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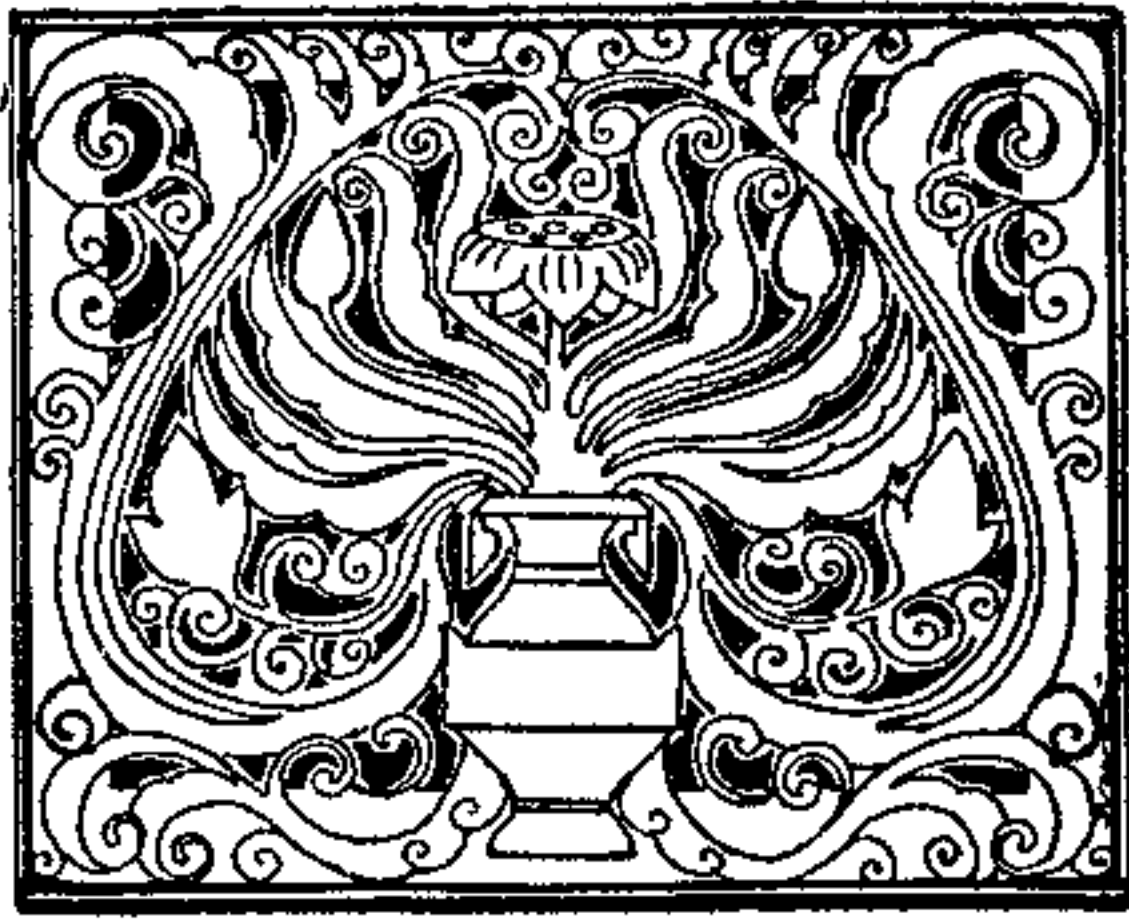
**Prabuddha**  
**Bharata**

OR

**AWAKENED INDIA**



**ADVAITA ASHRAMA, MAYAVATI  
HIMALAYAS**



# Prabuddha Bharata

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# Prabuddha Bharata

VOL. LXXVII

JUNE 1972

No. 6

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

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## SRI RAMAKRISHNA ANSWERS

Question (asked by a Sub-judge): 'Sir, does God show more grace to one than to another? If so, He can be accused of the fault of partiality.'

Sri Ramakrishna: 'What are you saying? Do you mean to say that the moon and a glow-worm are the same, though both give light? Iswar Vidyasagar asked me the same question. He said, "Is it a fact, sir, that God gives more power to one and less to another?" "God", I said, "exists in every being as the All-pervading Spirit. He is in the ant as well as in me. But there are different manifestations of His Power in different beings. If all are the same, then why have we come here to see you, attracted by your renown? Have you grown a pair of horns? Oh, no! It is not that. You have compassion; you have scholarship; there is a greater degree of these virtues in you than in others. That is the reason you are so well known." Don't you see that there are men who, single-handed, can defeat a hundred persons? Again, one man takes to his heels in fear of another; you see such a person, too. If there are not different manifestations of power in different beings, then why did people respect Keshab Sen so much?

'It is said in the *Gita* that if a man is respected and honoured by many, whether it be for his scholarship or his music or his oratory or anything else, then you may know for certain that he is endowed with a special divine power.'

Sub-judge: 'Sir, must we renounce the world?'

Sri Ramakrishna: 'No. Why should you? A man can realize God even in the world. But at the beginning he must spend a few days in solitude. He must practise spiritual discipline in a solitary place. He should take a room near his house, so that he may come home only for his meals. Keshab, Pratap, and others said to me, "Sir, we follow the ideal of King Janaka." "Mere words don't make a King Janaka", I replied. "How many austerities King Janaka first had to perform in solitude—standing on his

head,<sup>1</sup> and so on ! Do something first ; then you may become a King Janaka.” You see a man writing English fluently ; but could he do that at the very start ? Perhaps he was the son of poor parents ; he was cook in a family and earned his meals by his service. Perhaps he had to struggle hard to go on with his studies. It is after all these efforts that he can now write such fluent English.

‘I said to Keshab Sen further, “How can the worldly man be cured of his serious disease unless he goes into solitude ?” A worldly man is suffering from delirious fever, as it were. Suppose there are pickled tamarind and jars of water in the room of such a patient. Now, how can you expect him to get rid of the disease ? Just see, the very mention of pickled tamarind is making my mouth water ! (*All laugh.*) You can very well imagine what will happen if the tamarind is actually put in front of me. To a man, woman is the pickled tamarind, and his desire for enjoyment, the jars of water. There is neither end nor limit to this desire for worldly enjoyment. And the things are in the patient’s very room. Can you expect the patient to get rid of the delirious fever in this fashion ? He must be removed for a few days to another place where there are neither pickled tamarind nor water-jars. Then he will be cured. After that if he returns to his old room he will have nothing to fear. “Woman and gold” cannot do any harm to the man who lives in the world after attaining God. Only then can he lead a detached life in the world as King Janaka did. But he must be careful at the beginning. He must practise spiritual discipline in strict solitude. The peepal-tree, when young, is fenced around to protect it from cattle. But there is no need for the fence when the trunk grows thick and strong. Then no harm will be done to the tree even if an elephant is tied to it. “Woman and gold” will not be able to harm you in the least, if you go home and lead a householder’s life after increasing your spiritual strength and developing love for the Lotus Feet of God through the practice of spiritual discipline in solitude.

‘A man sets milk in a quiet place to curdle, and then he extracts butter from the curd. After once extracting the butter of Devotion and Knowledge from the milk of the mind, if you keep that transformed mind in the water of the world, it will float in the world unattached. But if the mind in its “unripe” state—that is to say, when it is just like liquid milk—is kept in the water of the world, then the milk and water will get mixed. In that case it will be impossible for the mind to float unattached in the world.

‘Live in the world but, in order to realize God, hold fast to His Lotus Feet with one hand and with the other do your duties. When you get a respite from your duties, cling to God’s Lotus Feet with both hands—live in solitude and meditate on Him and serve Him ceaselessly.’

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<sup>1</sup> One of the exercises sometimes practised by hathayogis ; also an expression to describe the austerities of yoga in general.



## ONWARD FOR EVER !

*This is a world of good and evil. Wherever there is good, evil follows, but beyond and behind all these manifestations, all these contradictions, the Vedanta finds out that Unity. It says, 'Give up what is evil and give up what is good.' What remains then? Behind good and evil stands something which is yours, the real you, beyond every evil, and beyond every good too, and it is that which is manifesting itself as good and bad. Know that first, and then, and then alone, you will be a true optimist, and not before; for then you will be able to control everything. Control these manifestations and you will be at liberty to manifest the real 'you'. First be master of yourself, stand up and be free, go beyond the pale of these laws, for these laws do not absolutely govern you, they are only part of your being. First find out that you are not the slave of nature, never were and never will be; that this nature, infinite as you may think it, is only finite, a drop in the ocean, and your Soul is the ocean; you are beyond the stars, the sun, and the moon. They are like mere bubbles compared with your infinite being. Know that, and you will control both good and evil. Then alone the whole vision will change and you will stand up and say, 'How beautiful is good and how wonderful is evil!'*

*Sri Kanchi*

## TO READ OR NOT TO READ —TO REACH GOD?

EDITORIAL

### I

UNESCO's general conference has proclaimed 1972 as the International Book Year. 'Books for All' has been recommended as the slogan of the year. 'Let us all work and act together', the UNESCO's Director-General has pleaded, 'to make books for all a reality for all.'<sup>1</sup> He has pointed out that, although the technical revolution in production and distribution of books has made available to buyers relatively inexpensive and good quality books, the developing countries are facing a 'veritable book famine'. Such a book scarcity may have a serious crippling effect on the educational programmes of developing countries which in turn will directly hamper their developmental programmes. So, all governments, writers, publishers, and people, specially of the developing countries, have a sacred duty in fighting the 'book famine' and in the dissemination of knowledge by producing and marketing books on educational, scientific, cultural and philosophical themes. India, with her massive book industry—India ranks fourth among book-producing countries—in English and the vernaculars, has participated in the Book Year by organizing the World Book Fair and observing the Book Week, by conducting an international seminar on 'Books for the Millions', the writers camp, and an extensive publicity campaign for fostering book-mindedness.

Undoubtedly, the invention of printing in about the fifteenth century and its gradual evolution climaxing in the wonderful present-day printing technology have immensely helped the spread of literacy and knowledge. But this has not been an unmixed blessing. The sprawling, thriving banyan of book-

<sup>1</sup> *The Hindustan Times*, New, Delhi, January 1, 1972.

industry has also borne 'noxious and poisonous' fruits. Just as uplifting masterpieces of various countries in science, art, philosophy, literature, and religion are made available to eager masses of readers, so also degrading and dehumanizing books are put into the hands of men, women and children by unscrupulous profiteers. Books on pornography, crime, and the seamy side of man are playing havoc with human morals. During this International Book Year, it will be most appropriate for the UNESCO and such other organizations, publishers and writers, not only to provide 'Books for the Millions', but also to educate their taste and to put some sort of a healthy restraint on the production and peddling of dirty and degrading books.

With the 'explosion of information' in almost every field of human thought, there has occurred an 'explosion of books'. Readers everywhere are naturally bewildered by the variegated and limitless fare offered by publishers. The Baconian counsel about selective 'tasting, swallowing, and chewing and digesting' of books is invaluable for all readers facing the book-explosion. A wise old Sanskrit verse gives a useful tip for discreet reading: 'Boundless verily is the mass of writings. Life, however, is all too brief. And there are many hindrances (for reading continually). Therefore one should gather the essential while leaving behind the chaff just as the swan takes milk from (a mixture of milk and) water.'

## II

Books have always been disproportionately appraised and praised. In this International Book Year the praise is sure to turn into adulation. In such an atmosphere of bibliolatry, the genuine spiritual aspirant may be faced with a few questions. Should he devote more and more time to the study of books? What kinds of books deserve his attention? How far is book-learning

helpful in shaping his inner life? Is scriptural knowledge a necessary precondition for the realization of God? Or, it isn't? And so on. If he is not cautious enough, the spiritual seeker may become lost in the trackless desert of book-learning.

*Svādhyāya* or study has been enjoined on the generality of spiritual seekers. That is mainly because of their inability to spend all their waking hours in divine contemplation. If an aspirant has an all-absorbing passion for God, and if he can think of Him uninterruptedly, then he need not read a single line from any book. For it means that his 'inner book' is opened. The object of all study is the opening of this inner book. This prescription of study, let us remember, is strictly confined to sacred books. So a seeker of God should conscientiously avoid all 'secular reading' such as fiction, novels, and suspense and horror stories. Not only is their reading time ill spent but, as they leave strong worldly and sensuous impressions on the mind, they are positively deleterious. It is indeed a rare handful who can maintain an unalloyed objectivity while reading impassionate novels or action-packed fictions. The great sage Nārada, therefore, gives this important advice: 'Stories or descriptions of women, wealth, or atheists should not be listened to.'<sup>2</sup> Here, let it be noted, listening implies the processes of seeing and reading.

Even when the seeker strictly confines his study to the scriptures, he is not entirely safe. There are still the following drawbacks and pitfalls on the way.

Firstly, the scriptural lore of any religion is immensely vast. In a religion like Hinduism, the corpus of sacred lore, in Sanskrit alone, can be said to be limitless. To a great extent this is also true of Buddhism, Christianity, Jainism, etc. Neither is it pos-

<sup>2</sup> स्त्री-घन-नास्तिक-चरित्रं न श्रवणीयम् । *Nārada-bhakti-sūtras*, IV. 63.



sible to read all that scriptural mass nor even a millionth part of it is necessary for building up one's inner life.

Secondly, there are bound to be apparent and even real contradictions among books and teachers. These are likely to upsettle the understanding of the truth-seeker. Instead of becoming calm and of a firm conviction, he might become disturbed and argumentative. But the real seeker is supposed to have finished his period of controversy. Great spiritual masters have therefore legitimately discredited fruitless reasoning and argumentation.

Thirdly, there is the still greater danger of mistaking a mere intellectual grasp of spiritual ideas to actual spirituality. In studying holy books, listening to religious discourses, and reading intellectual articles, we are sometimes deluded into thinking that we are being spiritually helped. For some it becomes a sort of intoxicating pseudo-spiritual stimulation. But on a close analysis of the effect of such reading and study, we shall find that at the utmost it is only 'our intellect that derives profit from such studies, and not our inner spirit'. True religion or spirituality has nothing to do with intellectualism. It is the result of self-conquest, purity, and devotion to God, none of which is obtainable through study of books. 'To conquer lust or control the mind by studying books', said Swami Brahmananda, the 'spiritual son' of Sri Ramakrishna, 'is as impossible as walking on air.' But those seekers who try to substitute book-learning and intellectual gymnastics for spirituality are attempting to 'walk on air'. Sri Ramakrishna was very severe on intellectuals and pundits who talked big on God, soul, realization, etc., but, not possessing even an iota of devotion, dispassion, and discrimination, were attached to worldly gain and enjoyment. He compared them to vultures which soar very high but scan the earth for rotten carrion.

### III

The Upaniṣads have been very uncompromising in drawing a clear line of demarcation between book-learning and self-knowledge. Even the Vedas themselves have been relegated to the position of inferior knowledge.<sup>3</sup> They say that self-realization cannot be got even by the study of the Vedas! Such a bold statement is indeed rare or non-existent in the rest of the scriptures of the world. Says the Upaniṣad:

'This Ātman cannot be attained through the study of the Vedas, or through the intellect, or through much hearing of sacred books.'<sup>4</sup>

The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* has a fine stanza which also contains a psychological truth. It says:

'The intelligent aspirant after Brahman, knowing about this (the Self) alone, should attain intuitive knowledge. (He) should not think of too many words, for it is particularly fatiguing to the organ of speech.'<sup>5</sup>

Śaṅkara, in his incisive comments on this verse, points out that 'this restriction on too many words implies that a few words dealing exclusively with the unity of the Self are permissible'. Here he quotes two short statements from the *Muṇḍaka-upaniṣad* one of which explicitly instructs the seekers to 'avoid all other talk' unrelated to the Ātman. The psychological insight is contained in the statement that too many words are fatiguing to the organ of speech. Even when one does inarticulate reading, the words are mentally repeated thus causing the fatigue for the organ of speech. Not to speak of the mental disturbance caused by conflicting opinions.

The truth that all study and scholarship are utterly useless in the realization of the Ātman is impressively brought out in the

<sup>3</sup> *Muṇḍaka-upaniṣad*, I. 1.4-5.

<sup>4</sup> *Kaṭha-upaniṣad*, II. 23.

<sup>5</sup> *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-upaniṣad*, IV. 4. 21.

story of Nārada and Sanatkumāra.<sup>6</sup> When Nārada approached the latter with a request to be taught, he was asked to tell what he already knew. Nārada reeled off a catalogue of subjects which would flatter, in their modern equivalents, any scholar of world-distinction. But Nārada, like all scholars, was very unhappy. He concluded his imposing list with this pathetic remark:

'Revered sir, I am, however, only a knower of verbal texts, not a knower of the Ātman. I have indeed heard from persons like your revered self that a knower of Ātman transcends grief. I am in such a state of grief. May your revered self take me across it.'

Vidyāranya, a fourteenth-century Vedāntic teacher, points out why Nārada, despite being a stupendous scholar in Vedas, epics, and various sciences, was grief-stricken. 'Before he studied the Vedas,' says Vidyāranya, 'he was miserable because of bodily and environmental troubles only. But later he became sorrow-laden on account of forgetting what he had learnt, fear of defeat by a superior rival scholar, and by the vanity of his scholarship.'<sup>7</sup>

A beautiful little anecdote in the *Kāvaseya-gītā* underscores the drawbacks of scholarship and indicates that the way to true knowledge lies beyond books. An ascetic by name Durvāsas went to pay his respects to the great god Śiva. He had carried a huge load of various books with him. On seeing him, the divine sage Nārada remarked that he was like an ass bearing a burden. Durvāsas resented the remark and threw all his books into the sea. The Lord then taught him and set him on the path of self-knowledge.<sup>8</sup>

The moral is obvious. Unless one dissociates totally from book-knowledge—or as

Swami Vivekananda said, 'To be religious, you have first to throw books overboard'—, God's grace and self-knowledge will not be attained.

Swami Vivekananda, who had seen through the utter hollowness of book-learning and realized the blissful Self through the grace of his Master, once exclaimed: 'There are books by the million. Oh, for an ounce of practice!'<sup>9</sup> Sri Ramakrishna, his Master, had nothing to do with books and scholarship. But he was the very personification of scriptural teachings. He once remarked: 'What will a man gain by merely reasoning about the words of the scriptures? Ah, the fools! They reason themselves to death over information about the path. They never take the plunge. What a pity!'<sup>10</sup>

#### IV

'Information about the Path!' That is what the Vedas and bibles, scriptures and hagiographies, texts and sacred books provide. They are the records of struggles and experiences of god-men, their agonies and ecstasies. They are like the maps and charts about an unseen continent, but never the continent itself. Simply because a man has thoroughly studied the map of a country he cannot claim that he has visited it. What an ocean of difference between a country's map and the actual country! The books may describe to us the nature of God and the blissful experiences of god-men. But realizing God ourselves and tasting the joy of that ineffable divine communion are entirely different. 'After the realization of God', exclaimed Sri Ramakrishna once, 'how far below lie the Vedas, the Vedanta, the Purana, the Tantra!' 'Books, scriptures, and science', he said in

<sup>6</sup> *Chāndogya-upaniṣad*, VII. 1.

<sup>7</sup> *Pañcadaśī*, XI. 18-9.

<sup>8</sup> Vidyāranya: *Jīvanmukti-viveka*, 'Vāsanākṣaya-prakarāṇa'.

<sup>9</sup> *Complete Works* (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Almora, Himalayas), Vol. VIII (1959), p. 349.

<sup>10</sup> 'M': *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Tr. by Swami Nikhilananda, Pub. by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras-4, 1947), p. 504.



another context, 'appear as mere dirt and straw after the realization of God.'<sup>11</sup>

Without losing sight of this fundamental fact, we can accept all the succour the sacred books can offer. If we have the proper attitude, the books can give us some substantial help. Leaving aside the Upaniṣads and the bibles of all religions, whose helpfulness is indeed great, there are a good number of holy books without which humanity would have been poorer. Take, for instance, a book like the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*. The recorder of this luminous book has placed the whole spiritually-aspiring humanity under a deep debt of gratitude. By its regular study, with the right frame of mind, an aspirant can get abundant inspiration, insight, hope, and peace. Seekers of God all over the world do find such books in all religions.

Swami Brahmananda once advised a disciple thus :

'Study a chapter of the *Gītā* every day. If the mind is crowded by unnecessary thoughts and worries, it can be cleaned out by reading the *Gītā*. I know this from my own experience.'<sup>12</sup>

But how exactly should one study the *Gītā* or for the matter of that any sacred book to derive the benefit indicated by the great Swami? The answer is contained in the following story narrated by Sri Ramakrishna :

'Chaitanyadeva set out on a pilgrimage to Southern India. One day he saw a man reading the *Gītā*. Another man, seated at a distance, was listening and weeping. His eyes were swimming in tears. Chaitanyadeva asked him, 'Do you understand all this?' The man said, 'No, revered sir, I don't understand a word of the text.' 'Then why are you crying?' asked Chaitanya. The devotee said: 'I see Arjuna's chariot before me.

I see Lord Krishna and Arjuna seated in front of it, talking. I see this and weep.'<sup>13</sup> That is the right way to read a sacred book. Just as the simple-minded devotee, though he did not understand a word of the *Gītā*, saw and heard Kṛṣṇa teaching Arjuna. Let the divine incarnation or the saint speak to us directly from the pages of the scripture. That will purify the mind and make us humble. Thereby the sacred book will provide us 'holy company' too. If we can succeed in cultivating this attitude, then the Vedic sages will speak to us in the Upaniṣadic *mantras*, Jesus from the pages of the Holy Gospels, Mohammed through the 'Suras' of Al Koran, Kṛṣṇa in the verses of the *Gītā*, Sri Ramakrishna from his *Gospel*, and Vivekananda from his *Complete Works*. Then only the injunction to practise *svādhyāya* or sacred study by our ancient sages becomes meaningful.

Next, the spiritual aspirant should totally refrain from pursuing the controversial points that might be found in a holy book. What he needs is the 'spirit' and not the 'letter' of the scripture. For the 'letter killeth', as the Bible says. Let him leave the controversy to the scholars who revel in it. Sri Ramakrishna used to say that you need a sword and a shield to fight with others but to kill yourself a needle will suffice. The essence of the scripture, its spirit, is enough for attaining the goal, namely God-realization. The aspirants should learn and master the art of gathering the essence from the holy book or scripture they study. A formula for such a mastery is provided in the concluding stanza of the *Śvetāśvataropaniṣad* : 'These truths, when taught, shine forth only in that high-souled one who has supreme devotion to God, and an equally intense devotion to the spiritual teacher.'

Finally comes the time for action. We

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 505, 615.

<sup>12</sup> Swami Prabhavananda : *Eternal Companion* (Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras 4, 1945), p. 186.

<sup>13</sup> *op. cit.*, p. 31.

know the goal, we know the path; we know what the saints and sages themselves did and what they want us to do. If we do not struggle to convert the intellectual apprehensions, gained through scriptural study, into spiritual realization, we cease to be honest seekers. Then, as Swami Vivekananda once remarked, there will be no difference between us and rank atheists! Sri Ramakrishna has explained the role of scriptural knowledge and man's duty after obtaining that knowledge with the aid of a homely illustration :

'A man received a letter from home informing him that certain presents were to be sent to his relatives. The names of the articles were given in the letter. As he was about to go shopping for them, he found that the letter was missing. He began anxiously to search for it, several others joining in the search. For a long time they continued to search. When at last the letter was discovered, his joy knew no bounds. With great eagerness he opened the letter and read it. It said that he was to buy five seers of sweets, a piece of cloth, and a few other things. Then he did not need the letter any more, for it had served its purpose. Putting it aside, he went out to buy the things. . . . 'In the scriptures you will find the way to realize God. But after getting all the information about the path, you must begin to work. Only then can you attain your goal.'<sup>14</sup>

## V

Man makes books and its reverse is seen nowhere. Knowledge is inherent in man. Books are outlying sparks from that fire of knowledge. Even when a man says that he gets light from a book, it is only his own light reflected back to himself. The

book acts as a mere reflecting surface. So let us not be thoughtless to make a fetish and a false god of books.

Without ever forgetting this all-important fact, let us produce books by the billions. Besides making all efforts for developing man's intellect through producing more books, let us also strive to develop the human heart and intuition. Otherwise we will continue to have leaders with 'first-rate brains' and 'third-rate hearts' who will cold-bloodedly push the world to the brink of a nuclear holocaust.

For spiritual seekers holy books and scriptures are only like the maps, guide-books, and fingerposts but never the destination they aspire to reach. While availing themselves of the aids, they should stay clear of all bondages. The following sayings of our great teachers can always serve as a healthy corrective to any tendency for apotheosizing books:

'Why in vain need anyone go on chewing the rags of various scriptural statements? Those who know the tenets should arduously search for the inner light.'

Quoted in *Jivanmukti-viveka*

'You may read scriptures by the thousands and recite thousands of texts; but unless you plunge into God with yearning of heart, you will not comprehend Him. By mere scholarship you may fool man, but not God.'

—*Sri Ramakrishna*

'Books suggest the inner light and the method of bringing that out, but we can only understand them when we have earned the knowledge ourselves. When the inner light has flashed for you, let the books go, and look only within. You have in you all and a thousand times more than is in all the books.'

—*Swami Vivekananda*

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 705-6.



## LETTERS OF A SAINT

### THE LORD MY REFUGE

Almora  
7.7.1915

Dear Bi—Babu,

... You have inquired about the attainment of peace. Well, you know that peace belongs to him alone 'who lives devoid of longing, abandoning all desires, without sense of "I" and "mine".'<sup>1</sup> and that 'as into the ocean—brimful and still—flow the waters, even so the *Muni* into whom all desires enter, he, and not the desirer of desires, attains to peace.'<sup>2</sup>

You may not have perfect peace, but surely you have relative peace. The more you are able to get rid of the sense of 'I' and 'mine' by invoking the Lord in your heart by His grace, the greater will be your peace—this cannot but happen. It is He who is doing everything, we are mere instruments in His hand: the better our hold on this attitude by His grace, the quicker our sense of 'I' and 'mine' will disappear, and our hearts be soothed with the awakening of restfulness and peace.

*Pañcadaśī* is a treatise which mainly teaches the path of *jñāna* (knowledge), and so in that book spiritual disciplines appropriate for the realization of the unqualified Brahman have been enjoined.

But the Lord says in the *Gītā*:

मय्येव मन आधत्स्व मयि बुद्धि निवेशय ।  
निवसिष्यसि मय्येव अत ऊर्ध्वं न संशयः ॥

Fix your mind on Me alone, place your intellect in Me; you shall no doubt live in Me hereafter.<sup>3</sup>

How delectable! How pleasing! How sweet!!

And you have asked if the householder can attain *samādhi*? If this does not happen how will these words of the Lord be true?—

अपि चेत् सुदुराचारो भजते मामनन्यभाक् ।  
साधुरेव स मन्तव्यः सम्यग्व्यवसितो हि सः ॥  
मां हि पार्थ व्यपाश्रित्य येऽपि स्युः पापयोनयः ।  
स्त्रियो वैश्यास्तथा शूद्रास्तेऽपि यान्ति परां गतिम् ॥

If even a very wicked person worships Me, with devotion to none

<sup>1</sup> *Bhagavad-gītā* II. 71

विहाय कामान्यः सर्वान्पुमांश्चरति निःस्पृहः ।  
निर्ममो निरहंकारः स शान्तिमधिगच्छति ॥

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, II. 70.

आपूर्यमाणमचलप्रतिष्ठं समुद्रमापः प्रविशन्ति यद्वत् ।  
तद्वत्कामा यं प्रविशन्ति सर्वे स शान्तिमाप्नोति न कामकामी ॥

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, XII. 8.

else, he should be regarded as good, for he has rightly resolved:<sup>4</sup>  
 'For, taking refuge in Me, they also, O son of Prithā, who might  
 be of inferior birth—women, vaishyas, as well as shudras—even  
 they attain to the supreme Goal.'<sup>5</sup>

This attainment of the supreme goal—can this happen without *samādhi*?  
 And that one can attain *samādhi* even without practising the various steps of  
 yoga (*yogāṅga*) is revealed by this aphorism in the *Yoga-sūtra* of Patañjali:

‘समाधिरीश्वरप्रणिधानात्’

‘By sacrificing all to Iswara *samādhi* comes’.<sup>6</sup> Also in the aphorism:

‘ईश्वर प्रणिधानाद्वा’

‘Or by devotion to Iswara’,<sup>7</sup> this is clearly borne out.

Vyasadeva, the commentator, writes in his commentary on this aphorism:

‘प्रणिधानाद् भक्तिविशेषादावर्जित ईश्वरस्तमनुगृह्णात्यभिध्यानमात्रेण । तदभिध्यानादपि योगिन  
 आसन्नतमः समाधिलाभः फलं च भवति इति ।’

‘Being pleased by the devotee’s practice of intense devotion God  
 by a mere wish showers His grace on him. By His wish too the  
*yogi* very soon attains *samādhi* and the fruit thereof.’

So all these (scriptural passages) definitely prove that *samādhi* can be  
 attained even without practising the various steps of Yoga as laid down in the  
 classical texts.

In this regard we may also remember what is said in the tenth ‘skandha’  
 (section) of the *Bhāgavata* about the attainment of devotion to the Lord by a  
*Gopi* in giving up the body made of *gunas*:

कामं क्रोधं भयं स्नेहमैक्यं सोहृदमेव च ।  
 नित्यं हरौ विदधतो यान्ति तन्मयतां हि ते ॥

‘Indeed, they who constantly cherish lust, wrath, fear, affection,  
 kinship or devotion to Śrī Hari (God) attain oneness with Him.’<sup>8</sup>

Is there any distinction between attaining oneness with God and *samādhi*?

The point is this—there is difference in the attitude and the means; other-  
 wise, as to the attainment of the supreme objective and its fruits, it is all  
 the same.

[The Lord says in the *Gītā*:]

यत्सांख्यैः प्राप्यते स्थानं तद्योगैरपि गम्यते ।  
 एकं सांख्यं च योगं च यः पश्यति स पश्यति ॥

‘The plane which is reached by the *jñānīs* is also reached by the  
*Karma-yogīs*. He alone sees who sees knowledge and performance  
 of action as one.’<sup>9</sup>

(Contd. on page 264)

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, IX. 30.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, IX. 32.

<sup>6</sup> *Sādhana-pāda*, 45.

<sup>7</sup> *Samādhi-pāda*, 23.

<sup>8</sup> *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, X. 29.15.

<sup>9</sup> *Bhagavad-Gītā*, V. 5.





## A HYMN TO GANGA

*Gaṅgā-stotram* or 'A Hymn to Gaṅgā' is a Sanskrit poem of captivating cadence attributed to Ācārya Śaṅkara, the philosopher-saint of the eighth century A.D. The chief of the holy rivers of India, Gaṅgā has a fame as ancient as the *R̥g-Veda*. The Hindu epics and mythology have glorified Gaṅgā to such an exalted position that all traditionally-minded Indians believe a bath in the river or a sip or even a touch of its water greatly purifying. Even today a sealed vessel of Gaṅgā-water is kept in almost every Hindu household and accorded worship. Some of the holiest places of Hindu pilgrimage are located on the banks of this river.

The legends about Gaṅgā depict the river as a goddess. She is closely linked with the Hindu Trinity—Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva—and thus derives all her holiness. In her absolving mission, she flows in heaven, earth, and the nether regions. Her descent from heaven, her original home, is a thrilling story and it immortalizes Bhagīratha, a king and ancestor of Śrī Rāma. Many allusions to the Gaṅgā-legends occur in this hymn of Śaṅkara.

All the great Indian saints and teachers held the river Gaṅgā in high veneration. 'I am Gaṅgā among rivers,' declared Śrī Kṛṣṇa in olden days. If Śaṅkara in medieval times praised her as 'flowing Deity! Veritable Goddess!', Sri Ramakrishna in recent times declared that 'Gaṅgā is liquid Brahman'. It is not known to many that Swami Vivekananda took with him some *Gaṅgā-jal* (water of the Gaṅgā) when he went to the West as a missionary of Vedānta. He wrote in his famous *Memoirs of European Travel* that whenever he drank a little of the water, his mind 'at once became calm and still' even amidst that 'bustle of civilization, that hurry of frenzied footsteps of millions of men and women'. One great Indian rightly declared that the essence of Hinduism is contained in the three *G's*—*Gītā*, *Gaṅgā*, and *Gāyatrī*.

We are glad to offer to our readers a metrical rendering of the *Gaṅgā-stotram* by Mr. T. C. H. Raper, London. He wrote in his forwarding letter, 'Here and there I have found it necessary to add, subtract or change a word or phrase for the sake of the rhyme or metre.' While the translation is not claimed by him to be literally faithful to the original—in fact, no good

translation, prose or metrical, can hazard such a fidelity claim—it is, we are sure, a very good attempt in giving an impression of the lilting Pajjhaṭṭikā-metre in which the hymn was composed. The English rendering, Mr. Raper assures, 'nowhere departs significantly from the sense or spirit of the original'. A few footnotes have been given by us to aid the non-Hindu readers.—*Ed.*

## गङ्गास्तोत्रम् ।

श्रीमत् शंकराचार्यं विरचितम् ।

देवि सुरेश्वरि भगवति गङ्गे  
त्रिभुवनतारिणि तरलतरङ्गे ।  
शङ्करमौलिविहारिचि विमले  
मम मतिरास्तां तव पदकमले ॥१॥

भागीरथि सुखदायिनि मातस्तवजलमहिमा  
निगमे ख्यातः ।  
नाहं जाने तव महिमानं त्राहि  
कृपामयि मामज्ञानम् ॥२॥

हरिपादपद्मतरङ्गिणि गङ्गे  
हिमविधुमुक्ताधवलतरङ्गे ।  
दूरीकुरु मम दुष्कृतिभारं कुरु  
कृपया भवसागरपारम् ॥३॥

तव जलममलं येन निपीतं परमपदं खलु  
तेन गृहीतम् ॥  
मातर्गङ्गे त्वयि यो भक्तः किल तं द्रष्टुं  
न यमः शक्तः ॥४॥

1. Bhagīratha, a king of the solar dynasty, did unparalleled penance to bring down Gaṅgā from heaven for the redemption of his great-grand-fathers who were reduced to ashes by the anger of sage Kapila in the nether world. Bhagīratha succeeded where others had failed, and so Gaṅgā is named 'Bhāgīrathi' or daughter of Bhagīratha.

2. When Viṣṇu incarnated as Vāmana (the Dwarf)

## A HYMN TO GANGA

BY ACHARYA SHANKARA

1. Holy Mother Gaṅgā, Queen of the Immortals!  
Saviour art Thou of heaven, earth and hell.  
Pure Thy trembling waves, in Śiva's locks delighting:  
At Thy lotus feet let my mind forever dwell!
2. Happiness Thou givest, O Bhagīratha's<sup>1</sup> daughter!  
Mighty is the power of Thy waters deep.  
Lauded in the scriptures—yet I cannot grasp it!  
Thou who art all mercy, me in safety keep!
3. Like the moon in winter are Thy dazzling waters  
That from Viṣṇu's foot<sup>2</sup> one time were made to pour.  
Sins on me weigh heavy—Mother, pray remove them!  
Bring me, free from guilt, to life's ocean's further shore!
4. Pure Thy sacred torrent! All that do imbibe it  
Thou to state of Highest Ecstasy dost raise!  
He that is Thy servant, holy Mother Gaṅgā—  
Hidden by Thy power is he from Death's dread gaze!

to subdue king Bali, he covered the entire heaven with His one foot. When His foot extended to Brahmāloka (the world of Brahmā), Brahmā worshipped it by pouring water which later flowed as the holy river Gaṅgā.



पतितोद्धारिणि जाह्नवि गङ्गे  
 खण्डितगिरिवरमण्डितभङ्गे ।  
 भीष्मजननि खलु मुनिवरकन्ये  
 पतितनिवारिणि त्रिभुवनधन्ये ॥५॥

कल्पलतामिव फलदां लोके प्रणमति  
 यस्त्वां न पतति शोके ।  
 पारावारविहारिणि गङ्गे  
 सुरवनिताकृततरलापाङ्गे ॥६॥

तव कृपया चेत् स्रोतःस्नातः  
 पुनरपि जठरे सोऽपि न जातः ।  
 नरकनिवारिणि जाह्नवि गङ्गे  
 कलुषविनाशिनि महिमोत्तुङ्गे ॥७॥

परिलसदङ्गे पुण्यतरङ्गे  
 जय जय जाह्नवि करुणापाङ्गे ।  
 इन्द्रमुकुटमणिराजितचरणे  
 सुखदे शुभदे सेवकशरणे ॥८॥

रोगं शोकं तापं पापं हर मे  
 भगवति कुमतिकलापम् ।  
 त्रिभुवनसारे वसुधाहारे त्वमसि  
 गतिर्मम खलु संसारे ॥९॥

<sup>3</sup> Gaṅgā, while following Bhagīratha on earth, entered the hermitage of the sagely king Jahnu and inundated his sacrificial ground. Jahnu became angry and drank the whole river up! When Bhagīratha propitiated him, he let out the river through his ears. So Gaṅgā is considered as Jahnu's daughter and is named 'Jāhnavī'.

<sup>4</sup> He was the youngest of the eight sons of Śantanu by Gaṅgā. He was the grandfather through

5. Gaṅgā, Thy fair waves Himālaya's rocks have riven—  
 Thou whose waters Jahnu<sup>3</sup> drank and then let flow!  
 Bhīṣma's<sup>4</sup> parent Thou, protector of the fallen!  
 Through heaven, earth and hell Thy wealth Thou dost bestow.

6. Like the mythical creeper every wish Thou grantest!  
 He that doth Thee worship sorrow need not bear.  
 With a sidelong glance, like love-lorn maid Thou hastest  
 To the ocean broad, O Thou of streams most fair!

7. He within the womb is ne'er again begotten,  
 Mother, who doth in Thy sacred waters lave!  
 Thou by mighty power to loftiness art risen!  
 Sin Thou dost destroy, and from hell's torment save.

8. Limpid are Thy waves, compassionate Thy glances  
 On whose feet the jewels from Indra's diadem shine!  
 Refuge of Thy servants, giver of all bounty,  
 Thou who art eternal—victory be Thine!

9. Sickness, sadness, torment, badness, Blessed One, dispel!—and the thoughts that stain my mind,  
 Necklace of the earth, of all three worlds the essence,  
 Wandering in Saṁsāra<sup>5</sup>, in Thee I refuge find.

his half-brother, of the Kauravas and Pāṇḍavas, the heroes of the *Mahābhārata*. He was remarkable for his continence, wisdom, firmness of resolve, and unflinching devotion to God.

<sup>5</sup> Relative existence characterized by bondage, misery, birth, and death.

अलकानन्दे परमानन्दे कुरु मयि  
करुणां कातरवन्द्ये ।  
तव तटनिकटे यस्य हि वासः  
खलु वैकुण्ठे तस्य निवासः ॥१०॥

वरमिह नीरे कमठो मीनः  
किं वा तीरे सरटः क्षीणः ।  
अथवा श्वपचो गव्युतिदीनः न च  
तव दूरे नृपति कुलीनः ॥११॥

भो भुवनेश्वरि पुण्ये धन्ये देवि  
द्रवमयि मुनिवरकन्ये ।  
गङ्गास्तवमिदममलं नित्यं पठति नरो  
यः स जयति सत्यम् ॥१२॥

येषां हृदये गङ्गाभक्तिस्तेषां  
भवति सदा सुखमुक्तिः ।  
मधुर मनोहरपञ्चटिकाभिः  
परमानन्दाकरललिताभिः ॥१३॥

गङ्गास्तोत्रमिदं भवसारं  
वाञ्छितफलदं विगलितभारम् ।  
शङ्करसेवकशङ्कररचितं पठतु च  
विषयी तद्गतचित्तम् ॥१४॥

10. Alakā's<sup>6</sup> delight, of Bliss the Consum-  
mation,  
Gracious be, who by the faint-  
hearted should be praised!  
Whosoever near Thy banks doth make  
his dwelling,  
He, they say, to Viṣṇu's paradise is  
raised!

11. Better 't were a fish or tortoise in Thy  
waters,  
Or a feeble lizard to be upon Thy  
bank,  
Or a wretched outcast, than to be far  
distant—  
Even though a prince of highest  
birth and rank!

12. Mistress of the World, who givest  
wealth and blessing!  
Deity that flows! Wise Jahnu's  
progeny!  
He who daily reads aloud this hymn  
to Gaṅgā,  
He without a doubt victorious  
will be!

13. Who this hymn recite, in metre so  
delightful  
Which from highest joy its sweet-  
ness doth obtain,  
If within their hearts devotion is to  
Gaṅgā,  
Bliss and liberation they shall  
surely gain.

14. Fortunate the man who everyday shall  
read it,  
That on everyone his longed-for  
fruit bestows!  
Śaṅkara its author, Śaṅkara his Master ;  
Now this Gaṅgā-stotra draweth to  
a close.

<sup>6</sup> Name of the capital of Kubera, the god of riches  
and treasure.



# SWAMI ADBHUTANANDA

BRAHMACHARI BHUMACHAITANYA

Nearly every great religion urges us to become childlike in order to advance spiritually. On the surface this appears contradictory, doesn't it?—to ask man to retreat to a former state rather than advance to a more mature one. But if we closely observe a child, we shall readily see why the man of God resembles him. For how openly and easily the child loves! There is no calculation in that love. It is as natural as breathing, as immediate and spontaneous as the movement of a flower bending to catch the warmth of the sun. And how total is the child's embrace of life! Trees and stones speak to him, the night sky becomes a canopy of diamonds, the very air breathes a vibrant gladness.

For, above all, the child is filled with wonder. He lives in a state of unashamed delight with the world, a condition which only the encroachment of adulthood dampens. And it is this openness toward life—and toward us—which draws our hearts to him.

There are a small number of men who, through the blessings of God and their own determination to remain unaffected and simple, retain during their lives these characteristics of the child. They have his charming impetuosity, his candour, playfulness—and his sense of wonder.

One such man is the subject of this book.<sup>1</sup>

The Sanskrit word *adbhuta* is translated literally 'full of wonder'. Perhaps, as our story unfolds, we shall come to understand why Swami Vivekananda named his brother-disciple 'Adbhutananda', and why, in our

own lives, we might have just reason to emulate such an attitude.

Swami Adbhutananda was the first monastic disciple to come to Sri Ramakrishna. Very little is known of his life prior to this, for the Swami was reluctant to speak of those days. Once pressed, he said, 'Must you busy yourself with these trifles and forget God?' It is known, however, that his family name was Rakhturam, and that he was born of humble parents in a small village in the state of Bihar, immediately northwest of Calcutta. But when he was five years old both his parents died and his upbringing was transferred to an uncle, who soon took the boy with him to Calcutta.

It was necessary for Rakhturam to find work, and after some searching he found employment in the home of Ram Chandra Datta, one of Sri Ramakrishna's devotees. The wheels of destiny that were to bring guru and disciple together were beginning to turn.

Ram Datta shortened the boy's name to Lahtu, which in turn became further abbreviated to Latu or Lato—and sometimes Nato or Noto—by the sweet tongue of Sri Ramakrishna.

Latu was a hard-working and loyal servant, and already his characteristic frankness and direct speech were coming to the notice of others. Once a friend of Ram Chandra jokingly hinted that the boy could easily pocket some of the marketing money with a little clever book-keeping. At once Latu bristled and hotly replied: 'Understand this, sir, I may be a servant but not a thief!'

There was much talk of God in the house of Ram Chandra, and the religious atmosphere of the home was to have a great influence on the young boy. One day he over-

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<sup>1</sup> *Swami Adbhutananda: Teachings and Reminiscences* to be published this year by Vedanta Press, Hollywood. The present article is the 'Biographical Introduction' to the book.—Ed.

heard his employer say to someone: 'One who is sincere and earnest about God is sure to realize Him. Weep for Him and pray to Him in solitude; then and only then will He reveal Himself to you.' These words so impressed Latu that he remembered them throughout his life and would repeat them many times to others. Often he could be seen lying in a corner, covered with a blanket and silently weeping. Many of the ladies in the house, thinking that he must be sorrowing for his uncle or friends in the village, would try to console him. They were unaware that the cause of Latu's tears had a far deeper meaning.

During his stay at Ram Chandra's, Latu heard a great deal about Sri Ramakrishna—his saintliness and wisdom. At each reference to the holy man of Dakshineswar, Latu's heart quickened, and his yearning to see Ramakrishna became intense.

At last an opportunity came for him to go to Dakshineswar. When he first entered the presence of the Master his heart was flooded with joy. He knew that at last he had found a real teacher, one who could slake his thirst for spiritual enlightenment. Ramakrishna, in turn, was warmly drawn to Latu and immediately recognized him as one of his 'inner circle' of devotees.

Shortly after this meeting, Ramakrishna returned to his native village of Kamarpukur for a visit of several months. During this time, Latu felt a great void in his heart. Utterly disconsolate, he would aimlessly wander about the temple at Dakshineswar. Others noticed his morose state, but they took it to be a result of some punishment or reprimand. Many years later, Latu Maharaj remarked: 'You cannot imagine how I suffered at that time. I would go to Sri Ramakrishna's room, wander in the garden, but everything seemed tasteless. I would weep to unburden my heart. Only Ram Babu [Ram Chandra] could partly

understand my feelings. He gave me a photo of the Master.'

When Sri Ramakrishna returned from Kamarpukur, he decided to engage a servant to look after his needs. He asked Ram Chandra if Latu could be spared, and his devotee at once agreed. Thus the boy received his heart's most treasured wish. Now his primary concern—which would remain with him all his life—was to serve and obey Sri Ramakrishna, his father, teacher, and Lord. A mere remark, a casual wish of Ramakrishna became law to Latu. Once the Master mildly reproved him for sleeping during the evening. 'If you sleep at such a time, when will you meditate?' he said. That was enough for Latu. He gave up sleeping at night altogether. For the remainder of his life, Swami Adbhutananda followed this extreme discipline. He would pass the night in meditation and *japa* (repetition of God's name etc.), taking only a short nap in the daytime.

From *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* we encounter another incident illustrating Latu Maharaj's deep yearning for God. M, the author of the *Gospel*, recorded this incident that occurred early one morning while he was walking in the temple compound at Dakshineswar:

'Deep silence, broken only by the murmuring sound of the Ganga, reigned in the temple garden at Dakshineswar. M walked toward the Panchavati. Then, from inside the thick grove of trees, he heard the heart-rending cry of a human voice. "O where art thou, Brother Madhusudan?" Silently, M listened.'

The voice, of course, belonged to Latu Maharaj.

There are numerous stories of Latu Maharaj's power of deep meditation. One day he was meditating on the bank of the Ganges. The flood tide began to rise and surround his motionless form. The news reached Ramakrishna, who rushed to bring



him back to consciousness by loudly calling his name.

On another occasion, a devotee noticed Latu Maharaj absorbed in meditation alongside the Ganges during the early hours of the evening. At four o'clock the following morning, the devotee left to mail a letter and passed by the same spot. He found the Swami still absorbed, as motionless as before.

He also had a great love of *kīrtan* or devotional singing. Even while still a house-boy at Ram Chandra's, Latu would drop everything when he learned a *kīrtan* was being held. On many occasions he would go into ecstasy while singing songs to the Lord.

Latu Maharaj lived on a plane where physical needs rarely intruded. Gross desires caused him little trouble. (In fact, so concerned was Latu Maharaj about anything which might threaten his spiritual life that on one occasion he prayed to Lord Jagannātha for two things: that he would be provided a convenient place to meditate on the Lord, and that he would be able to digest anything—for, as he told a devotee, 'stomach trouble is a great hindrance to spiritual practice'.)

Often only a small quantity of some local vegetable soaked in water would provide a meal. He derived his main strength through dependence on his guru and master, Sri Ramakrishna. He had complete faith that Ramakrishna would supply him with everything he needed. Once he said to someone who sought his help: 'Your dependence on God is feeble. If you do not get results in a day or two, you desert Him and follow your own will. Real self-surrender means a refusal to waver in your faith, despite even the greatest of losses.'

Although Latu Maharaj possessed no formal knowledge of the scriptures, his spiritual realizations had awakened him to their essential truths. His teachings, therefore, are both direct and boldly simple. Once a

devotee asked him: 'How can an aspirant grasp Brahman, who is infinite?'

Latu Maharaj answered without a moment's hesitation: 'You have heard music and seen how the strings of a *sitar* bring it out so beautifully, haven't you? In the same way, the life of a devotee expresses the Divine.'

On another occasion, a person said to him: 'How is it possible that I am that Self, I being finite and the Self being infinite?'

'What difficulty is there in that?' said Latu Maharaj. 'Haven't you seen jasmine flowers? The petals are very small; yet when the dewdrops fall on these tiny petals they reflect the infinite sky. In the same way, through the grace of God this limited self can reflect the Infinite.'

Swami Adbhutananda could be also disarmingly frank, sometimes to the point of rudeness. For he found it impossible to excuse hypocrisy—even that common sort of duplicity so often practised in society. Once, the Swami was chided by a number of people for avoiding the Holy Mother while she was visiting in Calcutta. When he overheard their remarks, he told someone: 'These rogues will not practise spiritual disciplines themselves or do anything to understand what Mother really is. Still they go on saying, "Holy Mother, Holy Mother", and make a display of their words. These fools make a showpiece of Mother.'

Thus his own deep understanding of Ramakrishna's wife granted him that power to discriminate between artificial respect and genuine, heartfelt devotion. The latter, he knew, was mostly inexpressible. His ineffable love for her and the profound depth of his feelings are revealed in the following incident:

On one occasion, Mother was preparing to leave Calcutta for her home village of Jayrambati (nearly 69 miles distant from Calcutta). The devotees arrived to salute her and see her off. But Latu Maharaj



remained in his room, pacing nervously back and forth, muttering to himself: 'Who is mother or father to a *sannyāsin* [monk]. All is *māyā* [illusion].' Mother heard this as she passed by his room, and said through the doorway: 'Latu dear, if you wish you needn't heed me.' When the Swami saw her, he immediately fell at her feet weeping. At this Holy Mother also found it impossible to restrain herself, and wept openly. With his garment, Latu Maharaj tenderly wiped away her tears and pleaded with her not to cry: 'Don't cry, Mother. One should not shed tears before going to one's father's house.'

Although always prepared to defend himself against false or shallow criticism, Latu Maharaj was utterly self-effacing. Once Sarat Chandra Chakravarty, a disciple of Swami Vivekananda, expressed a desire to write the biography of Latu Maharaj. When Latu Maharaj heard this, he said, 'Look, Sarat Babu, please don't do any such thing. Write nothing about me. Instead, write about Sri Ramakrishna and Swamiji—then you will benefit people.' It would be wholly incorrect to think that this refusal was the result of any inferiority complex. The Swami felt quite free to express himself forcefully when the occasion demanded it! It was simply that Latu Maharaj clearly recognized himself to be the servant of the Lord. He had realized it in transcendental consciousness. The fulfilment of his life, he knew, had come solely through surrender to God in the form of Sri Ramakrishna. Therefore, his humility was not merely the enactment of a role, but born of a transforming experience. He felt that to expose his life to the biographer's pen would only serve to contradict it. (We pray he will forgive this transgression of ours!)

In one account from the *Apostles of Ramakrishna*,<sup>2</sup> we read:

<sup>2</sup> Pub. by Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Almora, Himalayas, 1967.

'Latu Maharaj talked of high spiritual things when the mood for that came, but he was too humble to think that he was doing any spiritual good to anybody. Though by coming into contact with him many lives were changed, he did not consciously make any disciple. He used to say that only those persons who were born with a mission like Swami Vivekananda were entitled to make disciples or preach religion without directing their energies to building up their own character. He used to say that the so-called preachers go out to seek people to listen to them, but if they [themselves would] realize the Truth, people of their own accord would flock around them for spiritual help. Whenever he felt that his words might be interpreted as if he had taken the role of a teacher, he would rebuke himself muttering half-audible words. Thus Latu Maharaj was an unconscious teacher, but the effect of his unintentional teaching was tremendous on the people who came to him.'

Finally, hard spiritual practices and an almost total indifference to the needs of his body undermined the Swami's once strong health. As the illness of his body increased, his mind became more and more withdrawn. Oblivious of his surroundings, he remained for days midway between the conscious and the superconscious planes—until at last he entered his final *samādhi*.

In a letter addressed to Josephine MacLeod, dated May 12, 1920, Swami Turiyananda, a brother-disciple, touchingly described the passing away of Latu Maharaj:

'I am extremely sorry to let you know that Swami Adbhutananda—Latu Maharaj—is now no more. He breathed his last on the 24th of April. His passing away was indeed wonderful. He entered a meditative state from the very first moment that he fell ill, and remained absorbed in that state until he gave up the body. He had developed a small blister on his right ankle which developed into gangrene. All the best local medical help was sought, but to no avail; in ten days he expired. He showed no



signs of pain during his illness. But the wonder of all wonders was that after his death when his body was placed in a sitting position to conform with some of the funeral rites, we found him looking so beautiful, so serene and full of peace and bliss. His face beamed with light and an intelligence unspeakable, as if he were taking leave from his friends for the last time with an exhortation of affectionate benediction. Really, it was a sight for the gods to see.

'We chanted the name of the Lord for three hours and then took his body, decorated with garlands of flowers and sandal paste, in procession to the side of the Ganges....

'Latu Maharaj entered into eternal peace and another son of Sri Ramakrishna joins Him, making us feel poorer for this irreparable loss. Indeed, we have lost a spiritual giant in the person of Latu Maharaj, whose illiteracy and unsophisticated life helped him most to become what he was—a genuine and ardent devotee of Sri Ramakrishna.'

Thus came to a close the life of one of Sri Ramakrishna's most remarkable and, in a way, enigmatic disciples. For as the pages to follow will reveal, Latu Maharaj resists placement in any particular category. Once you attempt to define or grasp his nature, he eludes you. Praise him; he bristles with indignation—and perhaps calls you flatterer. Think him simple and unlettered; he startles you with a display of the profoundest philosophical insight. Call him wise; he at once slips into the mood of a child.

Nevertheless, as we study the life and words of Latu Maharaj, recall his unwavering faith and dedication to spiritual practices, we begin to recognize in him, beyond all these shifting moods, a transcending consistency. It is a consistency of character, more than anything else, which closely resembles that of the ancient Vedic *rṣis*. For they as well had no formal education, yet like Latu Maharaj attained to the highest wisdom, through the one-pointedness of

their will. And we who call ourselves educated—how paltry our knowledge in comparison, how shallow and inconsequential our 'wisdom'. But this simple servant, lacking both family and caste, without schooling or even the rudiments of literacy, attained in one bound the very purpose of existence. What a supreme paradox, indeed, was this Latu Maharaj!

A careful study of his character reveals another significant trait—his harmonization of the four yogas. The Swami's practice of *Karma-yoga*, for example, was certainly evidenced in his unusually dedicated service to Sri Ramakrishna. The extent of his service is perhaps best summed up by this incident, recorded by Swami Saradananda, which occurred during the final days of Sri Ramakrishna's life on earth:

'One day he [Sri Ramakrishna] was telling us that, owing to weakness, it would soon be difficult for him to go out for answering the calls of nature. The young devotee Latu felt pained to hear those words of the Master on that occasion; he made him as well as us smile even in that state of sorrow when with folded hands he chimed in sweet, broken Bengali, "Sir, here I am, your sweeper."'

No one was harsher with his own weaknesses than Latu Maharaj; no one more ruthlessly applied the whip of discrimination—the primary discipline of *Jñāna-yoga*—than he. Free of intellectual distractions, he was able to direct his entire energy in pursuit of that knowledge which supports, but at the same time transcends, all other knowledge. Long years of spiritual discipline and a rigid obedience to truth had sharpened his mind to razor-edged keenness. He refused to be bewildered or defeated by sophistry. His intuitive genius would quickly pierce the flesh of any argument, and drive home his own point with unerring accuracy. Thus the large number of Westernized Hindus he met came away utterly astounded at the depth of his wis-

dom, and often with a crushing realization of their own ignorance as well.

In the practice of *Bhakti-yoga*, it is difficult to find his peer. Latu Maharaj deeply loved *kīrtan* and it was common knowledge that if a *kīrtan* party were in the vicinity, there one could find him. It is the intellect that often troubles the heart, and because the Swami's intellect was childlike and uncluttered, he was at peace. Devotion to God was the natural inclination of his mind; reinforced by a boundless love for his guru, the heart of Latu Maharaj blossomed into perfection.

Upholding, as it were, these three yogas was his indomitable will, which years of con-

centration and the practice of *japa* had granted extraordinary powers. His strength of mind permitted him to sit long hours in meditation, often wrapped from head to foot in a blanket, lost to the external world. Thus he was, as well, a great *Rāja-yogī*.

But we who look back in time to this remarkable human being can only hope to guess at his real nature. Our single recourse is to ponder the few events of his life that have come down to us, the words that he spoke, and the evidence of his character. From these threads we must weave our history. Perhaps then we shall gain a glimpse into that one who could say, with all the force of his being, 'Sir, here I am, your sweeper.'

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(Contd. from page 254)

In the twelfth chapter [of the *Gītā*] also the Lord, after describing His conclusive deductions on worship of God with and without attributes, indicates in clear terms that the worship of God with attributes is easier and more pleasing and that He Himself saves the devotee. Therefore, in whom else we should take refuge forsaking such a compassionate Lord, and for what purpose we should do so, I just cannot comprehend.

With my sincere good wishes and love.

Ever your well wisher  
SRI TURIYANANDA

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## ILLUMINATING DIALOGUES FROM INDIAN LORE

### ARJUNA'S DOUBT

In Hastināpura (the capital of the Kauravas), the Pāṇḍavas (sons of King Pāṇḍu) and the Kauravas (sons of King Dhṛtarāṣṭra) were studying archery under the teacher Drona. One day, during an evening walk, Arjuna accosted Karṇa, and asked him whether war was good or peace.

Karṇa replied, 'Peace is good.'

'What is your reason?' asked Arjuna.

Karṇa said: 'O Arjuna, if war comes, I will pierce you with my arrows and that will worry you. As far as I am concerned, I possess a compassionate heart. Hence, if I see you suffer before my very eyes, my heart will bleed. Therefore it is grievous to both of us. So I concluded that peace is better than war.'

Arjuna rejoined: 'O Karṇa, I am not asking this as a personal affair between you and me. But I am asking in general whether peace or war is beneficial to the world.'

To this Karṇa replied: 'I am not in the least interested in matters affecting humanity in general.'

Arjuna silently concluded that this fellow should be put an end to, and no chances should be taken.

Then he wended his way to his master, Drona, and put him the same question.

Drona, replied: 'War is good.'

Arjuna asked why and Drona replied, 'O

Arjuna, by waging a war we can get, in victory, material wealth and glory; in defeat, death. But in peace everything is doubtful.'

Then Arjuna went to his grandfather Bhīṣma and asked him, 'O Grandsire, please enlighten me as to which is better, peace or war.' The venerable old Bhīṣma answered, 'O Arjuna, my child, peace is better. No doubt, war brings fame to the Kṣatriya (race of warriors); but peace is more universal and brings fame to the entire human race.'

Arjuna ejaculated, 'I can't see justice in your argument, Grandsire.' To this Bhīṣma said: 'Arjuna, first tell me how you arrived at such a conclusion.'

Arjuna replied: 'Grandfather, because of the absence of war, Karṇa seems to be shrouded in self-glory more than anyone else. But if war comes, truth will come out, and I will certainly prove my superiority.'

To this Bhīṣma said: 'Arjuna, remember that *dharma* will always reign supreme, either in peace or in war. Hence drive out malice and anger from your heart and seek always peace. Treat the entire humanity as your brethren: Realize that all should live in mutual affection. For, it is only with a love that overleaps all bounds humanity can survive. Hence "Love thy neighbour as thyself" should be the motto, I emphasize

and re-emphasize the same *mantra* to you.'

Saying this, Bhīṣma shed a tear.

Days passed by, and one day the great Sage Vyāsa came to Hastināpura. Arjuna approached him and put the same question, 'Which is good—peace or war?'

The sage replied, 'Both are good, depending on the times.'

After long years, at the conclusion of the period of exile stipulated, when the Pāṇḍa-

vas were about to send Lord Kṛṣṇa as emissary to Duryodhana's court, Arjuna accosted the Lord and asked Him, 'O Kṛṣṇa, which is better—peace or war?'

To this the Lord replied: 'For the present, peace is welcome; and hence I am starting for Hastināpura now.'

PROF. C. JAGANNATHACHARIAR

Source: Subramanya Bharati's *Kathaikkothu* or 'String of Stories'

## MEISTER ECKHART, LOVER OF GOD

PROF. LETA JANE LEWIS

*What is God's love? His nature and his being: that is his love. If God were robbed of his love for us, he would be robbed of his being and his divinity; for his being depends upon his loving me.... God has only one love; he loves me with exactly the same love that the father has for his son.—Meister Eckhart*

Like Swami Vivekananda and the great Śaṅkara, Meister Eckhart is generally known as a non-dualistic mystic philosopher of the highest order. But as Swami Nikhilananda pertinently writes of Swami Vivekananda, Meister Eckhart's 'real nature was that of a lover of God, though he appeared outwardly as a philosopher'. And, although Meister Eckhart, unlike Śaṅkara and Swami Vivekananda, wrote no devotional poetry, his prose writings abound in devotional passages.

Because he knew God to be his very Self, Meister Eckhart found it easy to love him. On the basis of his own experience, this greatest mystic of the Christian Middle Ages explained to his fellow Catholics that God continually pours himself out into the universe, transmitting his existence to the world in stages like the concentric circles of a pond. God breathes forth his divinity, first, as the Self in the soul and, then, as the Holy Ghost, so that we are more closely

united with him than our bodies are with the food we eat. Even plants and animals share miraculously in God's divine essence. Only Jesus Christ, who has his divinity from eternity, did not receive it as a gift from God.

Creation, according to Meister Eckhart, may be said to take place for the individual when he loses sight of God in the soul and begins to feel independent of him. This wilful egotistical separation from God constitutes the fall into matter. Religion, on the other hand, develops when the individual becomes dissatisfied with his limited human existence, and, reversing the creative process, struggles to find his way back to God. Since human nature is essentially divine, this striving must eventually be rewarded with the spiritual awakening to which Meister Eckhart variously refers as 'the birth of God in the soul', 'the birth of the Son in the soul', and 'the birth of the Word in the soul'.

Meister Eckhart declares it fortunate for



mankind that God, who longs for us a thousand times more than we long for him, is eager to draw our souls up to himself in the highest light. Knowing that we cannot attain him by our unaided efforts, he mercifully bestows his grace (Meister Eckhart beautifully defines grace as an 'indwelling and cohabitation of the soul in God') on the devotee who takes refuge in him. The tremendous power of grace which sanctified the Virgin Mary and all of the saints is present in every soul waiting to manifest itself there. The light of the intelligence is feeble and powerless compared with God's grace, to which nothing is impossible. Grace purifies the soul of all wicked tendencies and endows it with all virtue. Lifting up the soul to the highest light, it conforms the soul to God by means of the Holy Ghost. In Meister Eckhart's own words: 'God is not born in it. Grace arises from this birth. Grace is then poured into the soul. Grace does not act; its coming into existence in the soul is its only work. It flows out of the existence of God and flows into the existence of the soul, but remains separate from the worldly forces in the soul.' God so loves the devotee who is in a state of grace that he will not permit him to make a false step. He performs such a person's actions for him. And if, for some reason, the devotee falls from grace, the merit of the good deeds God performed through him during the state of grace will return to him in full force when he enters that state again.

Meister Eckhart could not sufficiently emphasize the fact that God loves all human beings equally and wants them all to find their way back to him. However, 'the light shineth in the darkness and the darkness comprehendeth it not'. Human beings, unlike God, have both higher and lower natures. The higher forces of the soul, which are uncreated, touch God, while the lower, the temporal and created, touch the world.

When we are motivated by these lower forces, we become self-centred and materialistic. In the pursuit of ephemeral happiness, we forget the one God who will not tolerate any other gods before him. Meister Eckhart uses quaint figures of speech to emphasize the disastrous effect the lower forces can have on spiritual life. For example, he first compares God's Son in the soul to a well which has become covered with dirt (obviously, the dirt of wickedness) and lost. Then he writes that, since the Light cannot shine and illuminate in the sinner, the birth of the Son simply cannot take place in him. And, finally he insists that anyone who wishes to find the new-born King must by-pass all other interests, leaving them permanently behind him.

In order to purge his children of the lesser loves which obstruct their vision of him, God permits them to suffer. But he does so with love rather than with bitterness. There is no trace of anger or cruel intent in his desire to sanctify the sinner, to transform his enemy into a friend. Often, too, God lets those of whom he expects the most sin wickedly so that, realizing how small and weak they are, they will turn to him for help. This taking refuge in God is penitence. God forgives the penitent sinner so completely that it is as if he had never fallen into sin. If, according to Meister Eckhart, a penitent man had committed all of the sins which have been committed since the time of Adam and all of the sins that ever will be committed, God would forgive him so completely that, if he were to die immediately, he would go to eternal bliss without delay. His sins would disappear 'in the abyss of God', for sin has no positive existence of its own. It is merely a temporary fall from Being. Since God asks no more of a sinner than that he take refuge in him and return to Being, it would be very foolish, if not downright



egotistical, for even the most wicked person to be afraid to approach him. The greater the sin, the happier God is to enter the soul and drive the sin away. Meister Eckhart encourages the devotee with the thought that

nothing that one may do so furthers spiritual progress as confidence in God. He has never ceased to do great things in those who achieved great confidence in him. He has made it quite clear with all of these men that this confidence comes from love; for love not only inspires trust but it also possesses true knowledge and an undoubting certainty....

Love...leads the soul with its knowledge and all its capacities into God and unites it with God. Nothing brings one closer to God than the sweet bond of love; whoever follows the path of love of God is certain to find God.

Although Meister Eckhart recommends a variety of disciplines for removing the impurities covering the lost well of eternal life in the soul, he emphatically states that none of them is as effective as loving God. Those spiritual aspirants who try to control the body and mind by practising austerities may derive certain benefits from their efforts, but they would progress much more rapidly through love and devotion. As they gradually surrendered themselves to the Lord in whom there is no defect, they would begin to feel his presence and grow into his image. Sin and weakness would slowly fall away and they would become established in virtue.

The spiritual aspirant should try to develop love for God by thinking of him everywhere and under all circumstances. He would do well to carry the feeling of devotion he experiences in churches and monasteries out into the street among the people; and he ought to remember that, since God is the heart of all creation, the man praying in a field is as close to God as the man praying in a church. He

should practise attentiveness by seeking God 'with burning love' in all things. And, realizing that all people are essentially divine, he should cease judging them according to the superficialities of personality and appearance. The aspirant who learns to see God 'radiating from everything' will feel his presence no matter where he is or under what circumstances. He will then understand why it is unnecessary to retire to a monastery in order to remember God during every hour of the day.

On the whole, Meister Eckhart did not especially stress formal religious worship as a means of cultivating love of God. However, he did teach his followers that, since the sacrament of communion can aid the soul in experiencing the divine presence, they would benefit greatly from taking it worthily and often. He taught them to frequent churches and monasteries, which he believed to be holier than other places, and to seek the company of dedicated monastics as well as other God-centred persons in order to profit from their holy influence.

Meister Eckhart admonished his disciples to try to imitate the perfect love which inspired Jesus to give the world 'all he had'. Realizing that God is equally present in everyone, they were to extend the special love they normally felt for their own families and friends to all humanity. They were to be no more concerned about gaining salvation (to say nothing of worldly goods) for themselves and their families than for persons whom they had never met.

The worthy master insisted that the spiritual aspirant need not let his work distract him from the thought of God if he will imitate the very thirsty man who must temporarily do without water. Such a person may do many things other than drink, but his mind will always be on his thirst. Similarly, a lover of God may be busy with his work, but he will always



think of God. In Meister Eckhart's opinion, the attitude with which an individual performs his work is much more important than the nature of the work itself. The person with the right attitude, that is, the person who works only to please God and not for personal gain, is bound to nothing. Seeking no advantage in the world, he is dead to the world. He lives in God, and God lives in him. He is a true Son of God, because, unlike servants and bondsmen, who demand payment for everything they do, he asks no reward for himself either in heaven or on earth.

Again, Meister Eckhart taught that when God finally 'becomes the world to the right-minded man', he will find God equally present in both secular and pious occupations, but that, in the meantime, he should consider those actions best which will bring him closer to God. The great monastic advised most people to live active lives in the world instead of retiring to monasteries where they would devote themselves primarily to contemplation. He praised Martha's path of service more highly than Mary's path of devotion (which he accused of one-sidedly neglecting service), because he believed that Martha understood the importance of trying to purify herself through dedicated action, while Mary apparently did not. Through interaction with other people Martha would come to know her weaknesses and seek God's indispensable help in her struggle to overcome them, thus gaining spiritual strength while growing closer to him.

However, Meister Eckhart did not imply that contemplation is unnecessary in spiritual life. On the contrary, he maintained that the active and the contemplative paths supplement each other. Contemplation contributes to the inspiration which makes love and self-sacrifice possible, but contemplation, for its part, would be impossible without prayer and self-sacrifice. He taught that whenever there is a conflict between prayer and meditation on the one hand and the performance of a needful unselfish deed on the other, one would be wrong to neglect the unselfish deed. For instance, if a devotee in the highest rapture knows that a suffering neighbour is relying on him for a bowl of soup, he will displease God if he does not discontinue his meditation to take his neighbour the soup. The active spiritual aspirant must struggle hard in the midst of the world's trials and temptations until he has become perfected in virtue. He will know that he need struggle no more only when his first, uncalculating impulse is to do what will please God. A true Son of God will not hesitate or flinch even when doing God's will means suffering and death. Meister Eckhart did not consider action an end in itself. He believed it important only because it enables the spiritual aspirant to free himself from 'the lower forces in the soul'. Ultimately, when he attains oneness with God, all of the works, both good and bad, which he did in this temporal world, will be 'lost in God'.

*(to be concluded)*

## VARIETY WITHIN UNITY—NATIONALLY SPEAKING

DR. JURIJ ZALOKAR

Throughout history, ethnic conflicts have caused fearful sufferings. No wonder, people have sought ways to eliminate them. So far, all these ways have remained unsuccessful. This should neither surprise nor disappoint us. Concerning the expectation that some ideal order could be introduced, Vivekananda has written: 'Perfect life is a notion contradictory in itself' and, 'Our world is like a dog's tail; for centuries, people have been toiling to straighten it out, but as soon as they let it loose, it rolls up again.'<sup>1</sup> The same certainly holds true in the field of ethnic conflicts. Yet, although it is unreasonable to expect to reach the ideal condition, we have incessantly to strive to approach the ideal. It is this effort that gradually lifts one above himself and frees him from the bonds keeping him away from ever sublimer values.

Though the ideal aim is never reached, it is easier to rise above the level of ethnic conflicts and to reach at least a partial solution if their natural laws are understood. Here I intend to confine myself to the social and psychological phenomena that occur when a numerically or otherwise stronger nation meets with a numerically minor or economically feebler one. Striking instances of such happenings are seen in the life of national minorities, especially those that are more or less overtly oppressed or not recognized by a dominant authority. In Europe, the most pronounced examples of such destinies are the existence of the Basques in Spain and France, of the Welsh in Great Britain, the Slovenes in some regions

of Italy and Austria, etc. Cruellest of all was the fate of the Tasmanians, exterminated to a man before the year 1876 by the British conquerors.

We shall see that in all these cases a regrettable fate befalls not only something thought of as an abstract minority, nor just its numerous living members, but also members of the dominant nation, who, in this struggle with the weaker ones, experience and thereby strengthen their worst desires. The latter's inferiority and the former's brutality, each in its own kind, envenom both parties. After the conflict terminates and one party gains the final victory, a heap of ruins and moral apathy is left. This happens when no one in either the minority or the majority opposes this state of affairs. Such opposition—infrequently—comes about; unfortunately, the power of the mightier party is mostly too cruel and nips the awakening in the bud. The weaker nation then succumbs not because of its inferior worth, but simply owing to overwhelming violence. The psychology of denationalization, of national extirpation, explains the varied fates met by people under such circumstances.

First of all, we have to answer the question who and what type are the personalities of the dominant nation—the initiators and more or less conscious executors of violence against the weaker nation? It will be seen that among them there are few true fighters eager for greater power or expansion of their own nation; there are far more fellow-travellers, seeking in the ethnic conflict some benefit for themselves or the solution of some personal problems of their own. Especially people with a weak, undeveloped personality seek, so to speak, by instinct, some external support, in order to lift themselves

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<sup>1</sup> Vivekananda: *Les Yogas pratiques* (Albin Michel, Paris, 1970), pp. 41-2. (Statements of Swami Vivekananda quoted in this article are re-rendered into English by the writer, and so may not tally word for word with their English originals.—Ed.)



up and to gain self-reliance with the aid of the milieu. Various sects, ideologies, social and chauvinistic movements then become worthy supports of their self-love. These people are in a certain way callow and unrestrained. Their belonging to the conquering side in the ethnic conflict gives them a feeling of power and significance. But in reality, behind such a façade, their personality is narrowing and giving way. Radhakrishnan has written: 'The more dead we are in our inner being, the more efficient are we for nationalist ends.'<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, such and similar fellow-travellers are, as a matter of fact, spurious, peripheral adherents of the movement. Hence, they all the more endeavour to identify themselves as much as feasible with the movement. If it is a matter of denationalizing, they are the noisiest advocates of destroying the other nation, and as well the most brutal executors of violent acts, whose carrying out of course does not imperil them. Within a society that silently acknowledges national intolerance, such a violence is even acknowledged as something exquisite. Thus, a person that is basically a weakling, becomes an apparent hero.

Another group of fellow-travellers sees in denationalization an opportunity to find its own account in it, i.e. one hopes to gain power, another money, another again some other yearned-for property. Besides, there is a much larger group of so-called silent denationalizers, passive fellow-travellers not even conscious of their conduct. They are that part of the average population whose personalities are less differentiated and less self-possessed. Such people are unable to balance and vent their—on the whole understandable—mental tensions. They therefore resort to a rather primitive way of pouring out their inner tensions. They just need a

lightning rod, and use for this purpose the members of a racial or national minority. Thus, their anger is free to explode unpunished. Furthermore, the minority members might also become the victims of various uncontrolled instincts which would not be allowed to have their fling elsewhere within the majority society. In addition, the minority becomes a kind of scapegoat in another sense, too, as the majority catches the habit of projecting into the former many of its own weaknesses. Hence, the worst possible qualities are imputed to the minority; no wonder that consequently even the worst member of the ruling nation feels himself superior to even the best member of the minority. This was sensed by Vivekananda when he came to Chicago. Here are a few quotations illustrating his pertinent experiences:

'These people were able to feel sympathy only for persons speaking their language and wearing their apparel.' 'The same person who is sweet, kind, honest and affectionate to those sharing his opinion, will not hesitate to perpetrate the vilest misdeeds on persons strange to his confessional community.' 'All the feeble and little developed minds of any creed and in any country afford just one manner of loving their own ideal, i.e. to hate all the others.' 'Much of the oppression of powerful nations on weaker ones is caused by this prejudice.'<sup>3</sup>

In describing the representatives and fellow-travellers of national suppression we have to add a significant group of nationally suppressed persons themselves, joining the adversary in falling upon their nation of origin. These people include persons basically resembling the above-mentioned fellow-travellers seeking in the national conflict an opportunity to satisfy their individual profits and ambitions. Besides them there is a much greater number of people going over to the oppressing

<sup>2</sup> Radhakrishnan: *Religion and Society* (G. Allen and Unwin, London, 1966), p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Vivekananda: *ibid.*, pp. 57, 140, 139, 57.



majority in order to elude somehow the mental distress due to the atmosphere of subjection. It has to be borne in mind that a member of a minority or of a subjugated minor nation is in many ways frustrated, which causes within him permanent psychic tension and anxiety; they are even measurable because of the consequent alterations in his vegetative nervous system. And this discomfort even augments if national discrimination is aggravated by economic subordination; which is quite likely to happen, since the majority is usually wealthier and the minority members are lower in the social scale. Thus twofold frustration arises and breaks first the feebler, less resistant members. They 'save themselves', through escaping to the majority. After that, they feel that they do not belong to it, so they all the more cling to the majority slogans and behaviour, in order to identify themselves with this majority.

Hence, the dominant nation continues its denationalization with essential assistance from such renegades of the very minority. This brings to the minority a new danger, as any member of the oppressing majority is entitled to wash his hands off suppressing the minority, arguing that even minority members (or those of a smaller nation) reject their nation. Such an argument then induces many decent majority members into quietly vegetating along in their unconcerned state of mind, thoroughly unaware of their own joint responsibility for the crime being perpetrated on behalf of their nation. This is the type of happy-go-lucky majority, careless of their fellow-men's suffering.

And yet even within such a silent majority the voice of conscience may resound, but it is at once successfully silenced with false arguments: there are the well-known theories of the higher quality of one race or nation and the inferiority of another; theories of 'historical necessity'; and of alienation being a blessing to the smaller

nation, as it is thus enabled to share in the material and cultural wealth of the larger one, etc.

Examining the other side, i.e. the victims of the ethnic conflict, we find that they are often demoralized or at least afflicted, as the dominant nation intrudes its language and culture upon them. Gradually the foreign language takes over exclusively in public life. The native language remains just for domestic or rural usage. Thus the expressive capacity of the minority members is decidedly impaired. Even if they satisfactorily master the foreign language, they still do not attain equal rights in conversing with representatives of the dominant nation, e.g. because of occasional mistakes, which are laughed at by the foreigner. Thence, social life becomes traumatic for the minority, which consequently resorts to its own world of dreams and avoids society. To a few of these people, alas, only a few, this might bring the access to rich inner life. Yet to most of them such circumstances, precisely because they hamper them in their expression and their social contacts, cause damage in the development and firmness of their personality. The important thing is that personality incessantly evolves through utterance, which is badly narrowed in such a minority. Gandhi, for example, writes on the harmful consequences of English schools and on the conflicts that arose when the foreign language began to alienate him:

'The torment started with my fourth year. All had to be learned in English.... The tyranny of the English language was so strong that we had to learn even Sanskrit and Persian through English, not through the vernacular. If a boy spoke Gujarati in class, he was punished.... The English language raised an unbridgeable barrier between me and the members of my family who did not attend the English school.... Rapidly I became a stranger in my own house; I became a superior personality.



Even my way of attiring myself imperceptibly changed.’<sup>4</sup>

In a minority, in a numerically smaller nation, in a subordinate race and the like, the mentality of its members crumbles not only owing to what has been said above, as it gives rise to feelings of inferiority, but it also causes a situation comparable with that of a permanently withdrawing army, which incessantly suffers blows and cannot reciprocate with counterblows. So, demoralization sets in, and fear plays a significant role in it. Occasionally, fear might have preserving effects, yet in time its disintegrating operation prevails. Fear paints difficulties and dangers greater than they actually are, and the minority sometimes gives in although there was no need. This again only incites the persons mentioned above (who seem to have monopolized the denationalizing policy of the more numerous nation) to assail the minority still more recklessly. Thus, a vicious circle is established, one side being pushed into ever worse despair and half-heartedness, and the other side incited to ever more violent aggression.

To understand the behaviour of people on either side of an ethnic conflict, its particular atmosphere has to be taken into account. It might be compared to an inundation. The water penetrates into every fissure and soaks every thought. Mostly, people respond to this ‘water’ quite subconsciously. In such an atmosphere prejudices play an important part, confusing both perception and action. Even a generally highly intellectual person might—because of prejudices—overlook obvious facts. A sort of blind spot comes into being. Such a falsified image then dictates certain unreal conclusions and consequently also wrong attitudes. This is why arguments often fail thoroughly, so that

discussion and dialogue are superfluous. As long as a man is confined within a narrow mould by an ethnic conflict, he is unable to find a distance from which to survey the actual situation.

By all the above-mentioned mechanisms entire nations or minorities are pushed into a peculiar, degrading atmosphere. First of all, under such conditions almost epidemic dimensions of various sufferings develop. It is understandable that aggression may turn then against one’s own person, and it is no accident that the number of suicides is particularly high in areas that are nationally endangered. Vitality is also affected. The birth-rate decreases, as if the nation were losing its joy in living. The familiar bonds work loose, the percentage of illegitimate births augments. All of this means in extreme instances flight from life, and in general—flight from malicious reality. One shape of this escapism is alcoholism, which especially impairs many imperilled national minorities.

In the cases when the majority is victorious over a minority or a larger nation over a smaller one, the larger nation is generally economically stronger, and the minority falls socially more or less behind. No wonder therefore that material, i.e. economic, arguments contribute towards making the members of a subordinate nation gradually renounce their vernacular, their customs and faith. Especially in the so-called consumers’ society numerically inferior nations reject, together with their mother tongue, their creed. Hence national alienation in many a case equals religious alienation. And this is one of the most fatal factors injuring the harmony of human personality, which without faith is not equal to various difficulties. Alienation contains sensual enticement, and this is what the *Bhagavad-gītā* (II. 62-3) says about it:

Thinking about sense-objects  
Will attach you to sense-objects ;

<sup>4</sup> Gandhi, M. K.: *Borba nenasiljem*, (Komunist, Beograd, 1970), p. 195.

Grow attached, and you become addicted ;  
Thwart your addiction, it turns to anger ;  
Be angry, and you confuse your mind ;...  
Thus, conflict among nationalities, especially when a stronger one oppresses or chokes the weaker one, causes not only the most varied forms of human suffering, but above all the disintegration of the personalities of numerous members of both nations. The worst phenomenon within this disintegration is the ever more powerful entanglement in the lower drives of human nature. When a nation is seriously oppressed, exceptions are rare.

Owing to the extent and fatefulness of this problem, people try to find a way out of the deadlock. In another connexion, the Swiss psychiatrist Jung has offered the solution using the parable of a mountaineer going through a storm, who, gradually ascending, gets through it and leaves it far below. In our instance the storm means the ethnic conflict, and the height above represents the aim of all religions. Vivekananda's following thoughts are appropriate in our case, too: "This world is not our home, it is but one of the numerous stages to be covered." "The only solution, in order to settle our dissensions, consists in going ahead, towards the centre ; the more rapidly this is done, the more rapidly our dissensions shall disappear."<sup>5</sup> And Radhakrishnan has written: "Civilization consists in giving up less valuable for more valuable freedom."<sup>6</sup>

Yet there are few people who have come so far uphill on their way. Many are still deep in the range of the thunderstorm. They live in a world of incontestable and unavoidable national heterogeneity, i.e. in a state of actual conflict, to which nobody can be indifferent. Nobody can withdraw into a false tranquillity of indifference, in a kind of shallow unaffectedness. In such

circumstances one has no choice but to solve the entanglements presented by life and to side with the good cause. The task of a man in this situation is seen by Radhakrishnan as follows:

'Nature has made many races with different languages, religions and social traditions, and has set man the task of creating order in the human world and discovering a way of life by which different groups can live peaceably together without resorting to force to settle their differences.'<sup>7</sup>

The heterogeneity is a fact that cannot be done away by denial. Vivekananda, speaking of it, accepts it as something good:

'As a matter of fact, all forms are good and salutary', and: "That man should be able to remain man, variety has to exist within unity. Variety has to be preserved in everything, for as long as variety subsists, the world will survive."<sup>8</sup>

Although these and similar ideas are chiefly related to the variety of religions, they may obviously also apply to varieties of race and language.

Variety in life might be creative and productive for the personality, but only if a just relation is found with it. If because of this variety a conflict arises, essentially the same situation emerges as Arjuna's situation on the battlefield of Kuruksetra. There is no retreat ; man then has the duty of a householder who has to take sides with the just cause. If his family or nation is endangered, he has to defend it. Let us again quote Vivekananda:

'With regard to his enemies, the householder has to be a hero. He has to resist them, this is his duty. He must not sit down in a corner to lament and talk ineptitudes on non-resistance . . . . The householder is bound not to show respect to the wicked, for if he is deferential to them, he encourages wicked-

<sup>5</sup> Vivekananda : *ibid.* pp. 48, 207.

<sup>6</sup> Radhakrishnan : *ibid.* p. 60.

<sup>7</sup> Radhakrishnan : *ibid.* p. 53.

<sup>8</sup> Vivekananda : *ibid.* pp. 187, 320.



ness', and: '... he (the *karma-yogin*) also knows that resistance to evil is only a stage on the way to non-resistance. Before attaining this supreme ideal, man has the duty to resist.'<sup>9</sup>

So, when a conflict arises among nations, and a more numerous or stronger nation tries to subjugate a weaker one, then there is no doubt about the role to be played by all those on either side of the ethnic conflict who are anxious to advance towards truth. Gandhi advised *ahimsā* as the most successful way to choose; nevertheless he has written that vengeance is 'any day superior to passive, effeminate and helpless submission'.<sup>10</sup> The darkest feature in the life of nations is actually this apathy, half-heartedness and unconcern usually flooding most nations on either side of national conflicts: the majority of the dominant nation does not resist the violence of its own nation, and the majority of the oppressed nation does not awake consciously to defend its values. This is what Vivekananda says about the tolerance veiling our pusillanimity: 'The word "tolerance" is at present disagreeably associated with the fat man, believing himself to be in an elevated position, and pitifully considering the other humans. This is an abominable state of mind.'<sup>11</sup>

Precisely, this half-heartedness is the cause of the most varied forms of violence spreading time and again within human society. Radhakrishnan has written: 'The cowardly inertness of the human mind must be checked if we wish to maintain peace and prevent planting the seeds of future disasters.'<sup>12</sup> Half-heartedness dictates silence, but Gandhi has written: 'Silence becomes cowardice when occasion demands speaking out the whole truth and acting ac-

cordingly.' And this is what Gandhi says about cowardice: 'Anything is better than cowardice. It is violence double-distilled.' Gandhi advocated determination and courage:

'I do justify entire non-violence, and consider it possible in relations between man and man, and nations and nations; but it is not a resignation from all real fighting against wickedness. On the contrary, the non-violence of my conception is a more active and more real fighting against wickedness than retaliation whose very nature is to increase wickedness. I contemplate a mental, and therefore a moral opposition to immoralities.'<sup>13</sup>

Here, we ought to remember history, which tells us how difficult is the way to be pursued by nations struggling for their rights. Over and over again yesterday's victim has become today's oppressor. Over and over again, legitimate resentment has—when faced with injustice—changed into blind anger and hatred. This way actually resembles walking along a razor's edge. It is a similar thing with a religion, which is good as long as it carries out its mission; Vivekananda says: '... but when it begins protesting, when it tries to trouble other religions, it adopts a negative and consequently dangerous attitude, and does not know where to commence or where to stop.'<sup>14</sup>

Sound nationalism or patriotism easily slides down into nationalist intolerance or open imperialism. In order to cover up such a fall, even imperialism tricks itself up with touching slogans. Radhakrishnan has written: 'Patriotism is ordinarily only hatred disguised in acceptable terms...'<sup>15</sup> and the same author in many passages stresses the danger of thus perverted nationalism. Above all he stigmatizes the tendency of all nations to put themselves above other

<sup>9</sup> Vivekananda : *ibid.* pp. 34, 29.

<sup>10</sup> Gandhi, M. K. : *My Non-Violence*, (Navajivan Press, Ahmedabad, 1960), p. 34.

<sup>11</sup> Vivekananda : *ibid.* p. 300.

<sup>12</sup> Radhakrishnan : *ibid.* p. 12.

<sup>13</sup> Gandhi, M. K. : *ibid.* pp. 235, 255, 31.

<sup>14</sup> Vivekananda : *ibid.* p. 300.

nations, as if a particular nation were of the highest worth:

'If each nation is sovereign master of its own will, if it is the final judge of its purposes, if it knows no law higher than its own, it will think in terms of power, and subordinate all other interests to those of the organization of force',<sup>15</sup> and: 'In different degrees, the nations of the world are possessed by this fanatical patriotism, by this blind will for power, by unscrupulous opportunism.'<sup>15</sup>

We have seen how wicked evils can be caused by degenerate nationalism. We also know what evils have been caused by degenerate religions. Yet it is not advisable to repeat our usual fault, i.e. to reject good qualities together with bad ones. It is therefore not recommendable to follow atheism merely because religious ideas have been so often betrayed. Nor is it advisable to ignore the significance of nationality and to neglect the finest possible development of every nation, great and small, merely because degenerate nationalism has brought on so many sufferings. It is life's basic task to distinguish between good and bad in every occurrence involved in life.

Since we are aware of the great importance of language for the development of man's personality, it would be thoroughly wrong to preach some kind of internationalism, to abolish vernaculars, as we know that such an abolition is always connected with violence. On the other hand, it would be wrong not to permit certain languages to become a sort of lingua franca to link cer-

tain nations to each other; of course, such a lingua franca should never be forced upon a minor nation or a national minority, nor should it ever be the language of the dominant majority. And wherever in the same area two nations mix, the members of both nationalities have to master both languages, although one belongs to the majority and the other to the minority. Only under these conditions can we hope that nations will unite in multinational states without fear of losing their identities in them. Until this is achieved, minor nations quite understandably press towards separatism, although not even this solution is salutary.

Let us therefore conclude with the words of Gandhi: 'Nobody is capable of being an internationalist unless he is a nationalist. Internationalism is possible only where nationalism becomes a fact, i.e. if the nations of various countries agree and qualify to act as one man. Nationalism is no evil; the evil is narrowness, selfishness, exclusivity—the cause of the contemporary nations' decay.'<sup>16</sup> Moreover, he has written: '... to-day I am able to declare that my conviction of the doctrine has been strengthened that serving one's own nation does not contradict the service of the world.'<sup>16</sup> All this has been beautifully collected in the following lines by the greatest Slovene poet Francè Preseren (1800-1849):

'God's blessing on all nations  
Who long and work for that bright day  
When o'er earth's habitations  
No war, no strife shall hold its sway.'

<sup>15</sup> Radhakrishnan: *ibid.* pp. 228, 81, 16.

<sup>16</sup> Gandhi, M. K.: *Borba nenasiljem*, (Komunist, Beograd, 1970), pp. 223, 225.



# GURU NĀNAK AND THE RELIGION OF MAN

SWAMI SASTRANANDA

Guru Nānak is one whom all of us can claim as our Guru, as our own, one who would gladly accept all of us as his own. The appropriate way to pay tribute to such a one is not just by exaggerated praise and runaway glorification; it would be better if we start taking effective steps towards clearer thinking, sincere heart-searching and right action in a calm, steady and fearless way.

A close student of history, ancient or modern, will discover that religion has been a releaser of mighty forces, some of which have proved tremendously creative, progressive, and civilizing, and some others awfully destructive and regressive. Truly did Swami Vivekananda observe :

‘... though there is nothing that has brought to man more blessings than religion, yet at the same time, there is nothing that has brought more horror than religion. Nothing has made more for peace and love than religion; nothing has engendered fiercer hatred than religion. Nothing has made the brotherhood of man more tangible than religion; nothing has bred more bitter enmity between man and man than religion. Nothing has built more charitable institutions, more hospitals for men, and even for animals, than religion; nothing has deluged the world with more blood than religion.’<sup>1</sup>

But tragedies register on the human mind more easily; they upset the thinking and judgment of even the so-called intelligent. Some jump to the conclusion that religion is at the root of all our troubles and the obvious solution is to destroy religion. Calmer reflection, however, would reveal that this thesis is neither right nor practical; it is but a counsel of despair.

Even dedicated destroyers will be confronted by certain frustrating facts: firstly, real religion being a human necessity is indestructible; secondly, if one form or expression of religion is eliminated another new one comes in with its own dogmas and doctrines, books and prophets, deities and rituals. Even virulent anti-religious movements take on all these elements and develop a ‘religion’ of their own!

The miseries and tragic developments in human society, attributed to religion, are not due to religion as such but to its wrong understanding, wrong interpretation, abuse and perversion—whether by the so-called followers or opponents. Even as science as such and genuine scientists are not responsible for its abuse and development of the nuclear bomb, but only fearful or aggressive politicians and militarists, religion and its true votaries have nothing to do with the wrongs committed in its name.

True religion is not to be identified with certain externals, which quite often develop into divisive factors. True religion is life at its deepest, most intense and best level—a level where man becomes totally involved in or committed to a great ideal, one in which he becomes absorbed, as it were. Real religion, again, true to its etymological derivation is that which binds or brings together, that which holds together or integrates;<sup>2</sup> it has as its core the principle of oneness, of fundamental unity, manifesting as an all-inclusive truth and all-embracing love. It can never be anything but a blessing to man; it can never be the cause of human misery, of fear or hatred, division or strife. Where such sad things prevail,

<sup>1</sup> *The Complete Works*, Vol. II (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Almora, Himalayas, 1963), p. 360.

<sup>2</sup> धारणात् धर्मम् । *The Mahābhārata*, ‘Karna-parvan’, LXIX 58.

they can be traced to other factors—to man's narrow, selfish interests—economic, political and personal, in short, to ignorance and greed, operating under the smoke screen of some religious label.

The beginning and end, the source and the goal, of true religion is characterized by oneness—one God, one all-pervading divine spirit, one source, one destiny. But creation, which is synonymous with difference and variety, naturally presupposes different paths of evolution for common destiny, does so by different paths. Though the paths, of necessity, differ, since the basis and end of all paths is the same there can be no real cause to justify the attitudes of superiority and inferiority, fear and suspicion, aggressiveness and hatred which often prevail among the misguided followers of sectarian religions.

In the history of religion, we find that it is when narrow selfish interests start operating that division, degeneration and perversions develop. Religions, in general, are pure at the source, at the time of the great founders or of the true shining exemplars, but with the lapse of time the pure stream is befouled by the ignorance and selfishness of its less edifying successors, many of them stupid yet proud. The result is internal schisms, antagonisms among different religious groups leading to aggressive onslaughts, to religious wars organized against so-called 'non-believers'. When we take a close look we find that all this is another outlet for the personal ambitions of abnormal individuals or a cloak for political or economic imperialism.

Fortunately, great teachers come from time to time, to represent and reinterpret the essentials of religion in their pristine purity to take us back to the pure source, as it were. And Guru Nānak is eminently one such. He belongs to the distinguished line of the messengers of Eternal Religion, of the prophets of universalism and

harmony. His voice is the voice of authentic religion which is coming to us through various illumined souls from the remote past to the modern present: the voice of the Vedic ṛṣi who declares, 'Reality is one; sages speak of It differently';<sup>3</sup> of Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa who proclaims, 'Even as men approach Me (the Supreme Being), so do I respond to them; all men (seekers) in truth tread the path that leads to Me alone';<sup>4</sup> of the poet who praises the Lord, 'O Lord, even as the ocean is the ultimate destiny of all streams, whether flowing directly or indirectly, so are You the one final destiny of all humans!';<sup>5</sup> of the modern Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, 'God is one; various are His names. All paths lead to Him provided one follows any with sincere longing.'

In the context of abuses and perversions prevailing in the name of religion, the agonizing question arises in the minds of thinking persons: 'What good is religion if it cannot bring us closer to both God and fellow-men?' True religion has no difficulty at all in providing a satisfying answer to this, for its theme is humanity at its best and its greatest good, or to put it in other words 'real man and his real good'. While religion thus certainly is humanistic, it concerns itself not with the lower man but with the higher. Its great concern is with man's divine essence, his divine self or 'Ātman', in and through which he becomes spontaneously identified with all his fellow-beings. Loving regard and service of fellow-beings is its natural corollary. The scriptures stress this aspect in various ways. The Upaniṣad declares:

'Thou art woman, Thou art man;  
Thou art the youth, and Thou the  
maiden;

<sup>3</sup> *Rg-veda*, I. 164.46.

<sup>4</sup> *Bhagavad-gītā*, IV. 11.

<sup>5</sup> *Śivamahimnaḥ-stotra*, 7.





qualities which are not very conspicuous in modern life. 'Through ego or conceit, one attaineth not to God, even if one uttereth the Gospel or readeth it aloud to others.'<sup>10</sup> This is to be noted specially by those who profess to be 'religious'. Most often, we have just enough 'religion' to hate and exploit one another. Let us resolve to acquire religion that will help us to love and serve one another, irrespective of outer differences. Let us remember that to the Guru, we do not count as Hindus, Muslims, Christians or Sikhs; we count as men, as sincere seekers, all the children of the same Divine Guru.

A little knowledge is a dangerous thing; it is the half-baked proponents of sectarian religions who are most dangerous to men in general; and it is they who also harm the cause of true religion. So let us be careful that we do not develop that way. Let us pray that we all may be endowed with the right kind of charity and understanding not only towards followers of other religions but towards all seekers. After all it is truth and sincerity that counts, that makes one truly religious. And we find that quite a few of the so-called 'non-believers' are, judging by their character and qualities, more genuinely 'religious' than many who just profess to be religious.

Let us have reverence to the seekers of truth, and servants of humanity in whatever camp they are: They are truly ours and they belong to God whether we so accept or not. Let us develop a spirit of divine synthesis, so that religion and philosophy, art and science will join hands and only 'falsehood and malice'—whether in others

or ourselves—will remain in the opposite camp.

In conclusion, I cannot do better than quoting a remarkable passage from Swami Vivekananda as expressing the spirit of this occasion and offering our homage to the entire line of Gurus:

'Our watchword, then, will be acceptance, and not exclusion. . . . I accept all religions that were in the past and worship with them all; I worship God with every one of them, in whatever form they worship Him. I shall go to the mosque of the Mohammedan; I shall enter the Christian's church and kneel before the crucifix; I shall enter the Buddhistic temple, where I shall take refuge in Buddha and in his Law. I shall go into the forest and sit down in meditation with the Hindu, who is trying to see the Light which enlightens the heart of every one.

'Not only shall I do all these, but I shall keep my heart open for all that may come in the future. Is God's book finished? Or is it still a continuous revelation going on? It is a marvellous book—these spiritual revelations of the world. The Bible, the Vedas, the Koran, and all other sacred books are but so many pages, and an infinite number of pages remain yet to be unfolded. I would leave it open for all of them. We stand in the present, but open ourselves to the infinite future. We take in all that has been in the past, enjoy the light of the present, and open every window of the heart for all that will come in the future. Salutations to all the prophets of the past, to all the great ones of the present, and to all that are to come in the future!'<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> *The Complete Works*: Vol. II, pp. 373-4.



## NOTES AND COMMENTS

### IN THIS NUMBER

Questions and answers are from : 'M' : *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, Tr. by Swami Nikhilananda, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras, 1944. References: Question I, p. 552. 2, pp. 553-4.

The words quoted in 'Onward For Ever!' are from: *The Complete Works*, Vol. II (1963), pp. 181-2.

The International Book Year is rousing interest in men and women to publish and read more and more books. While dissemination of knowledge and information is a welcome activity, negligence of wisdom and emotion is an unhealthy development. Though the Editorial points out this grave imbalance, its attention is mainly devoted to the place of books in spiritual life.

One worthwhile way of observing the International Book Year could be the publication and reading of a book on a sage who became wise without reading a single book! The very fact that such men of enlightenment lived and moved on this earth will serve as a needed reminder to humanity that while knowledge is obtainable from books wisdom is the result of self-discipline and spiritual realization. 'Swami Adbhutananda' forms the biographical introduction to a new book on the life and teachings of the Swami scheduled to be released from the Vedanta Press, Hollywood, U.S.A., this year.

Brahmachari Bhumachaitanya is a member of the Ramakrishna Order and at present an inmate of the Vedanta Society of Southern California, Hollywood.

Prof. C. Jagannathachariar, M.A., is the Head of the Tamil Department, Vivekananda College (Ramakrishna Mission), Madras.

'Wouldst thou be perfect,' declared Meister Eckhart, 'do not yelp about God.' When anyone feels the blissful presence of God within and without, he only loves Him and becomes fully satisfied. Mysticism and theological scholarship happily blended in M. Eckhart and he passionately taught about love of God. In him many Hindus would find a cognate of their own divinely mad philosophers.

'Meister Eckhart, Lover of God' brings to our columns the great teacher's valuable teachings on the cultivation of divine love. Dr. Leta Jane Lewis is from Fresno State College, California, U.S.A.

Fires of hatred and violence continue to rage in human societies simply because men and women refuse to see the fact that variety in race, religion, language, and culture is a necessary part of nature and creation. Thoughtful and selfless leaders of humanity have tried to quench these fires by pointing out the truth of unity in variety and preaching the spirit of tolerance, love, and co-operation. Millenniums may have to pass before humanity learns to abjure narrowness and fanaticism for breadth of heart and spirit of harmony. Dr. Zalokar wrote to us in his covering letter: 'The paper was written on the basis of the experiences that one may have as a member of a small nation as well as on the basis of the results of ethnic and psychological studies published by different research workers throughout the world. I hope that this would be of interest to your readers, as the problem is causing suffering and distress of vast proportions. The nation to which I belong is but one example of such destiny.'

Dr. Jurij Zalokar is the Head of Psihiatricna bolnica (Psychiatric Hospital), Begunje na Gor, Jugoslavija. He has been occasionally contributing to the *Prabuddha Bharata*.

'Guru Nānak and the Religion of Man' is a brief but incisive article highlighting the essentials of the Guru's teaching against the background of the universal religion of man. The contribution is the substance of a talk given by Swami Sastrananda, a

monk of the Ramakrishna Order, at 'The All Religions' Symposium' organized by the Guru Nānak Birth Quin-Centenary Celebrations Committee, Chandigarh Administration, in December 1969.

## REVIEWS AND NOTICES

**SAYANA'S SUBHASITA SUDHANIDHI** CRITICALLY EDITED BY DR. K. KRISHNAMURTHY, published by Karnatak University, Dharwar, pp. 240, 1968, price Rs. 10/-.

Sayanacharya's Veda-bhashya is a well-known work but not so the book under review. Most people do not know that in his younger years he compiled the wise sayings of famous authors and had arranged them under the four Purusharthas—dharma, artha, kama, and moksha. The collection is very vast and bears ample testimony to the wide and at the same time deep scholarship of its author. Reading through the collection one comes across many familiar sayings from the *Mahabharata*, *Ramayana*, Kalidasa's work, Kautilya's *Arthashastra*, Bharavi, Bana and Lila Suka's *Krishnakarnamrita*. The quotations from the last mentioned work serve incidentally to throw some light on Sayana's dates. The editor, in his introductory essay, seeks to fix the year of Sayana's birth on the strength of various lines of historical evidence. He fixes it as the year 1316 A.D. We may safely take it that he must have been between thirty-five and forty when he compiled the *Subhasita Sudhanidhi*. The editor thinks that this work can be dated fairly accurately and narrowed down to the period of 1346-1355. Lila Suka's dates are believed to be 1220 to 1300 A.D. His *Krishnakarnamrita* must have taken at least fifty years to gain currency in the world of scholars. It is quite likely that Sayana came to know of it about the year 1350 A.D.

The editor has rendered very useful service to the reading public by bringing out this work. One could wish that he had given English renderings of these wise sayings. Readers with a partial knowledge of Sanskrit would have appreciated the service all the more.

The printing and get-up leave little to be desired. It is a very useful addition to our anthologies.

SRI M. K. VENKATARAMA IYER

**THE VISION OF ATMAN: BY SWAMI SATCHIDANANDENDRA SARASWATI**, Published by Adhyatma Prakasha Karyalaya, Holenarsipur, Mysore, pp. 119, price Rs. 2/-.

The author of this treatise takes up the question of the Vision of the Atman, a subject that has raised so much controversy among the exponents of Advaita. Is the Vision (*atma drashtavyah*) arrived at by meditation and *sadhana* or by deliberation upon the texts of the Vedanta? The author takes up the passage in the *Brihadaranyaka-upanishad* dealing with Yajnavalkya's teaching to Maitreyi, discusses the various interpretations put upon the key sentences therein and comes to the conclusion of Acharya Sankara that 'Where any person is concerned with the enquiry into the nature of Brahman as the universal self, he has to rely on Vedantic texts, not as an authority to be believed in, but to be verified by intuition also supported by Vedantic reasoning'. The Atman is of the nature of consciousness. If the *avidya* (nescience) that veils the Atman is eliminated by *vidya* (knowledge), there ensues a natural intuition of the Reality. *Sravaṇa* (hearing), *manana* (understanding) etc. are only preliminary steps of the *vidya*. 'Atman cannot be known by any one of the faculties of the mind or directly visualized. Atman is of the very essence of consciousness which is in no need of being lighted up to be seen. To intuit this, is to see Atman.' (p. 26).

SRI M. P. PANDIT

**JAPASUTRAM: BY SWAMI PRATYAGATMANANDA SARASWATI**, published by Ganesh & Co. Private Ltd., Madras 17, 1971, pp. 309, price Rs 15/-.

In 1961 Swami Pratyagatmananda Saraswati gave us a short text entitled *Japasutram* which was reviewed in the columns of this Journal. It was a thought-provoking text, a summary of the author's



original work in Sanskrit. Now that short text is expanded, giving us more details regarding *sadhana*. A band of distinguished scholars and *sadhakas* helped the Swami in the preparation of this valuable text.

Japa can be undertaken, not in mere seclusion, nor in a pure formalistic way. It needs the inflow and outflow of energy so that we can draw upon 'the unbounded unfathomed Sea of Significance, where both star and straw their import receive and commerce carry'. It is a way of realization leading to the experience of an integral harmony with the divine spirit.

The first five chapters of the present text cover the earlier English publication *Japasutram*. These are followed by a thorough exposition of the doctrine by Sri S. N. Roy. The nine chapters of this exposition are rounded off by a chapter on the author's 'Theory of Knowledge'. At the end there is a section entitled 'The Secret of Japa' by Sri G. G. Mukhopadhyaya. The extracts from the text *Yantram* are given in the Appendix.

All *sadhakas* and all those interested in *sadhana* should do well to go through this important addition to our world of books.

DR. P. S. SASTRI

**RAJA RAMMOHUN ROY AND BRAHMOISM :** BY PIYUS KANTI DAS, published by Sundarban Mahavidyalaya, Kakdwip, 24 Parganas, 1970, pp. 144, price Rs. 10/-.

Raja Rammohun Roy was one of the great intellectuals and reformers of our country. To him we largely owe the emergence of Brahmoism. An account of his life and work is bound to throw valuable light on the contemporary scene. Sri Piyus Kanti Das offers in the present work a clear account of the activities of Rammohun Roy. In the critical analysis of Brahmoism he brings to bear on his study the views of Devendranath Tagore, Keshub Chunder Sen and others. The author seeks to show that Rammohun Roy actually founded a new religion and that it is not a variety of Hinduism at all. Sri Das denies that Rammohun Roy accepted Advaita Vedanta. These controversial problems are ably argued. But it must be frankly admitted that the author does not offer convincing proof or arguments to show that Rammohun Roy did not accept Sankara's system even as a framework.

DR. P. S. SASTRI

**THE NATURE OF FORM IN PROCESS, A PRINCIPIA FORMICA :** BY GENE L. PORTER, published by Philosophical Library, New York, 1969, pp. 111, price \$ 4.50.

The book is an analytical study on forming and informing processes and as such has widely borrowed from history, metaphysics, and other branches of knowledge. The book is divided into three Parts and nineteen chapters. Theories of 'Pattern', 'Structure', 'Stamping' and forms of 'Time', 'Behaviour', and 'Things and Objects' together with 'Language', 'space' and 'A Working Metaphysics' constitute some of the most important and interesting chapters.

It is a highly analytical book based on considerable study. But to the ordinary man it is not completely free from obscurity. It is a book for serious thinkers and not for lay readers.

DR. PARESH NATH MUKHERJEE

#### SANSKRIT—KANNADA

**UPADESHASAHASRI :** BY SWAMI VIJNANANDA, published by Sri Ramakrishnashrama, Mangalore, pp. 344, price Rs. 8/-.

Ascribed to Sankara, this work in prose and verse is a manual on Advaita *sadhana*. It expounds in simple language the essentials of this philosophy and details the methods by which one is to apply them in daily life for achieving liberation from bondage to body and ignorance and the realization of one's identity with the sole Reality. It is doubtful if the first part (in prose) is by Sankara at all, but since there is nothing in it that is contrary to the advaitic tenets, it has been included in this edition. Swami Vijnananda's rendering of the Sanskrit text is faithful and fluent; his notes are helpful. The references he has given to the citations from the scriptures in the treatise are particularly useful to the student. A very welcome addition to Advaita literature in Kannada.

SRI M. P. PANDIT

#### BOOKS RECEIVED

**LECTURES ON GANDHISM** BY NIRMAL KUMAR BOSE, price Rs. 4/-, **TOWARDS NEW EDUCATIONAL PATTERN**, price Rs. 3/-, **TOWARDS SARVODAYA ORDER**, price Rs. 5/-, **BOTH** BY K. G. MASHRUWALA, All the three published by Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad 14.

**THE AYYAPPA CULT** BY R. S. NATHAN, price Rs. 1.25, **MESSAGE OF VEDANTA IN THE AGE OF MODERN SCIENCE** BY BRAHMACHARI

HARIDAS, price Rs. 2/-, both published by Eswaran & Co., 8A Nakuleswar Bhattacharjee Lane, Calcutta 26.

FOUNDATIONS OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY BY BALBIR SINGH, published by W. H. Patwardhan, Orient Longman Ltd., 3/5 Asa).

FOUNDATIONS OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY By BALBIR SINGH, published by Orient Longmans Ltd.,

17, Chittaranjan Avenue, Calcutta 13, Rs. 27.50.

THE UNKNOWN NIETZSCHE By SUBHASH C. KASHYAP, published by National Publishing House, 2/35, Ansari Road, Darya Ganj, Delhi 6, price Rs. 32.50.

PATHWAY TO HAPPINESS AND OTHER ESSAYS By R. S. RASTOGI, published by Balkrishna Book Co., Hazratganj, Lucknow, price Rs. 1.50.

## NEWS AND REPORTS

### THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION, NEW DELHI REPORT FOR 1970-71

The activities of this centre during the period under review were as follows:

**Medical:** Tuberculosis Clinic: It has full facilities for diagnosis and treatment of T.B. in all its aspects. There is a laboratory equipped for all forms of bacteriological examinations including specialized examinations. Milk and tiffin were supplied free to all free-ward indoor patients. Costly medicines were also supplied free to them and also to all out-patients whose monthly income was less than Rs. 300/-. There were 28 beds in the observation wards. 235 indoor cases were treated in the observation wards. The number of outdoor cases treated in the Clinic during the year was 2556 (1,17,109 repeated cases) of which 1705 were new. The staff of the Domestic Service Unit kept contact with patients and the institution.

**Outdoor Homoeopathic Dispensary:** It has been serving the people of the locality, especially its poorer sections, since its inception in 1929. During the year it treated 68,652 cases of which 7,354 were new.

**Cultural and Social:** Discourses in English were delivered on Sunday evenings in the Mission auditorium by the Secretary Swami and others on Upanishads and on other relevant topics. A monastic member conducted some classes on 'The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna' in Bengali. Discourses in Hindi on *Sri Ramacharita-manas* were held in the auditorium regularly on Saturday evenings. Movies depicting the lives of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi and Meera were shown in some places in and around Delhi. During the year under review the Secretary conducted regular weekly classes on Sunday mornings at the Vedanta Samiti, Delhi University. The Secretary and other monastic members were in-

vited for discourses by many institutions in and outside the city.

The birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi, Swami Vivekananda and so also of Sri Rama, Sri Krishna, Christ, Buddha, Guru Nanak, Tulsidas, Ramanuja and Sankara were observed with due solemnity, worship, bhajans, readings from the scriptures and discourses.

**General Library and Reading Room:** The library and Reading Room had been growing all round from year to year. During the year the daily average of visitors was 329. In all, 1558 new books were added and the total number of books (including children's section) stood at 24,434. The number of books issued was 19,596. The Reading Room received 15 newspapers and 146 periodicals.

University students' section registered a steady progress during the year. The daily average number of students using the library was 102 and the number of books increased to 3450. In all 500 students, both boys and girls, used the library.

**The Sarada Mahila Samiti:** The Secretary addressed its monthly meetings and expounded *Kathopanishad*. Classes on the *Bhagavad-gita* and *Narada-Bhakti-Sutras* were also conducted. The programme of medico-social service at the Lady Hardinge Medical College Hospital for women was continued by the Samiti in the form of giving monetary help, talking to patients, telling them devotional stories, singing bhajans, and teaching the children there who had to miss school due to illness, distribution of books etc. About 200 patients were served in this manner.

In Sarada Mandir, a Sunday school, the average attendance was about 40. The school hour was spent in prayer, meditation, music and story-telling. The Samiti also arranged occasional group classes for university students to inculcate religious ideas.