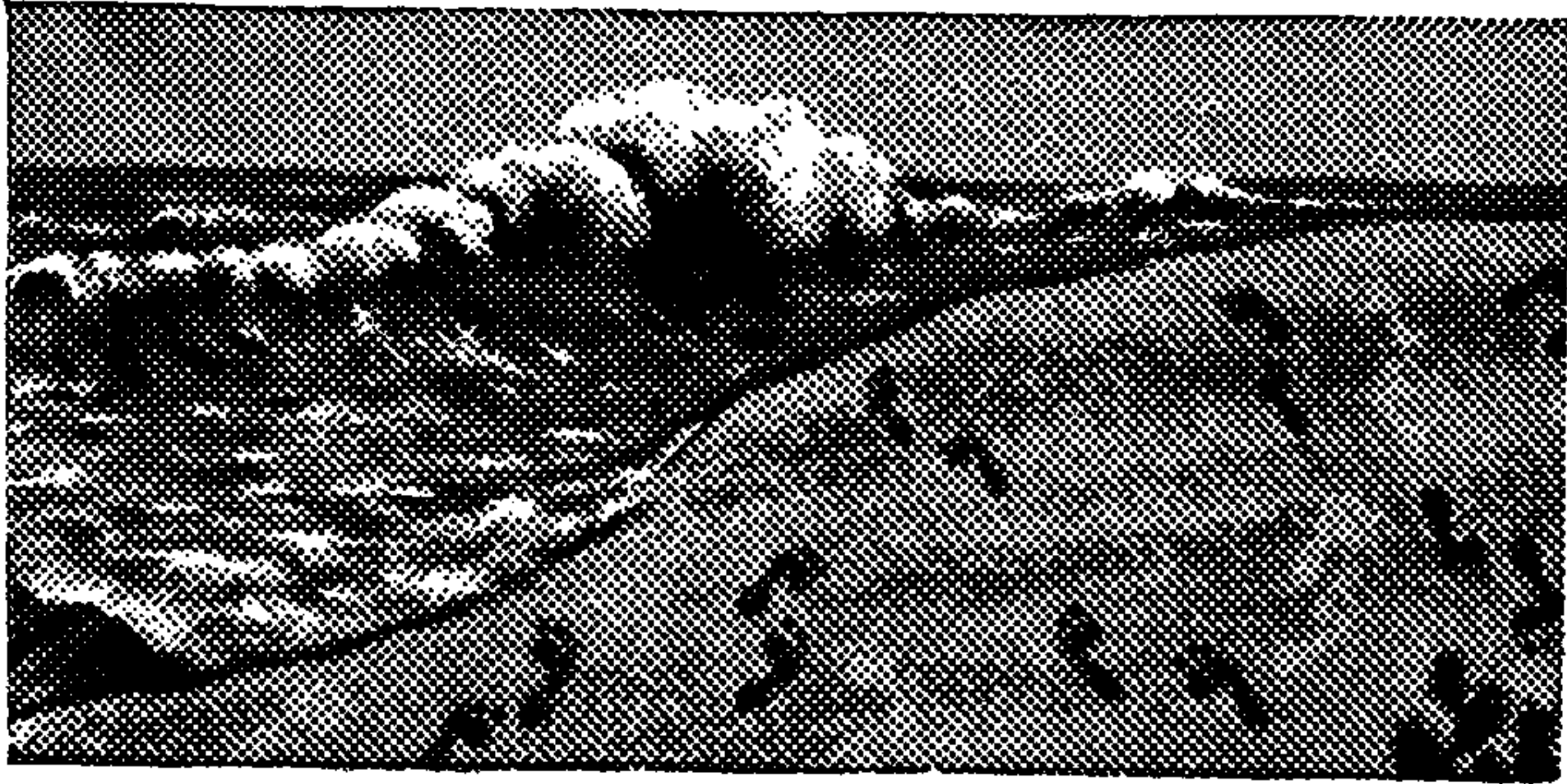
The only cause they could discover—for there was no mark of injury on his body—was that he died out of fear. They saw that while he fixed the pole on the ground in darkness he had driven it through a corner of his wrapper. When after fixing the pole he hurriedly tried to move, he felt that someone perhaps was pulling him by his wrapper. Who could do it but a ghost? And he fell straight dead there out of fear.

This is how fear would kill us when we do not face the cause of fear.

Therefore, with faith in our inherent strength we should always face it and whatever it may bring, in a frontal manner, and courage will be ours, fearlessness will be ours.

(Continued on page 432)

²² *ibid.*, pp. 210-11.



HUMAN TRENDS

NOISE-POLLUTION OF CALCUTTA

(A PLEA FOR SAFE-GUARDING THE MENTAL HYGIENE OF CITIZENS)

From the U.N. Environment Conference recently held in Stockholm we have no doubt heard some voices of sanity. But the practical question is : do we really mean business? Kurt Waldheim, the Secretary General of U.N., wisely called armament 'the ugliest of all pollutions'. The irony of it all was that while pious talks punctuated by beautiful phrases were going on in Stockholm, in Vietnam the whole country was being devastated by the most inhuman use of electronically guided 'smart bombs' and by setting brothers against brothers.

Perhaps it is useless to talk about this for we are obviously powerless to do anything about it. Talking of conscience makes no sense with those people today who are engaged in the greatest environmental crime of history. They may, nay, must learn only when the wheel of Karma comes full circle. That, however, is poor consolation!

Meanwhile, if we mean any business, we have our hands full in this vast city of Calcutta itself. Let me confine myself to one segment of the problem—noise-pollution of this city's environment. To be sure none of us is asking for Himalayan quiet in Calcutta. We know well enough that in a city like ours some noises are unavoidable such as those created by transport systems

like trams, trucks, taxies, buses, tempos, cars, trains and planes etc., and big and small factories. These are not inconsistent with business that needs to be daily done for living. However, to say the least we have more than double the decibels of noise normally expected from such sources for the simple reason that many insensitive drivers driven by abnormal impulses delight in making the maximum possible noise by honking mechanical horns for driving at break-neck speed in the busy streets of the city.

On top of it all we have the nerve-wrecking obnoxious nuisance of loud-speakers pouring out day in and out movie songs, a good many of which are, without any pretention, of low taste. It seems that the warning from Stockholm that 'man is fast driving himself mad with noise' is fast becoming true in Calcutta. I am afraid that it requires a considerable quantum of acquired insanity to go on playing as loudly as possible the same horrid songs repeatedly through day and night. Otherwise there should have been some thinking in the matter—and its manifest results in the behaviour pattern of those people—as to what such sounds mean to patients at home or in hospitals, people engaged in profes-

sions needing concentration of mind for doing creative work, students preparing their daily lessons or for their examinations, persons needing sound sleep after the day's hard work.

To those among the citizens whose minds, ears and sensibilities have been educated to appreciate the high values and subtle nuances of traditional classical Indian music, the necessity of having to hear these low-taste vulgar songs over the loud-speakers at odd hours of the day and night is an indescribable aesthetic torture. By using an invisible long arm of sound somebody beats you up early in the morning, and you can do nothing about it except perhaps wonder about the blessings of deafness!

Even in this city, early in the morning or in the late evening many people belonging to different faiths try to do some devotional practices, which to say the least is good for the upkeep of the mental hygiene of the people. But the noise-pollution of the atmosphere beginning from before sunrise makes it an extremely difficult task. What right has anybody to go on polluting the city atmosphere in this fashion and thus undermining the mental hygiene of the city?

If the number of patients suffering from nervous troubles in the city is on the increase, I am sure, sound pollution of the atmosphere is one of the causes for this. You become a captive of an inescapable sound-prison—for where will you run away?—and your nervous system gets continuously and mercilessly bombarded with these hated sounds. The result is that you become tense, irritable, and gradually become neurasthenic, for other reasons are also there to make the inner situation complicated.

What is even more disastrous is the effect of the vibrations of vulgar 'music' on the minds of children. Sound-effect can influence the growth or distort the mind of a child. If we keep our children's mind

saturated like pickles in a pool of vulgar sounds day and night we can only expect them to manifest unhealthy tendencies of mind precociously. Have we not some duty to protect the mental health of our children? Alas! we have exported our Ravishankar to the West and in the bargain we have chosen to import some sound-poison in the name of music.

Then, in this city we have made it almost a tradition to give expression to our so-called religious sentiments by making a bubble of noise. In this connection one remembers what the late-lamented Narayan Gangopadhyaya the famous litterateur wrote in his last article in 'Sunanda's Journal' column in the Bengali Weekly, *Desh*. During the puja days specially we do not seem to think that a few quiet moments for oneself is anybody's right to claim. So in Calcutta there takes place an explosion of noise perhaps uncountable by decibels. It was a last touching protest-cum-appeal of a creative mind against the nerve-shattering noise-pollution of Calcutta. Like him many litterateurs of this city, people engaged in learned professions, scientists doing research, particularly those who are under the compelling necessity of producing writings for the press within strict time-schedule, go on helplessly suffering this torture without end. If we intend to maintain and augment the intellectual vigour of the city, we must know how to eradicate this menace.

We are also in the habit of using the loud-speakers for religious recitals continuing through the whole night making it impossible for not only insomnia patients to sleep even with the use of sleeping drugs but also making it difficult for healthy people to sleep. We also do not care to consider the fact that this religious celebration is entirely unwanted not only by people who belong to other faiths than our own, but also by our co-religionists. What right has anybody to torture human beings

throughout the whole night with his inhuman religious exuberance? If I were to choose between people to live with—pious people oppressing me through the whole night with their religious noise and atheists, permitting me to quietly sleep after the day's hard work—I should certainly prefer to live with atheists, though I do not claim myself as an irreligious.

We are also in the habit of assuming that we have some sort of fundamental rights for celebrating our trivial or important family functions by creating blatant noise-annoyance disturbing the whole locality. And, not unoften, we take to even competitive assertion of such rights, with what maddening effect on disinterested near or distant neighbours is well within everybody's experience in Calcutta.

Now the important question is: what have the socially and politically conscious citizens of Calcutta been doing to remove this disastrous noise-pollution of this city of great problems and possibilities? Practically nothing. On the other hand, this pollution, unchallenged by citizens and unchecked by the Government machinery, goes on merrily increasing. I am told there is law already in existence for controlling this nuisance. But if enforcement of law is any proof of its existence, it does not exist in Calcutta. Unbelievable though it should have sounded, I am sure you will not be surprised to know that in South Calcutta, from a Central Government institution situated just opposite to a hospital a siren producing 150 decibels of ear-drum-shattering noise is dutifully released every morning at 9 a.m. for serving what purpose of God or man on earth I frankly do not know, though the utility of using sirens in times of war remains unquestionable.

The State Government, particularly the Health Ministry, have some bounden duties to fulfil in this matter. In the first place one would like to have some more proof

of their awareness of this problem. If adequate laws are not in existence, these should be enacted and publicized. It seems necessary also to add that these laws should be vigilantly and justly enforced. Use of loudspeakers and amplifiers should be banned from 9 p.m. to 8 a.m. During the remaining hours of the day, use of amplifier for public functions or other purposes should be permitted only to cover the hearing-area of the people assembled in a hall or a pandal for a festival.

The Ministry of Education has also some direct responsibility to see that this problem is solved. Elders are justly critical of the large number of students prone towards adoption of unfair means in examinations. I have nothing to say in favour of such students. To be sure there are also many good students who would like to work hard, sincerely and honestly befitting their stage of life and use no unfair means in examinations. I would like to ask: have the elders done enough or anything for providing students proper environment for their daily serious study for a few hours or at least before their examinations? Should they try to do anything in this direction, they must first remove this noise-pollution of the city.

Obviously, some features of the problem will always remain outside the easy reach of law even of a very earnest Government desiring to do the needful for solving the problem. Here comes the question of the service that can be rendered by people's awakened civic consciousness which, with all the glory of our ancient civilization, we Indians lack rather deplorably. In a great Western City, say like New York where there are so many other problems, which we would not surely like to import into our city, the noise-pollution is remarkably controlled not so much by enforcement of law as by citizens' cultivated civic consciousness. In eating

houses always there is some music but normally only in a subdued low key. In apartment buildings every one has T.V. or radio but from the next apartment you are not disturbed by the volume of its use. There is no harm if we learn from this technique of controlling noise-pollution of a city.

Awakened youth of this city, if they are persuaded that noise-pollution is disastrous to the precious mental hygiene of our

people, can work helpfully by throwing their weight and voice against it. By using reason and persuasion, through group work in their localities they can indeed help check this pollution by awakening the civic consciousness of the people and vastly change the whole atmosphere. And then we shall be in position to look forward to the day when such a writing will have been irrelevant. I wish it were *so today!*

DR. AMAL KUMAR SARKAR

(Continued from page 428)

CONCLUSION

Life is a mighty challenge and everyone of us has the might to accept it fully.

Let us not desecrate this temple of God which is our body-mind with those ugly things: fear and weakness. Let us make it aglow with strength and fearlessness.

The world is stricken with various weakness-born maladies and fears. Let the Vedāntins stand up and declare: 'Infinite strength is religion and God.' The world requires to hear that.

Let us practise and propagate religion as a strength-giving, fearlessness-generating power, and not as a bunch of dogmas. Then a new type of human being will begin to move in this world.

Let us not shed a drop of tear if those unproven dogmas of religion, which cannot stand the test of truth, go by wagonloads. But let us weep if we do anything which weakens us, makes us afraid of anything.

Instead of ruminating on weakness and fear, let us repeat: '*Abhīh, Abhīh*'; '*Om Śakti Om*'—'Be fearless, Be fearless'; 'Divine strength, Divine strength'.

Let us meditate on the Ātman, which is our essential nature, and we will become not strong but strength itself, not fearless but fearlessness itself.

Superabundant will be our life. Sky-high will be our joy. And oceanic will be our love.

Such is the message of Vedānta.



RUSSIAN COMRADES IN TROUBLE WITH GOD

-Amrita Bazar Patrika, Calcutta,
reported on May 4, 1972:

Communist authorities in the Soviet Union are considering the usefulness of introducing into public life forms of ritual to attract those who still hanker after the symbolism of religion.

This is reported by a Yugoslav journalist in Moscow, who says that substitution of secular for religious rituals would seek to meet the human need for solemnity and ceremony on certain occasions in life.

Such rituals could, for instance, be 'ceremoniously officiated' in village-Soviet buildings in the presence of collective and state farmers.

The proposition is mooted as part of the continuing search for means of alienating persistent religious influences from the minds of the Soviet people.

Atheist militants are already preparing for the summer arrival of visitors to Russia who wish to see if churches in the Soviet Union may be entered freely.

Religious beliefs persist in some segments of Soviet society 50 years after establishment of the atheist state and 'more and more has been heard of them of late'.

'The Church's incomes are on the increase; the number of children being christened is decreasing (only) very slowly; other religious practices are very much present, and ikons on the walls—a curiosity by itself—can be seen in the homes of Party members.'

The Russian Orthodox Church is adopting some 'modern' attitudes which are said to be worrying the Soviet authorities—for example, condoning man's natural seeking for happiness on this earth, a thought which was previously condemned as sinful.

This theme was the subject of a critical commentary broadcast by Moscow Radio for home listeners recently by an official historian, N. P. Krasnikov, who also spoke of the 'deep crisis' which he claimed was affecting the ideology of all religions today.

Krasnikov went on to warn the Russian Orthodox clergy that while their 'loyal and patriotic attitude towards the Soviet State was recognised and appreciated, their religious ideology was another matter'.

It was 'incompatible with socialism and thus one must always show intransigence to it'.

The press report quoted here in full aroused in me profound sympathy for you, Russian comrades, and also some surprise. After triumphantly returning home from his spectacular feat in space, Gagarin was reported to have declared to his admiring people that he had gone around in the heavens and found God nowhere. As you will remember, this 'scientific' declaration by a hero right back from the heavens, gave great

satisfaction to the Party and the militant atheists. It was exciting to know that the 'Fellow' called God was not out there.

But today it appears that even this deadly scientific blow had little effect on Him who is at the root of all troubles with religion in Russia. Just consider in dismay His good-work-naughting mischief on earth. The report says, 'Religious belief persists in some segments of Soviet society 50 years after establishment of the atheist state, and more and more has been heard of them of late.'

What is worse: 'The Church's incomes are on the increase; the number of children being christened is decreasing (only) very slowly; other religious practices are very much present, and ikons on the walls—a curiosity by itself—can be seen in the homes of Party members.'

Imagine the horror and perniciousness of it all! And who is responsible for this sabotage? Certainly it needs no great intelligence to find out that this is all the work of that 'Fellow' called God, gone underground in Russia.

What should be done with Him under the circumstances?

Comrades, having given some anxious thoughts to this serious matter, I can tell you a few simple things, any one of which you may choose to do. And your problem will be solved. The most wanted and natural thing for you to do will be to catch Him and then liquidate Him in the manner well-known in your history. But catch Him first! After catching Him, for Marx's sake, please let me know. I would like to go to your country and see His face only for once, before you do away with Him. You will lose nothing by allowing a non-entity like me to see Him for once. I am only a musafir. After I have seen Him once, you can do anything with me. For, perhaps, after that I should not come out and tell people that I saw God in Russia. Why,

that will be an utterly scandalous revisionism!

I must, however, utter a word of caution and warning. Please do not put Him in any concentration camp. I shall tell you why. I have heard He has a very lovely face. He bewitches everybody who looks upon Him. Whoever sees Him falls head over heels in love with Him. So, if you put Him in a concentration camp all will concentrate on Him and the result will be disastrous. Surely, comrades, you do not want Him to do overground with greater advantage what He had been doing with some seeming disadvantage underground.

Now, friends, I may never really understand the subtleties of your dialectics. But this I see clearly that you cannot leave this problem of God gone underground to chance. For, who knows what explosion He may cause at which vulnerable point, some inconvenient time? As keen students of your own history you surely know those black and hated chapters when mysticism thrived well on your soil. Thanks to the Great October Revolution, the disease of mysticism has been scotched. But, as your revolutionary psychologists will tell you, the bourgeois viruses of mysticism and religion die hard. So there is need to be cautious and have alternative methods ready at hand.

As pragmatists, you will, I am afraid, rather readily appreciate what I say next, because, after all, you are nothing if not revolutionaries. (Of course, our neighbouring comrades may say so many uncomplimentary non-Marxist things about you. That is none of my concern. When they grow in affluence they may surpass you in what they call, in such an undignified manner, 'revisionism'. That apart.) And what I am going to say is, if I may claim it in all humility, a hyper-revolutionary solution of your problem, besides being eminently pragmatic, if not scientific.

Well, let me come out with it like a

bullet out of the gun-barrel. Here is the alternative method: Declare God as the Greatest Comrade of all times and you will have done the thing with God and beaten both the Chinese and the Americans hollow. For, what is greater revolution than proselytizing the arch-enemy of communism and converting Him into a communist? By one stroke you then transform all religious countries into communist countries. Do you see my point, my uncanny point?

If you think deeper, you have not even to convert Him into a communist. In fact He has always been a pakka communist in His own great, glorious way. In one Hindu book which goes by the name *Gītā*, God calls Himself everybody's *suhṛd*, friend, that is to say comrade of man. And He specifically makes it clear that His business on earth is to liquidate the wrong-doers. Who are these wrong-doers? You sure know! He has always upheld the poor, the indigent, the oppressed, in one word the people, the proletariat, for the belly-god self-sufficient capitalists did not really need Him, so much so that they had no right of entry into heaven, (This point I shall make more clear later on.) To remove all the sins of heinous exploitation of others and of themselves, and thus establish righteousness—or the communist ideology—has always been His mission on earth.

Now, comrades, it is strategically important to remember the moment you claim God as the premier communist, that the church, the theologians and capitalists will jointly raise a world-rocking ballyhoo in protestation, as if God is somebody's private property. Indeed they have always sought to use Him as a vested interest and so would fight with all the vehemence of bourgeois learning to disprove your claim and assert that you are out to commit a horrifying sacrilege. This is all the more reason why you should tenaciously collectivize God.

Indeed He has Himself declared in that book called *Gītā* that He resides in every heart, even in the heart of capitalists (for the simple reason that all capitalists are potential communists), not to speak of communists, who are of course to be imagined as more comfortable lodgings for the premier communist. It was He who inspired Marx to write the *Das Kapital*, and Lenin to usher in the revolution for the deliverance of the submerged millions of the world. And this has always been His mission on earth. If in the capitalist scripture it is claimed that even the sparrow does not fall without the knowledge and will of God, then how could Marx and Lenin do their great deeds without the same knowledge and will of God? This is simple logic. But the capitalist heads are too thick even for this! They understand no truth which is revolutionary, and truth has always been revolutionary, in other words, communistic.

So, when they saw that the premier communist, whom they called God, was not so much in the church, as in the vanguard of the revolution, revisionism of a quaint sort infected a part of the capitalist world. Some perverted well-paid theologians raised the slogan: 'God is dead!' Funny indeed. Of course God of their imagination has never been alive, only they have discovered it the other day, but I doubt even today whether they understand the revolutionary dialectics of the truth that God and their concept of God are never the same. So the capitalists' God is truly dead. But He is very much alive in the revolution of the people, by the people, for the people. Communist power is verily divine power. How, in truth, can you deny this? What gain denying this?

Americans only print in their dollar bills (funny though): 'In God we trust.' From now on you can retort, 'Fine! That God is a communist!' And, you know, subtle though the Chinese people are called, they will take ages to take this great leap for-

ward in revolution. It is not like 'making a hundred flowers blossom' and claiming that it was a great leap forward, for are not uncountable flowers naturally blossoming every morning without anybody having to call it revolution? So, I need hardly argue with intelligent people like you, comrades, to establish the fact that the acme of unprecedented revolution unrecorded in history is to convert God into a communist, the Supreme Communist at that. And I am dead serious about this revolutionary truth. This you may even call, to use a hated Catholic term, real *aggiornamento*—updating—of the revolution, for after this great conversion of God to communism, there cannot be any non-communist in the world. I am sure most of you are fascinated by the dialectic beauty of this revolutionary thesis full of explosive possibilities of history-making consequences.

Now, comrades, if some of you would be democratically inclined to interpose, 'If wishes were horses, everybody could be a rider', that will be joking. And it behoves communists not to be joking when we are discussing serious issues affecting the Revolution. Comrades, more than others in the world you must be practical realists. You must be serious-minded people. I am not talking of a hobby-horse which does not kick. I am talking about the ultimate rider of our destiny, the supreme communist, God, before whom what is Marx? And what I say I am going to prove to the hilt.

Take Christ whom they practically worship as God. You have but to scratch his skin—even that may not be necessary—to find that he was the supreme communist. You justly take pride in your anti-imperialism. Christ was the first anti-imperialist in recorded history. He challenged the 'right' and might of Herod single-handed. You take rightful pride for ending private ownership. As the supreme communist, it was Christ who lived the ideal to perfection,

nineteen centuries and more before Marx-Lenin. Even your high-priests—excuse please the term, which is used for only its aptness—B. K. and you know who else, live in villas, drive cars, and have invisible affluence. They own families which could not continue without having some compromise formulas at work in the backyard of official communism. But behold Christ! He owned nothing, had no home or possession. Above all as a carpenter's son he was a proletarian, a workman who worked with tools, a man who knew how to make his hands dirty by working. And look at his heart, his great communist heart, how clear, how full of love and throbbing solicitude for the people! He was always with the sick, the poor, and the sufferer, the dispossessed, always with the multitude, always with those whom the society of the snobbish and cruel bourgeois oppressed and exploited without end for their own nefarious profit and shameful pleasure. To know this supreme communist intimately is to love him in the revolutionary manner of the communist. If you can for the nonce sportingly free your minds from hatred for terms they use in scriptures,—which of course you should not touch with a pair of tongs lest you should catch the contagion of holiness—you can feel the throbbing of his heart in these words which could be uttered only by a supreme practising communist. (Here I shall quote a long passage from, excuse me, the Bible with my revolutionary exegesis within brackets.):

When the Son of man shall come to his glory, and all the holy angels (advanced communists) with him, then shall he sit upon the (supreme communist) throne of his glory:

And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth *his* sheep from the goats (in other words, communists from the capitalists):

And he shall set the sheep on his right

hand (to justly give an honoured place and indeed that for good reasons), but the goats on the left (I need not say why).

Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world (the hint of world communism is too palpable here to need commentary):

For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in (are these not the communist principles of conduct?):

Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

Then shall the righteous (meaning, the practising self-unconscious communist) answer him, saying, Lord (meaning, respected supreme communist) when saw we thee an hungered, and fed *thee*? Or thirsty, and gave *thee* drink?

When saw we thee a stranger, and took *thee* in? Or naked, and clothed *thee*?

Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

(Look at this spontaneous self-giving and forgetfulness of the true communist. He does not keep account of his services, for unlike those of the capitalists, his services are not calculated investments.)

And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

(Comrades, who but the supreme communist could speak this language of the heart? Could any crystallized deity of any church utter such words which are so eminently proletarian?)

(And now he turns severely to 'the goats'; you know who they are!)

Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:

(This 'everlasting fire', I need hardly point out, is nothing but the capitalist world of heartless exploitation and this becomes obvious from what follows.)

For I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink:

I was a stranger and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.

Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?

(Look at the hypocrisy of it all, this playing the innocent!)

Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did *it* not to one of the least of these, ye did *it* not to me.

(Comrades, this is the Christ. Can you deny that he is the supreme communist? Could Marx or Lenin improve upon him, either as a revolutionary or in espousing the cause of the people against 'the goats', the exploiting capitalists?)

(Naturally and justly enough:)

And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous (meaning the communists) into life eternal.

(ST. MATTHEW, 25.31-46)

Such is the imperishable testament of the supreme communist whose every word throbs with the love of the people, the masses, the multitudes, the deprived, the oppressed.

Whom did Christ drive away from the temple? He drove away the 'money changers', the capitalists, who sucked the blood of the people. If you read his words between the lines, dear comrades, you will find that when he speaks of 'heaven' or for the matter of that 'kingdom of God', he underlines the fact that he is definitely speaking of the communist heaven, the proletarians' heaven, and not the bourgeois heaven of the church, for his very words are:

'Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.

And again I say unto you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a

needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.'

(*ibid.*, 19. 23, 24)

Here you find how beautifully he equates 'the kingdom of God' with the consummation of communism. Only a theoretician of the calibre of the supreme communist could unmask the so-called religion in such an effective manner, you may say, revolutionary manner.

And when the Christ speaks of perfection, he definitely speaks of communist perfection. Proof? What did he say to the young man wanting to follow him?

'If thou wilt be perfect, go *and* sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven (without doubt collective communist treasure in communist heaven): and come *and* follow me.'

(*ibid.*, 19. 21)

And above all harken to his revolutionary call to the working class:

'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'

(*ibid.*, 11. 28)

Only the supreme communist could bugle forth such a call to the labouring class to which he himself belonged. He was the son of man, who having himself worked with tools dared to speak on behalf of the working people, for he had felt deeply the pangs of their unrequited labour. How directly and compassionately he says that he will give rest to those who labour and are heavy laden? These are not the balloon-words of a priest but hammer-words of a communist. Do you see the point, comrades? He means that he will wipe away the tears and the sweat of the working people. He says, 'I will give you rest.'

Who ever thought of giving rest to the labouring people in the times of Herod except this inspiring supreme communist? The simple dialectical implication of giving rest to labouring people is socialization of the sources of production for meeting all their

physical and mental needs by raising the standard of living, for unless this is done giving rest to the working people is not possible.

Do you see how far his communist vision travelled even before Christianity was born? Perhaps I need not tell you that Christ was not a Christian but a pre-Christian revolutionary communist misappropriated by the church, obviously for gain and glamour.

Comrades, can you tell me what sense it makes for the world communist movement to disown this people's Christ, this supreme communist? It will be a wonderful creative step to claim him as the supreme communist and allow him to be the dynamic and morally explosive leader of the world communist movement in the next stage of its evolution. Then you will be saved from the absurdity of having to do certain obviously unintelligent and futile things like inventing 'secular rituals' to replace religious rituals, and giving people some official lollipops to satisfy their 'need for solemnity and ceremony'. If you are sure all Russia is inhabited by spiritually retarded kids, go ahead and do it. That may not do much harm. But if you believe that there may be some grown-up people also in Russia, beware, no official gimmick will satisfy people's inner hunger for the higher things of life.

Christ no doubt spoke of God, but this God is in no way against the movement for the liberation of the people, for by seeing the Son you can see the Father. And I have given you enough testimony to convince any man available to reason that the Son was the supreme communist, the pioneer in the movement for the liberation of the labouring people.

You have given the Russian people food and other basic needs for living. You have freed society from exploitation. Though you have attained this wading through your own blood, as it were, these are considered

great achievements. And you have attained power too. But that is an external affair. Inside, you are still very weak. You are afraid to open the shutters of your mind and allow free air in.

Comrades, be not surprised, I am not saying a thing which I cannot prove. You are afraid of God, you are afraid of your people. You are mortally afraid of giving your own people freedom of thought. It is useless for the State to tell people what they should or should not think, and how they ought to feel. It is entirely unnecessary, nay dangerous, to keep the whole nation imprisoned in the concentration camp of unwilling disbelief, for the success of the revolution.

You claim to be a democratic nation. The hall-mark of democracy is freedom of thought and choice. You are afraid to give any of the two freedoms to the people. Hence your 'democracy' cannot but degenerate into hypocrisy. But, remember comrades, faith gone underground can become so volcanic that you will not know how to

control it when it blows up and ejects angry lava heavenwards.

I am sure that it behoves the revolutionary Government of Russia to break down all people's inner and outer bondage and give them absolute statutory freedom to be atheists or believers. There is nothing to choose between dictated atheism and dictated faith. A mature people deserve to have freedom both ways—free to be atheists and free to be believers. Only society should be entirely free from exploitation of men by men or men by church. And churches should become laboratories for working out the ideas of the supreme communist.

And, then, friends, if you want to go further, there will be time to discuss after the maturation of the next stage of revolution under the banner of the supreme communist.

Meanwhile, comrades, you have my heart's sympathy in your trouble with God, for I have been in another way a sufferer from the same malady for quite a while.

July 20, 1972

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, 1947. References: Questions 1 and 2, 602-4; 3, p. 211.

The words quoted in 'Onward For Ever!' are from: *The Complete Works*, Vol. IV (1962), pp. 53-4.

At this time when millions and millions of devotees in and outside India are eagerly preparing to invoke and worship the Divine Mother, the Editorial brings to the readers

some important thoughts on the rationale of Mother-worship.

A major part of all the world's miseries and problems on levels personal, social, national and international can be traced to weakness and fear of uncountable varieties. In this sense these two vices are the two arch-enemies of mankind. No matter what else we may do, unless we learn to get rid of these and bring about qualitative improvement of the individual we cannot fundamentally better the human situation. Hence the importance of learning how to cultivate strength and fearlessness which are

the only remedies of weakness and fear. Swami Budhananda, in his delineation of the subject suggests such disciplines as may be universally applicable.

If the recently held (from June 5 to 16, 1972) U.N. Environment Conference at Stockholm drew surprising attention from mankind, it only proved that educated people all over the world are becoming more and more ecologically conscious, for the simple reason that despite man's occasional expensive trips to the moon, everybody knows that we have for living, thriving and dying, if you do not mind, *Only one Earth*, in Barbara Ward's words, and that in the care and maintenance of it every one's self-interest is firmly and absolutely involved.

Dr. Amal Kumar Sarkar, M.B., a practising physician of Calcutta writes without any pretention of dealing with a global eco-

logical issue. But in dealing with the noise-pollution of Calcutta he, with a physician's instinct, draws our special attention to the disastrous effect it can have on the mental hygiene of the people. Though he tries to confine his writing to a limited segment of the problem affecting Calcutta people, he in effect raises a national issue of great importance affecting all the noise-polluted cities of India, if not of other countries too.

An earnestly written article with sincere concern for people's mental hygiene as it is, we hope it will be read with interest by our readers.

Despite a campaign of more than half a century, it is evident that religion has been far from stamped out in Russia. The *Musafir*, in his *Musings*, suggests to comrades in that land a creative strategy for dealing with the problem.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

MONASTICISM BY ANTHONY ELENJIMITTAM, Published by Aquinas Publications, Mount Mary, Bandra, Bombay 50, 1969, pp. 335, Price Rs. 4/-.

This is a fair and objective study of the monastic aspect of the religions of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Christianity. A study of this kind is worthwhile because, as the writer points out, 'the esoteric core of the wisdom of perennial philosophy and eternal religion is still to be searched and found in hermitages and monasteries which are the natural home of philosophic wisdom and religious realization'.

For ten years the conscientious author sought direct experience in the Hindu *Ashramas*, Buddhist *Viharas*, Christian Monasteries in Europe, Schools of Tibetan Lamas, etc., and he records here his observations and conclusions in a spirit of comparative study. Meditation in its different connotations and techniques, the vows—moral, religious and physical—, the different kinds of goal, e.g. *nirvana*, *mukti*, Salvation, and their underlying element of One Spirit, are treated in separate

chapters with insight and understanding. He pleads for more fruitful dialogue among the leaders of the monastic movement in the different religions: 'We must feel it within the heart of our hearts that we all belong to one single human family, whether we belong to white races or coloured continents, to Christianity or the Hindu-Buddhist world.' And he feels there is enough ground for optimism in this regard. 'In spite of past errors and arrogance of sectarian bigots, we can draw out a clean balance-sheet on monasticism as favouring world-unity and spiritual fellowship between peoples and cultures on deeper roots of Perennial Philosophy and Eternal Religion of Man, the Universal, the Catholic, the Divine.'

SRI M. P. PANDIT

INTRODUCTION TO INDIAN PHILOSOPHY, A SIMPLIFIED TEXT: BY RUTH REYNA, Published by Tata McGraw-Hill Publishing Co. Ltd., New Delhi, 1971, pp. 257, Price not stated.

This is a readable handy volume on Indian

Philosophy written by an American author who evinces a deep and genuine interest as well as an appreciable degree of penetration in the subject.

Covering the whole field of Indian philosophy, the Vedas and the Upanishads, the six systems, Buddhism and Jainism, the Carvaka school, the Saiva, Sakta and Vaishnava theism, the author has attempted a *multum in parvo* and as such the accounts are rather summary and not detailed enough. However, the essential principles are lucidly, though briefly, explained.

There are twenty-two chapters in the book and at the end of each chapter there are 'Exercises' for the students.

It is a pleasure to find the author defending Indian philosophy against western misgivings and attacks.

Besides students, general readers will also find the book useful.

DR. S. N. L. SHRIVASTAVA

FOUNDATIONS OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY: BY BALBIR SINGH, Published by Orient Longman Ltd., New Delhi 1, 1971, pp. 301, Price Rs. 27.50.

Dr. Balbir Singh endeavours in the present volume to explain the ethical, religious and metaphysical foundations of Indian philosophy in order to reveal the unity and continuity of the different systems of Indian philosophy. The book offers a defence of the Indian tradition on the theoretical and practical sides. The opening chapters set out the ethical and the metaphysical implications of the Indian systems. In the fourth chapter he argues that the *Gita* replaced the Upanishadic emphasis on the metaphysical by the ethical. This is debatable, though it is partly true. But when we speak of the *prasthanatraya*, we take the three to form one whole; and then there can be no question of one text replacing the standpoint of the other.

The fifth chapter is a fine summation of the ethical ideal of the various systems of philosophy. All these systems are shown to accept the autonomy of the self. The sixth chapter, by far the largest and the most interesting one, deals with the religious foundations of Hindu thought. In the eighth chapter, Dr. Singh argues successfully that the Indian perspective reveals the pattern of reasoning which we also find in Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Spinoza, and Kant. The eleventh chapter examines the theory and practice in Indian Tradition; and it is a chapter which the students of philosophy and social thought should do well to read carefully.

This is a welcome addition.

DR. P. S. SASTRI

THE RELIGION OF THE SIKHS: BY GOPAL SINGH, Published by Asia Publishing House, Bombay 1, 1971, pp. 191, Price Rs. 24/-.

Dr. Gopal Singh, poet, philosopher, one-time M.P., and at present Indian Ambassador to Bulgaria, and author of several books on Sikhism, must be congratulated for the present work.

The book with nine chapters, well-planned, ably written and with a useful index, is certainly a contribution to knowledge in the field. The last chapter, 'Prayer and Meditation', containing free translation in English of some of the famous and most elevating verses of the Sikh scriptures, is very useful and has an appeal all its own.

Dr. Singh has done a very useful service to humanity in presenting to the modern age torn with conflicts the universal message of peace and brotherhood propagated by the seers of the great Sikh religion. Guru Nanak's famous message is of peculiar importance to the modern age: 'My God is not in the books of either the east or the west. For, verily, He is a Presence. ... He is the God not of one denomination, race, or colour, but of the whole humankind.' (p. 32). What remarkable nobility, vision, and catholicity! And how true!

The Sikh religion is the forerunner of the great age of synthesis, the *bhakti-kala*, and imbued with the spirit of synthesis it has a useful role for all time.

We recommend this useful book not only to the scholarly world, but to all and sundry, as a very useful and necessary study for solving the ills of the present age.

DR. PARESH NATH MUKHERJEE

ESSAYS ON VEDANTA: BY SWAMI SATCHIDANANDENDRA SARASWATI, Published by Adhyatma Prakasha Karyalaya, Holenarsipur, Mysore, 1971, pp. 190, Price Rs. 6/-.

The texts of the Upanishads are bewildering in their apparent contradictions. Now they affirm the transcendent nature of the Reality, next the universal and yet again they underline the sole verity of the Self within. There is also a contradiction among the methods they elucidate to arrive at the Truth. Reasoning is adopted in some passages whereas in others it is convicted of inadequacy. Swami Satchidanandendra Saraswati discusses the problems in the course of these essays and points out how the man's intellect is to be utilized to discriminate and reject the phenomenon of the world and the faculties of intuition and revelation developed to gain insight into the true nature of the

Reality that is One behind and beyond all appearances of the many. He rightly says: 'The aspirant to the intuition of Vedantic Truth, should be prepared to undergo the necessary spiritual discipline to travel inwards and make a diligent search till he lands at Reality which is his inmost Self.' (p. 166).

SRI M. P. PANDIT

BEYOND INDIVIDUALITY: BY CLINTON R. MEEK, Published by Philosophical Library, New York, 1970, pp. 95, Price \$ 5.50.

To the reader whose mind is steeped in Indian philosophic thought, the title of the book under review *Beyond Individuality* would immediately suggest the *mahavakya*, *Tat-tvam-asi*. And it is the *Tat* that the author seems to be groping after in this excellent book. As a shrewd thinker Clinton R. Meek is dissatisfied with the modern views on individuality, yet he seems to have some hopes of existentialism, which he tries to affiliate with Zen Buddhism and evolve a correct view of individuality. There are excellent summaries of the views of existentialism and Zen in ch. II. It is in the author's exposition of these two schools of philosophic thought in this chapter and elsewhere that we get glimpses of what he might have achieved had he turned to Vedanta for succour. 'Zen is a way of living which requires extensive practice ... Zen is seeing directly into Self.' (p. 15) 'The Self cannot be known in the sense that other things are known, it can be known only in direct experience.' (p. 20).

Reading such passages in the book, one gets the impression that the author is within sight of Vedanta; but Vedanta eludes him since he is not oriented towards it. It is a pity! The rest of the book expresses the struggles of the author who has had a glimpse of the truth far away, but is unable to possess it. In uncertain light, the author discusses such profound themes as 'Identity' (ch. III), 'Self-realization', 'Self-actualization', and 'Self-validation' (chs. IV and V), 'Meaning and Value' (ch. IX) and so forth, always coming close to the target, but never hitting it. This is an eminently readable book whose contents are worth pondering over, even if it be to see how much a keen mind can miss when Vedanta is missed.

PROF. P. S. NAIDU

LECTURES ON GANDHISM: BY NIRMAL KUMAR BOSE, Published by Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad 14, 1971, pp. 129, Price Rs. 4/-.

Dr. Nirmal Kumar Bose is a recognized exponent of Gandhian thought, in theory and practice. In the course of these nine lectures (1968-69) he covers many topics, e.g. politics, economics, women,

non-violence, admitting at some points the inadequacies of this approach. His sidelights on the personality of Gandhiji and frank mention of his own reactions to certain traits in his (Gandhiji's) nature add to the interest of the book.

SRI M. P. PANDIT

BENGALI

SRI RAMAKRISHNER SADHANA: BY DR. NIRADBARAN CHAKRAVARTY, Published by Readers Corner, Calcutta 6, 1970, pp. 218, Price Rs. 8/-.

Sri Ramakrishna preached no religious truth which he had not himself experienced. He first experienced it and then talked about it. This was not so remarkable as was the variety and range of his religious experiences. There was no experience known to Eastern or Western mysticism which he had not tried and finally mastered. Tagore's tribute that Sri Ramakrishna was the confluence of many tributaries was most apt. So was Romain Rolland's tribute that 'his inner life embraced the whole multiplicity of men and Gods'. He was the meeting point of different religious view-points, some of them apparently contradictory. He worshipped Kali but this did not inhibit his being a non-dualist Vedantin. He reconciled the irreconcilables. All was grist that came to his mill—from animism to non-dualism. He rejected nothing, he 'accepted' every form of religious belief as being a step towards God. The difference was one of taste and temperament. He truly came to 'fulfil'. He respected sincerity wherever he saw it. To him the guarantee of success was this one quality—sincerity. One might start in a wrong direction but if there was sincerity, the initial mistake could be corrected. His approach was entirely pragmatic. Idle discussions, that is, discussion for discussion's sake without any idea of 'doing' what one talked about, never interested him. He believed in doing first and then talking. Can anybody describe the sweetness of sugar without tasting it? Religion is 'being and becoming', it is not a theory, a concept or a proposition, it is not even scholarship. 'Take a step towards God and God will take a hundred steps towards you.' Let it be a feeble step, even a wrong step, but take this first step and the rest will follow automatically. In fact, all our steps are feeble and wrong, for how can it be otherwise, constituted as we are?

Sri Ramakrishna's is a fantastic story of man's search for God. How many paths he trod, how many formulas he applied! He never tired of experimenting and in this he did not spare God just as he did not spare himself. Did Mother Kali breathe? He must test it before he knew for sure. Was not Mother Kali being naughty with Her new

acquisition of a tinkling anklet? He must be Her guardian and mentor, for was She not taking risks running up and down the stairs of the temple, amused by the music of Her new ornament? Could She not hurt Herself if She slipped? He must therefore warn Her and he did. What was it like being a woman madly in conjugal love with God? He at once transformed himself into a woman and soon he was another Radha with all the symptoms of the passionate love she bore towards Krishna. His change into womanhood was so complete that even his most intimate friend and patron was deceived into thinking that he was a woman from another family. How about being a Hanuman to taste the kind of devotion he had towards his Lord and Master? Sri Ramakrishna was at once a Hanuman, complete with a tail (though cloth-woven) and always on a tree! He reverted to his normal human vocations only when he had known and fully enjoyed the kind of love and loyalty which Hanuman had towards Rama.

Sri Ramakrishna was a child whose curiosity about religion was never to be satisfied. He must taste and enjoy God in all possible ways—through his heart, intellect, action, through his entire being. He was constantly steeped in God. To use his own simile, he was the happy fish swimming in water of God. Yet if he heard of a new experiment, he must try it at once. At least, he must meet its exponent and find out what it was all about. The experiment might be amateurish, but he would welcome it, for was it not an attempt—may be only a fumbling, groping attempt but an attempt nonetheless—to reach God? There are innumerable ways of reaching God and each was to him holy and authentic if it represented a sincere attempt on the part of the seeker. His declaration 'As many religions so many paths' was not a platitude, it was the testimony of one who had tried and found all the known (and unknown) religions valid. Someone has described him as a Laboratory of Religion. He indeed was that.

Dr. Chakravarty has done well in writing this book. He studies Ramakrishna's mystic experiences from different angles, compares them with the experiences of other mystics and points out similarities as well as dissimilarities. In the process, he brings into sharp focus Sri Ramakrishna's uniqueness. Can you say what particular system Sri Ramakrishna followed? Was he a Saivite or a Vaishnavite? Was he a Sahajiya? A Baul? A Vedantin? If he was a Vedantin, was he of the Ramanuja's school or of the Sankara's school? It is impossible to

pigeonhole him in this way. With each of these systems he had affinity and yet he was different from them. The difference was in that he was all these and much more. Dr. Chakravarty has painstakingly described India's religious history to provide the backdrop against which Ramakrishna appeared. The nineteenth century saw a galaxy of religious leaders in India. None of them including even the great Raja Rammohun could match Ramakrishna's vastness. Each of them was great but great only in his own field. They represented only one facet of the Truth, but Sri Ramakrishna represented all the facets, the entire Truth. He was their fulfilment, their culmination. In mysticism he spanned past and present, East and West. He was indeed unique.

Dr. Chakravarty makes an interesting point when he says that Sri Ramakrishna's monism goes a step further than Sankaracharya's. Sankaracharya wants to negate the world and then realize the true nature of the Ultimate Reality. His approach is negative. Sri Ramakrishna negates the world but says that when you realize the true nature of the Ultimate Reality, you see that Ultimate Reality behind everything. You see then the same Self in both microcosm and macrocosm, you experience 'One in all, and all in one'. This is what Sri Ramakrishna describes as 'vijñana', a state some blessed souls attain even after graduating into the state of a Jnani (one who knows).

I will, however, join issue with Dr. Chakravarty over his statement that Sri Ramakrishna was a householder. Was he? In what sense was he a householder? Because he married? Because he did not wear 'Gerua'? Dr. Chakravarty is not doing himself justice when he makes this statement. His whole book contradicts him.

SWAMI LOKESWARANANDA

BOOKS RECEIVED

AN APPROACH TO LIFE, SOME THOUGHTS: BY KAUSHAL KISHORE SAXENA, Published by Prakash Publishers, Film Colony, Chaura Rasta, Jaipur 3, Rs. 11/-.

ESSENCE OF MODERN MANAGEMENT and THE YOU AND I IN BUSINESS: BOTH BY N. H. ATTHREYA, Rs. 15/- each, COMPARATIVE BUSINESS AND NONBUSINESS ADMINISTRATION: BY H. N. NANJUNDIAH, Rs. 6/-, all the three published by MMC School of Management, 3EI Court Chambers, New Marine Lines, Bombay 20.

THE EXECUTIVE SKILL OF PERSUASIVE LISTENING: BY N. H. ATTHREYA, Published by MMC School of Management, Sahakaar Bhavan, Bombay 77, Rs. 19.50.

NEWS AND REPORTS

THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION SEVASHRAM, LUCKNOW

REPORT FOR 1966-71

After 43 years of its useful existence at Aminabad, the Sevashram was shifted to its new site at Vivekananda Puram in January 1967. Swami Vivekananda Polyclinic, the name of the new medical centre, has been planned and designed as a unique medical centre with up-to-date modern diagnostic facilities to serve mainly out-patients with liberal domiciliary services. Briefly the objectives are to provide—(i) the most modern diagnostic facilities and facilities for domiciliary and specialized treatment for all disease—generally not needing hospitalization—in 21 Out-patient Departments and the main Polyclinic has a capacity to cater to about 4,500 patients per day; (ii) liberal domiciliary facilities by mobile units to the rural population up to a radius of 20 miles to the north of the Polyclinic covering a population of nearly 3.51 lakhs; (iii) Surgical, and observation bed facilities for 100 beds to start with; (iv) Para-medical training facilities for 120 students per term for qualifying as pharmacists, X-ray technicians, laboratory assistants, etc.; (v) Facilities for imparting health education to illiterate and indigent patients to correct their unhygienic habits; (vi) Facilities for post-graduate studies and research.

The 12 Out-patient Departments now functioning are as follows: Lung Diagnostic, General Medicine including Paediatrics, Minor Surgery, Polio-cum-Orthopaedic, Central Pathology, General Radiology, Physical Medicine, Neurology and Psychiatry, Dentistry, Ophthalmology, Social Welfare and Guidance, Homoeopathy. The rest 9 Departments will also work after proper arrangements are completed.

Uttar Pradesh Government has given substantial amounts by way of grants for construction of Polyclinic building. The Central Government has also been extending financial help for this purpose.

The Polyclinic has been functioning in the new

building since about the end of June 1970. The outdoor Charitable Dispensary maintained by the Sevashram continued its work during the years 1966-69. The Dispensary was amalgamated with the Polyclinic in 1969-70. During these years, the Allopathic, Homoeopathic and Ayurvedic Departments of the Dispensary strove their best to render their services to the needy public. Total number of cases attended to in the various sections in 1966, '67, '68, '69, '70 are 3,31,203; 3,39,025; 3,77,771; 5,76,727; 8,34,695 respectively. The Sevashram has also been running voluntarily a Tuberculosis Clinic for domiciliary treatment of Pulmonary Tuberculosis. It attracts patients from all over the city and particularly from the rural areas and adjoining districts. To cope with the increase in work-load, well qualified and whole time medical staff including Specialists as also para-medical and other staff have been employed.

Besides the medical, there are also other activities of the Sevashram. It has been maintaining a public library and a free reading room. Total number of books at present: 8,619; no. of books issued in 1971: 2,255. A Text-book Section of the Library has now been started to help poor students. The Reading Room has 9 dailies and 59 periodicals. The average daily attendance is 250.

The Sevashram has a Temple attached to the First Floor Hall, where daily puja and Aratrika are performed. Bhajans and religious and philosophical discourses are also held in the Hall. Sanskrit *Chatushpathy* classes are held every day. Anniversary celebrations of Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother, and Swami Vivekananda and important religious festivals are regularly observed.

Programme of future activities: Bed accommodation for complicated cases of Out-patient Departments; Staff-quarters; a small shrine, one guest house for visitors; quarters for the monastic members; reorganization of Public Library, an extra Reading Room, Auditorium etc. These works will need capital investment, and will be undertaken as and when resources can be arranged.