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Prabuddha Bharata

VOL. LXXVII

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No. 7

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

SRI RAMAKRISHNA ANSWERS

Question (asked by Trailokya) : 'Is it ever possible, sir, to have true knowledge of God while living in the world ? Can one realize God here ?'

Sri Ramakrishna (*with a smile*): 'Why do you worry ? You are enjoying both treacle and refined sugar. You are living in the world with your mind in God. Isn't that true ? Why shouldn't a man realize God in the world ? Certainly he can.'

Question: 'What are the signs of a householder's having attained Knowledge ?'

Sri Ramakrishna: 'His tears will flow, and the hair of his body will stand on end. No sooner does he hear the sweet name of God than the hair on his body stands on end from sheer delight, and tears roll down his cheeks.'

'A man cannot get rid of body-consciousness as long as he is attached to worldly things and loves "woman and gold". As he becomes less and less attached to worldly things, he approaches nearer and nearer to the Knowledge of Self. He also becomes less and less conscious of his body. He attains Self-Knowledge when his worldly attachment totally disappears. Then he realizes that body and soul are two separate things. It is very difficult to separate with a knife the kernel of a coconut from the shell before the milk inside has dried up. When the milk dries up, the kernel rattles inside the shell. At that time it loosens itself from the shell. Then the fruit is called a dry coconut.'

'The sign of a man's having realized God is that he has become like a dry coconut. He has become utterly free from the consciousness that he is the body. He does not feel happy or unhappy with the happiness or unhappiness of the body. He does not seek the comforts of the body. He roams about in the world as a jivanmukta, one liberated in life. "The devotee of Kali is a jivanmukta, full of Eternal Bliss."

'When you find that the very mention of God's name brings tears to your eyes and makes your hair stand on end, then you will know that you have freed yourself from attachment to "woman and gold" and attained God. If the matches are dry, you get a spark by striking only one of them. But if

they are damp, you don't get a spark even if you strike fifty. You only waste matches. Similarly, if your mind is soaked in the pleasure of worldly things, in "woman and gold", then God-Consciousness will not be kindled in you. You may try a thousand times, but all your efforts will be futile. But no sooner does attachment to worldly pleasure dry up than the spark of God flashes forth.'

Question: 'What is the way to dry up the craving for worldly pleasure?'

Sri Ramakrishna: 'Pray to the Divine Mother with a longing heart. Her vision dries up all craving for the world and completely destroys all attachment to "woman and gold". It happens instantly if you think of Her as your own mother. She is by no means a godmother. She is your own mother. With a yearning heart persist in your demands on Her. The child holds to the skirt of its mother and begs a penny of her to buy a kite. Perhaps the mother is gossiping with her friends. At first she refuses to give the penny and says to the child: "No, you can't have it. Your daddy has asked me not to give you money. When he comes home I'll ask him about it. You will get into trouble if you play with a kite now." The child begins to cry and will not give up his demand. Then the mother says to her friends: "Excuse me a moment. Let me pacify this child." Immediately she unlocks the cash-box with a click and throws the child a penny.

'You too must force your demand on the Divine Mother. She will come to you without fail. I once said the same thing to some Sikhs when they visited the temple at Dakshineswar. We were conversing in front of the Kali temple. They said, "God is compassionate." "Why compassionate?" I asked. They said, "Why, revered sir, He constantly looks after us, gives us righteousness and wealth, and provides us with our food." "Suppose", I said, "a man has children. Who will look after them and provide them with food—their own father, or a man from another village?"'

Question (asked by the Sub-judge): 'Is not God, then, compassionate, sir?'

Sri Ramakrishna: 'Why should you think that? I just made a remark. What I mean to say is that God is our very own. We can exert force on Him. With one's own people one can even go so far as to say, "You rascal! Won't you give it to me?"'

Question (asked by Hazra): 'Does God listen to our prayer for Bhakti?'

Sri Ramakrishna: 'Surely. I can assure you of that a hundred times. But the prayer must be genuine and earnest. Do worldly-minded people weep for God as they do for wife and children? At Kamarpukur the wife of a certain man fell ill. The man thought she would not recover; he began to tremble and was about to faint. Who feels that way for God?'



ONWARD FOR EVER !

We have to cover everything with the Lord Himself, not by a false sort of optimism, not by blinding our eyes to the evil, but by really seeing God in everything. Thus we have to give up the world, and when the world is given up, what remains? God. What is meant? You can have your wife; it does not mean that you are to abandon her, but that you are to see God in the wife. Give up your children; what does that mean? To turn them out of doors, as some human brutes do in every country? Certainly not. That is diabolism; it is not religion. But see God in your children. So, in everything. In life and in death, in happiness and in misery, the Lord is equally present. The whole world is full of the Lord. Open your eyes and see Him. This is what Vedanta teaches. Give up the world which you have conjectured, because your conjecture was based upon a very partial experience, upon very poor reasoning, and upon your own weakness. Give it up; the world we have been thinking of so long, the world to which we have been clinging so long, is a false world of our own creation. Give that up; open your eyes and see that as such it never existed; it was a dream, Maya. What existed was the Lord Himself. It is He who is in the child, in the wife, and in the husband; it is He who is in the good and in the bad; He is in the sin and in the sinner; He is in life and in death.

Tricknam

REFLECTIONS ON PROGRESS

EDITORIAL

I

To the educated of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, material progress of man—either endless or towards the goal of a heaven-on-earth—was a fact beyond all controversies. Granted sufficient time, and profuse discoveries and inventions in science and technology, this world would become perfect—that is, free from poverty, disease, misery, and savagery—and man civilized, moral, and happy. This concept of progress was propounded and nurtured by leading philosophers and thinkers of those two centuries. Hegel, whose contribution to the philosophy of progress and dialectical materialism is profound, postulated that the Absolute is expressing itself progressively in a never-ending becoming. But the historical and sociological events of this century have shattered to pieces the golden dreams of human progress. The two World Wars, the 'limited' wars in Korea and Vietnam, Nazi and Bolshevik atrocities and purges, genocide in Biafra and Bangladesh, environmental pollution, highway accidents and street violence, drug addiction and promiscuity, slums and flower children of affluent societies—these are enough to disillusion even the most ardent but rational believers in progress, except perhaps the Marxist socialists, who are anchored to a nineteenth-century prophet and swear by a materialistic doctrine.

Science and technology have conferred countless blessings on mankind. But has man become better, nobler, altruistic, and civilized? Nothing of the kind.

Here is an anecdote with a point.

Christ came from a white plain to a purple city and as he passed through the first street, he heard voices overhead, and saw a young man lying in the gutter. 'Why do you waste your time in drunkenness?' he asked. The drunk replied, 'I was a leper and you healed me, what else can I do?'

A little farther through the town he saw a young man following a harlot and said, 'Why do you dissolve your soul in debauchery?' And the young man answered, 'Lord, I was blind and you gave me sight, and what else can I do?' At last in the middle of the city he saw an old man weeping, and crouching on the ground, and when he asked why he wept, the old man answered: 'Lord, I was dead and you raised me unto life, what else can I do but weep?'

What Jesus Christ allegedly accomplished through his supernatural powers, science is doing naturally. Through wonder-drugs and surgical marvels it heals superbly, postpones old age and death, and through genetic engineering hopes to conquer death. But how is man utilizing these physical and many other benefits derived from science? Not surely for the prosperity and security of himself or his fellows. Science has given man 'life' but not a 'philosophy of life'.

Global industrialization and widespread mechanization, which are threatening ecological disasters, were thought to be the 'open sesame' for prosperity and happiness. Industrialization has its own inherent defects, not the least of which are trade-unionism, profiteering, competition, and overproduction.

This small story has a big moral.

A coal miner's family could not have a fire on a winter morning. The miner's young son asked the father why there was no fire in the house. 'Because there is no coal, my son,' replied the father. 'Why isn't there any coal?' 'Because there is no money to buy it.' 'Why can't you have any money?' 'Because I am out of job.' 'Why are you out of job?' 'Because there is plenty of coal.'

The miners were laid off because of a glut in coal production.

One of the direct consequences of progress in industrial technology is the prolife-

ration of cities with rural population converging on them. A modern city, West or East, is like a miniature cosmos. Just as it shelters noble and dutiful citizens, the city also harbours satanic and violent elements. Owing to the latter, life in big cities has become insecure and hazardous. Recently we read that W. H. Auden, one of the greatest living figures in English poetry, has gone back to England and to Oxford after spending thirtythree years in New York. Though at his age he needs suitable company and attention, one other important reason for his leaving New York was the terror of being mugged by armed robbers. He, it is said, always kept a five-dollar bill in his pocket as a sop for 'muggers'. 'In Oxford', he said, 'I won't be afraid of the dark.'¹

The champions of progress, social and material, should ponder deeply over these points and the opinions of thoughtful men and women about the present-day trends in society and the world. Walter Orr Roberts, who was President of the American Association for the Advancement of Science for 1968, has the following to say on this so-called advancement:

'Science and technology are deep in the flux of controversy. With the automobile and the superhighway, we have smog. With cigarettes at every store, cancer. With nuclear power, the bomb. With the miracle of TV, its programming. We plan to walk on the moon, and with exquisite concern for the lives of the two or four astronauts who will walk there, we spend hundreds of millions of dollars to assure their safe return. But we find it impossible to marshal the human ingenuity to give food or shelter to uncounted millions of souls who will die of sheer starvation and exposure.'²

¹ *The Hindustan Times*, New Delhi, Feb. 15, 1972.

² Quoted by Prof. T. R. Seshadri in *Science and Spirituality*: (Pub. by the Sri Ramakrishna Mission Vidyalaya, Perianaickenpalayam, Coimbatore Dt., 1969), pp. 49-50.

II

Man somehow clings close to the idea of progress despite the glaring anomalies abounding in human history. There may be an apparent phase of progress in some countries and cultures which later historians sanctify by calling it as 'golden age' etc. But even these opinions are controversial and do not stand penetrating scrutiny. As some thinkers like Oswald Spengler have demonstrated, human civilization, among geographically defined groups and masses, passes through a somewhat similar life-cycle as of a human being. Just as a man has his youth and adulthood, a civilization too may be progressive and dominant. But that is only a temporary phase. Soon decline and death follow.

Speaking from a physical or external viewpoint, modern man has undoubtedly advanced a great deal compared to his cave-dweller counterpart. He has greater control over his environment and that is a hallmark of progress. His knowledge of the world and the universe is astoundingly immense. Modern man's discoveries and inventions could not have been even imagined by his ancestors. His comforts, power, and prosperity have not been witnessed before in historical times. All this is too true. But what gains has the inner man, the real man, made? Have his age-old questions been answered? We are at the same old point as our ancestors when we still seek answers for such ultimate questions as what soul or power is responsible for this wondrous creation, what is our duty here, why there is suffering on earth, whence are we and whither do we go, and 'so many questions that we have addressed for centuries to the ever silent heavens'.

With man's knowledge and intellectual capacities expanding in an ever-widening ambit, his wisdom and nobility seem to shrink to miserable puddles. The more he

knows the universe the less he seems to love it. And the grievous tragedy is, he is becoming a worse misanthrope than his stone-age ancestors. Maurice Maeterlinck, the Belgian writer and Nobel laureate, depicts with acerbity and truth the degeneracy and iniquity of modern man in the 'Prelude' to *The Great Beyond*:

'Did all the recent discoveries raise the moral ceiling of man, that is, his character, his sentiments, his general ideas, his everyday thoughts, his spiritual horizon? On the contrary, it seems that the more boundless did the skies become, the more the walls of the home in which he lives shrink, and the lower its roof becomes. The more he knows about the abode of the stars, the deeper he sinks under the ground where prosper the moles. The more he discovered—following the example of the social insects, or prodded by the same instinct—the power of the state of which he believed himself to be master, the more unbearable a prison he made of it.

'He and others like him believed that by crowding in the shadow, they would create light; would learn all things, and that it was enough to think of the earth alone in order to have a complete idea about the universe and to replace a God who could never be seen.

'They were forgetting or did not notice that one can very well be a great engineer, a great mathematician, and even a great astronomer and still remain an exploiter and a scoundrel.'

'If, then, as you argue, human progress is an utter impossibility,' someone might counter, 'are we to withdraw from the world like the desert fathers or Vedic sages? Shall we abandon all our scientific researches and ventures? Aren't we, then, to scrap all our melioristic plans and programmes?' No, we need not at all take such extreme and negative steps. We have, however, to keep in mind two basic facts

while continuing to do what we have on hand with zeal and devotion. First, the whole phenomenal universe, of which our earth and we ourselves are an organic part, is only the mutating skin of a profound, indivisible, infinite and all-knowing Reality. Second, while no real progress in the material world is feasible, all progress in the subject, that is, the inner man, is possible—and imperative too—through his ardent efforts to make the world progressive.

Man just finds himself on this earth. He is neither its creator nor its master. All talk of conquest and mastery of nature is only for impressing children. This world is not such a simple and tiny, little thing that modern man, through his science and inventions, can push it around as he pleases. On the contrary, it is a bewildering and immense complexity, a puzzle within puzzle *ad infinitum*, of which he can never make any head or tail. He is veritably like a child on a vast seashore collecting coloured shells and intently studying them. How can he talk of changing the world or improving it? Even if he tries for aeons his efforts will only prove Sisyphean to the end. But he can change and improve himself to such a degree that he will see the whole universe as perfect, one homogeneous whole, infinite, and without barriers. That is what is really meant by progress and achievement of perfection.

Once when an English disciple of Swami Vivekananda expressed a desire to come back again and again to this life and 'help the causes that were of interest to her instead of striving for personal salvation', the Swami, who was a great advocate of 'service to the poor', did not appreciate her unselfish feelings. He might have detected some amount of disguised egotism behind those pious-sounding words. So he quickly retorted: 'That's because you cannot overcome the idea of progress. But things do not grow better. They remain as they are; and

we grow better, by the change we make in them.'³

III

Evolutionary change is considered progressive when it increases independence of, and control over, the environment. If we apply this law to man while restricting the connotation of environment to its conventional meaning, we find that man has indeed progressed. But man has an internal environment too. And that is both psychological and spiritual. If the law is applied with regard to the internal environment, we find man is still in good company with his evolutionary cousins, wild and arboreal. Progress for man, therefore, must mean a growing independence of and control over the internal environment which consists of his rages and passions, selfishness and egotism. And that is spiritual progress. This progress is not an eternal ongoing. It has an end and a supreme consummation. In the Vedāntic vocabulary it is the achievement of that level of perception when one realizes the truth of *tattvamasi*—That thou art—or the identity of the individual self with the Supreme Self.

The Hindu yogis speak of different planes of consciousness. They say from experience that, fulfilling rather some exacting conditions, a man can steadily rise to higher planes of awareness where the normal waking and dream worlds do not intrude. Normally, a man lives on the three lower centres—called in yogic parlance as *mūlādhāra*, *swādhīsthāna*, *manipūra*—busily pursuing his instinctual, physical, and psychological drives and aspirations. His higher psychic powers and spiritual potentialities remain slumbering, as it were. Not even a trillionth part of his real powers and potentialities can

³ *The Complete Works* (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Himalayas, Almora), Vol. VIII (1959), p. 262.

be expressed on these lower planes. Real spiritual progress begins when there is the awakening of the *kundalinī* or coiled-up spiritual energy, and it moves through the *susumnā* canal to the fourth centre located in the region of the heart. In *anāhata*, the name by which this centre is known, the mind of the aspirant is withdrawn from the objects relating to eating, sleeping, and creature comforts. Here he has strange psychic perceptions, such as the vision of a light and the sound of 'aum' or *pranava*. He tastes for the first time a peace and bliss the like of which he had not experienced before. With greater purity, discipline, devotion to God, and concentration, he can rise to higher planes. In the words of Sri Ramakrishna:

"The centre known as Visuddha is the fifth plane. This centre is at the throat and has a lotus with sixteen petals. When the Kundalini reaches this plane, the devotee longs to talk and hear only about God. Conversations on worldly subjects, on "woman and gold", causes him great pain. He leaves a place where people talk of these matters.

"Then comes the sixth plane, corresponding to the centre known as Ajna. This centre is located between the eyebrows and it has a lotus with two petals. When the Kundalini reaches it, the aspirant sees the form of God. But still there remains a slight barrier between the devotee and God. It is like a light inside a lantern. You may think you have touched the light, but in reality you cannot because of the barrier of glass.

'And last of all is the seventh plane, which, according to Tantra, is the centre of the thousand-petalled lotus. When the Kundalini arrives there, the aspirant goes into samadhi. In that lotus dwells Satchidananda Siva, the Absolute. There Kundalini, the awakened Power, unites with Siva. This is known as the union of Siva and Sakti.'⁴

Reaching the seventh centre, the spiritual aspirant completes his spiritual journey. His bliss and knowledge then become infinite. If by God's grace he is enabled to come down to normal plane of consciousness, then he sees himself in the whole universe and the universe in himself. In his transformed vision differences and imperfections cease to register. What he used to see in the days of his ignorance as the imperfect, miserable and inert world now appears as Truth, Bliss, and Infinity. No more will he talk of progress and improvement. No more will he cut up the Reality as physical and mental, phenomenal and noumenal. He only wonders how it was ever possible for him to take or mistake man or world or the meanest thing as imperfect.

IV

In a simple but telling poetical composition entitled *Anātma-śrī-vigrahanam*—'Denunciation of sham-glory of not-self'—, Śaṅkara, the philosopher-saint, pointedly asks:

'You may have crossed the ocean on foot. You may have at ease confined the wind in a jar. You may have lifted a whole mountain on your palm....

'You may have drunk poison as if it were milk. You may have eaten fire like eating popcorn. Like a bird, you may have acquired the power of flight through the sky....

'You may have subjugated the elements such as fire. Solid steel may have been pierced directly through your power. You may have acquired immense wealth through magical powers.

'Yet, if you have not realized your own Self, what will it avail you? Oh, what indeed will it avail you?'

Science and technology might bring all the power, progress, and prosperity that

⁴'M.': *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Sri

Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras-4, 1947), pp. 455-6.

Śaṅkara hints at above in his poem. Still that will not make this world perfect or man happy. Just like the youth in the present-day affluent societies man will rebel against the false values and reach out for that 'something' which alone gives meaning and fulfilment to human life. That 'something' is the realization of the Self which, 'like the figure "1" giving meaning and value to the train of zeros coming after', invests man, his endeavours, and the world with meaning and glory.

Spiritual progress, according to Vedānta, is no forward movement. In fact, it is no movement at all, forward or backward. It is only the removal of an intervening veil or screen on one's own real Self. Suppose a man is looking at a beautiful and sprawling scenery through a pinhole in a screen. His

vision of the scenery is very imperfect. Suppose the hole grows bigger till it becomes one with the screen. His vision also becomes clearer and better and finally it is perfect and unobstructed. All the while neither the observer nor the scenery did undergo any change. Spiritual progress, described as the ascent from the lowest centre to the highest, is to be understood similarly. To look at this world from the sensual level is like viewing the scenery through the pinhole. Perceiving it from the sensual level is like viewing the scenery without the intervening screen. Then the world and the observer are both seen as waves of Reality which merge and mingle in the homogeneous ocean of Truth-existence-bliss Absolute.

LETTERS OF A SAINT

THE LORD MY REFUGE

Almora

24.7.15

Dear—,

By my will nothing much can happen. 'It is God's will that always prevails.'¹ I am greatly pleased that you prayed for my recovery. Please accept my heartfelt thanks for it. Your desire to realize God is quite befitting:

'If a man knows the Ātman here, he then attains the true goal of life.

If he does not know It here, then great destruction awaits him.'²

It will be to one's good to attain Him while in this body; otherwise great calamity undoubtedly awaits. He who sincerely longs for Him finds Him: 'It is attained by him alone whom It chooses.'³ 'I search and seek but can't get Him. He, who is chosen by Him, gets Him.'

The Lord can be realized easily. He is indeed very compassionate. But the point is—who *wants* Him? 'If you earnestly seek for Me, I will meet you in a moment's search'—if anyone sincerely searches for Him, He will appear be-

¹ देवेच्छा प्रवर्तते ।

² इह चेदवेदीदथ सत्यमस्ति न चेदिहावेदीन्महती विनष्टिः । *Kena-upaniṣad*, II. 5.

³ यमेवैष वृणुते तेन लभ्यः । *Mundaka-upaniṣad*, III. 2, 3.

fore him in a trice, it is His promise. But who cares to seek? Such is the Mahāmāyā, the Mother and Her delusive power! She has kept us all absorbed in so many things that we do not ever feel an urge for seeking Him. It reminds me of Sri Ramakrishna's parable of receptacles in a storehouse for rice: 'In big grain stores the merchants keep rice in great heaps that touch the ceiling. To protect the grains from the mice, the merchants leave puffed rice and sweetened rice near them on a winnowing fan. The mice get the parched smell of these and feed on them sumptuously. Thus they even get no clue of those heaps of rice. All the same the rice is there itself.' In the same way, a man is engrossed in the happiness of wife, son etc. He does not endeavour to get divine bliss. But He is always present within us. Such is Mahāmāyā!

When such delusion veils the world, through Mahāmāyā's spell
That Brahmā is bereft of sense,
And Viṣṇu loses consciousness,
What hope is left for men?

The narrow channel first is made, and there the trap is set;
But open though the passage lies,
The fish, once safely through the gate,
Do not come out again.

The silk-worm patiently prepares its closely spun cocoon;
Yet even though a way leads forth,
Encased within its own cocoon,
The worm remains to die.

Such is the delusion of Mahāmāyā! Such indeed is the delusion of Mahāmāyā!! But here is the word of fearlessness:

'Those who devote themselves to Me alone, shall cross over this māyā.'^{3a}
'Take refuge in Him alone with all your soul, O Bhārata. By His grace will you gain Supreme Peace and the Everlasting Abode.'⁴

What is wanted is *śraddhā*, godly faith: if by the grace of the Lord *śraddhā* is born, then there won't be any more fear.

'He who is full of faith and zeal and has subdued his senses obtains Knowledge; having obtained Knowledge, he soon attains Supreme Peace.'⁵

This is an inward experience and it is never affected by people's talk. The knowledge flashes within. It is known to oneself, and is it influenced one way or the other by others' talk? Within, the bliss becomes full. 'He neither grieves nor craves'⁶—there is no wonder if, by the grace of the Lord, anyone

^{3a} मामेव ये प्रपद्यन्ते मायामेतां तरन्ति ते । *Gītā*, VII. 14.

⁴ तमेव शरणं गच्छ सर्वभावेन भारत ।

तत्प्रसादात् परां शान्तिं स्थानं प्राप्स्यसि शाश्वतम् ॥ *ibid.*, XVIII. 62.

⁵ श्रद्धावान् लभते ज्ञानं तत्परः संयतेन्द्रियः ।

ज्ञानं लब्ध्वा परां शान्तिमचिरेणाधिगच्छति ॥ *ibid.*, IV. 39

⁶ न शोचति न काङ्क्षति । *ibid.*, XVIII. 54

realizes it. A room kept dark for a thousand years becomes lighted in a second by striking a single match. Sri Ramakrishna used to say, 'All jackals howl alike.' That is to say, when knowledge dawns all have the same experience. No contradictions exist in their utterances.

They are all the children of the Divine Mother. As many views, so many paths. But all arrive at the same place, the destination is one.

'To persons following various paths—straight or crooked, depending on the diversity in temperaments and tastes—You [the Supreme] are the only goal, as the ocean is to the rivers.'⁷

'Uncle moon is everybody's uncle'—is there any error in it? Why should you become weak-minded? Being the child of the Divine Mother, you are possessed of infinite power. 'O friend, he whose mother is the Divine Mother, Brahman's Embodiment, of what can he be afraid?' Rāmprasād says:

'Safe do I stand by drawing round me the magic circle of Kālī's name.
If you speak harshly to me, O Death,
And I report to the Mother, you will be punished.
Śyāmā, the Destroyer of Death, is a madcap woman.
Listen, O Death, to what I say: I am not a weakling that I will obey
you meekly.
This is not a sweetmeat in a child's hand
That you will cajole it away and eat it.'

Will the Mother's child lack any strength? By Her grace, you possess infinite power. Sri Ramakrishna used to say, 'She is not a mother by some cooked-up relationship; She is one's own real Mother.'

'Mother is the embodiment of Brahman and She dwells in all beings. At Her feet are all the holy pilgrim-places and rivers, like Gayā, Gaṅgā, and Kāśī.'

'You are the power of Viṣṇu and of infinite valour. You are the primeval māyā, the source of this cosmos. O Goddess, by You has been deluded all this creation. If You become gracious, You become the cause of liberation in this world.'⁸

This Brahmayī is our Mother. What fear have we, why should we be weak? He who thinks himself weak becomes really weak. You are Mother's child: how can you be weak? You contain within you great power. By Her grace what can you not accomplish? How much time does it take to be rid of the notions of 'I and mine'? The Mother, through Her grace, can grant you illumination in a second—She grants for certain.

SRI TURIYANANDA

⁷ रुचीनां वैचित्र्याद्भुजुकुटिलनानापथजुषां

नृणामेको गम्यस्त्वमसि पयसामर्णव इव ॥ *Śiva-mahimnaḥ-stavaḥ*, 7

⁸ त्वं वैष्णवीशक्तिरनन्तवीर्या विश्वस्य बीजं परमासि माया ।

सम्मोहितं देवि समस्तमेतत् त्वं वै प्रसन्ना भुवि मुक्तिहेतुः ॥ *Devī-māhātmyam (Candī) XI. 5*

MEISTER ECKHART, LOVER OF GOD

(continued from the previous issue)

DR. LETA JANE LEWIS

The richness of God consists in five things. First, in the fact that he is the first cause; Second, in the fact that he is uniform in his being; therefore, he is the innermost Self of all things. Third, in the fact that he is now in the act of pouring himself out; therefore, he divides himself with all things. Fourth, in the fact that he is immutable; therefore, he is the support of all things. Fifth, in the fact that he is perfect; therefore, he is that which is most desirable.—Meister Eckhart.

Although God, according to Meister Eckhart, continually pours himself forth into all corners of the universe as the 'eternal process', he is in no way qualified or limited by this activity. Time and space are fragments, but there is perfect unity in God. 'He is neither here nor there; he is neither this nor that.' Love and wisdom, like all other virtues, have their source in him; yet, he is none of these virtues as we understand them. To form a conception of God is to 'miss him completely', 'to know nothing about him, and to be in animality'. It would hardly be accurate even to think of him as all virtue raised to an infinite degree and, therefore, beyond human comprehension. He has no name. But if he must be described, it will do him the least violence to call him 'the Word' and 'Truth'. Even his creative activity is outside time. At this moment, he is actively creating not only the world which existed six thousand years ago and the world which we now see before our eyes but also the world which will exist six thousand years from now. Since all perfection already exists in God, he works without reason or goal.

To make the infinite difference between God and the temporal universe absolutely clear, Meister Eckhart habitually used negative terms when speaking of the divine source of all life and consciousness 'in whom we live, move and have our being'. By referring to God as 'Nothing', he differentiat-

ed him from things, which are subject to the limitations of time and space.

Paradoxically, he also referred to God's creatures negatively. While God is 'Nothing' in that he cannot be identified with earthly things, man is 'nothing' without God. Having no existence apart from God, man would cease to exist if God did not sustain him. 'When I know all creatures in God,' declared Meister Eckhart, 'I know them as nothing.' It is, therefore, perfectly possible to 'see nothing with open eyes'. Unlike the evanescent worldly personality, the divine spark in the soul shares God's eternal existence and, consequently, cannot be classified as 'nothing'. However, the *real* Self, which Meister Eckhart called 'God in the soul', is untouched by the world. It is free and uncreated and can be known only by looking inward. Since it is above time and space and all their attributes, it cannot be described in words.

Meister Eckhart employed many colourful metaphors in the attempt to convey a non-intellectual, intuitive idea of God in the Soul. God, he wrote, is a light which the soul cannot comprehend. But when this light pours into the soul, the soul is united with God like a light with a light. When the soul no longer turns outward to external things, it will dwell in its simple, pure light. One must be blind to the world in order to see this light just as the eye must be 'empty of colour before it can see colour'. When we

turn our gaze outward into creation instead of inward toward God, 'what we see is night'. 'Those who live in the five senses cannot enjoy the sacrament of communion.' To know God and experience eternal life, we must transcend this selfish, sense-oriented existence. 'If... [we] reject all that is within... [us]... [we] shall be the pure being of God.'

Since 'corporality, temporality, and multiplicity' prevent us from finding God in the soul, Meister Eckhart constantly emphasized the importance of discrimination between the eternal and the non-eternal in order to renounce the non-eternal. When we become real lovers of God, he maintained, we will renounce this world without the least regret. We will then know what a great weakness it is to suffer because of worldly frustrations. And, even now, we should realize that when we mourn the loss of worldly things, it is a sign that we have forgotten God and love the world too much. We should struggle to renounce worldly possessions so completely that we neither feel attachment to them when we have them nor miss them when we lose them. Meister Eckhart related how Diogenes once sat naked in his barrel talking to Alexander the Great. 'I am a much greater man than you,' he declared, 'for I have renounced more than you have gained by conquering the world. What you call great is so insignificant to me that I cannot even bother to disdain it.'

Diogenes, being free from action motivated by worldly desires, satisfied Meister Eckhart's definition of the tranquil man. Unlike Lot's wife, the tranquil man does not look back with longing attachment at what he has left behind by the act of renunciation. Being perfectly non-attached, he is as concerned about other people's lives and problems as he is about his own. Since the tranquil man can remember God easily, Meister Eckhart called tranquillity 'man's greatest gift to God'. God can work secret

divine wonders in the heart which is empty of all but himself, so tranquillity is above fasting, praying, and the performance of all austerities. In fact, Meister Eckhart knew nothing higher than abiding in tranquillity when life is difficult and painful.

To surrender the will, which Meister Eckhart calls 'love's dwelling place', completely to God is the act of perfect renunciation. Realizing that in our lack of wisdom we do not know what is best for us, the man of right discrimination desires only what God wants him to have. 'Thy will be done', is his only prayer. He accepts everything, good or bad, which comes from God. 'If our friend dies—in the name of God! If we lose an eye—in the name of God!' Only unhappiness comes from failing to surrender the will to God, who alone understands our true interest. It is spiritually harmful to ask God for earthly benefits or to bargain with him in any way. Even those who ask for holy gifts of piety from God do not find him, for it is selfish to want to experience God for one's own happiness. We do not love God as we should if we seek blessedness for ourselves rather than for other people. So we should tolerate no desires of our own, whether for blessedness, for salvation, or even for God.

Meister Eckhart explained that, although renunciation may seem insurmountably difficult to the ordinary sense-oriented individual, it becomes easy for those who, taking refuge in God, experience his grace. When we have learned to give up our will to God, we will be able to renounce seemingly important things 'as easily as a lentil or a pea'. 'If I found myself in this Being for even a moment,' maintained Meister Eckhart, 'I would pay as little attention to myself as to a little manure worm.'

When, through devotion, God-centred action, and renunciation, the devotee experiences the birth of God in his soul, he is immediately freed from all weaknesses and

acquires all virtues. God's will becomes his will, and it is impossible for him to do any wrong. Knowing that he actually *is* the divine spark of God in the ground of his soul, he overcomes his selfish identification with his body, his family, and his friends. He sees and loves God in everyone, including those who were formerly his enemies.

Although Meister Eckhart admitted no possibility of temporal change within God, whose pure, undifferentiated Being is in no way affected by the world process for which he is responsible, he paradoxically maintained that God's creative activity places a certain limitation upon him. He distinguished God from the Godhead (which he also called the 'Ground') by the fact that the former acts in the creative process, while the latter remains in completely inactive repose. But he insisted that, in all other respects, God and the Godhead are identical, that they supplement each other inseparably like the two sides of one coin. The devotee can enter into a loving personal relationship with God but not with the inactive, impersonal Godhead. The Godhead exists alone outside of time, in which God, the Creator, spontaneously appears giving birth to the Son and to the Holy Ghost. God continues his creative work for countless ages until the process is reversed and the Son and the Holy Ghost flow back into the Father. When, at the end of time, the Trinity becomes fused in one, God's activity, which alone had differentiated him from the Godhead, automatically ceases. Because God thus seems to come into being at the inception of creation and to disappear at its close, Meister Eckhart conceived of him as going through a development, as 'having a history'. However, only those who are ignorant of the Infinite see time in the process of creation. Meister Eckhart assures us that, from the standpoint of timeless infinity, which, for him, is the only legitimate standpoint, God's history ended before it began. Con-

sequently, God and his creation are illusory. In the last analysis, nothing but the Godhead, in which all creation has always been one, has ever existed.

As might be imagined, the more dogmatic, less spiritually enlightened clerics of Meister Eckhart's time found his bold statement of the ultimate identity of all things in the Godhead blasphemously pantheistic. Somehow they must have overlooked the fact that Meister Eckhart did not identify either God or the Godhead with the limited human ego, which is quite other than God in the Ground of the soul. They apparently did not read his sermons carefully enough to discover his clear statements to the effect that man has received 'all he has' from the transcendent Lord of the universe and that he would be nothing, spiritually or otherwise, without him. Never does Meister Eckhart make the pantheistic error that, although God is omnipresent in a creation which could not exist without him, he is in no way limited by his creation.

Perhaps the clerics were also alarmed by the fact that Meister Eckhart instructed the spiritual aspirant to 'go beyond God' (that is, to merge with the Godhead). If they did not consider this admonition in its proper relationships, they may have been shocked at the apparent implication that there is something more desirable than God. Meister Eckhart directs the spiritual aspirant down a long, arduous path in which worshipping the personal God is fundamental. First, he instructs the devotee to surrender himself to God because God loves him and is eager to grant him his grace. Then, he admonishes the devotee to 'go beyond God', by which he means, in effect, that it is necessary ultimately to transcend dualism. At the moment of perfect union with God, the spiritual aspirant will cease to be a separate entity; the lover and the beloved will be completely fused in an experience which is monistic rather than dualistic. In the realm of perfect

peace where there is neither creature nor creator, the personal God will have disappeared for the devotee and nothing but the Godhead will remain. One might suppose, then, that Meister Eckhart's religion is atheistic in the acceptance of a Godhead which is 'beyond God' and into which God 'disappears', but this is not the case. The merging of God in the Godhead is, if anything, an expansion of God's existence. It

does not imply his annihilation. God never ceases to exist; at the most, one might say that he is 'redefined'. Much the same thing may also be said of God's devotee. When the devotee merges with God in the Godhead, he enters a heightened Existence in the one Source of all light, bliss, and existence and, in so doing, attains the greatest possible fulfilment.

(concluded)

WHAT IS RELIGION?

SWAMI VIJNANANDA

There are several great religions prevailing in the world today. These were all either founded or discovered by great spiritual men. These religions have inspired thousands of people to great acts of kindness and self-sacrifice. Many have been transformed by these religions. Thousands have gained strength and solace from them. These religions have contributed much to the civilization of men, to social harmony and peace, human understanding and solidarity.

Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, and Buddhism are some of the great religions. Today there are hundreds of millions of Hindus, Muslims, and Christians in the world. Thousands of temples, churches, mosques are spread all over the world. People in thousands gather in these places of worship and participate in prayers, sermons, and festivals. These religions all possess scriptures by the hundreds. Thousands of religious preachers go about preaching these religions. In spite of all this, what do we find today? People are losing faith in God and religion. Religious consciousness is definitely on the decline. People are being swept off their religious moorings. Sin, sor-

row, and suffering are on the increase. People belonging to different religions hate and persecute each other in the name of religion.

Looking at this state of things, even men of religious faith are prone to doubt whether religions have become outmoded, whether they have lost their original inspiration and vigour. But, as Swami Vivekananda says, clear-thinking will reveal the fact that neither the prophets nor the religions promote intolerance, violence, bigotry, and persecution. All the evil influences of religions can be traced to ignorance about religion, that is prevalent not only in the minds of the masses, but also in the minds of the educated intellectuals. As a result of this ignorance, people have begun to suspect and repudiate all religion.

Some scientists say that religion is a matter of blind belief. Some others say that the universe is self-sufficient and self-explanatory and so there is no necessity to posit the existence of God to explain the universe. They give a mechanistic interpretation of the universe and a materialistic explanation of life. Certain psychoanalysts say that God is the projection of our own minds. We worship God as our Father and Protector

because we feel helpless in distress and we need the protection of a Father. As a child leans upon its father for support and sustenance, so also people who have not matured beyond their infancy, think of God as Father-in-Heaven. The dogmatists identify religion with scriptures and rituals. According to them unquestioning acceptance of certain dogmas and beliefs is religion. Common people believe that going to temples and offering worship, participating in ceremonies and festivals, going on pilgrimages is religion. Some moralists argue that morality is the whole of religion. There are some social workers who think that social service constitutes the core of religion. Humanists assert that humanism is religion. There are some intellectuals who think that a mere intellectual conviction about the existence of God is religion. Some others have equally fanciful interpretations of God and religion.

In order to understand what exactly is religion, we have to know the definition of the word. Etymologically, religion means 'what binds a man to God'. This usually refers to certain beliefs and dogmas by which men show their loyalty to God. But the Hindu definition of the word is different. Swami Vivekananda has beautifully defined religion. He says that, religion is the manifestation of the Divinity already in man. Every soul is potentially divine. We are not merely bodies; neither are we a complex of body and mind. We are pure spirits. Body and mind are only the periphery of our personality. The divine self is the core of our personality. Truth, beauty, goodness and bliss are its attributes. The function of religion is to bring out this divinity and manifest it.

The realization and manifestation of divinity in man, constitutes the heart of religion. Scriptures, rituals, temples, sermons etc. are only secondary details. Religion is being and becoming divine. Constant striving of

the aspiring soul for perfection and divinity is religion. When a man realizes his divinity, he attains peace and blessedness. He transcends sin, sorrow, and suffering; he goes beyond birth and death. Mortal man becomes immortal; man of the world becomes a man of God by the realization of his inherent divinity.

If we have got a divine soul, how is it that we are unaware of its existence?

We are aware of the existence of our bodies because the body is a gross object, and it is visible to our eyes. We are sure of the existence of a mind in us, though it is not visible to us. It is subtle; but through experience we know that each of us has a mind. We think through the mind, we reason through the mind. Just as we have a mind and a body, we have a soul. Our soul is not material like the body and the mind. It is spiritual and very subtle. It is because of the presence of impurities like lust and greed, anger and hatred, selfishness and pride that we are not aware of our divine soul.

When the mind is freed from its dross, Ātman—the divine self—reveals itself to us. Moral life is indispensable because, a moral life alone makes our body and mind pure. There cannot be any religion without morality; but morality is only a stepping-stone to religion. It is not the whole of religion. Moral values are rooted in religion. Moral values do not explain themselves. Religious experience alone explains moral values. Man should love others because spiritually he is one with others. Spiritually the whole mankind is one and indivisible. If we hate others, we hate ourselves. So there cannot be any morality without religion.

Religious experience is not the privilege of a few prophets. It is the common property of all men and women. Religion is realization. Scriptures, rituals, sermons etc. are only preparations. God and soul are not in outer space. They are in the depths

of our being. So in order to experience our soul, we have to turn the senses within, we have to quieten our mind and we have to meditate on the Ātman. Meditation brings man face to face with his divine soul.

Religion is not a matter of blind belief. It is based on proved facts just like science. Though religion and science seem to be far apart, they are rooted in the same spirit of truth-seeking. If science is correctly understood, it is an incessant search for truth in the outside world, whereas religion is a search for truth in the depths of our being. Passion for truth is the master sentiment that inspires and guides both religion and science. But there is one difference between science and religion. Science is no doubt progressing towards truth ; but it has not yet discovered truth. So its laws and conclusions are only as provisional as its facts. Whereas the facts of religion, its laws and conclusions are final. Religion has discovered the ultimate Truth. Religion is a perfected science, whereas science is religion in the making.

The dogmatists identify religion with scriptures. This does not make much sense. The Vedas themselves say that when a man realizes the divine Truth, he transcends the Vedas and their teachings. The scriptures cannot help us to control our senses, to purify or quieten our minds. Scriptures no doubt indicate God to us ; but they cannot give us any direct experience of God. Scriptures tell us what is good and what is bad, what is right and what is wrong. But they cannot compel us to pursue the good and shun the evil. The choice is in our hands. So preoccupation with the scripture or rituals is no religion.

Many people have a mistaken notion that religion is otherworldly. They believe that it concerns itself only with life and achievements in the other world, and it is indifferent to life in this world. But our scriptures define religion as that which is conducive to

happiness here on earth and peace hereafter. Religion is closely associated with life here. It supports man in his present stage of life, and also shows the way to a higher evolution. It covers the whole life. It determines our conduct. The greatest tragedy of modern times is the divorcing of religion from daily life.

Religious experience is not a post-mortem experience. It is possible in this very life. Religion purifies and vitalizes our physical, mental, social and spiritual life. On the physical level it purifies our bodies and senses, and directs them towards the realization of God. Our body and senses must be pure and strong. The body is the foundation for the practice of religion. Our ṛṣis of old always prayed for health and strength. The *Bhagavad-gītā* condemns torture of the body. It says that if we torture the body, we torture the God in the body. Body is the temple of God, the senses are the channels through which the light of God becomes manifest.

At the mental level, an aspirant has to practise moral virtues like purity, chastity, charity, self-control, forgiveness, truthfulness etc. At the social level religion brings about harmony, understanding and interpersonal solidarity. At the spiritual level religion becomes an inward process. It is no longer an external manifestation ; it becomes an internal realization. Every man at a certain stage of his evolution hears the voice of God. At that time man's soul becomes eager to commune with God. This hunger for God is the main theme of religion. When a man feels hunger for God, everything else—wealth, pleasures, wife and children, social service, patriotism etc.—become insipid. At that time man wants God and God alone. Then man continuously meditates on God till he is face to face with Him.

In modern times many describe the religious attitude as a flight from reality, as an escape mechanism. Man recoils from the

sordid facts of life and raises for himself a comfortable world of dreams wherein he finds himself very secure from the trials of life. This is a wrong interpretation of religion. The familiar world of sense experience is intrinsically not real. Worldly life is full of contradictions. Deep down in life is a fundamental instability, a basic contradiction. Life and death coexist in the world. Man wants to live an eternal life. But death stares at him at every step. Sorrow and happiness coexist. Man wants to be happy always ; but sorrow overtakes him at every step. Good and evil coexist. Man knows what is good and what is evil. He wants to be good and do good. But in spite of himself he becomes bad, does evil. So there is an element of self-contradiction in life. Whatever is self-contradictory cannot be inherently real. So the urge for reality and truth drives an aspirant to a religious life which transcends the contradictions of the normal worldly life. It is not easy, by any means, to give up the normal life of impulses and sense experience. The worldly life is full of fleeting joys. So it requires strength and bravery to reject the normal life and take up a religious life. It is the weak who are afraid to give up the worldly life.

The religious ideal of life has been the subject of much discussion in modern times. It has been characterized by some as life-denial, as a suppression and obliteration of the zest and fullness of life. They say, it is a deliberate impoverishment of life and personality, and involves violence to human nature. But this criticism is based on wrong assumptions. The so-called natural life of men is not in accordance with the fundamental nature of man. What is true human nature ? Ego, ambitions, selfishness, desires etc. do not constitute true human nature. These are only weaknesses of human nature. If ego, ambition etc. are the constitutional nature of man, they cannot be transcended. But the great men of all religions of the

world have shown by their lives that these can be transcended. And the people of the world worship them for transcending this apparent or lower nature and manifesting the true divine nature of man.

Man's essential nature is divine. Freedom is its characteristic. Freedom of the senses is not the true freedom. Freedom *from* the senses is the true freedom. The life of sensual existence suppresses and does violence to this divine nature of man. Hence the spiritual ideal of renunciation is for the liberation and the flowering of the true nature of man. Religious life is a denial no doubt, but not the denial of the inner reality of man but a denial of the apparent man. Religious life is a life of true fulfilment and self-affirmation. Religious life is an escape no doubt, but it is an escape into the infinite life of freedom and joy from the life of bondage and sorrow.

Religion recognizes different values: *dharma* (righteousness), *artha* (acquisition of wealth), *kāma* (enjoyment of legitimate pleasures), and *mokṣa* (liberation). Religion prescribes two ideals: material well-being and spiritual liberation. Worldly prosperity is attained by the practice of righteousness, earning of wealth and enjoyment of legitimate pleasures. Acquisition of wealth and enjoyment of pleasures are not external to religion ; but they are to be earned and enjoyed by righteous means. Otherwise they become greed and sensuality.

What is righteousness ? By righteousness we do not mean just politeness, courtesy, or even correct behaviour. Righteousness means gradually directing all our energies and faculties towards the realization of the highest good which is spiritual enlightenment. After one has enjoyed wealth and pleasures through righteous means, one pursues the highest ideal of liberation of the spirit from the bondage of matter.

So religion operates on two levels, the
(Contd. on page 305)



ILLUMINATING DIALOGUES FROM INDIAN LORE

TRUE RENUNCIATION

In ancient times there was a king by the name Śikhidhvaja adorned with the moral virtues of *sama* and *dama*¹ in the city of Ujjain. His father died at an early age. After his father's death, when only of sixteen years of age, by the prowess of his arms he brought the surrounding kingdoms under his overlordship and assumed the title of the Emperor. He was married to the daughter of the king of Saurāṣṭra, Cūḍālā, possessed of many qualities. Cūḍālā was not like an ordinary woman. Denying the trivial pleasures of the life of the senses, she engaged herself in listening to and contemplating the sacred scriptures. She began to question herself thus:

“This individual who has since childhood been designated as Cūḍālā—what is she in reality? I am not this body driven by the vital forces and every moment going to destruction. This body is inert, and these instruments of actions are not different from the body, but only its limbs, and therefore of the same inert nature as the body of which these are parts. The organ of cognition and the vital force are parts of the body and so are equally inert. Like stones driven by a stick, the mind is also driven by the sensations of the body. The *buddhi* or intellig-

ence is also a reaction of the contact of the sense-organs with their objects, a compound, and therefore it is also inert and unconscious. The ego is the reflex of the *buddhi* and is also unconscious like a corpse. Alas! Everything in this world is unreal, a creation of ignorance. There is only one Reality of the nature of Supreme Intelligence. This *cit* (intelligence) is the Brahman of the Vedānta. Let me stay in blissful abidance in Brahman, the Essence of Delight, by giving up my identification with the limiting adjuncts.’

Thus Cūḍālā day by day became introspective and by meditation on the Self realized the blissful Ātman. Her selfish longings and attachments, all the dualities of happiness and misery vanished altogether from her. Reaching the supreme goal of the Paramātmān, her inner being was filled with overflowing bliss and all her doubts vanished. She began to find her rest and abode in the supreme state of blissfulness.

One day king Śikhidhvaja, observing much grace and beauty in the form of Cūḍālā, said:

‘O blessed lady, seeing you I feel as if you have drunk the nectar of immortality and are filled with currents of bliss. Your mind has attained control of the internal and external sense-organs and they do not run counter to your wishes now. You have acquired much serenity of mind and are

¹ *sama* is the restraining of the outgoing mental propensities; *dama* is the restraining of the external sense-organs.

living in the profoundest depths of being; you have shaken off all instability and disbalance of the mind. What divine nectar have you drunk of, what rare thing have you obtained, I desire to know.'

Cūḍālā: 'O king, I have given up my identification with the body, natural to the ignorant, and have attained identity of self with Brahman. Therefore am I of such radiant form. Come happiness or misery, I am even-minded with regard to them, therefore is such calm and composure written on my face. Whatever objects I see with my finite senses and mind are only limited and finite, having no independent reality. Finding all these limited objects to be unsubstantial, I observe the Infinite Reality beyond the limitations of the mind and the senses. As my mind has become pure and transparent on the rise of right discrimination, I feel the existence of an unbroken Reality both inside and outside. This knowledge has imparted such a resplendence to my form.'

The king could not catch the drift of Cūḍālā's words. He laughed and said:

'O Cūḍālā, what incoherent jargon have you talked? But you are not to blame. You are yet a girl of tender age, of an immature mind. Go, and giving up these insane words void of reality set your mind to the enjoyment of the pleasures of life.'

Laughing off her words the king departed from her presence.

The laughter and words of ridicule from Śikhidhvaja who did not appreciate the words of Cūḍālā roused her endeavour the more and she engaged herself in spiritual practices.

After sometime, the king went out of his capital to conquer an invading enemy and Cūḍālā found much time and opportunity for her spiritual practices. Living in solitude and placing herself in a firm posture, she began to practise Yoga, restraining her *prāṇa* (vital force). The queen Cūḍālā thus

practising Yoga and firmly established in the practices of the restraint of *prāṇa*, became possessed of the powers of Yoga. When her husband Śikhidhvaja returned, she told him many a time about the knowledge of the Ātman, but he paid no heed to it and ridiculed her as an immature girl. The king plunged into a life of luxury, enjoyment, and power. But as he was bereft of the knowledge of the Reality, all his enjoyments brought only a reaction of pain and his mind began to burn day and night with an insatiable fire of self-enjoyment and its resultant misery. That revel of pleasures cloyed his senses and jaded his mind, and it brought him no prospect of an enduring happiness. His prosperous and wealthy kingdom palled and jarred on him and he began to think of some remedy for this disease of the world—its futile round of pleasures and the world-weariness it begets bringing misery in the end. His mind began to be attracted to solitary caves and forests, and the thought arose: 'Happiness or misery, adversity or prosperity cannot attack the mind of a forest-dweller and subjugate it. Purity and composure of the mind do not rise anywhere so much as in a solitary place.'

Thinking thus, when night fell and the whole city was hushed in the silence of the night and the inhabitants were overpowered by sleep, leaving the sleeping Cūḍālā in bed and saluting the Fortuna of his kingdom, he left the kingdom, to plunge into the depths of a forest. And when morning came with swift steps he passed many villages and cities, crossed many mountains and rivers and came to a thick forest situated near Mandar mountains. This place was situated far from human habitation. He built himself a hut of leaves in the forest, in an even place abounding with fruits and flowers, and with a plentiful supply of water near by. Śikhidhvaja also gathered a staff, a bowl, a flower-basket, a *kamaṇḍalu* (water-pot), a rosary, a blanket, a seat of *kuśa*-grass and

deerskin, and other necessaries for the performance of austerity. The first quarter of the day he used to spend absorbed in morning devotions and meditations and telling the beads, the second in gathering from the forest flowers for worship, and fruits and roots and fuel, the third quarter in bathing and performing worship. Afterwards, living on fruits, roots, and edible creepers gathered from the forests, he spent the greater part of the night absorbed in *japam* (repetition of God's name).

Now in the city, after king Śikhidhvaja left and entered the forest, Cūḍālā woke up and not finding her husband in bed, searched for him for a while. Cūḍālā was very intelligent and possessed of the vision of the Ātman. She had already noticed the turning away of the spirit of the king from worldly pleasures, and so concluded that he had left the kingdom and entered the forest in the hope of attaining supreme bliss and peace. She collected the citizens, and, addressing them, said:

'The king has for a certain reason left the kingdom and gone elsewhere; be you assured in your mind that in his absence I shall maintain peace and order and safety of the kingdom.'

Thus eighteen years passed in Cūḍālā's ruling the kingdom and Śikhidhvaja's living in the forest. Cūḍālā felt that by this time the king had attained steadiness in his goal and his desire for the highest truth had attained maturity. She knew from the beginning that, by means of spiritual help and instructions from her, her husband would attain supreme knowledge. She felt delighted in the thought that her husband would be established in the same supreme state with her on the rise of the true knowledge.

Cūḍālā, disguised as a Brahmin ancho-rite, appeared where the ascetic king was living in a hut in the forest. She found that her husband, wearing a deerskin, was living

alone, looking composed and desireless. Matted hair had formed a crest on his head. Śikhidhvaja turned and found before him standing a Brahmin boy, the very embodiment of *tapas* (austerity). His complexion was bright like molten gold, a rosary of beads was round his neck, and the white holy thread was hanging from his shoulder. The mark on the forehead of the boy, with an appearance of perfect self-mastery, was beautiful like the full moon on the crest of a mountain. The form of his body was like the abode of bliss and peace. Thinking some divine child had come, Śikhidhvaja rose from his seat, saluted him, and said:

'O Divine child, whence have you come? This day has become blessed for me by your sight. Accept this worship and my hospitality today.'

Cūḍālā, in the disguise of a Brahmin boy, felt much pleased at the hospitality of her husband, and, addressing him, said:

'O Sādhu! Have you attained the supreme peace and calm for which you are trying by giving up all selfish thoughts and unreal imaginings? Who are you and for what object have you come here? I am an ascetic, tell me everything truly.'

Śikhidhvaja: 'O Serene One! Afflicted with fear by the way of the world and the bondages it brings to the soul, I have entered the forest. Troubled by the thought of the eventual death of all, and hoping to find a way to immortality, I have come here. I am king Śikhidhvaja. In the world, man, a slave to desires, is carried helplessly round a succession of happiness and misery, birth and death. And he suffers thereby. There is no abiding centre of happiness and equanimity in the world. Therefore I am performing this *tapas*. But as ill luck would have it, like a poor man who works hard but does not get proportionate return for his labours, I, even though performing hard austerities, cannot get the supreme rest and peace. As if all my efforts are coming to

nought, I am getting no knowledge. I have now become more helpless by not getting the company of the *sādhus* (holy persons) which I had while in my kingdom. Although I am performing the austerities, still I am passing from one unrest of the mind to another. Nectar has turned to poison in my case.'

Cūḍālā: 'I have heard that only knowledge is the highest thing and takes one to the highest goal. Desires only sway the mind of the ignorant, by which they obtain limited results from their finite desires. But the wise knower is bereft of all finite desires; and only by giving them up can one reach the imperishable state of Truth beyond birth and death. Freed from the fetters of desire, *jīva* (individual soul) attains knowledge and reaches the highest Truth. That knowledge is the Supreme Truth. This staff, that water-pot, that seat of deerskin, which I find with you,—why are you showing such love for these? They are also a cause of

evil. Why are you not thinking about the truth of these questions: "Who am I? Where has this world sprung from, in what is it living, to what will it return?" Follow the path of the knowers of truth and learn how bondage is produced and how it vanishes. Why are you spending your life in excessive endeavours after external mortification? Live in the company of *sādhus* who by knowing the Truth have attained same-sightedness. Serve them, question them, and all your doubts will be sundered. By the rise of knowledge of the Reality in your heart, you will attain freedom. Therefore giving up these excessive external austerities, which only give pain to the body but do not conduce to the rise of knowledge of the Truth, live in the company of the *sādhus*.'

—*Saṅjaya*

Source: *Yoga-Vāsiṣṭha Rāmāyaṇa*,
Nirvāṇa Prakaraṇa, Part I.

(to be concluded)

(Contd. from page 301)

lower and the higher. The lower level prepares one for ascending to the higher level. At the lower level a religious seeker studies the scriptures, performs worship, participates in rituals, does social service etc. At the higher level the aspirant practises meditation and attains spiritual freedom.

Religion does not mean indifference to the things of the world. It means non-attachment. Non-attachment brings serenity in pleasure and pain, in honour and dishonour, in health and disease, life and death.

People nowadays say that with the spread of education, science and technology, we shall be able to dispense with religion which is only a superstition! But human beings cannot give up religion. The Russians under Stalin made the experiment but today religion is a factor in Russian life.

There are a large number of temples of worship today in Russia, and people in hundreds attend the services held in these places of worship. We cannot give up religion. It is our constitutional necessity. Man has a body, sense-organs, a mind and a soul. The body is maintained by food, the sense-organs are gratified by sound, touch, taste, smell, and form. The mind is nourished by art, literature, philosophy and science. But the soul is satisfied only by communion with God.

Man has an eternal relation with God. This relationship does not need to be created. It already exists. It has only to be discovered. To be always conscious of this relationship with God, to live our life and guide our conduct with the light of this consciousness—by Truth, Beauty, and Goodness—is Religion.

DIVINE MOTHER AND BLESSED VIRGIN

SWAMI PARAHITANANDA

'I cannot but believe that there is somewhere a great Power that thinks of Herself as feminine, and called Kālī, and Mother.... And I believe in Brahman too.'¹ In these words Swami Vivekananda expressed in an informal way and personal context the ancient Śākta or Tāntric view.

Now if there is such a Mother-Power, as many Hindus are quite certain there is, then we could expect to find some recognition of it wherever religion has approached completeness. And if it is true that the worship of this Mother-Power is of special consequence in modern times, we could expect to find such Mother-worship as is practised outside Hinduism, being practised more widely and fervently than ever today.

In recent Roman Catholicism we find both expectations fulfilled. A Catholic professor writes:

'At no time in the history of the Catholic Church have love of Mary and devotion to her been purer or more extensive and intensive than they are at the present day. The Ave Maria is second only to the Lord's Prayer in frequency. The Rosary and the Litany of the Blessed Virgin are recited publicly and privately by millions of persons every day.'²

In the same vein, Henri Daniel-Rops, one of the outstanding scholar-authors among Catholics, speaks of 'that overpowering current of fervour which has gathered throughout the centuries and which we nowadays see rising in unabated waves throughout the whole Catholic world'.³ He writes:

¹ *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda* (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Almora, Himalayas), Vol. VIII (1955), p. 264.

² Prof. P. J. Lennox, article 'Mary', *The Encyclopedia Americana* (Americana Corp., U.S.A. 1957), Vol. XVIII.

³ *The Book of Mary* (The World's Work [1913] Ltd., Kingswood, U.K., 1960), p. 114.

'The unusual proliferation of devotion to Mary in our own time is a fact of considerable and noteworthy significance. Any attempt to define its lines would have to begin with the observation that the primary role now appears to be taken neither by the data of dogmatic knowledge, nor by concepts purely theological.... The outpouring of their love for the Virgin Mother Mary has an entirely different tone and meaning.'⁴

Truly, the prediction ascribed to Mary in the Magnificat (Luke 1.48) has not gone unfulfilled: 'Henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.'

That this intensified, purified devotion to the Blessed Virgin has developed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when anti-religious forces have been powerful, is by no means the only strange thing about the development of Marian devotion. It was natural that a measure of honour should have been accorded to her, since she was the mother of Christ. A more compelling reason for the growth of this devotion was the teaching that Mary would intercede with Christ on behalf of the worshipper; yet biblical support for this teaching is conspicuously limited. It is restricted to the single incident which occurred at Cana (John 2.3): the wine had run short at a marriage feast and Mary sought Jesus' help.

Historical considerations alone would not seem to be anything like enough to explain the extraordinary influence that the Blessed Virgin has had and now has. To show this, I shall present such evidence as there is space for. One remark about the subject as a whole may, however, be made at this stage. Differences over the question of Marian devotion have been a major obstacle to Christian unity as between the Roman

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

and Reformed Churches. Many non-Catholics are psychologically allergic to the whole subject of Mary. The case of those of them who have found nourishment in Hinduism is instructive: their allergy has been overcome as their understanding of and sympathy with Hindu devotion to God as Mother has grown. They have, as it were, been reconciled to Mary by Kālī! It is also possible that the example of Śakti-worship, and the profundity of its philosophy as that becomes known, may in some obscure way work towards making non-Catholics more tolerant of, if not positively sympathetic with, Marian devotion. However, the modern distaste for Mary by no means stems from Protestantism and Puritanism alone. The Freudian type of view dies hard. This sort of view asks us to believe that the religious person, and *a fortiori* the devotee of Mary and the Mother-worshipper, are seeking a substitute for an unsatisfactory relation they had with their earthly mother or father. The exponents of this view do not see that our relations with our earthly mother and father are poor, thin substitutes for our real relation with God.

THE RISE OF MARY

The previous existence of the cult of the Great Mother in the Middle East and Mediterranean world undoubtedly gave an initial boost in Mary's rise to power—or perhaps, more accurately, in Mary's manifestation of power. The Great Mother was worshipped as Artemis, as Diana, as Isis, as Ishtar, and under various other names. As Ishtar, She was, like Kālī, worshipped as revealer and life-giver, and as destroyer. That this Mother-worship was widespread is evident from the New Testament (Acts 19.27) where the silversmith Demetrius refers to Diana as 'the goddess whom Asia and all the world revere'.

Swami Vivekananda says: 'It is She (Mother Kālī) whom the Christians meta-

morphosed into the Virgin Mary, and worship as the mother of Jesus the Christ.'⁵ Because Swamiji used the name Kālī here, we need not think that it was the worship of the Great Mother as Kālī and called Kālī which Christianity changed into 'worship' of the Virgin Mary. His context was one dealing with Kālī, and therefore it was natural for him to use that name. His meaning was, I suggest, that the worship of the Great Mother, named variously, was channelled towards the Virgin Mary where Christianity supplanted the older Mother-worship. More recently Bertrand Russell said the same: 'Christianity transformed her (the Great Mother, Artemis, "Diana of the Ephesians") into the Virgin Mary....'⁶ This view is not likely to be seriously questioned now, and I shall not pause to cite the specialists.

Early in the history of Christianity disputes arose among Christians themselves about the status of Jesus. The position to be established was that he was fully God and fully man at the same time. In the view of those times, to establish his humanity it was necessary that one of his parents should be shown to have been a human being. Scripture had it that a certain virgin named Mary was his mother. Thus the fact of Mary's motherhood was the guarantee of the Incarnation, the guarantee that Jesus Christ was not just God acting as man, putting on a show and seeming to suffer for the world, but that he was a man and really did suffer most terribly in body and mind for love of the world.

Having decided on a clear teaching as to the status of Jesus, the Church went on to clarify the position of Mary. In the fifth century she was officially designated *Theotokos* or Mother of God: a glorious title if ever there was one. The argument was:

⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. V (1959), p. 445.

⁶ *History of Western Philosophy* (Allen and Unwin, London, 1946), p. 23.

Mary is not the mother of Jesus' body only ; she is the mother of Jesus himself. Jesus is God ; therefore Mary is the Mother of God.

This title is used in the second most-repeated prayer of Catholics, the 'Hail Mary !'. The prayer ends : 'Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death.' They pray to Mary asking her to pray to Jesus for them. She is specially loved of him ; her prayers are sure to be answered. She is asked to use her influence with Jesus on their behalf.

Corresponding to this mediating role of Mary in our approach to God is her mediating role in dispensing His grace. It is believed that all grace comes through her. In saying this it is as well to remind the reader that the Church insists that Mary is a created being, a human being. The veneration (*hyperdulia*) given to her, like the veneration (*dulia*) given to the other saints, is, according to official doctrine, different in kind from the supreme worship (*latria*) and adoration offered to God alone. On the other hand, in recent centuries, especially among Latin peoples, and most conspicuously in Mexico, it will be admitted that this distinction has in practice been blurred. And it was decidedly blurred back in twelfth-century France. For instance, in Chartres cathedral, one of the greatest in the world, Mary is seated beside Christ on a precisely similar throne. John Henry Adams, in his well-known study of Chartres, goes so far as to say, 'Chartres represents not the Trinity, but the identity of Mother and Son.'⁷

The Blessed Virgin is admitted to have been unique in the privileges accorded her by God, and is exalted above the angels and other saints. First of all, she had the privilege of conceiving Christ, not by a human father, but by the power of the Holy Spirit. Her virginity was preserved physically and

also inwardly, she being exclusively concerned with the things of God.

At the Council of Trent, in 1547, she was declared to be sinless throughout her life. In 1854 the Church defined the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception ; in 1950, that of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin ; and in 1954 the Pope founded a new feast of Mary as Queen of Heaven. Several centuries before the 1854 and later definitions were declared, what they stated was almost universally believed in by Catholics. The declarations only set the official seal on the beliefs.

The dogma of the Virgin Mother's Assumption means that at the end of her earthly life she was assumed into heaven body and soul. It was an anticipated resurrection. Developing this line of belief, some Catholic theologians have taught that she did not die, but was translated body and soul to heaven without having died.

The definition of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception was a victory of popular devotion to Mary. To the humble folk God was distant, to be approached with trepidation through His vicars, the priests. Mary was kind and close. Many were the stories of her mercy on those who had turned to her in difficulty. Added to this affection was reverence. Out of the whole of creation, in all time past and future, did not God choose this one woman, to be born of her ? It was God Himself whom Mary bore, whom she 'inexplicably housed'. To have been so privileged she must have been sinless, she must have been spotless.

According to Christian theology, all human beings are born tainted by sin. Therefore, even though Mary may at some time have been freed from sin by grace, nevertheless she must have been born a sinner just because she was born of human parents.

The people, led by some English monks, would not stand for this. In time a big dispute brewed up. It was the people and a

⁷ *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres* (Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1933), p. 100.

few monks against the whole weight of official theology, including several of the greatest theologians in history. In the end the theologians had to capitulate. St. Thomas Aquinas, though himself keenly opposed to the popular contention, had provided a new explanation of original sin; this enabled the theoretical difficulties to be overcome. The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, that Mary was taintless from the very moment of her conception by her parents, won the day.

It must be admitted that the Reformation was a setback for Our Lady, as it was a setback for monasticism and for higher forms of spiritual practice. In terms of empire, England, which had always had a warm heart for her, was lost to her; indeed, England had been officially known as Mary's 'dowry'.

Medieval Catholicism had managed to fuse biblical with other strands of thought, principally Greek classical. The tendency of the Protestant reformers was to distil out the biblical elements. In the Bible there was no place for the worship of a Great Mother or for any tendency in that direction. Furthermore, the reformers insisted that the soul should come to Christ direct, and repudiated the idea of any creature's coming between it and him. They felt no need of an intercessor. Add to this the prevalence of fervent devotion to the Virgin Mother in the Roman Church against whose domination they were revolting. It is not surprising that in these circumstances there was a strong reaction against 'Mariolatry', the effect of which still persists in Protestant and sectarian Christianity.

Of the next development in this account of the Great Mother's work in the western world I hesitate to write: yet if it is not mentioned an important part of the evidence has been omitted. It has to do with the marvellous. Whatever religion they practise, serious and clear-minded people know that hankering after marvels only distracts them

from striving for purity of heart and direct experience of God, which constitute the essence of religion. Paying much attention to the miraculous is weakening. This does not mean, however, that we should not try to understand the significance of any marvellous events that we believe to have happened.

I have in mind, of course, the famous apparitions of the Virgin Mother. There is overwhelming evidence that Mary has appeared quite a number of times, and particularly in the last 150 years. It would seem that in this period she has appeared much more frequently than she is reported to have appeared in former times, so much so that from 1830 onwards has been called by some the Marian Age.

Before we doubt these apparitions, or the mental or moral integrity of the persons who saw them, we should study the evidence. I would suggest that however many explanations we may think up, the only explanation that does justice to all the evidence is that Mary did appear on certain definite occasions, for instance at La Salette in 1846, at Lourdes in 1858, at Fatima in 1917, at Beauraing in 1932-33, at Banneux in 1933, and so forth.

The Church does not want to make itself ridiculous either to its own members or to the still more critical multitude of non-Catholics, whether Christian or not. Today, outside the Church, reports of apparitions are received, perhaps, with a general indifference. This was not so in the nineteenth and early part of the present century. When a claim was made that Mary had appeared, this was an occasion of mockery for the enemies of Catholicism. The Church is therefore extremely cautious about accepting such claims, and does so only after prolonged and careful investigation. Claims, either proved fraudulent or for which the evidence was not decisive, are far from unknown.

In nearly all her appearances the Blessed Virgin was alone. In most she gave verbal instructions. The message common to almost all of them was roughly this: 'Be serious. The forces of evil are very strong. Pray. Always pray. Do penance. Pray for sinners.' In addition each appearance or series of appearances had features specific to it.

At La Salette she wept as a mother over the sins of the world. There and at Fatima she foretold famine and war if penance were not done and the world did not change its ways. At Beauraing she promised to convert sinners; and there she showed her heart as made of pure gold. At Banneux she said, 'I come to relieve suffering' and, 'I am the Virgin of the Poor.'

At some places Mary asked for a chapel to be built on the spot for the worship of her Son. At Lourdes she said, 'I want people to come here in procession.' At Fatima she enjoined the frequent use of the rosary. In a Paris convent in 1830, she told Catherine Labouré to have a medallion struck in the likeness of the apparition, that is, of herself, surpassingly beautiful, standing with a ball representing the world in her hands. All who wore it round their neck would receive graces. This was the origin of the famous Miraculous Medal, worn by many people today.

On some occasions she gave significant descriptions of herself; on some, she made predictions about international affairs; and on some occasions, predictions about the visionaries themselves. In all appearances she was bathed in brilliant light. Often a spring started to flow at the place of the apparition, or, as at Lourdes, a silted-up spring was re-discovered and began to flow copiously. Through the waters of these springs many miraculous cures have been claimed and certified.

'It was not to the wealthy, to the influential, to the learned that Our Lady

appeared. Rather it was to the poorest, humblest, most unlearned and illiterate of her children.... These were people whose minds were uncluttered with the pretentious philosophies and skepticisms of the day.... These were the little people who would accept the fact that the Mother of God had appeared to them.... Directly and unequivocally, they would deliver the message she had given them exactly as she had given it to them, and no amount of questioning and bullying would change their stories.'⁸

The word 'bullying' in this quotation is apt. The visionaries, who were often country-children, had to face ridicule, threats, endless questioning, and in some cases beating and confinement. Nobody could get them to retract a word of their accounts, or to contradict themselves or each other.

Often Mary told when she would re-appear. The result was that at many of the appearances other people were present, sometimes in thousands. The bystanders did not themselves see the Blessed Mother, but they felt a sublime peace at the time, and generally came away convinced. At Fatima, where some 70,000 people had gathered for the final appearance, the Miracle of the Sun is said to have taken place. Mary had promised a miracle on that day, a miracle on such a scale that all present would believe in the reality of the apparitions. It is reported that for ten minutes the sun was made to perform a terrifying dance in the sky, making the huge crowd think the end of the world had come. After that, hardly had the sun returned to its normal position in the sky when another miracle happened, as if out of Mary's maternal solicitude: all their rain-sodden garments instantly became dry, and everybody felt warm and comfortable.

⁸ J. J. Delaney: *A Woman Clothed with the Sun* (Doubleday and Company, New York, Image Books (paperback ed.), 1961, p. 24.

As marvellous, if not more so, and showing that the happenings at Fatima were more than only psychic phenomena, was the effect on the lives of the three children who saw Mary there. The eldest of them asked her to take them all to heaven. She replied that she would take two of them soon, but that the third would have to remain to do the Lord's work. Not long afterwards the great influenza epidemic of 1918-19 swept the world. The two younger children eventually succumbed, aged about nine and seven years respectively. Both met prolonged and intense suffering with complete abandon to God, knowing that they were going to die, and dying inspiring deaths. The surviving child in due course renounced the world, and worked for many years to spread further the devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

The story of Bernadette,⁹ to whom the Virgin Mother appeared many times at Lourdes, is better known and will not be recounted here. Bernadette became a nun, lived a wonderful life of self-surrender, and died a holy death after much physical suffering.

Sometimes Mary went beyond what theology would lead us to expect her to say. At Fatima she is reported to have said, 'My Immaculate Heart will triumph', when the Christian would have expected something like, 'My Son will triumph.' At Beauraing she is reported to have said, 'I will convert sinners', when the Christian would have expected, 'I will obtain the conversion of sinners', that is, by praying to Christ for them. 'The only answer', says a noted

⁹ Her portrayal was for long somewhat blurred. Hugh Ross Williamson (*The Challenge of Bernadette*, Burns and Oates, London, 1958, p. xii) writes: '...To the distortions of partisanship have been added the perils of fiction, in particular Franz Werfel's *Song of Bernadette*, "the one modern book", as Father Martindale has so rightly pointed out, "on which no reliance can be set".'

Catholic writer on Mary, 'seems to be that God has entrusted tremendous power to Mary and that He refuses her nothing. She is the Mediatrix of All Graces in the full sense of the term.'¹⁰

As spiritual experiences the Hindu and the Christian will both say that these apparitions were of a relatively low order. But from another standpoint they must be admitted to be of a high order, because in them the whole initiative has come from the side of the Divine. A mysterious Power did everything. In the period in which these interventions have been much more frequent—the so-called Age of Mary—the rejection of religious values has been widespread. This is a sufficient reason why they should have occurred, and their common message is addressed to this state of affairs. The times and places of the interventions have a discernible logic about them.

In the Orthodox Church also Mary has been greatly honoured. The East has not had the Latin enthusiasm for conceptual analyses and formal definitions relating to her and her role, but its love has not been less deep and sustained. Its famous Akathistos Hymn dares apply to her words (here in italics) which scripture (Colossians 2.9) applies to Jesus: 'Hail, throne of flame,... in you *the fullness of the divinity did dwell corporeally*.'¹¹

Mary and her Child have been an ever-fresh source of the greatest art in both Eastern and Western Europe. And many of the highest architectural achievements have been dedicated in her name. Leaving aside the scene of Christ's life, the places of her appearance have been the most-frequented places of Christian pilgrimage. For five hundred years or more the kings and

¹⁰ Don Sharkey in *A Woman Clothed with the Sun*, p. 237.

¹¹ Quoted by R. Laurentin: *Mary's Place in the Church* (Burns and Oates, London, 1965), p. 132.

queens of France would go on pilgrimage to her shrines and ask favours of her. Today two and a half million pilgrims every year go to Lourdes alone, and very large numbers to Fatima. To these two shrines could be added scores of others. The literature on Mary is enormous. University chairs for Marian study and institutes devoted to it have been founded. Various kinds of Marian associations count their membership in huge numbers. And so one could go on: one cannot hope to be complete in recounting even the external manifestations of the Power that is Mary or acts through her.

WHAT MANNER OF WOMAN ?

Before concluding I shall mention the instance of Mexico, because the character of Marian devotion there has special reference to the question that the open-minded person is forced to ask himself: What manner of woman is this Mary, called Mother of God ?

In 1531 she appeared to an Aztec-Indian labourer. The place was a hillock five miles north of Mexico City, on which had formerly stood a temple to the Mother-goddess of the Aztecs. The Blessed Virgin, in the form of a dark-skinned Mexican girl, instructed the labourer, Juan Diego, to give a message to the bishop in Mexico City: that she, the Virgin Mary, desired a church to be built on that spot, where she would show her compassion to the Mexican people. The touching details of the whole incident will have to be omitted. To prove to the bishop that Juan was not deceived or deceiving, she imprinted her image on the simple man's *tilma*—an Aztec garment like a long cape worn in front and often looped up to carry things.

Among the concrete effects of this event several are worth noting. The Indians of Mexico swarmed in millions to embrace Christianity. On the hillock now stands a great

basilica which is visited by over five million people annually. Juan's *tilma* is hung above the altar. 'Modern scientists are agreed that in the Mexican climate this cloth (woven of fibre from the maguey plant) would naturally have disintegrated beyond recognition within twenty years.'¹² Yet it can be seen to be in good condition today, after nearly four and a half centuries. How any painting could ever have been done on its fishnet-like web, what the 'paint' was that was used, and how it has retained its colours—this 'still eludes all endeavours to elucidate it'.

Prof. F. S. C. Northrop writes :

'In some way, the Virgin of Guadalupe and the story of her revelation, directed especially to the Indians, call forth from the Mexican spirit a devotion and a sweeping response not equalled by any other influence in Mexico even today.'¹³

But the most significant thing for our purpose is that :

'Our Lady of Guadalupe is to the Indians not divine mediate, by virtue of being the purely earthly mother of Christ, but is, like the Aztec goddess of the spot on which her spirit first appeared, divine in her own right.... She appears in the shrine of the basilica of Guadalupe alone and in her own right. That this is what she means to the Mexicans is evidenced again and again throughout the churches of Mexico.'¹⁴

And she was virtually divine in her own right to medieval France, if John Henry Adams' appraisal in *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres* is not too wide of the mark.

The gap between discernible causes and discerned effects is closed, the facts are 'explained', if there is indeed, as many Hindus believe, a Mother-Power deserving of supreme worship and called by various names: a Mother-Power which is identical

¹² Ethel C. Cook in *A Woman Clothed with the Sun*, p. 58.

¹³ *The Meeting of East and West* (The Macmillan Company, U.S.A., 1946), p. 26.

¹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 27.

with the Godhead (Brahman or Śiva the Absolute), being that Godhead Itself when It is regarded as projecting, sustaining, and resolving the universe. Translating this intuition in Christian terms, it would amount to something like this: Mary is one with God; Christ is one with God; and Mary is therefore in some mysterious way one with her Son.

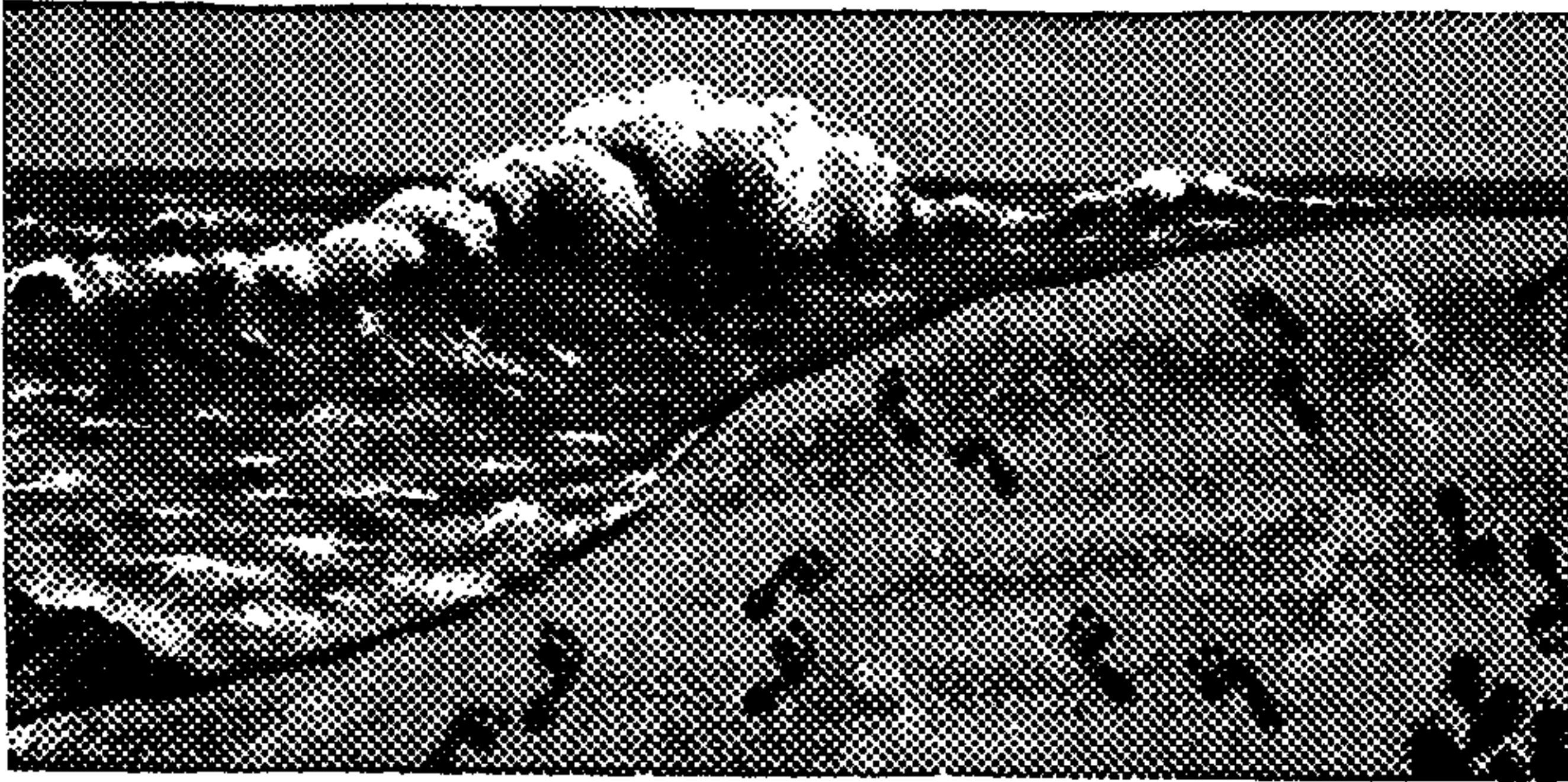
The facts are also to some extent 'explain-

ed' if it is true, as many Catholics believe, that God has conferred on a woman, the Virgin Mary, the privilege of being the channel of His grace; that through her He does great things, beyond anything He has done or will do through any other created being. But the facts are far from 'explained' if the cult of Mary is regarded as no more than the creation of human psychological needs, normal or abnormal.

A SONG SUNG BY RAMAKRISHNA

All creation is the sport of my mad Mother Kali;
 By Her Maya the three worlds are bewitched.
 Mad is She and mad is Her Husband; mad are Her two disciples!
 None can describe Her loveliness, Her glories, gestures, moods;
 Shiva, with the agony of the poison in His throat,
 Chants Her name again and again.

The Personal does She oppose to the Impersonal,
 Breaking one stone with another.
 Though to all else She is agreeable,
 Where duties are concerned She will not yield.
 Keep your raft, says Ramprasad, afloat on the sea of life,
 Drifting up with the flood-tide, drifting down with the ebb.



HUMAN TRENDS

JOURNALISM V. PERSONALITY: BEWARE THE COMMUNICATIONS MEDIA

A humorous anecdote, fortunately apocryphal, deals with Moses' flight from Egypt.

The prophet is said to have had a public relations man with him. 'Moses,' said the public relations man, 'the Egyptians are close behind us. We don't have a chance. They'll capture us soon and return us to slavery. What can we do?'

With deep calm, Moses said, 'I have a plan. We're near the Red Sea. I shall call upon the Lord and He'll part the water. There will be a dry path for all of us to walk across. Soon we'll be on the other side. The Egyptians will follow us. As soon as they are in the middle, the Lord will close the sea and drown them all.'

The public relations man listened in silence and awe. He was impressed. He said, 'Moses, if you can do that, I can guarantee you ten pages in the Old Testament.'

That is the twentieth century, where even a holy man can be linked with a public relations adviser. The field of publicity has made its mark, some say scar, on our existence. For better (rarely) or worse (usually), it is on us like a fungus, touching almost all aspects of our lives.

The four horsemen of the apocalypse—death, famine, disease, and war—are dramatic and direct in their terror and destruction. Infinitely more insidious in technique and

disguised with the beautiful markings of a deadly snake hiding in high grass come not four horsemen but five horseless carriages: television, radio, newspapers, advertising, and public relations. With bright colours, honeyed words, pretty faces, and unremitting pressure, these five, powered by greed and lust for power, attack us year in, year out. The war is unending. The prize: our soul, our possessions.

TELEVISION

In the West, its impact has been phenomenal. A recent survey revealed that the world owns over 250,000,000 television sets, with over one-third in America. Television's immediacy in terms of presentation (any event can be presented to the public worldwide as it is occurring) has given it incredible power. In America, innumerable newspapers and magazines have gone out of business, unable to compete with television's getting the news first.

Once this power became evident 'the usual process' occurred. 'The usual process' consists of money exerting itself to the utmost. Television stations sold air time to business, which in turn dictated the kind of programming to exist within this remarkable new toy. What business had in mind was a series of presentations that would cause profits to rise consistently.

Not only did business seek profits, but it was joined in this quest by the television stations which through total cooperation created a lucrative alliance. Such a relationship was not without its victims. As Swami Vivekananda points out, extreme attachment makes us ready to harm others for the sake of this attachment.

The public was harmed. It still is. It is harmed by being subjected to poor programming, distorted views of life and art, slanted approaches to news—these are just some of the results. The motto of commerce and television stations was and is: Profits first and foremost.

Television's popularity is sweeping the world like a medieval plague. Those nations which resisted its onslaught for years are succumbing. If *māyā* won't come to the people, the people can be depended upon to go to *māyā*. After all, it is difficult to resist having a so-called window on the world right in one's home. And so sales of television sets continue to skyrocket. Few manufacturers of this item ever end up at the wailing wall.

The public's intoxication with 'the boob tube', as television is sometimes called, soon forced the rest of the communications family to adopt desperation methods merely to survive. To an alarming degree, newspapers ceased attempts at being objective. Objectivity was dull. Instead, something called personal journalism fell upon us.

This meant that journalists would give you their personal viewpoint even if such a viewpoint crowded out facts. This approach was interesting, colourful and it got attention.

Radio's survival decision was pathetic. Not even the roar of cannon can drown out the loud, raucous music heard throughout the West. Periodically, the music is interrupted by unctuous voices urging you to buy products so useless that if you came upon them lying about on the street, you would

step over them and keep walking.

The talk show is radio's second line of defence. Listeners telephone stations throughout America and carry on conversations on the air with a radio personality. These vocal exchanges usually resemble the art of conversation as much as decapitation resembles brain surgery. The patience of an avatar would be sorely tried as he listened at length to economic woes, theories about life on other planets, sexual frustrations, racial and religious bigotry, political dislikes, advice on how to govern the nation, what is wrong with today's youth, pleas to marry a rich widow/widower, pleas to marry anybody, *ad infinitum, ad nauseum*.

Lucrative is the word for this pseudo-therapy. A station owner can always find a minute to squeeze in a commercial message and as commerce is learning, the tariff for such a minute is steep. In California, one radio programme has achieved nationwide prominence throughout America because its entire theme is sex. The programme is aimed at women, who are encouraged to telephone and discuss their sexual problems and attitudes. With the knowledge and consent of the caller, the conversation is broadcasted over the air.

If it is true that sexual excess is a sign that a civilization is crumbling and sliding into the sea, then it is almost time to grab a sack of food and a prayer book and head for high ground.

ADVERTISING

Its effect on human life cannot be calculated. Every item for sale is presented as a need and a necessity. Result: envy, greed, discontentment. Still, the bombardment continues. Buy, buy, buy. If you don't, you'll feel unhappy, say the hucksters. Your existence will be devoid of life's pleasures and wonders.

Advertising presents its unending supply of merchandise as a continuing series of

life's new joys and riches. It sees an ideal existence with each of us owning a gold mine and a warehouse. The gold mine would be for unlimited spending, the warehouse for storage of purchases.

Unending discontent surrounds us all. Yet we again and again allow ourselves to be seduced by the siren song of advertising. Soon what little money we have vanishes and with frightening ease we slip into debt. Again, unending desire manifests itself. And coupled with a lack of money, it tears families apart and causes painful personal upheavals.

For as marriage counsellors have observed about western marriages, the cause of many disagreements is money.

There is no end, via advertising, to the attempts to turn us into acquisitive robots. We are like a small boy in a candy shop with but a penny in his pocket. We do not know what to buy first. Our eyes and other senses far outweigh the penny, and so we suffer.

Advertising has brought us to this point: we react rather than reason. The sign says 'Buy'. And so we do, without once asking 'why?'

Incredible as it may seem, the following is a true story. A brazen fellow hit upon a scheme to take advantage of this 'buy and don't ask why' attitude. He placed a small advertisement in a newspaper. It read: 'LAST CHANCE. SEND \$1 TO....' and he included an address. Last chance for what he did not say. No mention was made of any goods or services to be received.

What happened was predictable as well as humorous and pathetic. Many people sent the money. They received nothing in return. More and more money poured into the fellow's coffers until authorities investigated and forced the suspension of this lucrative undertaking. Oddly enough he was never prosecuted. No crime had been

committed. He had made no promises and there had been no deceptions. As a matter of fact, his advertising was one of the more truthful of this century.

A list of the ill effects of advertising would encircle the globe. Poorer classes in the West feel it most. So do minority groups who are oppressed in society to a greater or lesser extent and who therefore have limited earning power at best. Being unable to afford these trinkets makes them angry, resentful and therefore dangerous to the community both now and at some future date.

Yet in a world that values conspicuous consumption, that tallies a man's worth in what he owns, there appears no end to the cycle of desire-buy-discontent.

JOURNALISM

Newspapers. Often called the world's second oldest profession. Hardly a praiseworthy note, since prostitution is listed as the first.

Today's breed of western journalists often resemble the evils they so loudly rail against. They are egocentric, inaccurate, misinformed, uninformed, and often consumed with what they mistakenly feel is their place within the events on which they are reporting.

For example, there is the trend towards 'personal journalism'. This particular abuse of communications has the writer relating what he feels, what he surmises people to be thinking. Since this often is presented under reporting of the news, mark it down as the public's loss. It is more than conjecture and presumption of a high and low order. It is repetitive and dull reading.

If the personality of the journalist is interjected, it is a fond wish that said personality be interesting, intelligent, likeable if at all possible and definitely justified in intruding.

Instead 'personal journalism' in the West often has all of the interest one would find in a conversation with a tree. It is this cult of personality that has made western journalism often comic and tragic.

Let us remember that a newspaper is a business, that employees must be paid, that equipment be bought and maintained, that there is a definite cost involved in putting a newspaper together and placing it in the hands of a reader. Income must be assured. And we find western newspapers seeking this assurance by catering to as wide a public as possible.

And so we are flooded with the sensational, stories on the world of entertainment with an emphasis on the notorious and often pathetic personal lives of the famous. This economically motivated muck-raking is not without its irony. Few newspapers miss a chance to pontificate on the manners and mores of just about anybody. One reads such stirring slogans on the masthead. Stinging editorials leap from the page and hit our eyes. And that most common target of opportunity—the politician, spends his career dodging the brickbats of journalistic wrath.

Thus armed with hypocrisy and indifference, newspapers persevere in search of money. Titillation, distortion lie side by side on the printed page with the barest lip service to principle. One is reminded of a remark made by the shrewd French Prime Minister George Clemenceau while working with American President Woodrow Wilson to form the League of Nations after World War I.

After observing the lengthy, quite vocal and to his mind not excessively sincere moralizing of Wilson, Clemenceau remarked that if there were ever a vacancy in the Holy Trinity, Wilson would apply for it. To that may be added—if a journalist does not seek the position first.

Meanwhile, the public suffers from wrong

information and in some instances, it suffers from a lack of information. Since many people tend to believe what they see in print, newspapers are in a position of public trust. Journalism-into-big-business brings to mind Dr. Samuel Johnson's remark: 'No one but a blockhead ever wrote except for money.'

Better for the ink stained wretches, as journalists were dubbed some years ago, to recall Voltaire's aphorism: 'To pick up a pen is to be at war.' Let mankind benefit from a war waged against political corruption, against the vainglory of the military mentality anywhere on the globe, against business and its legalized thievery. Bring to mind the royal wrath of Queen Victoria, who in a moment of regal displeasure said, 'We are not amused.' Let us cease to be amused. And let us draw a sword and cut the strings which keep us dancing like puppets to any tune played by a printing press.

PUBLICITY/PUBLIC RELATIONS

Running headlong at us again and again comes the horseless carriage of publicity and public relations. While there is no one definition of this particular field, its primary method of operating relies heavily upon distortion. Its practitioners say that public relations are the efforts to obtain a favourable attitude by the public towards any given project or personality.

Publicity people would have you believe that they make available valid information to press and public. This is debatable, since a publicity man is for hire to the highest bidder. Money, not truth, is the Holy Grail. Western civilization has long proclaimed that 'money talks'. If so, it is certain that such 'talk' serves a vested interest.

No surgeon ever wielded a scalpel with the skill most publicity men employ distortion. Newspapers, radio, magazines, wire services, television stations, organizations, individuals—all are flooded daily with releases and communiques from public rela-

tions men serving a paying customer. This amounts to a daily tidal wave of pressure on the press.

Even governments employ such twentieth century specialists in order to sway the minds of many. Entertainers, politicians, businessmen, criminals, charity organizations, animal lovers, churches—all are spending mountains of money to have public relations men influence someone else. It is not surprising that some anonymous wit decreed that Moses was in need of an image maker.

For in today's world, image is the magic word. It is what you look like, not what you are, that counts. Or so we are told again and again. The trend is surface first and foremost. If people are more and more impressed by merely what they see, and it seems to be true, alas, nowhere can this trend be more evident than in American politics.

It began with John F. Kennedy's decision to run for Presidency of the United States. The gods gave him all the gifts. He was youthful, handsome, witty, energetic, forceful, a war hero, and wealthy. America's entire, brief political history had never given birth to a more charismatic candidate. Richard M. Nixon, his opponent, provided a sharp contrast.

He had jowls, wore ill-fitting clothes, spoke poorly and only his staunch supporters and blood relatives could sit through one of his speeches without constant shifting. A nation weaned on movie stars, which more and more relied on newspapers and television to tell it how to think, could only make one choice. It did.

Kennedy became the youngest President in American history. After the campaign, observers agreed that his most important move in his march to power was to appear side by side with Nixon in a debate held on nation-wide television. If it was Kennedy's *most canny manoeuvre*, it was Nixon's chief error. Millions of people saw the contrast

—the dynamic v. the lethargic, the attractive v. the unattractive.

The debate was lop-sided. Kennedy's flair, along with his awareness of the proper use of media, completely overwhelmed Nixon. Appearances aside, it must be admitted that many felt Kennedy to be the better man in terms of character as well.

Nixon has since learned his lesson. He has lost weight and now wears better suits. His shift in tactics includes: the services of professional television advisers, the use of a small amount of stage make-up before a television appearance and perhaps most important of all, he has never again appeared on television to debate a political opponent. As the saying goes—once bitten, twice shy.

And though he appears alone on camera, out of range of the viewer are aides, speech writers and others whose sole job it is to create a public image for the President.

Ponder once more the words of Dr. Samuel Johnson: 'It concentrates a man's mind wonderfully to know he will be hanged within the fortnight.'

The atomic noose, casting its terrifying shadow over the globe, does not appear to have triggered off widespread soul-searching. We live each day as though it were one of ten million to come. We concentrate rarely and never for too long a time. Few questions are asked, consequently few answers are obtained.

We accept style as substance. We mistake form for content. And so huge portions of our lives are taken over by such things as a publicity release. Journalists scurry back and forth like mice in a cardboard box, observing events and writing stories which pass as journalism and accurate reporting. Yet these events are merely arranged and manufactured by publicity people selling products ranging from foreign policy to can openers.

This non-event, this series of tableaux created on behalf of commerce is on the

increase. And the communications media, clutching each mimeographed handout, grows more dependent and lazy each minute. With a steady flow of such 'news' always on tap, a television station, for example, can afford to choose newsmen who are attractive and personable.

In the West, the motto has long been 'more is better'. And so the media daily set about filling page after page of newsprint, plus hour upon hour of television and radio airtime. No long and involved mental process is needed to deduce that each inch of newsprint and each minute of airtime is not crammed with meaningful material.

However, this in no way relieves media of having to do their best. The power to influence souls and minds is too big to be given to those who do not care or whose caring is limited to fiscal expansion. The media must lift themselves by themselves or face a judgement day sooner or later.

The so-called 'Youth Rebellion' of the 1960's is a glaring example of what the media did or did not. Newsprint and airwaves loudly trumpeted youth tastes in fashion, music, politics, and social changes. One soon had the impression that millions of western youngsters had achieved a solidarity unprecedented in human history.

With this particular hue and cry having subsided to a great degree, it is possible to see that media built the 'youth movement' out of all proportion. The togetherness of youth existed or exists to a large extent as a commercial entity. The youth market is uppermost in the minds of manufacturers wishing to peddle goods. Any other existence is open to question.

The numbers of shaggy lock adolescents hurling rocks through university windows were small. However, the press focused on

the sensational as always. Soon many people were convinced that hordes of long haired, drug crazed hippies were on the march, crushing cities and mores under foot, determined to turn the western hemisphere into a waste land.

It did not happen. History is not made by man. It is made by time and that involves a force and a knowledge that few if any of us truly understand.

Some say the youth rebellion is over, that it has come and gone. Perhaps. Perhaps what has come and gone is the interest of the press in such goings on. Can the solution be for us to believe only half of what we see and none of what we hear?

'The one-eyed monster', as television is known to a few free thinkers, can be contained. You can silence him with a movement of your fingers. The same applies to radio. As for newspapers, one can read less and believe less. One certain result of this opposition to these twentieth century headless horsemen is more time.

That time can be used for study, provided we want to do so. A study of ourselves, a study of something meaningful and spiritual even if it is merely a sentence or two can work wonders in our lives. It is a bold step at first, to turn one's back on electronic salvation. But all progress begins with rebellion and there is no better cause to rebel for than one's own soul.

The French writer Albert Camus said that when future historians dug up the remains of French culture, they would find that the populace was known for two things: fornicating and reading newspapers.

There has to be a more worthwhile estimate of us by our posterity.

—MARC OLDEN

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: Questions 1-4, pp. 555-7; 5, pp. 469-70.

The words quoted in 'Onward For Ever!' are from: *The Complete Works*, Vol. II (1963), pp. 146-7.

Though progress as a philosophic concept is at present severely discredited in the West except in socialist countries, still men in general suffer from a nineteenth-century hangover. While discussing the concept from the standpoint of material progress, the Editorial tries to point out that progress is possible only on the moral and spiritual planes. And that is nothing less than the realization of the divine Self.

In this second instalment of 'Meister Eckhart, Lover of God', Dr. Leta Jane Lewis brings out lucidly some of the fundamental thoughts of the philosopher-mystic regarding Godhead, God, creation, renunciation, spiritual striving, and absorption in God. Dr. Leta Jane Lewis is from Fresno State College, Fresno, California.

Religion, in spite of all that its opponents hurl at it, continues to hold the centre of the stage in the human drama. Because it is the very bone and marrow, as it were, of the human personality. "Take religion from human society and what will remain?" asked Swami Vivekananda, and answered, 'Nothing but a forest of human brutes.' To deliver man from the clutches of brutality no power except religion is capable. In 'What is Religion?' Swami Vijnananda, a

monk of the Ramakrishna Order, discusses this theme in non-technical language but *vis-à-vis* some modern counter-religious thought-patterns.

Though Mary, the Mother of Jesus, does not occupy as high a place as God or Jesus in ecclesiastical opinion, still popular devotion to her, in her own right to divinity, has surged forth again and again. It is so 'especially among Latin peoples and most conspicuously in Mexico' in recent centuries. And why not? Is not God both Father and Mother? In Hinduism God's Śakti or power of creation, sustenance, and dissolution is personified as the Mother and worshipped from Vedic times. The followers of other religions may profit much by understanding and absorbing this 'Divine Mother' idea of Hinduism.

In a well-documented and interesting study of the evolution and rise of devotion to the Virgin Mary, Swami Parahitananda, a monk of the Ramakrishna Order, hints at the higher aspects it can grow towards.

One might justifiably say that man created the modern civilization and the devil the 'communications media'. So demoralizing are the delusions and false values called into being and nurtured by them. 'The medium is the message,' predicted Marshall McLuhan. And his prophecy is fulfilled to the letter. The developing nations and eastern societies should display more than the proverbial sheep's intelligence to avoid the evil and accept the good from the developed nations. Mr. Marc Olden, who is associated with the New York Vedanta Society, writes in his effective style on the important theme of 'Journalism v. Personality' with a warning about the poison fruits the tree of mass-media is bearing.

CORRIGENDUM

Vide May, 1972 *Prabuddha Bharata*, p. 212: please read for *śloka* (Lines 23 and 24), as follows:

महता पुण्यपुञ्जेन क्रीतेयं कायनोस्त्वया ।
पारं दुःखोदधेर्गन्तुं त्वरं यावन्न भिद्यते ॥

With the mass of virtue accumulated (in previous lives), you have bought a boat, this body. So before this boat is destroyed, make efforts to cross this ocean of misery.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

THE SIKH GURUS AND THE SIKH SOCIETY: A STUDY IN SOCIAL ANALYSIS, BY NIHARRANJAN RAY, published by Punjabi University, Patiala, 1970, pp. 204, price not stated.

The book under review comprises a course of three lectures delivered by the author at the Punjabi University, Patiala, in commemoration of the Quincentennial of the birth of Guru Nanak in August 1969. The three lectures constitute the three chapters of the book entitled 'The Milieu', 'The Message', and 'The Mission'. It also contains the following two appendices: (1) The Concept of *Sahaj* in Guru Nanak's *Theology* and its Antecedents (2) Guru Govind Singh and After in Sikh Society.

The book, as its sub-title indicates, attempts an analysis of the social factors (in the broad sense of the term inclusive of economic, political and cultural factors) that were conducive to giving its distinctive shape to the Sikh religion and society. 'Any religion and society', says the author,—and one cannot but agree with him—'has a creed and a behavioural pattern that originate and evolve in a given time and space and hence within a given total situation. Credal and doctrinal matters even, nothing to speak of the individual and collective behavioural pattern, cannot be understood without reference to this total social situation including its economic and political complex' (p. 178). In the first chapter of the book the author gives us an account of the total social milieu prevailing in Punjab during the times in which the Sikh gurus were born there. In the second chapter of the book the salient features of the message of the gurus are recounted, such as, opposition to all forms of

austerities and asceticism, opposition to the worship of icons, images and symbols, devotion to God who is One without a second, worship and veneration of Sri Guru Grantha Sahib, etc. The third chapter deals with the organizational development of the Sikh society culminating in the institution of the *Khālsa* and the abolition of the succession of the Gurus by Guru Govind Singh, the tenth guru.

It will be admitted on all hands that the genius of the Sikh Gurus lay in giving to their followers a simple and dynamic faith which wonderfully harmonizes the claims of the temporal and the spiritual, the mundane and the supra-mundane. In Sikhism we have an exemplar of that combination of *brahma-teja* and *kshatra-virya* of which Swami Vivekananda spoke and desired to see materialized in India.

The appendices of the book are instructive and readable. There is a Bibliography and an Index at the end. The book deserves to be widely read.

DR. S. N. L. SHRIVASTAVA.

THE LANGUAGE OF ORDINARY EXPERIENCE, BY DAVID E. DENTON, Published by Philosophical Library, 15 East 40th Street, New York, N.Y. 10016, 1970, Pages 160, Price \$ 5.00.

That education is a first-person experience is a truth which we tend to forget even after learning it in Plato's works. Mr. Denton draws our attention to this valuable truth in the book under consideration. In order to present the philosophy of education from this standpoint, he sets forth the tools of analysis and identifies them in the stream of Western thought. Here he relies a little too

much on the existentialist thought, thereby tending to lose an impartial approach.

The first-person experience needs a linguistic expression. Accordingly the author sets forth the presuppositions of the language of ordinary experience. The various philosophies of language, including the theories of the logical positivists are ably examined in the second chapter. The language of ordinary experience consists of Gestalt-symbols which can communicate the simultaneous, ideographic, multidimensionality of experience. From the fourth chapter onwards there is an illuminating explication of this concept and its related problems. Divided into three parts this book is a stimulating account of the nature of experience and of language. It deserves the serious attention of all teachers and thinkers.

DR. P. S. SASTRI

GURU NANAK, BY HARBANS SINGH, Published by Asia Publishing House, Calicut Street, Ballard Estate, Bombay, 1969, pp. 247, Price Rs. 18-75.

Brought out on the occasion of the 500th Birth anniversary of Guru Nanak (1969), this biography strikes a happy balance between the legends of the *Janamsakhis* and the dry, matter-of-fact accounts of the modern historian reducing the Teacher to a social reformer.

The author first presents an account of the social, religious and political conditions that called forth a genius of the calibre of Nanak to embody the spirit of synthesis (between the Hindu and the Islamic religions) that sought expression at that time and to combat the forces of destruction that threatened to overwhelm the society in the 15th century A.D. He narrates with sufficient data and vigour the boyhood, the struggles and the ministry of the Guru, his wide travels and finally his contribution to the heritage of the nation.

The writer emphasizes the positive and practical character of the Guru's teaching. His was a gospel of love, equality, and service. God is one and true religion is to worship Him from the heart, express Him through one's conduct. 'By a life of service in this world alone will one become entitled to a seat in the next.' The world is real: 'Real are Thy worlds and real the created forms.' Guru Nanak calls upon man not to flee from the world as a temptation, but to look upon it as 'reflecting the divine being and divine purpose'. 'The body', he said, 'is the palace, the temple, the house of God: into it He has put His eternal light.'

A balanced and satisfying biography.

M. P. PANDIT

THE LOGIC OF RELATIONSHIP BY FREDERICK S. JOHNSTON JR., published by Philosophical Library, 15 East 40th St., New York, N.Y. 10016, 1968, pp. 110, price \$4/-.

This slender volume in 9 chapters claims to pose a challenge to the traditional logic of Aristotle. The author gives an 'oversimplified' version of deductive and inductive reasoning, and then makes an attempt to destroy their validity by questioning the Aristothian laws of thought (pp. 5-7). The second law comes in for special attention. Thereafter the author develops what he calls a Logic of Reference (his own) as against the Logic of Inference (which is the title given to Aristotle's logic).

'There is an area within Inferential logic, ... where the system falters badly and is unmanageable to the extreme. It is in this defective area that we shall reveal our new system of logic that is opposed to Inference.'

Inference actually becomes inconsistent and illogical whenever an opposable term is used as part of the inferential system.' (p. 5).

Taking *hot* and *cold* as examples, the author points out that in the inferential system of thought, if an object is *hot* it cannot be *cold* and vice versa. But a rod can be *hot* at one end and *cold* at another and the whole rod can be *hot* at one time and *cold* at another. And we have a whole range of temperatures between *hot* and *cold*. The Aristotelian laws of thought, according to the author, cannot accommodate these facts. So the Logic of Inference is futile. And so, a new logic, Logic of Reference (or Relation), built on the middle ground, is to be created.

The author lays the foundation for his logic of Relationship in the first chapter, covering a third of the book, but the superstructure is not there. One looks in vain for a well organized, fully structured, cogently deduced system of Logic of Relationships which could be placed by the side of the magnificent Aristotelian system for comparison. The author has yet to build the superstructure.

Fully conscious of the *middle ground*, Aristotle purposely built his 2-valued system. He wanted a logic of *thought*, not of *things*. So he built up a formal logic. There is no point in criticising Aristotle for what he did not intend to build.

This new Logic of Inference is supplementary to the old logic. We would welcome it when the superstructure is built.

The reviewer was amazed to find (at p. 14) the great Stagirite, the founder of the 'Golden Mean' in Ethics being accused of not advocating that very

'Golden Mean'!

In the second and succeeding chapters the author works out the implications of his logic in the religious, philosophical, psychological, social and political fields. The last chapter (ch. 9) is very revealing. It brings out the basic limitation in all types of analytic and synthetic reasoning. 'As far as reality is concerned, opposing things ... are relative to each other. We can have no knowledge of either without simultaneous knowledge of both.' This is correct and this is the truth so long as one stays in the realm of *dvandva* (duality). That there is a *dvandvatita* (transdual) realm of experience is not within the grasp of those who are confined to the level of sense experience.

PROF. P. S. NAIDU

ISWARACHANDRA VIDYASAGAR BY HIRANMAY BANERJEE, published by Sahitya Akademi, Rabindra Bhavan, 35 Ferozeshah Rd., New Delhi, 1, 1968, pp. 88, Price Rs. 2.50.

Biography as a unique literary form poses a challenge to the writer, and when the subject, as in the present case, happens to be an outstanding leader whose personality is multi-faceted and complex, the biographer is indeed baffled. Luckily the burden of the author of the volume under review has been lightened by the fact that he has to present the image of the great Iswarachandra as a maker of literature only. Even so Hiranmay Banerjee could not have helped stepping across into regions other than Biography. Education, emancipation of women, philanthropy, etc. in all which Iswarachandra played a leading role, have been touched in this volume. Within a narrow limit of 88 pages the author has managed to present a thumb-nail sketch, fairly sharp, of the great Pundit. The usual biographical details are given at pages 7-35. The next section 'A fighter for women's rights' is but an extension of the previous one. Vidyasagar's fearlessness and moral courage in the face of formidable obstacles created by the state and society are brought out in clear perspective in these chapters. The Pundit's peerless efforts to educate Bengali youth, and his compassionate philanthropy receive adequate treatment. And of course, the author does full justice to Vidyasagar as a creator of Bengali prose. The most touching pages are at the close of the slender volume. Instances are narrated, full of pathos, of the author's pity and love for the downtrodden and under-privileged.

All told this is a mini-biography of a great Bengali. How great he really was could be seen

even in a rapid perusal of this thin but impressive volume.

PROF. P. S. NAIDU

VEDANTA: EDITED BY CLIVE JOHNSON, Published by Harper & Row, 49 East 33rd Street, New York N. Y. 10016, 1971, pp. 243, Price: 6.95 dollars.

Swami Prabhavananda was then a very young man, studying Sankara's commentary on the *Vedanta-sutra*, with Swami Turiyananda. One day he said to this teacher: 'Sankara always appeals to the authority of the scriptures to prove his point. But suppose I don't believe in the scriptures? How can he convince me of what he is trying to prove?'

The Swamiji replied: 'The authority of the scriptures doesn't depend only on the fact that they are the utterances of great seers; their real authority is that they are verifiable. If these seers had claimed that the truth had been revealed exclusively to them and that it must be accepted from them on trust because it could never again be revealed to anybody else, then your argument would be sound. But what the seers actually say is that these truths can be verified personally by anyone who will follow the instructions given him by his guru and by the scriptures. They also say that one cannot even call oneself spiritual until one has personally experienced these truths.'

Precisely. Indian scriptures contain verifiable truths and they are not true to one until one has realized them in experience. This volume is a fine anthology, prepared under the guidance of Swami Prabhavananda, of readings from Indian scriptures (rendered into English) beginning with the Vedas and the Upanishads right up to the living scriptures of the present day. The epics, the Puranas, the Tantras, the mystic-poets (Kabir, Tulsidas), Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Ramana Maharshi, Sri Aurohindo are all well represented. There is a special accent on practical *sadhana*, e.g.:

'Meditate upon God within the shrine of your heart, or visualize him present before you. Worship him mentally. Just as the ritualistic worshipper offers flowers, and waves incense and lights before the deity in the temple, so should you offer all the articles of worship mentally to the living presence enshrined within your heart.'

(Swami Brahmananda)

M. P. PANDIT

BOOKS RECEIVED

OUR GANDHIAN HERITAGE: By R. N. Bose, Published by D. Basu for J. N. Bose & Co., Grey Street, Calcutta 6, Rs. 15/-.

THE DIALOGUE WITH DEATH: By ROHIT MEHTA, Published by Shree Rambhai N. Amin, 'Ram Home' Gulbai Tekra, Ahmedabad 6, Rs. 15/-.

YOGA OF MEDITATION: By CHAMAN LAL, Published by the Author, 2789 N.E., 37th Drive, (P.O.) Fort Lauderdale, Florida, U.S.A., \$ 7.50.

THE MONUMENTAL MARATHI COMMENTARY ON SHRIMAD BHAGAVADGITA: CHAPTER V, BY S. D. GOKHALE, Published by the Author, 437, Gaonbhag, Sangli, Maharashtra, Rs. 3/- (2 copies).

THE SYNTHESIS OF YOGA: By SRI AUROBINDO, Published by Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, Rs. 24/-.

WOMEN'S TRAINING COLLEGE: SILVER JUBILEE COMMEMORATION VOLUME 1972, ED. BY MRS. S. P. SUKHIA, Published by Women's Training College, Dayalbagh, Agra, price not stated.

VIVEKANANDA KENDRA PATRIKA: EDITED BY SRI EKNATH RANADE, Published by Editorial Office, 12, Pillaiyar Koil Street, Triplicane, Madras 5, Rs. 8/- per copy.

NEWS AND REPORTS

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION ASHRAMA, KATIHAR REPORT FOR 1968-70

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

Educational and Cultural: Ramakrishna Mission Vidyamandir, a recognized secondary High School had 605 and 641 students on its roll during 1968-69 and 1969-70. Full and half free studentships were awarded to 44 students during these years. Apart from this, Rs. 526/- were given to deserving students for their fees, books etc. In 1969-70 the result of the school was 94%; 3 students secured national scholarships.

Library and Free Reading Room: The library had 2100 books in Hindi, English, Bengali, and Sanskrit on philosophy, religion, literature, and science etc. The Reading Room received 3 dailies and 25 periodicals. In 1969-70 1215 books were issued.

Students' Home: The Ashrama runs a Students' Home with a small number of students of our Vidyamandir. Efforts are made for the uniform development of their head and heart. During 1969-70 there were 13 students in the Home; out

of these four were free and one part-paying. It costs at least Rs. 1000/- to maintain a free student for one year. More of free students could not be accommodated due to paucity of funds.

Medical: The Allopathic and Homoeopathic departments of our Charitable dispensary were conducted by qualified doctors and experienced compounders. The Eye Department was closed in Sept. 1969. In 1969-70 Allopathic department treated 13,200 cases and Homoeopathic department 10,647.

Religious and Preaching: The Kali Puja, the birth anniversaries of Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother, Swami Vivekananda and the other monastic disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, and prophets of other faiths were performed. Discussions on the *Gita* on Sunday afternoons, regular religious classes and discourses after the daily Aratrika, and Ramana nama sankirtanam on the Ekadashi days were conducted. Lectures in and outside the Ashrama were delivered.

In 1968 flood relief the Ashrama distributed food-grains, clothes, and building material worth Rs. 1110/- and contributed a sum of Rs. 3,110/- to Ramakrishna Mission Relief Centre at Jalpaiguri.