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# Prabuddha Bharata

VOL. LXXVII

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No. 5

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

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## SRI RAMAKRISHNA ANSWERS

Question (posed by himself) : 'Can a man blessed with the grace of God ever lack Knowledge ?'

Sri Ramakrishna : 'At Kamarpukur I have seen grain-dealers measuring paddy. As one heap is measured away another heap is pushed forward to be measured. The Mother supplies the devotees with the "heap" of Knowledge.

'After attaining God, one looks on a pundit as mere straw and dust. Padmalochan said to me : "What does it matter if I accompany you to a meeting at the house of a fisherman ?<sup>1</sup> With you I can dine even at the house of a pariah."

'Everything can be realized simply through love of God. If one is able to love God, one does not lack anything. Kartika and Ganesa<sup>2</sup> were seated near Bhagavati, who had a necklace of gems around Her neck. The Divine Mother said to them, "I will present this necklace to him who is the first to go around the universe." Thereupon Kartika, without losing a moment, set out on the peacock, his carrier. Ganesa, on the other hand, in a leisurely fashion went around the Divine Mother and prostrated himself before Her. He knew that She contained within Herself the entire universe. The Divine Mother was pleased with him and put the necklace around his neck. After a long while Kartika returned and found his brother seated there with the necklace on.

'Weeping, I prayed to the Mother : "O Mother, reveal to me what is contained in the Vedas and the Vedanta. Reveal to me what is in the Purana and the Tantra." One by one She has revealed all these to me.

'Yes, She has taught me everything. Oh, how many things She has shown me ! One day She showed me Siva and Sakti everywhere. Every-

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<sup>1</sup>A reference to Mathur Babu, who belonged to the fisherman caste. The orthodox brahmin refuses to set foot in the house of a fisherman, who belongs to a low caste.

<sup>2</sup>The two sons of Bhagavati, the Divine Mother.

where I saw the communion of Siva and Sakti. Siva and Sakti existing in all living things—men, animals, trees, plants. I saw Them in the communion of all male and female elements.

‘Another day I was shown heaps of human heads, mountain high. Nothing else existed, and I was seated alone in their midst.

‘Still another day She showed me an ocean. Taking the form of a salt doll, I was going to measure its depth. While doing this, through the grace of the guru I was turned to stone. Then I saw a ship and at once got into it. The helmsman was the guru. I hope you pray every day to Satchidananda, who is the Guru. Do you?’

M : ‘Yes, sir.’

Sri Ramakrishna : ‘The guru was the helmsman in that boat. I saw that “I” and “you” were two different things. Again I jumped into the ocean, and was changed into a fish. I found myself swimming joyfully in the Ocean of Satchidananda.

‘These are all deep mysteries. What can you understand through reasoning? You will realize everything when God Himself teaches you. Then you will not lack any knowledge.’

Question (asked by the Konnagar Sadhaka) : ‘Sir, what is the way?’

Sri Ramakrishna : ‘Faith in the guru’s words. One attains God by following the guru’s instructions step by step. It is like reaching an object by following the trail of a thread.’

Sadhaka : ‘Is it possible to see God?’

Sri Ramakrishna : ‘He is unknowable by the mind engrossed in worldliness. One cannot attain God if one has even a trace of attachment to “woman and gold”. But He is knowable by the pure mind and the pure intelligence—the mind and intelligence that have not the slightest trace of attachment. Pure Mind, Pure Intelligence, Pure Atman, are one and the same thing.’

Sadhaka : ‘But the scriptures say, “From Him words and mind return baffled.” He is unknowable by mind and words.’

Sri Ramakrishna : ‘Oh, stop! One cannot understand the meaning of the scriptures without practising spiritual discipline. What will you gain by merely uttering the word “siddhi”?<sup>3</sup> The pundits glibly quote the scriptures; but what will that accomplish? A man does not become intoxicated even by rubbing siddhi on his body; he must swallow it. What is the use of merely repeating, “There is butter in the milk”? Turn the milk into curd and churn it. Only then will you get butter.’

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<sup>3</sup> Indian hemp.

## ONWARD FOR EVER !

He alone can be religious who dares say, as the mighty Buddha once said under the Bo-tree, when this idea of practicality appeared before him and he saw that it was nonsense, and yet could not find a way out. When the temptation came to him to give up his search after truth, to go back to the world and live the old life of fraud, calling things by wrong names, telling lies to oneself and to everybody, he, the giant, conquered it and said, 'Death is better than a vegetating ignorant life; it is better to die on the battlefield than to live a life of defeat.' This is the basis of religion. When a man takes this stand, he is on the way to find the truth, he is on the way to God. That determination must be the first impulse towards becoming religious. I will hew out a way for myself. I will know the truth or give up my life in the attempt. For on this side it is nothing, it is gone, it is vanishing every day.... On the other, there are the great charms of conquest, victories over all the ills of life, victory over life itself, the conquest of the universe. On that side men can stand. Those who dare, therefore, to struggle for victory, for truth, for religion, are in the right way; and that is what the Vedas preach: Be not in despair; the way is very difficult, like walking on the edge of a razor; yet despair not, arise, awake, and find the ideal, the goal.

*Sri Krishna*

## WISDOM CAPSULES FROM THE GĪTĀ

EDITORIAL

I

To some of our readers the caption might appear to have a pharmaceutical tang. Not unwarrantedly. To be sure, the *Bhagavad-gītā* embodies a portable spiritual medicine chest. Human beings of all times, especially of the present, betray serious pathological symptoms. The Hindu teachers speak of the *bhavaroga*, 'malady of worldliness', that afflicts nearly all of humanity. It takes many virulent forms such as clinging to life, thirst for enjoyments, fear of death, and self-glorifying egoism. Sri Ramakrishna used to say that worldly people in general suffer, as it were, from typhoid. Being delirious, they talk incoherently. If you want any proof for this delirious state of human beings, read any day the newspapers of any language. Who can help in curing such a humanity? God, who alone is the Real Teacher, can become the 'Physician of the malady of worldliness'. In His incarnation as Kṛṣṇa, He taught the *Gītā*. The wisdom capsules of the *Gītā* are prepared according to the formulae of the 'B.P.' But the abbreviation now has a different expansion, namely 'Bhagavān's Pharmacopoeia'!

The 'Song of God' packs many potent wisdom capsules. A seeker of salvation, accepting a single capsule in good faith, will undoubtedly achieve his end and become blessed for ever. Consider for instance the cryptic statement in the eighth chapter: 'Remember Me and fight.' A mere four-word sentence; but its meaning is unfathomable. What more can be necessary for securing one's salvation if one sincerely tries to carry out this divine command? 'Evenness is yoga', 'O Arjuna, be a mere instrument', 'By worshipping Him with his own duty, a man attains perfection'—these are some fine specimens of capsuled wisdom.

Here we propose to take up a few such wise statements of the *Gītā* for our reflection. The beauty of these gnomic utterances is that they are equally true and valid both in and out of the context. They are, as it were, glowing sparks of wisdom from the blazing fire of the *Gītā*.

## II

*Therefore You should not Grieve over the Unavoidable.*<sup>1</sup>

This statement occurs in the second chapter which also contains many other wisdom capsules. In the context it is meant to open the eyes of Arjuna to the existing and true fact of death. Just then, blinded by attachment and egoism, he was thinking of retreating from the battlefield lest he should cause the death of his kinsmen. Mentally picturing the painful and irreversible consequences of war, he was piteously sorrowing. Kṛṣṇa, the Lord and Charioteer, had taken up a commonsense line of argument and was telling him : 'Look here, everyone born on earth must die. All these warriors, kings, and generals must also die some day. And those who die are reborn. It is an ongoing cycle. So recognize this fact and stop grieving.'

Even if taken out of the Kurukṣetra-context, we find the truth-content of the statement does not diminish a whit. In actual life we need the wisdom encased in it. Are not much of our heartbreak and peacelessness owing to our being childishly blind to this fact? Is not the factor of 'unavoidableness' present, in a major way, in life? Pain, disease, ugliness, bereavement, loss, accident, disappointment, poverty, calumny, humiliation, natural and national calamities—an interminable list of heartrending realities—are a part and parcel of earthly life. We need not, of course, confine the unavoidable to the tearful side

of life only. Happiness, health, beauty, gain, success, wealth etc., are certainly a part of life. Unfortunately, they are neither enduring nor abounding. While riding on the crest of good fortune, men are apt to forget that the fall is closing in from behind. When soon misfortune does strike, they discover that they lack the mental and moral stamina to bear the shock. To some the fall would prove traumatic beyond recovery.

It should not be inferred, however, that this command of Kṛṣṇa not to grieve over the unavoidable is a disguised advocacy of fatalism or stoicism. Behind fatalism lie masses of pessimism and passivity. Not infrequently there are also defeatism and a sort of impotent religiosity. But Kṛṣṇa's is a message of strength, daring, and enterprise. He tells us to be manly and fight on. Also, His message, as it accommodates and emphasizes emotion, love, and active sympathy, would be too warm for stoicism to strike roots in, much less to thrive.

Not to grieve over the unavoidable, then, can only mean : first, men and women should outgrow their infantile notions about life and learn to see the realities ; second, recognizing the unavoidableness of sorrow, disappointment, death etc., they should keep their mind unperturbed. Thus they can prevent the wastage of mental energy otherwise caused by fruitless grieving.

In a thought-provoking and constructive booklet entitled *Psychology—How It Can Help You?* Reginald W. Wilde says :

'No one of us can live worthily and fruitfully until he is prepared to be a grown-up person, willing to look at facts rather than at wishes. Real childhood has its own lovely and natural qualities. But there is nothing likeable or admirable in a grown-up baby.'

That is the trouble with many of us : we refuse to grow up. We are reluctant to let go our hold on the 'pleasure principle' to

<sup>1</sup> तस्मादपरिहास्ये न त्वं शोचितुमर्हसि । II. 27

grasp the 'reality principle'. So we get what we unwittingly ask for—disillusionments and heartaches.

By absorbing the wisdom contained in this wise directive of the *Gītā*, we become mature and greatly serene. Only in such a psychological soil will spiritual virtues take root and develop.

### III

#### *Fight—Free from (mental) Fever<sup>2</sup>*

In one of the most illuminating verses of the *Gītā* occurs this short and pithy exhortation. Whatever essential instruction an aspirant needs for leading his inner life is packed into this verse. Not merely is Arjuna addressed here. The whole family of truth-seekers is called upon to practise dedication, selflessness, and disinterested action.

In this wisdom capsule the physical activity of fighting is coupled with its psychological counterpart of being free from anxieties and worries. The *Gītā* recognizes the innate human propensity for action. 'Verily', says Kṛṣṇa, 'no one can remain even for an instant without doing work. For, driven by the *guṇas* born of *prakṛti*, everyone is made to act, in spite of himself.'<sup>3</sup> Activity characterizes the whole cosmos, from the minutest atoms to the mightiest clusters of galaxies. What is true of the physical universe is also true of the psychological universe. Man is an organic part of the ever-active cosmos. How then can he help being active? But we also see that activity brings physical and mental pain. Can man enjoy freedom from pain and worry while intensely participating in the dynamic stream of world-process? He can, says the *Gītā* firmly.

While instructing Arjuna, Kṛṣṇa refers to

His own personal example. 'If I should cease to work,' He says, 'these worlds would perish: I should cause the mixture of castes and destroy all these creatures.'<sup>4</sup> No doubt, *prakṛti* or nature composed of *guṇas* actually works, and not God. But where does nature get its undiminishing dynamism? It surely gets it from God though He is actionless. All activity thus indirectly flows from God only. Does that affect Him? Is God nagged by anxiety and worry as we are? Surely not. Because He is perfectly detached; because He is free from motives. As Kṛṣṇa says: 'I have, O Arjuna, no duty; there is nothing in the three worlds that I have not gained and nothing that I have to gain. Yet I continue to work.'<sup>5</sup>

That is the secret of tranquillity: Do not say 'I and mine'; do not identify yourself with that which does not belong to your real self at all. Those who are familiar with motorcar driving know that it is the clutch which engages or disengages the engine with the driven parts. The engine may whirl on at full tilt. But if the clutch is pressed and thus disengaged, the vehicle will not move an inch. So also is a man to take part in the sport of the cosmic energy—which cannot be halted by anyone—with his clutch of egoism disengaged. Let him work intensely with his head and hands. Let him discharge all his duties, to the family, country, and the whole world. But let him keep out egoism, identification, this hollow 'I and mine'. Then he will enjoy the freedom from mental fever which also means enlightenment, peace, and bliss.

The import of this wise teaching of the *Gītā* is powerfully brought out by Swami Vivekananda in a few sentences in his exposition of Karma-yoga. Says he:

'Let us repeat this day and night, and say, "Nothing for me; no matter whether

<sup>2</sup> युध्यस्व विगतज्वरः । III. 30

<sup>3</sup> III. 5

<sup>4</sup> III. 24

<sup>5</sup> III. 22

the thing is good, bad, or indifferent ; I do not care for it ; I sacrifice all unto Thee.” Day and night let us renounce our seeming self until it becomes a habit with us to do so, until it gets into the blood, the nerves, and the brain, and the whole body is every moment obedient to this idea of self-renunciation. Go then into the midst of the battlefield, with the roaring cannon and the din of war, and you will find yourself to be free and at peace.’<sup>6</sup>

#### IV

##### *The Doer of Good will never come to Grief<sup>7</sup>*

Many of us in modern times keenly require the light and assurance contained in this wisdom capsule. Man’s belief in the good seems to have weakened greatly because of unprecedented sociological forces and thought-patterns activated by modern science and technology. To a slight extent—which unfortunately is greatly exaggerated by shallow-minded enthusiasts and believed in by gullible masses—, modern man seems to have acquired control over the forces of nature. Compared to his forefathers, he is in a better position to face up to nature’s vagaries. In sad contrast to the increase of this disputable control over nature, his capacity to deal with forces unleashed by himself has sharply declined. Man today is more scared of the consequences of a nuclear war and environmental pollution than of a raging epidemic or flood. ‘Broadly speaking,’ wrote Bertrand Russell in his slim but scintillating book *The Impact of Science on Society*, ‘we are in the middle of a race between human skill as to means and human folly as to ends . . . . It follows that, unless men increase in wisdom as much as in knowledge, increase of knowledge will be increase of sorrow.’ Increasing in wisdom

consists in recognizing the intangible but withal irresistible spiritual and moral laws governing the universe and living in tune with them.

‘Why do good ? If you do, you cannot thrive in this world. Most likely you go to the wall. On the contrary, we find the dishonest and the selfish succeed and prosper.’— We hear some people arguing with a show of rationality and pragmatism approach.

First, it is not entirely true that those who do good in this world go to the wall. Quite a few unselfish, honest and sincere men and women also succeed and prosper. Second, worldly success and prosperity—measurable in terms of gadgets, real property, social standing, and bank balance—are not the only goals to be attained in life. For quite a considerable number of human beings, they are only the means to the acquisition of higher values of altruism, peace, and inner strength. For a small minority, the highest values of truth, self-conquest, tranquillity, and illumination become the only goals worthy of attainment on this earth. However, for developing the moral and psychological sinews, doing good is the only way. And their value far outweighs all material goods one can acquire. In the hour of trial and the final hour of death, the selfish opportunist will shudder and break down. But the doer of good will remain calm and bold with an inner strength unknown to the former.

Besides, man’s life, in spite of what the materialists assert, is not exhausted between the two events of birth and death. This so-called life is only one link of an endless chain of incarnations. By doing good the pilgrim soul manifests more of its real and perfect nature. By doing evil, its perfection is obscured more and more, and it goes lower down the tortuous track of evolution.

The firm assurance given by the *Gītā* in this short sentence must steady our steps on

<sup>6</sup> Swami Vivekananda: *The Complete Works* (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Almora, Himalayas, 1962), Vol. I, p. 102

<sup>7</sup> न हि कल्याणकृत् कश्चित् दुर्गतिं गच्छति । VI. 40



the path of unselfishness, goodness, and virtue.

### V.

*What a Man's Faith is, that verily He is*<sup>8</sup>

'Faith' does not convey the profound implication of the original *śraddhā* in this statement of the *Gītā*. *Śraddhā* occurs frequently in the Upaniṣads, and the *Gītā* has inherited it with all the aura of associations. *Śraddhā* is flaming faith, self-confidence, conscientiousness, candour, conviction, and single-mindedness—all rolled into one. Where is the equivalent for it in the English language that packs all these meanings? That was why Swami Vivekananda, on occasions, refused to render *śraddhā* into English. But for the present we shall use the term 'faith' being aware of its onerous responsibilities.

It is very significant that the *Taittirīya-upaniṣad*,<sup>9</sup> depicting the intelligence-self (*vijñānamaya-ātman*), makes *śraddhā* or faith its head. Even in one who has well-ascertained knowledge, Śaṅkara points out, faith with regard to the things to be performed arises first. In another context, Śaṅkara gives a sublime interpretation of *śraddhā*. He says that it is 'mental tranquillity and belief in the truth of things (taught by the scriptures and the teacher) and it is a precondition for all application of the auxiliaries that are productive of human objective'.<sup>10</sup> That is why the *Gītā* says that 'a man is constituted of his faith' and that he who is endowed with it attains wisdom.

One of the drawbacks of the modern age is the deification of reason to the point of making it a fetish. Reason, undoubtedly,

<sup>8</sup> यो यच्छ्रद्धः स एव सः । XVII. 3

<sup>9</sup> II. 4.1

<sup>10</sup> यत्पूर्वकः सर्वपुरुषार्थसाधनप्रयोगः चित्तप्रसादः  
आस्तिक्यबुद्धिः ।

Śaṅkara on *Muṇḍaka-upaniṣad*, II. 1.7

is a useful instrument: for instance, in combating superstitions. But it has severe limitations. With regard to ultimate questions, reason acts like a babe in the woods. It is baffled and fumbles about helplessly. There are faculties in man which are even more important than those manifested through the neurocerebral and cortical activities. While pampering reason, modern education and outlook starve the superior faculties. Spiritual malnutrition of the moderns is the direct result of that starvation. Finding a solution to the emptiness in life, the intellectual aridity, through drugs and promiscuity is foredoomed to failure. Restoration of faith in the spiritual nature of the individual and the perceptible universe is the only genuine corrective for this grievous imbalance.

Swami Vivekananda was as great an advocate of faith as of strength. He wanted the ideal of faith in oneself, based on the truth of the immortal and infinite Ātman, to be preached intensively all over the world. The ideal of faith moved him so much that he, a perfect monk, once exclaimed: 'If I had a child, I would from its very birth begin to tell it, "Thou art the Pure One"!'<sup>11</sup> He called that man an atheist—not the non-believer in God—who did not believe in himself. All the difference between man and man was due to the presence or absence of this faith in himself. In one of his Madras lectures, he said:

'Believe in the infinite soul, the infinite power, which, with consensus of opinion, your books and sages preach. That Ātman which nothing can destroy, in it is infinite power only waiting to be called out . . . .'<sup>12</sup>

Lest it should be misunderstood as selfish faith—a sort of veiled egotism—he pointed out that it was its opposite. He said:

'But it is not selfish faith, because the

<sup>11</sup> op. cit., Vol. III (1960) p. 243

<sup>12</sup> ibid. pp. 319-20

Vedānta, again, is the doctrine of oneness. It means faith in all, because you are all. Love for yourselves means love for all, love for animals, love for everything, for you are all one. It is the great faith which will make the world better.'<sup>13</sup>

Let us cultivate that real spiritual faith and nourish the languishing soul. With that will come tremendous strength, purity, steadiness, and charity. Gradually, the gates of the realm of Truth will open, and like Naciketā, we will become one with It.

<sup>13</sup> ibid. Vol. II (1963) p. 301

## LETTERS OF A SAINT

### THE LORD MY REFUGE

Almora.  
4.7.1915

Dear De—

I am very pleased to receive your letter of June 26.

Seated in your heart may He keep you in constant spiritual awareness and make you the recipient of love and devotion for Him and thus enable you to enjoy pure bliss and make your human life blessed. This is my sincere prayer to the Lord.

One gets a human body as a result of many an act of virtue. With the very getting of a human body the gate to liberation is opened once. If one does not strive to attain liberation, then who can say when such an opportunity will come again? So one should make all efforts to get one's spiritual consciousness awakened in this very life. Hence it is said in scripture :

महता पुण्यपुञ्जेन कृतोऽयं कायनीस्त्वया ।

पारं दुःखोदधेर्गन्तुं तव यावन्न भिद्यते ॥

As a result of many acts of virtue you have got a boat, this body, to cross the ocean of misery. Make proper use of it while yet it is not destroyed.

Again it is said :

यः प्राप्य मानुषं लोकं मुक्तिद्वारमपावृतम् ।

गृहेषु खगवत् सक्तस्तमारूढच्युतं विदुः ॥

He who after getting the human birth, which is like an open door to liberation, becomes attached to home like a bird the wise ones know him as fallen from high state.

It is attachment—this attachment to wealth, relative, home or one's own body—which makes a man fall even though he has reached the gate of liberation; this is why one is required to leave aside everything in order to become attached to the lotus feet of God. It is by having one's intent, inclination and love riveted in Him that one becomes free. There is no other way.

The Lord, however, is very very kind. If you advance one step towards Him, He comes forward a hundred, nay a thousand steps. This is the real fact.

One can only know this by doing; mere verbal statement is of no avail. If a person can say with absolute sincerity, making his mind and words one, Lord, I take shelter at Your feet; I have no one else (to call my own), then the Lord most certainly accepts him, without fail. One must say, one must know :

त्वमेव माता च पिता त्वमेव त्वमेव बन्धुश्च सखा त्वमेव ।  
त्वमेव विद्या द्रविणं त्वमेव त्वमेव सर्वं मम देवदेव ॥

You are verily my mother, father, friend, playmate, knowledge, wealth, O God of gods, and all in all.

When this is done can the Lord help accepting the devotee? But now the moot question is, who is saying this and thinking in this way?

So the Lord Caitanyadeva has said :

एतादृशी तव कृपा भगवन् ममापि  
दुर्देवमीदृशमिहाजनि नानुरागः ।

O Lord, You are so gracious but I am so unfortunate that I have not developed any love for You even though You are so compassionate.

What is wanted is love for the Lord—love, felt attraction for the Lord—then you will succeed spiritually. We shall have to pray like this: 'Lord, attract me towards You, fill my heart with love for You'—and then only will He grant us these.

Pray—pray intensely, pray with all your heart. The Lord will be pleased. When the Lord is pleased nothing will remain unattainable; then the heart will be flooded with love and devotion and one's human birth will become blessed. Then you will be able to relish the truth of these words (in a song) :

He who meditates on the Mother to him all enjoyments of Indra (the God of gods) become like trash, and he enjoys constant bliss if the Mother Śyāmā casts Her gracious glance.

My prayers for your welfare. With best wishes,

SRI TURIYANANDA

# PHILOSOPHY: THEORY AND PRACTICE

PROF. S. S. RAGHAVACHAR

## INTRODUCTION

The distinction between thought and action is a matter of common experience. Thought is exercise of intelligence for the right understanding of facts and action is willed reaction to situations for purposes of securing desired results. While the distinction is obvious and is taken cognizance of by common sense, that the distinction proceeds from a psychological analysis of human nature into knowing and willing is a discovery of sophisticated common sense.

While the analysis does not need serious substantiation, it requires considerable reflection to bring out the interdependence of the two elements of personality. Thought pursued as an organized endeavour leads to knowledge, and action performed with the requisite competence produces results termed good. That success in the pursuit of knowledge requires a certain devotion to that end and all the moral ingredients of such a devotion deserves clear recognition. That discovery of truth is the fruition of a certain discipline in that direction is an important consideration. This is one line of interdependence. While knowledge is an achievement of thought, the endeavour after knowledge contains features describable as ethical. In this sense, 'knowing is a function of being'. The second line of interdependence can also be clearly marked. The life in pursuit of the good requires a clear awareness of the end pursued and a proper evaluation of the possible means or directions of effort. The choice of the end and the choice of the means are through exercise of due reflection and it is on their basis that a good life of effective activity has to be lived.

It is true that the discipline however ethical may not culminate in knowledge. But the discipline prevents the failure that surely follows from an insufficiently purposeful and chaotic intellectual effort. Devotion to truth is not the same as insight but the insight does not emerge in a mind to which truth is a triviality. In the same way, it can be admitted that intellectual clarification of the end and the means therefore does not inevitably produce a life of goodness but the cause of a good life does suffer a setback if confusion befogs the end and the means. Thought is not the soul of goodness but in its absence goodness gets impeded by uncertainties concerning the right goal and right means.

These elementary considerations must be carried into the wider fields of cultural interpretation. Knowledge built up through intellectual discipline is embodied in the sciences and philosophy and they together may be construed as signifying 'theory' in the theme we are discussing. Life as lived in the sphere of individual conduct and social institutions does constitute what is named 'practice' in our theme. It is necessary to note the distinctiveness of each before we could enter into further discussion concerning them. Theory aims at truth and practice is for realizing worthwhile ends in life collectively describable as 'the good'. In other words, theory and practice relate to two of the ultimate values of life, truth and goodness.

That there should be an apparent or real conflict between these two values needs an explanation. It is possible to define truth in such a manner so as to include within it all the integrity, uprightness, the ideal of being in conformity with the law of our being, which goodness signifies. It is possible

to define the moral value of goodness in such a manner as to appropriate truth or knowledge as one of the elements within goodness. Truth is something that 'ought to be' and as such it is comprehended within the larger concept of 'the good'. If the two values, truth and goodness, are understood in this comprehensive manner, the possibility of conflict or even distinction between them is eliminated. But the context of thought that permits such a conflict and distinction is one in which truth and goodness are assigned restricted meanings. Truth means, in this context, strictly the intellectual apprehension of reality and goodness means the realization of the ideal of life through practical endeavour by way of volition and action.

#### REPRESENTATIVE HISTORICAL POSITIONS IN WESTERN THOUGHT

While such is the general background for the consideration of theory and practice in philosophy, the problems involved get formulated in the course of some interesting and representative historical positions.

The problem of relating theory and practice acquire real seriousness and magnitude in a philosophical inquiry into them. Philosophy, in a certain sense, seeks ultimate and all-comprehensive truth in the field of pure theory and attempts a definition of ultimate goodness when it examines the values of life. While truth at a lower level may be considered apart from other concerns of man and the smaller good things of life can be pursued without reference to truth, when the highest truth and the supreme good are considered, the question of their inter-relation becomes an inevitable issue. It is in this sense that the problem is of paramount interest for philosophy.

(a) In the Western tradition it is customary to regard the spirit of ancient Greece as predominantly intellectual, while the

Hebrew tradition as exemplified in Judaism and Christianity is judged to be dominantly practical and ethical. This contrast of Hellenic and Hebrew attitudes to life is what we have learnt from accredited interpreters of European culture.

(b) Within the philosophical thought of Greece itself differences of emphasis arise between two of the leading thinkers of Greece. Plato, who places the philosophical spirit at the highest possible level, exalts the philosophers who return to the affairs of men for purposes of working out the collective elevation of the community. The contemplative ideal of the philosopher is made to culminate in the ethical exertions of the statesman. This is one indubitable strand in the message of the *Republic*.

Aristotle, on the other hand, in spite of his repeated bias in favour of the concrete, the particular and the mundane, places the contemplative ideal of the philosopher higher than the ideal of moral activity. This lapse, as we should call it in the light of his general predilection, is reflected in the Aristotelian conception of God who is engaged in eternal contemplation of Himself. The initial avoidance of transcendence and abstraction in the philosophy of Aristotle works out a strange nemesis and his final thought on what he regarded as ultimate turns out to be vastly more abstract than the most abstract imagination of Plato. The difference is conspicuous and has been noted by all interpreters of Greek thought.

(c) In Christianity itself the contrast between the contemplation of God and active service of God is vividly presented. The great story of Martha and Mary illustrates this contrast and the moral of that story seems to place the ideal of contemplative devotion above that of active service. The controversy in the Christian tradition concerning justification by works and justification by faith perpetuates the

contrast. The difference between the intellectualist philosophy of Christianity formulated by St. Thomas Aquinas and voluntarist version championed by Duns Scotus continues the inherited dualism.

(d) In modern philosophy the great ethical system of Spinoza is an imposing advocacy of the intellectual love of God. For Kant, understanding yields only phenomenal truth and speculative theology is riddled with contradictions. The theoretical nature of man alienates him from the Real. Only practical reason as embodied in moral life puts him in communion with reality as it is in itself. Hegel's 'absolute idea' transcends the moral sphere and philosophy understood as the absolute consciousness returning to itself in the 'notion' is the goal of the spirit's voyage of self-discovery. The absolutist stand is repeated in the Anglo-Hegelian inclusion of goodness in the realm of appearances. Bosanquet saw in the Bergsonian emphasis on time, in the pragmatist exaltation of pluralism and change and even in the 'dynamic idealism' of Croce the overrating of the moral point of view as against the religious. Schopenhauer upheld the ontological primacy of will and argued for its eradication through art and morality for redemption from life whose characteristic essence for him was suffering. This exaltation of will is repeated by Nietzsche in a way peculiarly his own. Both Bergson and William James see the intellect as a tool of action with the difference that Bergson posits an intuitive contemplation at once non-practical and non-intellectual. Deussen devoted to both Vedānta and the Kant-Schopenhauer tradition envisaged the union of Vedāntic speculation and Christian morality as a consummation to be wished for. In recent philosophical systems in which neither the concept of Absolute Reality nor that of the Ultimate Good find a place, the controversy is naturally done

away with. Echoes of the old battle are audible in the Existentialist denunciation of intellectualism. Marxism is more interested in changing reality than in understanding it, while Freudianism prescribes the supersession of the pleasure-principle by the reality-principle. Not much is to be gained by way of solution from analytical philosophy to whose super-scholasticism the entire issue along with many other traditional problems of philosophy may appear a pseudo-problem.

#### THE PROBLEM IN INDIAN THOUGHT

The distinction between the way of action and the way of contemplation emerges in Indian philosophy in the period of the Upaniṣads. The Upaniṣads proclaim the goal of life to be something transcending mere secular welfare and the possession of the good things of life. The ideal of spiritual freedom as the Supreme Good comes to be clearly presented in the Upaniṣads. But, according to them, the ideal is realizable only through the knowledge of the Ultimate Reality. Knowledge is not for its own sake but for the sake of perfection. Thus an axiological appropriation of knowledge takes place. At the same time the supreme end of life is maintained to be realizable only by knowledge of the Supreme Reality. In this process of the axiological exaltation of the contemplative mode of life, the earlier Vedic religion, consisting of the active devotion to the gods by way of actions, ritualistic and ethical, *iṣṭāpūrta*, for purposes of happiness on earth and Heaven is superseded. Hence the traditional distinction between the *karma-kāṇḍa* (ritualistic portion) and *jñāna-kāṇḍa* (knowledge portion). Even the Vedic thought in its culminating period, even before the emergence of the Upaniṣads, lays down the principle. The *Puruṣa-sūkta* proclaims:

I know this great Being who is resplendent like the sun and beyond all dark-

ness. Knowing Him thus one becomes immortal here. There is no other path for immortality.'<sup>1</sup>

The proposition that knowledge of the Ultimate Reality is the road to salvation is part of almost every school of Indian philosophy. Sāṅkhya, Yoga, and Nyāya are unambiguous on the point. This emphasis on Jñāna reaches the utmost limits in the philosophy of Śaṅkara. The other point of view, upholding the superior role *karma* (rituals or action), is advocated by only one school of thought, namely, Pūrva-mīmāṃsā. Even in that system the position is not emphatic and clear, as the system seems to have hardly concerned itself with the ideal of the Supreme Good in its earlier phases and even the later thinkers like Kumārila provide for the supplementation of Karma-mīmāṃsā with contemplation of Vedānta. But the action-oriented trend is represented in the school on the whole.

We have a slightly different atmosphere in Buddhist thought. It is on record that the Buddha paid no heed to speculative metaphysics and admitted only as much of philosophical thinking as was necessary for the supreme task of eradicating suffering. It is true that in his analysis of the cause of suffering and in his formulation of the noble eight-fold way the intellectual element is taken into account. Avidyā (ignorance) is the root cause of suffering and *samyak-dṛṣṭi*, *samyak-smṛti*, and *samyak-samādhi* (right views, right mindfulness, and right concentration) are essential steps in the way towards *nirvāṇa*. But the understanding and contemplation are of the nature of practical reason and are harnessed to the programme of ethical emancipation. In the Hīnayāna phase of Buddhism this ethical orientation dominates and in Mahāyāna we have a re-

version to popular religious devotion on the one hand and to high abstractions of dialectical metaphysics on the other. The ideal of individual *nirvāṇa* comes to be replaced by the vision of collective salvation. On the whole, authentic Buddhism in its uniqueness is predominantly an ethical idealism permitting only as much of metaphysics as was required to repel metaphysical systems that would annul the way of Dharma promulgated by the Buddha.

We have an old verse affirming the essence of Jainism, and its gist is as follows:

'Bondage and liberation are matters of primary concern. Conquest of self by matter is bondage and arrest of this process through austerity and self-control is the way to liberation. Such is the substance of Jainism.'<sup>2</sup>

The practical and ethical direction of the system of Jain thought is brought out in this assertion. No departure from this central principle has taken place in the course of the long evolution of Jaina thought.

The position of Śaṅkara must be viewed against this historical background of Indian thought. There is no doubt that he makes ample provision for ethical practice as a preparatory discipline in spiritual life. *Niṣkāma-karma* (desireless action) as taught in the *Gītā* is incorporated into Advaita in this sense. Sureśvara seems to provide a place for even *kāmya-karma* (action with motives) in the scheme of *sādhanā* (spiritual striving) as propounded in *Naiṣkarmya-siddhi*. Liberation is not something eschatological for Advaita. It is a state of blessedness attainable here and now. One who has attained this state sets an ethical example to mankind and he practises goodness as a matter of natural spontaneity and

<sup>1</sup> वेदाहमेतं पुरुषं महान्तमादित्यवर्णं तमसः परस्तात् ।  
तमेवं विद्वानमृत इह भवति । नान्यः पन्था विद्यते-  
ऽयनाय ॥

<sup>2</sup> आस्रवो भवहेतुस्स्यात् संवशे मोक्षकारणम् ।  
इतीयमार्हती दृष्टिरन्यदस्याः प्रवञ्चनम् ॥

not in obedience to the moral law. So much is clear. Spiritual life as a life of action gets this much of undisputed recognition.

The question of the greatest importance, of course, concerns the nature of bondage and the means that could effectuate release. For the standpoint under consideration, time, matter, and plurality are ultimately unreal. The only reality without a second is the pure, non-temporal and non-dual spirit. Human bondage arises as a result of positing as real what is not real. Hence the presence of the non-self obscuring the sole reality of the self is the fundamental nature of bondage. The dignity of the ultimate existence is transferred, as it were, from self to the non-self. That error is the substance of evil and imperfection, in one word, of bondage. Naturally, therefore, the means for emancipation must lie in the attainment of insight into the sole reality of the Absolute, the non-dual spirit. What error presents, what appears as a result of illegitimate positing, is removable only by enlightenment. It is only knowledge that can cancel illusion. Hence, knowledge of the Ātman is the sole means of release.

There is a further reason also in support of this conclusion. Action is what implies time, change, and plurality and as such it is implicated in the unreal. It can only perpetuate and not cancel the basic error. Hence knowledge alone is the means for emancipation and it is so much bereft of the element of action that it comes to be named *naiṣkarmya*, 'actionlessness'. Care is also taken to avoid the element of volition in knowledge. Hence it cannot be named contemplation or meditation, as these terms might imply a willed process. It is cognition unadulterated and pure. It is unnecessary to understand the cognition in question as discursive and mediate cognition. It is immediate and integral apprehension. It is more appropriate to describe it as experience absolute. Immediacy is the mark of the self

and whatever else is experienced as immediate in life is so experienced owing to its fusion with the self. Hence this summit of self-apprehension cannot but be the most immediate experience of the Ultimate Reality. It is recorded in the intuitive utterance 'I am Brahman'.

In the theistic version of Vedānta the position is altered substantially. Neither time and change, nor plurality and matter are taken as unreal. The essence of bondage lies not in the perception of duality but in the non-perception of Brahman, the absolute Self, in whose reality the empirical world, supposedly unreal on the previous view, is contained as an irreducible aspect. The vision of this supreme principle is the goal of life and expansion of human consciousness to the requirements of this vision is the pathway of ideal life. The pathway is no doubt termed Jñāna or knowledge but is conceived as willed contemplation of the nature of loving devotion. It is adoring meditation and as such rises out of and above mere cognition. While understanding by way of conviction arising out of evidence matures into steady and progressive meditation marked by absorbing love towards the object of meditation, the field of the mind in which the meditation has to be planted and nurtured into fullness must be rendered conducive and contributory to this operation by the continuous practice of fundamental virtues and acts of devout righteousness. There is nothing wrong in action as such when it is directed to this inner end and its being implicated in time and plurality is no peril for a view which holds them to be parts of the Ultimate Reality. Even within meditation the element of will is incorporated as its exercise itself is a matter of deliberate volition and meditation marked by love spontaneously issues in complete self-dedication, which is also an act of will. Thus, theistic Vedānta seems to provide greater scope for practice, even though it maintains that the



contemplative core of devotion is the principal factor.

This trend named the Bhakti movement received widespread development in medieval India and penetrates the recent religious movements of India such as the one represented in Sri Ramakrishna. The activist outlook gets revived in a vigorous form in the contemporary traditions of thought initiated by Vivekananda, Tilak, Tagore, Aurobindo, and Mahatma Gandhi. All these take care to preserve and perpetuate the contemplative element as ultimate but refuse to under-rate activism and do not see the necessity for sacrificing it. It may be asserted without fear of contradiction that this synthesis of contemplation and action is a cardinal principle of the Neo-Vedānta of recent times.

#### THE NECESSITY FOR INTEGRATION OF CONTEMPLATION AND ACTION

This rapid and, therefore, superficial notice of the treatment of the relative status of contemplation and action in some of the significant systems of thought, European and Indian, is a fitting preamble to a constructive indication of their possible integration in a truly philosophical life.

The self in us is neither blind will nor inert awareness. Neither side of our nature can be reduced to the other. This imposes on us the task of cultivating both. But they cannot be cultivated in mutual isolation, as that would establish a dualism. Such a dualism would be our problem and not a solution. Further, activity without understanding and contemplation without resoluteness and purpose are impoverishments of human nature. Action is at its best when illuminated by understanding and contemplation gains its natural dimensions when it becomes a passion and a creative involvement. Hence, neither contemplation nor action can be suppressed and done away with. Nor can both

be cultivated in mutual separation. An integration of the two sides of our nature, therefore, seems to be a real necessity. It is the possibility of such integration that needs to be explored.

(a) The possibility of the integration in question is suggested in aesthetic experience. That experience is essentially contemplative but the contemplation is such that it is driven, as it were, by an inner urge to seek expression. The expression is not just a mechanical transfer of the inner vision complete in itself to an external and sensuous medium. On the contrary, the vision shapes itself into clarity and fullness through the process of expression. The sensuous embodiment is a creative self-formation of the vision. There is no doubt that art is a creative process and involves practical zeal and intense activity. But all the artistic activity involved is subordinate and instrumental to the contemplation. It is doing that aims at bringing about a fuller seeing. In short, artistic experience in the artist himself is a contemplation that completes itself through creative self-externalization and the artistic exertion fulfils itself in establishing the contemplation in fullness of actuality. This integral functioning of vision and work, of intuition and expression, of contemplation and activity is a fruitful illustration and its moral demands amplification in life as a whole. Not merely is this fusion at work in the creative artist but also in the spectator whose experience is a faint analogue of that of the artist.

(b) This fusion is an accomplished reality in religious experience. Religion at the preliminary levels may be mere faith or aspiration but in its height it claims to be a perception of the infinite. It is not that this apprehension or direct experience is ever conceived in purely cognitive terms. It is held as the highest value, the Supreme Good. In popular language the religious experience is both God-realization and self-

realization; it is both a discovery of the Supreme Reality and the attainment of the Supreme Good.

In the preparation for the ascent to the high destiny, the active element in human nature is fully mobilized and put into operation. Worship is essentially a matter of practice and worship conceived rightly involves the dedication of the whole personality of the worshipper to the active endeavour after communion. As already noted, the experiential communion is both a vision and a fulfilment. The consequence of this experience in the life of the individual is not that he passes out of the realm of activity and the world's concerns but that he is energized and re-enters the realm of activity with unprecedented dynamism. The new force of personality generated by the experience liberates him into wider fields of God-centred action and he comes to be an instrument and a channel for the ever-expanding flow of intense activity, inspired, as he thinks, by a source beyond himself and for a good beyond his own. There is a passivity in the great mystics which distinguishes itself in the realm of human history as boundless activity, with unpredictable power and uncommon clarity of purpose.

This paradox of religion as a contemplation that is the fulfilment of life and, at the same time, as imparting a new passion and motivation, is but a revelation of the integral character of religious experience. A philosophy that is convinced of the desirability of uniting contemplation and action can do nothing better than approximate to the condition of religious experience. In this special sense, religion, it would appear, fulfils the aspiration of philosophy.

(c) Perhaps there is no work in the world's philosophical literature, other than the *Gītā*, which seems explicitly designed to meet the challenge of this problem. It is even likely that the very theme of the semi-

nar has been suggested by the *Gītā*, though the problem we are discussing has received widespread recognition in all the reflective literature of the higher cultures. It is unnecessary for our purpose to go over the entire argument of the *Gītā* and to take note of the divergent interpretations its message has evoked. Fortunately, the central thought of the work is stated unambiguously and that over and over again. It has everything to do with our theme.

It is necessary, at the outset, to recognize the doctrinal limitations within which the *Gītā* propounds its theory of contemplation and action. From the standpoint of the *Gītā*, any view which takes man to be merely a physical entity or system without a super-physical and immortal principle is an absurdity. Similarly, to look upon the universe as merely a temporal and physical order not rooted in an absolute divine principle and not sustained by its interpenetrating presence is an absurdity of absurdities. The *summum bonum* for man lies in integrating his immortal essential being with the infinite deity through a total utilization of all the resources of his personality—volitional, emotional, and intellectual—for that high purpose in a supreme endeavour. The *Gītā* formulates the ideal way of life within this frame of reference. It is immaterial whether this specific perspective is judged too narrow or too broad. It is only important to remember that it is within it that the argument takes shape.

The teaching of the *Gītā* is occasioned by Arjuna's proposal to retire from the bloody action about to be initiated. Śrī Kṛṣṇa enlightens him through His philosophical discourse and dispels the error that was blocking his natural activism. Arjuna acknowledges at the end that his error has been annihilated and that he would do the teacher's bidding. Even a commentator like Śaṅkara admits that the *Gītā* inculcates action in Arjuna. He says:

'As the Bhagavān is a supreme well-wisher to Arjuna, He teaches him *karma-yoga* not associated with the supreme non-dualistic wisdom.'<sup>3</sup>

The other interpreters of the *Gītā* find it even less difficult to accept this activist import of the *Gītā*. But the activity advocated in the *Gītā* is sought to be exalted through a fundamental spirit of asceticism in action. Action sublimated by a clear awareness of the nature of the self and freed from the binding craving for the realization of personal ends and dedicated to God in the spirit of worship is what is enjoined. Hence the contemplative spirit, the element of spiritual awareness enters into the very substance of action. This is the significance of the paradoxical assertion that the wise man sees action in inaction and inaction in action. Inaction in the context is what is other than action; it is contemplation. Hence, *naiṣkarmya*, literally meaning actionlessness, is taken as signifying knowledge. This is again the significance of the celebrated verse beginning with *brahmārpanam*, 'the offering is Brahman'.<sup>4</sup>

The action so performed does not terminate in itself. It generates the state of steady-minded contemplation. 'All action culminates in knowledge.'<sup>5</sup> The glowing accounts of the man of knowledge given several times in the *Gītā* come in at this stage. The knowledge extolled in this fashion is no mere ratiocination; it is apprehension direct and perpetual of the nature of man and God; rather it is the apprehension of man in God and God in man.

From the standpoint of the *Gītā* it is

<sup>3</sup> यस्माच्च अर्जुनस्य अत्यन्तमेव हितैषी भगवान् तस्य सम्यग्दर्शन-अनन्वितं कर्मयोगं भेददृष्टिमन्तमेव उपदिशति । Com. on *Gītā*, XII. 12

<sup>4</sup> *Gītā*, IV. 24

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.* IV. 33

hardly fair and proper to describe this knowledge in narrowly intellectual terms. It is contemplative apprehension maturing into adoration. Śaṅkara, designates it as *jñāna-lakṣaṇā bhakti*, 'devotion characterized by knowledge'. Now, what happens to the element of action that prepared the way for this illumination? Has it dropped out altogether as its work is over or does it re-enter the perfected life? The *Gītā*, even according to Śaṅkara, insists upon the resumption and continuance of action for purposes of the good of the world.<sup>6</sup>

Sureśwara adds that action as a means to perfection is superseded but action that results from the very perfection flows in unimpeded abundance. The *Gītā* urges the further unanswerable consideration that even God incarnate as Kṛṣṇa is engaging Himself in ceaseless activity for the world's good, even though He has to work for nothing to be attained by way of perfection. Rāmānuja draws the surprising consequence that a man of knowledge will suffer diminution of knowledge if he does not work for the good of the world.<sup>7</sup> Brother Lawrence tells us in *The practice of the Presence of God* that 'he was more united to God in his outward employments than when he left them for devotion in retirement'. Madhvācārya holds that *jñāna* increases when combined with *karma*. All these point to the spontaneity of the continuance and the desirability of the continuance of action even after the supreme contemplative experience of Godhead takes place.

That the basic tenet of the *Gītā* is the integration of contemplation and action is symbolically enunciated in the last verse of the text:

Wherever Kṛṣṇa, the Lord of contemplation, and Arjuna, the warrior ready

<sup>6</sup> Śaṅkara's com. on III. 20

<sup>7</sup> अन्यथा लोकनाशजनितं पापं ज्ञानयोगादप्येनं प्रच्यावयेत् । Rāmānuja's com. on *Gītā*, III. 21

with his bow, are together, one may be sure that there will come about all the triumph and glory.

We may conclude, therefore, that aesthetic experience illustrates the possibility of uniting the contemplative and practical dimensions of human personality and that

such a unification is an accomplishment in the high altitude of religious experience. The central classic of the Hindu tradition, the *Bhagavad-gītā*, works out elaborately the integration in terms of both ultimate principles and concrete details.

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## HOPEFUL THINKING

SWAMI PAVITRANANDA

The way to success in any endeavour depends on our hopefulness. We must have reasonable hope that we can succeed in the particular work we have taken up. Otherwise, if we simply imitate others who have become successful in their own fields, without any strong conviction or reasonable hope, we cannot succeed; we shall easily give up the work.

In a war or a battle, success depends on the morale of the people in the army. They must have intense and genuine feeling that their cause is right. And their Commander-in-Chief must be able to inspire in them the confidence that they can succeed. Otherwise, simply with mercenary soldiers success will not come. So, in a war, we find that there is a great deal of propaganda by both sides to break down the morale of the people of the opposite side. If it can be done, half the battle is won. With low morale, people won't be able to fight for long. But when the soldiers are convinced, feel intensely that their cause is right, they will have grim determination to fight to the end. They will not mind one or two defeats in battle; ultimately they will win the war. One may lose many battles but one may succeed ultimately.

We find an example of this in the battle of Kuruksetra, which was waged in ancient times, and whose message is the *Gītā*. The

lessons, the teachings that came out of that war are the *Gītā*. Arjuna was a mighty warrior, who had won many battles. He came to the battlefield as Chief-of-Staff of one army, the Pāṇḍavas. When he came to the arena and stood at a point from which he could see both the armies, he began to talk of philosophy. He came to the consciousness that war is cruel, war is evil. By talking philosophically, he was simply covering up his faint-heartedness. What he said was good from one standpoint. He thought, 'In this battle our own people are fighting on both sides and there will be a great deal of bloodshed. What's the use of this bloodshed?'

Fortunately he had as his charioteer and guide Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is also the Charioteer of our life. Śrī Kṛṣṇa could easily see through the whole situation, and his first words to Arjuna were, 'Give up this faint-heartedness. It does not befit thee. Get up and fight out the battle.' But sometimes, when our courage gives way, with a little sympathy we begin to feel much more diffident or unwilling. Arjuna began to say, 'It is wrong. I see clearly that it is wrong, and therefore my limbs are shivering, my body is shaking, my tongue is parched, my head is reeling.' Then Śrī Kṛṣṇa chid him, saying, 'You should be ashamed. You have won so many battles, and now

you come here and say, "I will not fight."'

Then came the teachings of the *Gītā*. Arjuna found out his mistake, and towards the end he said, 'I will do whatever you have said.' As a result of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's shock treatment and sympathy and reasonable persuasion, Arjuna fought and won the battle.

If this be true in the regular battle of war, it is true in the battle of our own life, and in our individual battles in life. Anyhow, we should know how to keep up the morale in our life. There are many instances of successful persons, rich persons who lost heart and therefore became poor. Sometimes there is trouble inside, sometimes there is domestic trouble. One may have money, but he doesn't know how to handle it because he cannot think reasonably, he is in a depressed condition of mind.

I heard of a composer who was a very successful person. He composed one work, and his very friends said it was a great failure. They said this failure was greater than his previous success. His success was very great, but his failure was even greater. He got so badly depressed by this that he took to his bed. He did not go to a psychoanalyst to lie on a couch and speak out the things in his subconscious mind. He was literally in bed. Then he went to a doctor who was more a psychologist than a doctor. I don't know whether he gave medicine or just something that looked like medicine so that the patient might feel he was taking medicine. From day to day he would encourage him: 'You have been successful so many times. What does it matter if this time there was failure?' Gradually he got back his faith and confidence. His morale returned and he became hopeful. And the next time his success was tremendous.

If this be true in ordinary worldly life, it is much more true in spiritual life, because in spiritual life we deal mainly with

the mind, not with external, worldly things. Mind is subtle, mind plays many wily tricks. Spiritual life becomes much more difficult unless we can keep up our morale, unless we can keep up our hope, our courage, our strength. The important thing is to know how to do that.

You know how Swami Vivekananda would say in his usual strong way, 'If you have faith in all the three hundred and thirty millions of your mythological gods, and... have no faith in yourself, there is no salvation for you.' Even rationally, this is so true. If you do not have the faith that God will listen to your prayer, or that God will answer your prayer, you cannot pray for a long time. If you pray half-heartedly, you will soon give up praying. If you undertake spiritual practice, but for one reason or another you have no reasonable faith or hope, you cannot continue.

In spiritual life you are your own instrument. You must deal directly with that instrument. When you do spiritual practice, when you try to meditate, you direct yourself. To a certain extent that power of direction is within us; we are the instrument, though not yet in the higher spiritual sense. We feel that we work; we think and we do. So we must be able to direct ourselves. Then gradually spiritual confidence begins to come.

As confidence comes, we think we shall be able to succeed. We get some symptoms, some indication that success can be had in that way, by following that path. It is another kind of hopefulness. Always we must be able to keep up hopefulness, or try to keep it up. Otherwise, all our effort is doomed to fail.

Now, how do we keep up the willingness to do spiritual practice? Here also, faith in oneself is necessary. When we find through discrimination that certain things are good for us, we must at least be steady in following those into practice. It is ex-

tremely necessary to be steady in our pursuit.

Real faith in oneself is not what is called autosuggestion, or positive thinking, or New Thought, or Christian Science, or Coué System. It is true that what you think you become, but the people following these systems think only on the surface level. They deal with the surface of the mind; they do not go to the deeper layers of the mind.

Why is the mind powerful? It is not the ordinary mind which is powerful. Behind this mind there is the *Ātman*, which is super-mind. When Swami Vivekananda said, 'Whatever you think you will become; if you have faith, you will succeed', what did he mean by that? He meant that you are always the *Ātman*. As a seer, as a man of God, he saw very clearly that there is great strength behind everyone, and he felt pity that people are not aware of it. From that standpoint he would say these things, though he spoke in popular language. Seeing clearly man's infinite possibilities, he said, 'If you have faith, you will succeed.' Knowing that the *Ātman* or God is behind everyone, he wanted to bring that out. And being a powerful person, he would bring it out. His words were so powerful that he could give inspiration to many persons. Long ago he said these things, but even now, in the printed pages, there is so much strength.

Where did that strength come from? How could he get that strength? He got it from his knowledge of the Self. In one of his speeches, entitled 'God in Everything', he said: 'In life and in death, in happiness and in misery, the Lord is equally present. The whole world is full of the Lord. Open your eyes and see Him.' The words indicate how strongly he felt. He said, 'Open your eyes and see Him.' God is always present. We feel very much elated when pleasures come; we feel equally depressed

when misery comes. This is our life—pleasures and pains, smiles and tears. But if we know that God is equally present on both sides, we do not succumb to depression so easily. Great help comes when we hear these things from a person who has realized Truth completely, or has known it to a great extent. So it is said, when you find a teacher you get great help.

When we do spiritual practice, we begin to get in touch with God, or our belief that God is all-powerful increases. 'With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible,' Christ said to a disciple who had lost faith. As we do our spiritual practice, that conviction begins to come. Otherwise, we may hear these things or read them in the Bible, but they will have no effect on our lives. When we do spiritual practice, that faith begins to come.

What is spiritual practice? One's teacher will ask one to repeat the name of God or to meditate in a particular way. And before that, the teacher will see whether the person has potentialities, or whether he can bring out his potentialities. Even if our potentialities have not come to the surface, when we practise ethical virtues, when we do unselfish work, our self-centredness becomes less and less, and our spiritual unfoldment begins.

Then we find that there is so much power in the Divine Name. These names of God, as well as other forms of spiritual practice, have been tested and found to be true. If we follow the directions, we get the results. When we become unsteady, we must remember that some persons, if not many, got the results. In this way we should try to keep up our morale.

Another way is to study scriptures. When we study the scriptures, we find many directions given. In the *Gītā*, in the Upaniṣads, so many directions are given. Even one single direction is enough for one's life, but

there are so many directions. For example, in one passage in the *Gītā* it is said, 'This ocean of māyā is very hard to cross.' Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself says that it is difficult to cross. But it is not impossible. The next line is, 'But one who takes refuge in Me will cross this ocean of māyā very easily.' He does not hide things ; he says it is difficult. But it is difficult only so long as you think you are separate from God, as long as you try to live your existence separate from God. If you know that you have the least relationship with God, your courage will not give way.

One fine method is to take down quotations which are helpful, hopeful, inspiring. Whenever moods of depression come—and they are bound to come to everyone, more or less—look at those sayings. And if you commit some of them to memory, these thoughts will automatically come to you at the hour of need. They will come on the surface of the mind to help you, to show you that God is not altogether dead. Thoughts of God will come on the surface of your mind and will give you a push.

But real strength will come when we have realized the Truth completely. It comes in either of the two ways: when we think we are one with the Divine, or when we think we are absolutely nothing, we are zero. You see, in both ways we reach the Ultimate Reality. We have put a barrier between ourselves and God. That barrier is the ego. It must be removed. The flood tide would come, but we have put up a floodgate and locked it. This is our ego. If it is slackened even a little, then water begins to come. And as it continues to flow through, the current becomes so strong that the floodgate is destroyed.

So either we have to think that we are nothing, or we have to think that we are one with the Divine. One of these attitudes begins to come in our spiritual life according to the way in which we do spiritual

practice. They are not really separate. One will find that both attitudes come ; with time one will be at home with both. They are not basically different. Both lead to the same result, the same God or Ātman. Simply the ways are different. In either case we get the result.

We must remember that moods of depression come in the life of everyone. Even great saints were not free from moods of depression at one time or another. Swami Vivekananda was so strong. But in his letters we find that sometimes he was extremely depressed, when things did not go according to the way he liked. When he was working, he had his methods, he had his plans. When those plans were not succeeding, he would get desperate. Sometimes he would say to Ramakrishna, his teacher, 'I will give up my work. I will no longer work for you. I have done enough work. I shall take a holiday.' Just like a child he would talk, as if he were fighting with Ramakrishna. At one time success came more than he could dream. He was very much elated and he wrote in a letter, in his own handwriting, 'I am such a rogue. Even under such circumstances my faith totters, doubt comes into my mind.' And he wrote to one who was like a disciple, 'Know for certain, there is a God, father or mother, who leaves you never, never alone.' With a person like Vivekananda, depression is a momentary thing, and usually comes in the course of the work.

Earlier in his life, Swami Vivekananda also experienced depression, but that was of a different type. When Ramakrishna was present, the disciples were safe, but after Ramakrishna passed away, they had to stand on their own feet, to earn the realization themselves. That was necessary. One great saint said, when he was implored by a disciple to give him realization, 'I can give it to you, but you will not be able to keep it up.' It is the law of spiritual life

that we must earn it. God could give realization to every one of us, so why does He withhold it? He wants us to strive and earn it. Whatever might be in the mind of God, we find we can get nothing without striving for it. Swami Vivekananda was going through a state of depression after his Master passed away. At that time he once said, 'I have seen ideal religion, I have seen ideal truth, but still my mind is in such a condition.'

I knew a disciple of Vivekananda who was very free with him and knew many things about him. I asked him, 'How do you explain these things?' He said, 'What explanation is needed? For the time being a cloud came into his mind, and then it went away. The cloud did not last long.' That is the difference between him and ordinary persons. But it is a lesson to us. It might have happened just to give a lesson to us so that we may not get into depression so easily. Such things occur.

Swami Turiyananda was such a strong personality. He had iron will, though towards the end he would say that Divine Mother is everything. But he himself told how one night he was desperate. (I think it was in the early days, just after Ramakrishna passed away.) He went to the roof of the dilapidated monastery building and paced up and down in a terrible condition. The moon was shining, smiling, laughing, as it were. All of a sudden it was covered up with patches of cloud. The sky became semi-dark. Then the clouds went away and the moon shone again. And he thought, 'That's it! The Ātman is there always; it

is temporarily covered with clouds of ignorance. The Reality can never be lost. It is always present.'

That is a great truth. The Divine Reality is always present. Ignorance simply covers It up. What a source of great strength! It is there, but you have to find it out, you have simply to take up the quest, to go and get your birthright.

When Buddha returned home after getting the Enlightenment, his son Rāhula asked his mother, 'Who is this? What is he?' And she said, 'Go there and demand your birthright.' Buddha made him a monk. Rāhula got his inheritance.

We also must assert our birthright. Swami Vivekananda once gave a direction to Sister Nivedita, a Western disciple, on how to pray to the Divine Mother. He was sending her for some work—perhaps he had some fear that she might face difficulties, going alone by herself. As she was starting, Swami Vivekananda all of a sudden said, 'I'll give you a prayer which has been of immense help to me.' And he gave her a prayer to the Divine Mother. Then he said, in his characteristic way, 'And mind, make Her listen to you!' Don't pray like an orphan. Make the Divine Mother listen to you. Assert your birthright.

It is up to all of us to make God listen to our prayer. If our demand is sufficiently strong, it will wear down all obstacles in our path. Unfortunately it does not become strong enough. Let us make our demand strong, very, very strong. Let us make Her listen to our prayer.



# EVOLUTION AND VEDĀNTA

SWAMI YOGESHANANDA

The word evolution is used in several ways, so let us be clear about how we wish to use it in this discussion. It may mean, first, the growth of an individual—how he evolves biologically from the germ-cell to an adult human being, or how he evolves spiritually as a soul. It may mean how a given species changes in time into something looking quite different, as for example, the horse. We could speak of the evolution of an idea-pattern, a structure, such as the bicycle—which is, after all a pattern of ideas: two wheels, placed one in front of the other, manipulated by balancing etc.; here one speaks of the ‘evolution of the bicycle’. Fourthly, there is the evolution of the universe as a whole: what we call cosmology.

In this discussion we shall be concerned primarily with the second and first meanings—biological evolution—but we may touch in passing on cosmology also. We shall first briefly review the biologists’ story of how we came to be what they think we are. This will raise certain important questions in our minds. Then we must consider various answers men have tried to give to these questions; finally, we may attempt to put before you explanations given by the Vedānta philosophy, to see whether they satisfy our mind and heart.

The first thing we have to realize is how difficult it is for that which is a *part* (man) to study itself or to study the whole of which it is a ‘part’. For we must remember that for the biologist, man is a part of the universe, one of its smallest products. And how can the product ever get a proper picture of its cause? How can it jump out of its limited nature and comprehend the whole? You see, that is the standpoint from which the scientist starts, so that handi-

cap is bound to be bound up with his explanation. It is like trying to find the beginning of *avidyā* (ignorance) or *māyā*. Vedānta, you know, says this *avidyā* is beginningless. It is folly to search for the beginning; but the human mind is made that way, and scientists, being human beings, pursue the categories of time, space, and causation. That is why we can think of no better way to start, than with the business of the hen and the egg. Which comes first? Biologists now know that they cannot ask that question. As Swami Vivekananda says, one cannot think of a hen which did not come from an egg, nor of an egg not laid by a hen. ‘Hen’ and ‘egg’ are names which we give, for the sake of convenience, to particular configurations of a long series of changes of form, constituting one long process of development. The patterns which persist for some time are called by names like hen, egg etc., while shorter-lived patterns we call embryo, germ-cell and so on.

Somewhere, billions of years ago, just the right set of circumstances came together so that in some places on this earth molecules of complicated inorganic substance, played upon by heat, light and moisture, ‘gestated’ the first dim forms of life, the viruses and single-celled creatures from which all other living forms evolved. These, they tell us, became more and more complex as the ages rolled by, underwent many many transformations in their attempts to survive, sometimes becoming highly specialized, sometimes remaining just the same for millions of years together. How did this Tree of Life, with its numerous branches, representing the various phyla or groupings of creatures, high and low, snail and bird, fish and mammal, come into being? By what they call ‘natural selection’—and when

sex-distinction arose, by sexual selection also. We know the familiar examples used to illustrate natural selection: when a particular variety of fish was able to swim faster than its predators it escaped and survived. That species became the natural dweller in that area. The flowers which lay on the higher slopes of ground in frosty weather, escaping the concentration of cold of the hollows at night, tended to live and propagate their own peculiarities, and became acclimatized to the place. Protective colouring favoured the insects who were the most camouflaged of their breed. Mind you, it is not that any of these creatures did these things consciously, or 'strove' in any sense—orthodox biologists will not have that. These events just happened. The survival of the fittest means nothing more than this: the survival of the fittest—to survive; it is not proper to read anything else into this word 'fittest'.

Perhaps you know that the momentous discovery of these great principles was made almost simultaneously by two naturalists, Charles Darwin and Alfred Russell Wallace. Darwin felt Wallace breathing down his neck, so to speak, and he published first. He got the credit, and his outlook it was that influenced the whole future of evolutionary theory. Modern biologists have gone beyond Darwin, they have corrected and adjusted his theories; but the 'colour' of the whole field of study is Darwinian. That is orthodoxy. In the history of science this must surely be one of the most enthralling episodes, this relation between the two interpretations of the same general theory. Wallace said that he saw the 'hand of God' in this magnificent story of the evolution of species; the influence of the Divine Power was at work in shaping the whole process, and it unfolds as a witness to the glory of the Creator. Darwin was shocked by this. He found no necessity for any explanation outside the process itself. Wallace became

more and more religious, increasingly devoted to non-mechanistic factors, and ended his career as a full-fledged spiritualist! But Darwin had done such an amount of meticulous experimental work that he captured the imagination and loyalty of the scientists and thus set the mechanistic tone for all future biology.

That was 1850-1860. The laws of genetics were not yet known. Evolution and heredity are counterbalancing mechanisms: however much the environment may buffet the organism about and modify it, heredity gives the conservatism to the structure—keeps it going on as what it is, generation after generation. For only mutation, an actual change in the structure of the genes, can influence heredity. Lamarckianism, is really dead now. This, you know, was the hypothesis that acquired characteristics could be inherited. The muscles in the arms of the blacksmith's son were powerful because the blacksmith had supposedly transmitted some of his own strength. Specific acquired traits like this cannot be passed on genetically. We know now that gene-mutation and natural selection are explanation enough for the *mechanism* of how man has evolved from the lower animals. The question is, is mechanism enough? But we shall come to that.

Now when we speak of man, the human being, we are told that he emerges as the crown and glory of a long development over perhaps 1,750,000 years on this planet, from what are called anthropoid apes; and some of the 'missing links' between the earliest man—so-called because of his large brain-case—and these fire-using apes of Africa have been discovered, but not many. There are various other proofs: ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny. That is, in the evolution of the human germ-cell through its embryonic stages into the human baby, certain of the earlier chapters in this wonderful story are mirrored, as it were. The embryo

looks, at stages, like a kind of frog, horse, or pig, or ape. It is not only the *body* of man which has come up this way, say the Darwinians,—lest you should think, as some Indian writers do, that the mind and social behaviour of man have had a different origin; no, this process must account for the whole genesis of man; his social behaviour, his intelligence—all can be traced to earlier species, according to modern biology. As regards social behaviour, the early evolutionists—those with whom Swami Vivekananda is contending, in many of his lectures—emphasized Carlyle's 'Nature red in tooth and claw'; they played up the role of violence and competition, natural and sexual, in the selective process. This has had to be corrected in the modern theory; the original evolutionary outlook has changed. P. B. Medawar, and Julian Huxley are two who have helped to bring balance in this respect, and Prince Kropotkin's book on mutual help among animals was an early antidote.

Now we are in a position to ask the evolutionists some questions. They may find these inconvenient. Suppose we grant that their account of the process is substantially correct. But a process is a process *of* something. What *is* it that is evolving? If your tradition says that no teleological purpose is pulling at this business from the other end—the goal—then what name will you give to that entity which is undergoing all these transformations? The naturalists may reply, 'matter'; or if we start with the organic, 'protoplasm'. Protoplasm is evolving. Then mind and intelligence, spiritual values and concepts, all have come out of protoplasm. Yes, they will say, these have 'emerged' in the course of evolution; they are by-products or end-products: epiphenomena. But if intelligence has come out of protoplasm must it not have been involved in the protoplasm? This is the question Swami Vivekananda repeatedly re-

minds us must be asked. Why do they not speak of involution? Somehow the degree of mind or intelligence we find in man must have been implied in the virus. And in that case would it be wise to call it protoplasm, or matter? Is consciousness such an insignificant phenomena that we may regard it like the flame of a candle, to be kindled and then blown out? Is consciousness a compound, that it can disintegrate?

'To study evolution deeply', says a wise biologist, 'means inevitably to move from a consideration of the shifting of forms to a consideration of the essence. Then comes psychology.' We are not studying 'matter' any more; we are studying mind when we go into it deeper. This is one of science's weaknesses: it finds the investigation of the earlier phases of development easier to handle and to comprehend, and emphasizes origins more than later developments which are complicated. Here is the crux of the question of the appearance of mind (a passage from Sir Charles Sherrington's *Man On. His Nature*):

'Mind as attaching to any unicellular life would seem to me to be unrecognizable to observation; but I would not feel that permits me to affirm it is not there. Indeed, I would think, that since mind appears in the developing soma, that amounts to showing that it is potential in the ovum (and sperm) from which the soma sprang. The appearance of recognizable mind in the soma would then be not a creation *de novo* but a development of mind from unrecognizable to recognizable....

'Mind seems to emerge from no mind. So, conversely at death it seems to re-emerge into no mind. But mind seems to come from nothing and to return to nothing. The devolution into nothing seems as difficult to accept as the evolution out of nothing. If the mental were some form of the energy it so closely adheres to, the story would be one of energy-transformation.'

But it is not; no way has been found to

handle the 'energy' of thought in the way we do other known energies.

Let us raise another question. This starts with an experiment. One naturalist discovered in the forests a species of snail which displayed two varieties, some with yellow shells, some having pink-and-brown shells. In summer he found that there were more yellow ones, in winter, more of the others. After long investigation he reported that it was a question of protective colouration and a beautiful example of natural selection. The yellow shells were less visible to birds etc. in the green foliage of summer; the pink-and-brown shells less visible in winter. The naturalist says, in reporting his conclusion: 'It was possible to show that at some time in early May yellow changed from being disadvantageous to being advantageous.' Now, advantageous to whom? To what? Why should an organism wish to survive? If there is no inherent urge to greater self-manifestation in snail tissue, why should it develop a colour-changing ability? Another naturalist, commenting on the experiment therefore says, 'Analytical biology can operate only with reference to a non-analytical framework; when we analyse living things into their minutial parts, we must, if only implicitly, acknowledge higher levels of organization of the wholes, and the achievements toward which they are ordered.' (This does not mean that analysis, physical and chemical, cannot proceed indefinitely; of course it can.) Where is the scientist who will admit that knowledge itself is no achievement? He would be laying the axe to his own incentive.

Mechanistic biology destroys the very explanation which it offers. What kind of explanation would we call that which destroys a part of the thing to be explained—namely, a differential in values—before it begins? 'Mechanism as an explanation', someone has said, 'is like looking into the

mechanics of a theatrical production.' All that is necessary is there: you know where all the ropes and curtains are, how the sound-effects are made etc.—but what the drama is, why it is being played, by whom, and who is the audience—these important facts it does not tell us.

So, we see, evolution is a word with many value-judgement connotations. Species change, genes mutate; by what criteria shall we judge these changes? And judge them we must. What are the hidden values and presuppositions which make us define these words in the way we do? A Vedāntist asks these questions.

Wise men in both East and West, keenly sensitive to these difficulties in mechanistic biology, have tried to offer us various alternatives. In the West there was Lamarckianism, the idea that acquired features might be transmitted by heredity to one's offspring. That was tempting to the idealists because it gave some hope for the notion of progress. As we have mentioned, genetic laws have vitiated it; no hope there. Then there came the Vitalists, Bergson, MacTaggart and others. They wanted to say that there is a mysterious vital principle, adhering to all life, moving it, sweeping it forward, an inescapable vitality and reactivity which cannot be accounted for by mechanical operations. Back came the biologists with their familiar dictum: no explanation from outside is required. Science, as Swamiji so often tells us, means the accounting of a thing in terms of the thing itself. It must be a unitary process, this evolution, not the action of two unrelated factors.

Today the idealists seem to be having their last stand. We find in the writings of Alexis Carrel, Lecomte du Nouÿ and many other religious-minded scientists all these ideas about 'God in history', 'Isn't man wonderful? How much more wonderful must his Creator be!' and so on. 'In all this naturalistic description there is a Divine

Element which is missing; they have not been able to put their finger upon it.' Finally, we have Teilhard de Chardin, the Name of the day, with his 'evolution of the Cosmic Christ'.

Now what does Vedānta say? It tells us that the individual must be the basis of any explanation of this universe. All the views of which we have been speaking, too much ignore the individual. We forget the subject. What good is an explanation which does not help *me*? Darwinism cares nothing for the individual—he is wasted, except as a link in a chain. But if you should go to Sir Julian Huxley's house, as a friend of ours recently did, you would find that he behaves as an individual: he has his wife and family, his property, his tea-time, his favourite chair and all that, and he thinks of these as his. No one on the relative plane escapes the immediacy of the subject in every relationship. It is the *individual* amoeba which has become this individual who is speaking to you now. As Swami Vivekananda tells us, if the man has evolved from the amoeba, then it is the amoeba individual who has become the individual man, only he must expand himself a great deal. Evolution means in Vedānta the evolution of the soul by a process of unfoldment—or better, uncovering, a process of self-manifestation or self-revelation. If we represent Darwinian evolution by a horizontal line, evolution in Vedānta is a vertical line, taking off at right angles, so to speak. One is the transformation of species of bodies and minds, into other species of bodies and minds; the other is the same thing, but we call it the transformation of thicker veils into thinner veils, obscuring media into transparent media, until in that finest of coverings, the *buddhi*, purest intellect—Brahman, the Self or Spirit, stands revealed. The evolution of the soul is the call from a higher Freedom to the individual to come up—to work his

way up, and out—from all these limiting forms. It is increased operation of the *sattvaguna* (the quality of serenity).

Another thing: Vedānta would not dream of speaking of evolution without involution. It is a cyclic affair, a series, repeating over and over. This point seems to give difficulty to Western students. Such is our penchant for the idea of progress and achievement (in external terms) that we resist the idea of something going as far down as it goes up! So we do not hear scientists talking much about involution. But there is involution in nature. Old age and death are forms of involution. Some species regress; this is believed to be true of the lice and fleas. When rivers, having accumulated the waters of many streams and having become great and powerful individuals, as it were, merge in the sea, losing their names and forms, are we to call it evolution or devolution? Physicists are telling us now that because of the laws of symmetry, time, like charge and parity, may be reversible. Just as there is anti-matter, where the charge and the spin are reversed, so the third factor in the complex, time, may very well be also. This would certainly be involution. For although we speak of time flowing, it is not really time that flows; events flow; time is a peculiar awareness of 'otherness', Vedānta tells us. It says cosmology is not in time; time is in cosmology.

How does involution work in the case of the spiritual aspirant, is a question it is natural to raise here. As his spiritual sensitivity increases, he learns to recognize consciousness (or mind) at lower and lower levels of creation, as Sherrington's words given above point out, until at last he sees, as did Sri Ramakrishna, the cat, the door-sill, the marble floor of the temple—everything as shining Consciousness. That is a consummation devoutly to be wished; but from a biological point of view it can be considered an involution. How does per-

ception take place? We say that the mind as *artha*, substance, takes the form of the object; and mind as *śabda* (sound) cognizes it and gives it a name. The increasing of the field of the perception of consciousness from the spiritual standpoint, can only be called evolution.

Then again, let us take purpose. Biologic naturalism claims that no 'purposiveness' can really be assigned to forces of evolution. What does Vedānta say? Orthodox Vedānta and Sāṅkhya assert that creation's whole purpose is enjoyment. But this enjoyment is also suffering—bondage. If we wish to be free, we have to finish with all this enjoyment. The individual man has a purpose, in striving to free himself from the whole entangling process. *It is no more 'modern' nor enlightened for men to think of themselves as animal products than it was earlier to think of themselves as cringing sinners.* This attitude has to go if we want spirituality. Stand on the Ātman and know your true nature—this is what Swami Vivekananda never tires of reminding us. This is what he defines as *prayer*. In a sense the Advaitin is more in harmony with the outlook of Darwin than with that of Wallace. He regards the whole of creation, evolution and dissolution as a unitary process, the 'work' of one Hand, the cosmic dance of Śiva, the shadow-play of the Divine Mother—real, in a certain state of consciousness, ultimately a dream. And for that reason evolution is for him no drab prosaic plati-

tude whose contemplation leaves one uninspired and melancholic; it is the Grand Drama being played out by that Substance-which-is-no-substance, Mind-which-is-no-mind, all the more marvellous for being, at last, the 'Magnificent Spoof'.

How then does a man come to this awakening? Here is a fine statement of it:

'All biological species become adapted by changing their genes in accord with the demands of their environments. Natural selection is the process which brings these changes about. The human species is able, in addition, to become adapted by changing its environments in accord with the demands of its genes. Understanding and invention are the means which make this possible.'

The Vedāntist must add: the human individual can become adapted to living in the Changeless, Undivided and Eternal, instead of the changing, the finite and the time-bound. Discrimination, meditation, renunciation and devotion are the means which make this possible.

Evolution has brought us to the human condition, to the power of choice. At least so it seems to us. How will we use it? Will we put it to work for effecting our own further evolution as Spirit? As Swami Vivekananda says, 'This infinite power of the spirit, brought to bear upon matter brings material development, brought to bear upon mind yields intelligence, and made to work upon itself, makes of man a god.'

# EASTERN PHILOSOPHY AND WESTERN PROBLEMS

DR. LETA JANE LEWIS

According to the great Norwegian playwright, Henrik Ibsen, everyone is entitled to experience the 'joy of life',<sup>1</sup> by which he meant the expansive sense of fulfilment which comes from participating in abiding human relationships based on mutual love, trust, and understanding as well as from making those worthwhile contributions to society which are in keeping with one's best talents. However, since Ibsen realized that even those 'pillars of society' who appear to be leading perfectly normal lives may be the victims of the most destructive conflicts, he created few if any characters whose desire to experience the 'joy of life' was not somehow frustrated. Writing in the nineteenth century, this great literary psychologist seemed to foresee the hatred and violence, the torment and conflict, which are filling our mental and criminal institutions today.

Nothing so thwarts the joy of life as self-condemnation and self-hatred. At times, although not always, such negative attitudes may be provoked by the individual's pathological inability to forgive himself for his actual faults and weaknesses. Unable to accept the fact that he, like all other human beings, is imperfect by nature, he storms against himself, consuming himself with bitter gall and raging furiously against society. It is unlikely that even his Christian faith will help him appreciably under these circumstances, for he will in all probability be quite incapable of believing that the divine grace which is said to save penitent sinners from perdition in the afterlife is sufficiently real and potent to remove his burden of

guilt here and now. He will, therefore, join August Strindberg's Ellis in lamenting, 'The Redeemer suffered for our sins, yet we have to go on paying.'<sup>2</sup>

The individual's feelings of unworthiness can assume still greater pathological proportions if, because of a false sense of values, he is found guilty and condemned by the irrational court of a sick conscience for having done nothing at all. He may, for instance, feel painfully inadequate because he cannot accept his parents' dogmatic religious beliefs or enter a profession of which they would be proud. He may be shamed by the fact that persons of his race and creed are treated slightly by the community in which he lives. Or he may be tormented by abnormally puritanical attitudes, which he has inherited from his ancestors.

In all likelihood, the false sense of values by which such an individual judges himself so painfully did not originate with him but was virtually forced upon him from outside with so much subtle persistence that his common sense and better judgment eventually capitulated.

We enlightened twentieth-century Americans must assume the guilt for having confronted each other—especially the members of those particular minority groups to which we, as individuals, do not happen to belong—with distorted personal and professional self-images. For generations large segments of our population have more or less taken it for granted that some Americans, simply because of the accidents of their birth, could not be trained for certain so-called 'higher'

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<sup>1</sup> Henrik Ibsen: *Ghosts*. pp. 95-176 in *Eleven Plays of Ibsen*, ed. H. L. Mencken (Random House Modern Library, New York), p. 134.

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<sup>2</sup> August Strindberg: *Easter*. pp. 130-184 in *Six Plays of Strindberg*, trans. Elizabeth Eprigge (Double-day and Co. Anchor Book, Garden City, 1956), p. 141.

professions. By openly refusing to give these fellow citizens the opportunity to develop all of their talents, we have almost certainly excluded some of them from the very occupations in which they would not only have experienced the greatest joy of life but in which they would also have made the greatest contributions to society. Furthermore, our tacit assumption that hereditary inferiority has deprived some persons of any abilities worth mentioning has become a tragic self-fulfilling prophecy for those who have been too imbued with self-doubt to take proper advantage of whatever exceptional opportunities to develop their higher talents actually occurred. Overlooking Jesus' warning that he who says, "thou fool", to his brother is in danger of hell fire,<sup>3</sup> we have committed the almost unforgivable crime, the crime closest to murder, of killing the healthy self-love in these and other innocent human beings on whom we have inflicted our false materialistic, social, and ethnic standards. Our half-consciously raised eyebrows and disdainful glances, to say nothing of our more overt indications of exclusion and rejection, have been sufficient to impose irrational feelings of unworthiness upon their most innocent victims. Although we have grieved the deformed girl and the sickly little man with our animalistic value judgements, we have reacted in unwarranted hurt surprise when they turned their pent-up animosity against us. As the contemporary psychologist Erik Erikson points out :

Therapeutic as well as reformist efforts verify the sad truth that in any system based on suppression, exclusion, and exploitation, the suppressed, excluded, and exploited unconsciously accept the evil image they are made to represent by those who are dominant...<sup>4</sup> There is ample evidence of 'inferiority' feelings

and of morbid self-hate in minority groups.<sup>5</sup>

'Schizoids and delinquents', he explains, 'have in common a mistrust of themselves, a disbelief in the possibility that they could ever complete anything of value.'<sup>6</sup>

The personality of Gypsy Pearl, the black heroine in Nathan Heard's *Howard Street*, aptly illustrates the point that those who have a deeply ingrained negative self-image find it almost impossible to change this image or the life style which it sustains. Although Gypsy Pearl derived much misery and very little happiness from engaging in prostitution in order to buy narcotics for a hopeless addict, whom she could neither love nor admire, she was so accustomed to this identity that she could not imagine herself in any more positive role. She, therefore, refused the substantial working man who fell in love with her and wanted to marry her, although she knew that to do so meant forfeiting her hope of future happiness.

Unfortunately, we Americans have not confined ourselves to inflicting negative self-images upon each other. We have also infected the people of other nations with feelings of unworthiness because of their skin colour, because of their diverse cultures, and because of their inability (or lack of desire) to meet our superficial materialistic standards. We have too often judged them according to their capacity to approximate our high standard of living and, feeling smugly superior because of our automobiles and our television sets, we have failed to notice their differing cultural attainments. Because of our inability to interpret unfamiliar religious symbols which we have not honestly tried to understand, we have insulted the sacred religions of other nations by treating them as if they were gross superstitions.

Those nations and individuals who have

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 5 : 22.

<sup>4</sup> Erik H. Erikson : *Identity, Youth and Crisis* (W. W. Norton and Co., New York ; 1968), p. 59.

<sup>5</sup> Erikson, p. 303.

<sup>6</sup> Erikson, p. 185.



been reduced to accepting the negative images imposed upon them by others usually hate both themselves and those whose constant insinuations corroded their will-power until they actually affirmed their own supposed inferiority. If the hatred thus generated turns to rage and the rage to violence (as it is apt to do), society is fortunate if only small local areas are involved; for there is always the possibility of conflict with the millions of persons outside our borders (not necessarily including the Russians and the Red Chinese) who resent our narrow-minded, purse-proud attitudes. These millions, whom millions of *us* have wanted to ignore, may constitute the most serious threat to our nation in the foreseeable future.

By taking false materialistic standards more or less for granted in our daily lives, we have unwittingly motivated each other to a diversity of hurtful actions. We who take foolish pride in our new homes and automobiles, we who so admire the rich and powerful that we are flattered by their small attentions, we good people must assume our share of the blame when our neighbours resort to cutthroat business tactics in order to win our approval. We are partially responsible for the loneliness and possible delinquency of the children whom they neglect while pursuing the economic and social goals we have unthinkingly set before them. For, although every individual must assume responsibility for his own errors, it is, nevertheless, paradoxically true that those who inspire wrong actions in others are also somewhat to blame for those actions.

Twentieth-century adolescents who live in seemingly good homes with social-climbing, money-loving, divorcing parents are painfully aware of the anguish a distorted sense of values can cause. Feeling a close bond of sympathy with the minority groups and social classes which suffer as they do from society's superficial value judgments, they easily cast off unjust racial and social pre-

judices. However, some bitterly disillusioned teenagers do not stop with merely disassociating themselves from society's most flagrant abuses. They go on to become cynically sceptical of all value judgments handed down to them by an older generation which they accuse of placing money and prestige above love and understanding. Then, if no one whom they honestly respect comes forward with valid reasons for ethics and self-control, they may arbitrarily reject wholesome standards of conduct which are the hard-won products of centuries of moral evolution. When such rebellious young people arrive at this tragic point of disbelief, neither parental disapproval nor social pressure can prevent them from putting their free-thinking ideas into action.

Adolescents adrift without a meaningful philosophy to give them goals and direction in life are like oarsmen lost in the fog without a compass. Jean Paul Sartre defines the malaise of such confused sufferers as 'nausea', while the famous psychoanalyst Dr. Carl Jung calls it a 'psychoneurosis'. 'A psychoneurosis', explains Dr. Jung, 'must be understood as the suffering of a human being who has not discovered what life means to him.'<sup>7</sup> But, unfortunately, Dr. Jung finds the diagnosis of such a malady much simpler than its cure. 'As a doctor,' he continues,

... [the psychiatrist] is not required to have a finished outlook on life, and his professional conscience does not demand it of him. But what will he do when he sees only too clearly why his patient is ill; when he sees that it arises from his having no love, but only sexuality; no faith, because he is afraid to grope in the dark; no hope, because he is disillusioned by the world and by life;

<sup>7</sup> Carl Gustav Jung: *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, trans. W. S. Dell and Cary F. Barnes (Routledge and Kegan Paul Limited, London, 1933), p. 260.

and no understanding, because he has failed to read the meaning of existence?<sup>8</sup> In their search for a living philosophy of life based on truth rather than on questionable conjecture, the twentieth century's frustrated adolescents will naturally look to their culture's intellectual leaders for help. However, these intellectuals, in so far as they are intellectuals and nothing more, are bound by the limitations of the mind, which knows only what the senses tell it plus what little it can deduce from the knowledge supplied by the senses. They are, therefore, restricted to the very materialistic interpretation of the universe which today's youth associates with unhappiness. As UCLA's internationally known physicist, Professor Joseph Kaplan, declares:

One has to be extremely careful in these days of such continuous and strong impacts of science on society not to mistake quantity for quality. Physics gives the answers to how things happen, but not to why things occur or where they come from. There is no reason to believe that if physics has failed to answer these questions in its long search for answers about the inert universe, that it will succeed, or that biology will succeed, when it discusses life itself.<sup>9</sup>

Professor Kaplan goes on to express the hope that religion will, in the future, play its part in answering the basic questions about life, which science will probably leave unanswered.

Realizing that religion must, indeed, play a part if life's most important questions are ever to be answered, an occasional disheartened seeker will turn hopefully to Christianity. Some may be helped. However, the majority will soon discover that few church Christians live as though they knew God to be as certain a reality as the physical universe. Since most theologians teach that

the revelations on which Christian doctrine is based cannot be verified by contemporary personal experience, laymen are generally left with the impression that matter is the only reality of which they can be absolutely sure. So, even if they do not want to be the hypocrites some disappointed young people believe them to be, it is difficult for most professing Christians not to become practising materialists.

If the frustrated adolescent blames the restraints placed upon him by society for his failure to find the joy of life, he may seek his freedom in hedonistic living. Thus, he may experiment with narcotics in the vain hope of attaining a nirvanic state unaffected by life's vexing limitations. He may look to free love for warmth and affection, only to be disappointed with the discovery that emotional satisfaction cannot be had in relationships devoid of tenderness and continuity. And he may attempt to explore the occult in a futile quest for supernatural powers with which to control the operation of nature's frustrating laws.

What is the desperate young seeker to do when he emerges empty-handed from his search for the joy of life? He might become one of the increasing number of disillusioned young people who have answered the question by committing suicide. Or, having exhausted the resources of his native culture, he might look elsewhere for the solutions he craves, perhaps to India, which is famous for having produced serene saints like Mahatma Gandhi. But, of course, the fact that India is a land of much suffering and many abuses, not the least of which is the cruel caste system, might deter him from taking such a step. However, to assume such a negative attitude from the outset would be unjust not only to Mahatma Gandhi himself but also to other modern Indian leaders who have courageously tried to abolish India's ancient caste system as well as her other social evils. India has had

<sup>8</sup> Jung, p. 260.

<sup>9</sup> Joseph Kaplan: 'What is Life?' in *Vedanta and the West*, Vol. XV, no. 6 (November-December, 1952), p. 164.

no more compassionate leader than her beloved patriot saint, Swami Vivekananda, who exhorted his countrymen to correct their nation's social and economic inequities by practising their ancient wisdom in daily life. 'No religion on earth', thundered the fiery monk, 'preaches the dignity of humanity in such a lofty strain as Hinduism, and no religion on earth treads upon the necks of the poor and low in such a fashion as Hinduism. Religion is not at fault, but it is the Pharisees and the Sadducees.'<sup>10</sup>

Few Westerners, with the possible exception of those who are familiar with Vincent Sheean's *Lead Kindly Light*, realize how much India in general and Mahatma Gandhi in particular owe not only to the inspiration of Swami Vivekananda himself but also to the inspiration of the Swami's great teacher, Sri Ramakrishna, who is now almost universally acclaimed to be modern India's spiritual genius. Mahatma Gandhi pays the following appropriate tribute to Sri Ramakrishna in his foreword to the latter's official biography :

The story of Ramakrishna Paramahansa's life is a story of religion in practice. His life enables us to see God face to face. No one can read the story of his life without being convinced that God alone is real and that all else is an illusion. Ramakrishna was a living embodiment of godliness. His sayings are not those of a mere learned man but they are pages from the Book of Life. They are revelations of his own experiences. They therefore leave on the reader an impression that he cannot resist. In this age of scepticism Ramakrishna presents an example of a bright and living faith which gives solace to thousands of men and women who would otherwise have remained without spiritual light. Ramakrishna's life was an object-lesson in *ahimsa*. His love knew

no limits geographical or otherwise. May his divine love be an inspiration to all who read the following pages.<sup>11</sup>

Sri Ramakrishna's remarkable love and his great fortitude during times of suffering have inspired thousands of persons with the certainty that man's true nature is divine. Having attained transcendental states of consciousness in which he knew himself to be blissful, undying spirit rather than the body, the ego, or the mind, Sri Ramakrishna escaped the tyranny of physical and mental pain, which prevents most people from experiencing the full joy of life. It is a well-documented fact that when his body was suffering intensely from terminal cancer of the throat, he would lose himself so completely in ecstatic divine love that he would become entirely oblivious of the pain.

That Swami Vivekananda had a similar ability to experience the joy of life under all circumstances is evident in the following passage from Swami Nikhilananda's book entitled *Vivekananda* :

One day, in course of a discussion [Robert] Ingersoll said to the Swami, 'I believe in making the most of this world, in squeezing the orange dry, because this world is all we are sure of.' He would have nothing to do with God, soul, or hereafter, which he considered as meaningless jargon. 'I know a better way to squeeze the orange of this world than you do,' the Swami replied, 'and I get more out of it. I know I cannot die, so I am not in a hurry. I know that there is no fear, so I enjoy the squeezing. I have no ... bondage of wife and children and property, so I can love all men and women. Everyone is God to me. Think of the joy of loving man as God! Squeeze your orange my way, and you will get every single drop!' Ingersoll, it is reported, asked the Swami not to be impatient with his views, adding that his own unrelenting fight against traditional religions had shaken men's

<sup>10</sup> Swami Nikhilananda : *Vivekananda : The Yogas and other Works* (Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, New York, 1953), p. 74.

<sup>11</sup> Quoted in Vincent Sheean, *Lead Kindly Light* (Random House, New York ; 1949), pp. 300-301.

faith in theological dogmas and creeds, and thus helped to pave the way for the Swami's success in America.<sup>12</sup>

Direct spiritual perception has made it possible for an almost continuous succession of Indian sages on the order of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda to know life's fourth dimension, which like Albert Einstein's geometrical fourth dimension, is inaccessible to sense perception. 'Theories will not satisfy us,' exclaimed Swami Vivekananda, boldly interpreting the Indian spirit. '...Is it true that there is a God? If it is true, can I see Him? Can I realize the Truth?'<sup>13</sup> Foreshadowing later generations of young people who would long to build their lives on the certain knowledge of truth, Swami Vivekananda had, as a young man, refused to be satisfied with second-hand theories and revelations. He, therefore, sought unrelentingly until he met Sri Ramakrishna, whose entire guileless life was ample proof of the fact that he had seen God. After having scrupulously tested the validity of Sri Ramakrishna's spiritual attainments, Swami Vivekananda followed his instructions until he had the profound spiritual experiences which transformed him into one of the world's great humanitarians.

Indian philosophy, to most Hindus, treats the ultimate nature of the universe as such wise men have perceived it in their most valid states of awareness. Thus, Śaṅkara's experience in the highest state of consciousness formed the basis for his brilliant nondualistic philosophy. On the authority of his transcendental perception, Śaṅkara taught that all creation lives, moves, and has its being in the absolute Brahman. So even our circumscribed human consciousness derives its existence from Brahman's stupendous consciousness much as the sunbeam derives its existence from the sun. Although the tiny sunbeam is

pale and weak compared with the mighty sun, its essence is not different from that of the sun. Likewise, man's true Self, which is spiritual rather than physical, is not different from the supreme Spirit. '*Tat twam asi*',<sup>14</sup> 'That art thou', is the central teaching of the Upaniṣads. Since man is essentially identical with Brahman, he is heir to Brahman's absolute existence, knowledge, and bliss; but, since most human beings mistakenly identify themselves with their minds, their bodies, and their egos, very few are aware of the divine Self.

This teaching of the divinity of man is Indian philosophy's positive answer to the disheartened sufferer who is adrift in life without a meaningful philosophy to give him a purpose and goal. Śaṅkara's Advaita Vedānta and India's several other living schools of philosophy will teach such a person that the goal of life is to realize one's divine identity and assure him that it is his inescapable destiny to do so. They will familiarize him with the lives of illumined saints and sages in order to help him overcome his misguided identification with his lower, egotistical self. And, finally, they will encourage him with the hopeful thought that, if progress seems slow, he will be able to continue his efforts through as many incarnations as are needful to attain freedom from bondage in the perfection of Self-knowledge.

As the person who chooses to practise spiritual disciplines in accordance with this optimistic philosophy of life begins, ordinarily after considerable sincere endeavour, to feel the sweetness of a divine presence within himself, any sense of unworthiness which may have frustrated his joy of life slowly falls from him. He then realizes the validity of the Indian contention that sinfulness

<sup>12</sup> Swami Nikhilananda, p. 87.

<sup>13</sup> Swami Nikhilananda, p. 703.

<sup>14</sup> *The Upanishads, Breath of the Eternal*, trans. Swami Prabhavananda and Frederick Manchester (The New American Library of World Literature, Inc., New York; 1957), p. 69.

and inferiority are not attributes of the pure Self but only the illusory products of one's false identification with the body, the mind, and the ego. 'The Hindu', declared Swami Vivekananda, 'refuses to call you sinners. We are the children of God, the sharers of immortal bliss, holy and perfect beings.'<sup>15</sup>

The Indian sage, who in essence, equates the forgiveness of sin with the realization of a higher state of being, neither condemns the spiritual aspirant for his past wrong-doing nor excuses him from full responsibility for its harmful results. Since almost no one can attain absolute perfection immediately, the illumined guru advises the aspirant to accept the fact that it is human to err; and since spiritual progress is blocked by self-satisfaction, he urges the aspirant to work diligently to improve himself, neither condemning himself for his failures in spiritual life nor accepting any permanent compromise between good and evil.

The spiritual aspirant who has begun to feel a divine sweetness within himself also has the joy of discovering it in others. Then he becomes so mellow in his attitude towards other people that he tends to disregard their annoying faults and weaknesses. And when, perhaps after some time, this kindly feeling ripens into divine love, the individual completely loses his desire to compete selfishly with anyone. The fact that someone else may be richer or more powerful than he does not disturb him. Nor does he want to raise himself by assuming superiority over others. Thus, Swami Vivekananda rode proudly in the black sections of our segregated street cars on his travels through the southern United States. Because he loved the blacks and did not want to rise at their expense, he refused to explain that he was a Hindu and, as such, was expected to ride with the whites.

Since he knew that every human being is

divine and, therefore, infinitely precious, Mahatma Gandhi was not deceived by any system of values which taught the innate superiority of one human being over another. Consequently, when the powerful British rulers in South Africa subjected the East Indian inhabitants to the most shamefully degrading treatment, he would not permit them to inculcate his fellow Indians or himself with feelings of unworthiness. With the quiet humility which comes from being both compassionate and self-assured, he taught the Indians to respect themselves and to assert their legitimate rights against their oppressors. On the other hand, although the British beat and humiliated him, he treated them with impartial love unalloyed with fearful cringing. Some of this saintly little man's persecutors were so overcome by his remarkable faith in their innate goodness that their better natures asserted themselves and prevented them from taking further action against him.

After his years of work and self-sacrifice for the Hindus in South Africa were over, Mahatma Gandhi returned home where he next took up the cause of India's downtrodden masses. Because the caste system, which had oppressed millions of people over the centuries, was inconsistent with his vision of the divine man, he defied it not only by living with untouchables but even by adopting some of them into his own family. Furthermore, although his English education and greater earning capacity might have tempted him to do so, he refused to insult the poor people of India by holding up Western cultural and economic standards as measures of human worth. This great soul, who could not bear the thought of depriving others who might actually be starving, ate no more than was absolutely necessary to maintain life and health.

The illumined guru of traditional Hinduism has an even greater capacity for awakening the higher Self in others than the saintly

<sup>15</sup> Swami Nikhilananda, p. 188,

Gandhi had. As Gandhi himself wrote of that guru par excellence, Sri Ramakrishna, such a spiritual teacher is the 'living embodiment of godliness', who, by virtue of his radiant presence, 'enables...[the disciple] to see God face to face'.<sup>16</sup> In addition to silently communicating his blissful consciousness directly to the spiritual aspirant who is capable of perceiving it, the truly qualified guru studies his disciple's temperament and instructs him in those particular spiritual disciplines which will best facilitate his development. When necessary, he also chastises his disciple in order to root out the character weaknesses which would impede his progress. But instead of discouraging the disciple by identifying him with these weaknesses, the compassionate guru constantly reminds him that the true Self is absolutely pure and perfect. Thus, that great guru, Jesus Christ, awakened Mary Magdalene to the kingdom of heaven within where there can be no sin and no negative self-image. She lovingly covered his feet with tears of gratitude for the grace which was lifting her above her former wretchedness to a state of supreme beatitude; and he, knowing that her great faith, that is, her higher consciousness, had all but wiped her evil tendencies away, assured her that her sins had been forgiven.<sup>17</sup> An illumined guru like Jesus Christ—or even a lesser saint like Mahatma Gandhi, who also saw the pure Self in everyone—might have given Nathan Heard's Gypsy Pearl a new self-image which would have enabled her to grasp her happiness.

Since the motiveless divine love of the sage, who knows that all human beings are infinitely precious, would destroy the painful self-contempt which compels frustrated individuals like Gypsy Pearl as well as entire nations to strike out against those whose disparaging treatment has made them feel

inferior, the best possible step towards eliminating violence would be for us to make some attempt, no matter how feeble, to cultivate such love universally. The resulting greater appreciation for the talents and accomplishments of others would not only increase our aesthetic delight in their distinctive cultural achievements, but, much more importantly, it would become a source of goodwill reducing the possibility of future conflict with millions of resentful persons both inside and outside our borders.

The sage, who sees and loves his beloved Lord in all humanity, cannot rest until he has done his utmost to alleviate mental and physical pain wherever he finds it. Therefore, Swami Vivekananda had no patience with the idea of deserting this needy world to meditate in selfish Himalayan seclusion. 'Seeing God everywhere, thus do your work,'<sup>18</sup> he admonished his disciples. 'And may I be born again and again', he thundered, 'and suffer thousands of miseries, so that I may worship the only God that exists, the only God I believe in, the sum total of all souls. And above all...my God the miserable, my God the poor of all races, of all species, is the especial object of my worship.'<sup>19</sup>

In the course of his extensive wanderings over the length and breadth of India, Swami Vivekananda grieved bitterly over the pitiable condition of the ignorant, impoverished Indian people, the majority of whom had been exploited by greedy landowners, unscrupulous priests, and selfish rulers. Although he occasionally spent the night as an honoured guest in the mansions of cultured princes and potentates, some of whom later gave him substantial help in his efforts to uplift the masses, he never felt more at home than when he ate and slept in the humble cottages of the untouchables who

<sup>16</sup> Quoted above. See footnote 11.

<sup>17</sup> Luke 8 : 48.

<sup>18</sup> Swami Nikhilananda, p. 256.

<sup>19</sup> Swami Nikhilananda, p. 130.

offered him shelter as he passed through their villages on foot.

In 1897, several years after these wanderings were over, Swami Vivekananda founded the Ramakrishna Mission with the purpose of helping humanity as effectively as possible over a long period of time. 'You will go to hell,' he warned the young monks of the Ramakrishna order, 'if you seek your own salvation... Work, my children, work with your whole heart and soul! That is the thing. Mind not the fruit of the work. What if you go to hell working for others? That is worth more than to gain heaven seeking your own salvation.'<sup>20</sup> During the last three-quarters of a century, these steadfast monks have built and operated schools and hospitals for the poor in every part of India. Faithful to the trust of their great leader, they have risked their lives to save those stricken by famine, cholera, and floods. They have served God so earnestly in suffering humanity that they would have thought it ridiculous, if not downright blasphemous, to act condescendingly towards those whom they were privileged to help.

Swami Vivekananda's insistence upon unselfish work as essential to spiritual life must not, however, be interpreted as meaning that he thought meditation could be neglected. On the contrary, he taught the novitiates at the Ramakrishna monastery to meditate in order to feel the divine love without which the worshipful service of humanity is impossible. He would have commended the late Bishop Velimirovich of the Serbian Church for writing: 'First *be* and then *do*. First we must get and then we can spend. And when we get, we are obliged to give. The giving is an expression of what we are.'<sup>21</sup>

Of course the spiritual aspirant who practises meditation and other important disciplines under the guidance of a qualified guru will not immediately experience the full ecstasy of Brahman. However, as he persists, he will begin to feel the sweet presence which Swami Prabhavananda calls 'the breath of the eternal'. He will then gradually transcend his inner conflicts and negative self-images to integrate his personality on a higher level of consciousness. Since his psychological confusion is merely the product of spiritual ignorance, it will automatically vanish as his Self-knowledge grows.

When the struggling aspirant who has made a little progress in spiritual life discovers from his own experience that egotism and sense-indulgence lower one's level of consciousness, making it impossible to feel the presence of God, he will begin to realize that the virtues which he had at one time associated with hypocrisy and joy-killing puritanism are the *sine qua non* of spiritual life. Then, in order to attain the purity of heart which enables one to see God, he will intensify his efforts to weed out his faults and replace them with the corresponding virtues.

The sincere aspirant's ability to appreciate genuine Christianity will keep pace with his growing spiritual awareness. Although he may be unable to accept any body of doctrine in its entirety, he will pay sincere homage to the perfect manifestation of divinity he sees in Jesus Christ. And when he discovers that a contemporary church virtually devoid of spiritual experience has left most Christians innocently unaware of their religion's deeper meaning, he will find himself unexpectedly sympathizing with those whom he formerly criticized for not living according to their Christian ideals.

As such a person grows spiritually, he will experience the joy of life in increasing abundance. Not only will he respect himself and be respected by others but he will inspire

<sup>20</sup> Swami Nikhilananda, p. 149.

<sup>21</sup> Bishop Nilolai Velimirovich, 'To Be and to Do', in *Vedanta and the West*, no. 205 (September-October, 1970), p. 9.

self-confidence and healthy self-esteem in his friends and associates. His ability to see the good in everyone will naturally involve him in warm and abiding human relationships. And his life's work will be rewarding in the unique sense that the peace, joy, and love with which it is performed will be a blessing to everyone.

## NOTES AND COMMENTS

### IN THIS NUMBER

Questions and answers are from : 'M' : *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, Translated by Swami Nikhilananda, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 1944. References : questions 1, pp. 301-2 ; 2, p. 451.

The words quoted in 'Onward For Ever !' are from : *The Complete Works*, Vol. II (1963), p. 124.

A handbook of spiritual life, with universal validity, is furnished to all in the *Gītā*. Its psychological and spiritual insights are profound and highly practical. The Editorial is an attempt at analysing a few briefly-worded generalizations which are scattered all through the holy book.

'Philosophy: Theory and Practice' is a wide-ranging and enlightening study of action and contemplation. The best synthesis of these, the author points out, is achieved by the *Bhagavad-gītā*. Prof. S. S. Raghava-char is Professor and Head of the Department of Philosophy, Manasa Gangotri, University of Mysore. The paper was originally presented at the International Seminar on 'World Philosophy' conducted by the Centre for Advanced Study of Philosophy, University of Madras, during December 1970.

Progress on the spiritual path is never even. The inner terrain, as in the Himalayas, is undulating. In the course of his ascent towards the sublime peaks of God-

consciousness, the aspirant may have to go down many a deep valley. But he ought never to lose hope and courage. In 'Hopeful Thinking', Swami Pavitrananda gives many a valuable hint to help the spiritual seeker from sinking into mental doldrums.

Swami Pavitrananda is a senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order and is the head of the Vedanta Society of New York. The article is the substance of his Sunday talk delivered at the Vedanta Society on May 2, 1971.

In 'Evolution and Vedānta', Swami Yogeshananda makes a revealing study of the theory of evolution and its mechanics *vis-à-vis* Vedāntic ideas of manifestation of the inherent powers of the soul. Vedānta takes note of a basic fact not noticed by many evolutionists that evolution presupposes an involution. 'If a man is an evolution of the mollusc,' says Swami Vivekananda, 'then the perfect man—the Buddhaman, the Christ-man—was involved in the mollusc.'

Swami Yogeshananda is a member of the Ramakrishna Order now working in London, and this article is the text of a Sunday talk delivered by him at the Centre.

Many maladies are afflicting Western society and there is no gainsaying the fact. If the Eastern society needs to learn some lessons from the West in tackling its problems of poverty and material backwardness, the Western society also needs to learn a few lessons from the East to re-



medy its crippling maladies stemming from spiritual malnutrition. 'Eastern Philosophy and Western Problems' by Dr. Leta Jane Lewis is a thoughtful study on this important theme spotlighting the appropriateness of Swami Vivekananda's message in tackling Western social problems.

Dr. Leta Jane Lewis is at present a professor of foreign languages at Fresno State College, California, and her article was originally delivered as a lecture in 1971 under the 'Fresno State College Lectureship'. It has been reproduced here with the kind permission of the Fresno authorities.

## REVIEWS AND NOTICES

**THE CONCEPT OF THE VYAVAHARIKA IN ADVAITA VEDANTA, BY DR. T. P. RAMACHANDRAN,** Published by Centre of Advanced Study in Philosophy, University of Madras, 1969, pp. 192, Price Rs. 12-50.

The Advaita Vedanta accepts the forms of being, the absolute, the empirical, and the momentary or seeming one. The way the Absolute being is, explained has led to all kinds of misunderstandings in India and abroad about the Advaitin's attitude to the world around him. The critics ignore that the Advaita does recognize the world as the place where the individual has to strive towards the realization of the Absolute. Dr. Ramachandran has made in this work a good analysis of all the implications of the concept of Vyavaharika in the fields of ethics, reason, religion and aesthetics. In the chapters on religion and aesthetics he has ignored primary sources like Madhusudana's *Bhagavad-bhakti-rasayana*, *Abhinavabharati*, and Sri Sankara's *Saundarya-Lahari*. These would have added to the value of the dissertation considerably.

DR. P. S. SASTRI

**DISCUSSION ON THE STYX, BY MATTHIAS R. HEILIG,** Published by Philosophical Library, 15 East 40th Street, New York, N.Y. 10016 1969, pp. 118, Price \$ 4.50.

The author makes the Stygians, the distinguished spirits of the ancient world who were fabled to dwell by the river Styx, discuss some of the most pressing and baffling problems of the present age and offer some solution to them. It is a clever and intelligent device to tackle these problems that an experienced theologian and social scientist can adopt.

In ten neatly written chapters he has discussed the problems connected with liberalism, pacifism, evil, ecclesiasticism, dormant humanity, and so on.

The book has a didactic note and a sombre philo-

sophical touch which impart a real significance to it. It is one of those books that make the reader think seriously about the present-day problems. Thus, there is a sense of participation and the reader is also a part of all the discussion that takes place.

We recommend the book as a valuable asset to every library.

DR. PARESH NATH MUKHERJEE  
BENGALI

**BHARATER SADHAK CHITRAVALI, EDITED BY SANKAR NATH ROY,** Published by H. Chowdhury, Prachi Publications, 3 & 4 Hare Street, Calcutta 1, 1376 B.S., pp. 50, Price Rs. 10.

There is a saying that 'a picture carries a thousand words', that is, that in explaining something, one picture can save a thousand words. This picture album, with biographical sketches of twenty saints of India, is of a new kind. It will help readers to visualize and to think of their favourite saints.

The assertion is made in the book that Nanga Baba was Totapuri, the guru of Sri Ramakrishna. We feel that if this assertion is to be made it should be substantiated. The evidence of vague hearsay is insufficient.

Of the twenty pictures, some are photographs and some paintings. In the case of Sri Ramakrishna, the publisher has reproduced the painting of Frank Dvorak. We think it better to reproduce a photo-portrait where it is available.

This type of book is generally bought for presentation. The block prints should therefore be as clear as possible. The reproduction of the portraits would have been much better if it had been done on bright heavy art paper.

Apart from this, the book is produced well, and we appreciate the endeavours of the writer. The book, which can be read in an hour, deserves wide circulation.

SWAMI CHETANANANDA

**BOOKS RECEIVED**

ISWARCHANDRA VIDYASAGAR, BY HIRANMAY BANERJEE, Published by Sahitya Akademi, Rabindra Bhavan, 35 Ferozeshah Road, New Delhi 1, price Rs. 2.50.

TRUTH AND NON-VIOLENCE—A UNESCO SYMPOSIUM ON GANDHI, Edited by T. K. Mahadevan, Published by Indian National Commission for Co-operation with Unesco, New Delhi 1, price Rs. 15/-

BIOGRAPHICAL VISTAS, BY C. P. RAMASWAMI AIYAR, Published by Asia Publishing House, Calicut Street, Ballard Estate, Bombay 1, price Rs. 15/-.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO PSYCHOLOGY, EDITED BY A. K. P. SINHA, H. K. MISRA, A. K. KANTH, K. S. RAO, Published by Asia Publishing House, Bombay 1, price Rs. 30/-.

BOVARYSM, BY JULES DE GAULTIER, TR. BY GERALD M. SPRING, Published by Philosophical Library, 15 East 40th Street, New York, N.Y. 10016, U.S.A., price \$ 8.75.

VINOBA: HIS LIFE AND WORK, BY SRIMAN NARAYAN, Published by Popular Prakashan, 35C, Tardeo Road, Bombay 34, W.B., price Rs. 36/-.

MISSION OF MAN, BY AARON HILLEL KATZ, Published by Philosophical Library, New York, N.Y. 10016, \$ 5.00.

**NEWS AND REPORTS****RAMAKRISHNA MISSION SEVASHRAMA,  
VRINDABAN****REPORT FOR 1970-71**

The activities of the Sevashrama during the year of review were as follows :

*Indoor Hospital:* The total number of cases admitted during the year was 2,910. Of these, 2,456 were cured and discharged, 146 were relieved and discharged, 126 were discharged otherwise, 90 died, and 92 remained under treatment at the end of the year. The total number of surgical operations performed during the year was 1,515.

*Nandababa Eye Department:* The Eye Department is a special feature of this Sevashrama. It was started in the year 1943 with the financial help of two devotees of Bombay. Since then it has been maintained partially by their help. Total number of cases treated during the year: Indoor 642, Outdoor 7,147. Number of operations performed: 1,083.

In order to make available the services of this eye department to the rural population, a fortnightly out-patient eye clinic was conducted at Kosi, a small town 25 miles from Vrindaban. Patients from the surrounding villages utilize the services of this clinic and on average 90 patients attend this clinic.

*Maneklal Chinai Cancer Department:* A ward consisting of 8 beds out of the existing ones was converted into a Cancer Ward during 1969. Total number of cases treated during the year: Indoor 62, Outdoor 68.

*Outdoor Dispensary:* The total number of cases treated during the year was 1,70,069 and that of the new cases was 31,147. The total number of operations performed including those of the Eye Department was 1,383. The average daily outdoor attendance was 458.

*Clinical Laboratory:* Arrangements exist for conducting all routine and some special examinations. Pathological investigations of 24,672 samples of blood, urine, stool, sputum etc. were carried out.

*X-Ray Department:* A total number of 2,660 X-Ray exposures were taken during the year.

*Physio-therapy Department:* The total number of cases treated under this head was 375.

*Homoeopathy Department:* A Homoeopathy Department is also conducted by the Sevashrama under an eminent Homoeopath. This system of treatment is found specially beneficial to children and persons suffering from obstinate chronic diseases. During the year under report there were 3,472 and 16,483 new and old cases respectively.

*Library and Reading Room:* The Sevashrama has got a patients' reading room and library with useful books and periodicals, besides a separate tiny medical library for the use of the medical officers.

*Recreation:* For the recreation of the patients, the wards of the hospital are fitted with loud speakers and interesting programmes from Radio Stations are fed into them. Audio-visual programmes on health, hygiene, etc., are also arranged for patients and others.

**Immediate Needs of Sevashrama :**

1. Donation to clear off the accumulated loans Rs. 97,153.66
2. Building Maintenance Fund Rs. 50,000.00
3. Endowments for maintenance of each bed Rs. 15,000.00
4. Goseva Fund Rs. 25,000.00
5. Road construction and Land Development Rs. 50,000.00.
6. Sanitary Installations Rs. 60,000.00
7. Covering the open Verandahs of the Hospital building Rs. 20,000.00