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# Prabuddha Bharata

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OCTOBER 1973

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# Prabuddha Bharata

VOL. LXXVIII

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No. 10

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

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## SRI RAMAKRISHNA ANSWERS

Question (asked by Ishan of Bhawanipur) : 'Sir, why have you renounced the world ? The scriptures extol the householder's life as the best.'

Sri Ramakrishna : 'I don't know much about what is good and what is bad. I do what God makes me do and speak what He makes me speak.'

Ishan : 'If everybody renounced the world, they would be acting against God's will.'

Sri Ramakrishna : 'Why should everybody renounce ? On the other hand, can it be the will of God that all should revel in "woman and gold" like dogs and jackals ? Has He no other wish ? Do you know what accords with His will and what is against it ?

'You say that God wants everybody to lead a worldly life. But why don't you see it as God's will when your wife and children die ? Why don't you see His will in poverty, when you haven't a morsel to eat ?

'Maya won't allow us to know the will of God. On account of God's maya the unreal appears as real, and the real as unreal. The world is unreal. This moment it exists and the next it disappears. But on account of His maya it seems to be real. It is only through His maya that the ego seems to be the doer. Furthermore, on account of this maya a man regards his wife and children, his brother and sister, his father and mother, his house and property, as his very own.

'There are two aspects of maya : vidya and avidya. Avidya deludes one with worldliness, and vidya—wisdom, devotion, and the company of holy men—leads one to God.

'He who has gone beyond maya, through the grace of God, views alike both vidya and avidya. Worldly life is a life of enjoyment. After all, what is there to enjoy in "woman and gold" ? As soon as a sweetmeat has gone down the throat, one doesn't remember whether it tasted sweet or sour.

'But why should everybody renounce ? Is renunciation possible except in the fullness of time ? The time for renunciation comes when one reaches the limit of enjoyment. Can anybody force himself into renunciation ? There

is a kind of renunciation known as "monkey renunciation". Only small-minded people cultivate it. Take the case of a fatherless boy. His poor widowed mother earns her livelihood by spinning. The boy loses his insignificant job and suddenly is seized with a fit of renunciation. He puts on the ochre cloth of a monk and goes to Benares. A few days later he writes home, "I have secured a job for ten rupees a month." In the meantime he tries to buy a gold ring and beautiful clothes. How can he stifle his desire for enjoyment ?

'It is very difficult to do one's duty in the world. If you whirl round too fast you feel giddy and faint ; but there is no such fear if you hold on to a post. Do your duty, but do not forget God.

'You may ask, "If worldly life is so difficult, then what is the way ?" The way is constant practice. At Kamarpukur I have seen the women of the carpenter families flattening rice with a husking-machine. They are always fearful of the pestle's smashing their fingers ; and at the same time they go on nursing their children and bargaining with customers. They say to the customers, "Pay us what you owe before you leave."

'An immoral woman goes on performing her household duties, but all the time her mind dwells on her sweetheart.

'But one needs spiritual discipline to acquire such a state of mind ; one should pray to God in solitude every now and then. It is possible to perform worldly duties after obtaining love for God. If you try to break a jack-fruit, your hands will be smeared with its sticky juice. But that won't happen if, beforehand, you rub them with oil.'

Question (asked by Girish) : 'Sir, which is wiser—to renounce the world regretfully, or to call on God, leading a householder's life ?'

Sri Ramakrishna : 'Haven't you read the *Gita* ? One truly realizes God if one performs one's worldly duties in a detached spirit, if one lives in the world after realizing that everything is illusory.

'Those who regretfully renounce the world belong to an inferior class.

'Do you know what a householder jnani is like ? He is like a person living in a glass house. He can see both inside and outside.'



## ONWARD FOR EVER!

*We generally find men holding two opinions regarding the world. Some are pessimists and say, 'How horrible this world is, how wicked!' Some others are optimists and say, 'How beautiful this world is, how wonderful!' To those who have not controlled their own minds, the world is either full of evil or at best a mixture of good and evil. This very world will become to us an optimistic world when we become masters of our own minds. Nothing will then work upon us as good or evil; we shall find everything to be in its proper place, to be harmonious. Some men, who begin by saying that the world is a hell, often end by saying that it is a heaven when they succeed in the practice of self-control. If we are genuine Karma-Yogis and wish to train ourselves to the attainment of this state, wherever we may begin we are sure to end in perfect self-abnegation; and as soon as this seeming self has gone, the whole world, which at first appears to us to be filled with evil, will appear to be heaven itself and full of blessedness. Its very atmosphere will be blessed; every human face there will be good. Such is the end and aim of Karma-Yoga, and such is its perfection in practical life.*

*Sri Kanchi*

## HOW TO PRAY TO THE MOTHER

EDITORIAL

Man is an eternal seeker of the Eternal. Despite his intellectual cyclical expeditions in the realms of physical and psychological sciences, socialistic and sociological theories, man is compelled in every age to turn back to the inner seeking of the Eternal. This seeking is as arduous and compelling as it is adventurous and fulfilling. Maybe among hundreds who start on the trail of the spiritual truth, or God, only a handful succeed. Such a meagre percentage of success notwithstanding, one is amazed by this strange, imperiously compelling fact of spiritual hunger and thirst, seeking and yearning. It is not that spiritual hunger and seeking are peculiar to some, or that the end of the search is a big, meaningless void. In the majority, the spiritual urge remains suppressed like a subterranean spring under a weighty rock—under the rock of sensual desires and ambitions. The end, instead of being a confounded void, is an unbounded fulfilment, like that of the mountain stream's after a long meandering journey, mingling with the sea. The sea exists and the stream seeks it with its every drop—though often unconsciously—and ultimately meets and merges with it. There is the ocean of infinite bliss, knowledge and truth, permeating man within and enveloping him without. How can he not but seek It and seek It desperately?

God is both with form and without form, with attributes and without attributes. What He is and what He is not will always remain beyond complete discovery. He sometimes reveals Himself in the manner of His own choice; at other times He conforms to the attitude and approach of the worshipper. He becomes the Father, Mother, Friend, Beloved, or anything else that the devotee demands of Him. But all these, from the highest point of view, are only thought-moulds that the devotee uses for channelling

his overflowing love and affection for God, or 'spirit-moulds' that God assumes out of His infinite grace, for blessing His worshippers. If God is the stern Father dispensing justice, punishing the wicked, and teaching recalcitrant children to behave, He is also the tender Mother giving birth to this cosmos, nourishing and sustaining it, sporting with His (or Her) creatures, and taking back those who are tired of the play and want to go back to eternal peace and bliss. As the devotee rises to higher levels of spiritual understanding and realizations, he finds out that all his anthropomorphic ideas about God are only relative and that God as Spirit is unconditioned and absolute, incorporeal and ineffable. To call the Supreme the Father is as sensible or ridiculous as to call It the Mother. As the 'Hymn to Kālī' in the *Mahākālasamhitā* puts it, in negative terms:

'You are neither a girl, nor a woman, young or old. You are not feminine nor masculine nor a eunuch. You are neither a god nor a demon, nor human, man or woman. You are One without a second, realized as the Brahman Supreme.'

Worship of God as Mother, though it seems to us more natural and along man's grain, is mainly developed and perfected in Hinduism—along with other types of worship—while other religions limit themselves to a very few modes and attitudes. Undoubtedly all modes and attitudes of worship have come into existence in accordance with man's needs. Now it is a well-known physiological and psychological fact that a child's relation with its mother is sweeter and more intimate than with its father. Because of this, it has greater freedom and is more demanding with the mother. If the child's relationship with the father is somewhat tempered with discipline and restraint, with the mother it is suffused with love and indulgence, devoid of fear and inhibition. The child knows in its innermost being that, however stern the mother may appear at

times, she can never be merciless and cannot long withhold what it earnestly asks for. If a worshipper can adopt the child's attitude to its mother while worshipping God, it becomes easier to focus all his energies and yearnings on the divine ideal. It is also possible to attain results sooner. 'Brahman alone is addressed as the Mother,' says Sri Ramakrishna. 'This is because a mother is an object of great love. One is able to realize God just through love . . .'<sup>1</sup> In another context he said, 'This attitude of regarding God as Mother is the last word in *sādhanā* [spiritual discipline]. "O God, Thou art my Mother and I am Thy child"—this is the last word in spirituality.'<sup>2</sup> These statements of Sri Ramakrishna are very significant, as he himself, having worshipped and realized God as the Mother, also successfully practised various other attitudes and modes of worship.

What a seeking soul needs is sincerity and a deep yearning. The yearning for God will not develop the cutting edge unless the seeker becomes perfectly sincere. 'I want God alone and nothing else'—that is a precondition for yearning to become intense and irresistible. 'Add your tears to your prayer,' Sri Ramakrishna once advised a group of earnest enquirers. A child, we see in our daily life, does it and almost always succeeds in getting what it wants. If a spiritual seeker can pray and weep for God—as a child weeps for its mother—he is sure to get God-vision. The lives and sayings of many saints bear witness to this fact. 'I vouch for it', Sri Ramakrishna says, 'that a man who sincerely yearns for God will get Him.'

'On a certain solemn occasion,' records Sister Nivedita, 'he [Swami Vivekananda] entrusted to a disciple a prayer to Her [the Divine Mother] that in his own life had

<sup>1</sup> 'M': *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (tr. by Swami Nikhilananda, Pub. by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras, 1947), p. 34.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, p. 676.

acted as a veritable charm. "And mind!" he added suddenly, turning with what was almost fierceness upon the receiver, "make Her listen to you, when you say it! None of that cringing to Mother! Remember!"<sup>3</sup> A child can be petulant or importunate with its mother but never cringing.

Many Hindu saints and devotees have prayed to the Divine as their Mother in moving phrases and stanzas that can inspire devotion in others and teach them the art of effective prayer. At the back of their mind there always remained the idea that the Deity they prayed to was none but the Supreme Reality. Generally it found expression in their psalms and hymns. Nevertheless, oft-times they spoke to Her as a helpless forlorn child, having no means of salvation excepting Her unconditioned mercy. At other times, they twitted and taunted Her, with sentimental rages and epigrammatic phrases that would have surely gone home. At still other times, they surrendered themselves completely to the Mother's will, with words such as: "There is no sinner equal to me; there is no sin-destroyer who is Your equal. Now, knowing thus, O Great Goddess, do what seems fitting to You."

Here we will confine ourselves to a brief study of hymns and prayers to the Mother in Sanskrit. It is a vast storehouse with innumerable captivating hymnal genis, of which only a handful is selected for our present purpose.

#### THE DIVINE MOTHER—THE SPORTIVE, LIBERATING POWER OF THE SUPREME

In Hinduism, Brahman or the Absolute is declared to be unconditioned, actionless, non-dual Truth. Though It is the sole substratum of every conceivable phenomenon, the threefold process of creation, sustentation

and destruction of the cosmos is executed by Its inscrutable Power. It is the Śakti or Power of Brahman that is invoked as Mother. Not that this Power is different from Brahman. They are identical like the fire and its burning power or the sun and its brilliance. They can never be separated in essence; the apparent sense of separation is wrought by words only. Sri Ramakrishna compared Brahman's unconditioned aspect to the calm, waveless ocean and Its conditioned or relative aspect to the ocean's disturbed, billowy state. He also gave the illustration of the coiled-up and the wriggling states of the serpent to explain the absolute and relative aspects of the non-dual Brahman. "Because there is non-difference between the power and its possessor," as Śrī Śaṅkara crisply remarks,<sup>4</sup> Brahman and Śakti are identical.

The first verse of the *Saundarya-lahari*, a hymn ascribed to Śrī Śaṅkara, very aptly says that Śiva, the absolute Reality, cannot create without being associated with His Śakti, or Power. Without Her, He remains inert and motionless. Once this process of creation starts, everything comes under the Mother's jurisdiction. Even the great Trinity—Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Rudra—are made, by Her power, to assume bodies to discharge their duties.<sup>5</sup> She is the cause of all the worlds, but transcendent and unknowable even to the greatest gods. Because the qualities of *sattva*, etc., distort the clarity of their vision. She is the refuge of all; the whole world is but a part of Her; She is the unmanifest, primordial, supreme Creatrix.<sup>6</sup> Before creation the individual soul was one with Śiva, the Supreme, blissful and free. With creation, which is the Mother's sport,

<sup>4</sup> शक्ति-शक्तिमतोरनेन्यत्वात् ।

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

<sup>5</sup> See : *Devī-mūhātmyam* (D.M.), I. 84; *Bhuvaneśvarī-stotram*, 1; *Kanakadhārā-stotram*, 10; *Gaurī-daśakam*, 6; *Saundarya-lahari* (S.L.), 24.

<sup>6</sup> D. M., IV. 7.

<sup>3</sup> *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita* (Sister Nivedita Girls' School, Calcutta, 3, 1967), Vol. I, pp. 115-6.

the soul gets deluded and bound. And so becomes miserable. With Her grace again, the soul gets out of bondage, regains Śivahood, and becomes blissful.<sup>7</sup> As the *Mātr-kābheda-tantra* teaches us to pray:

‘Obeisance to You, the Mistress of the God of gods; obeisance to You who are worshipped by Śiva; obeisance always to the Goddess who is the embodiment of *Brahma-vidyā* (the Knowledge of Brahman).’

‘Obeisance always to that Goddess who takes one to the other shore of this world’s ocean of bondage, the Bestower of spiritual wisdom and deliverance, the Eternal (*Jñānadā, Mokṣadā, Nityā*).’<sup>8</sup>

Same-sightedness, according to Vedānta, is the hall-mark of a man of wisdom. Such a man will find the whole universe to be Brahman and, finding nothing to covet besides It within and without, will become free from the sway of the pairs of opposites. ‘The propensities’, observes Śrī Śaṅkara, ‘of even a confirmed libertine are checked in the presence of his mother; just so, when Brahman, the Bliss Absolute, has been realized, the man of realization has no longer any worldly tendency.’<sup>9</sup> The concept of God as the Divine Mother greatly aids the transmutation of one’s attitude to this world and to oneself, from one of separation, attachment or hatred, to that of unity, unselfishness, and friendliness. If the whole creation has come out of the Divine Mother, each one of us then, from the lowest to the highest, is bound to everything else with the cord of spiritual fraternity. None can be an alien, none inferior. Thus the vision of sameness that a follower of the path of knowledge attains through the most rigorous discrimination, is attained by the true worshipper of the Mother in a very natural way.

Another direct corollary of worshipping

God as Mother is the change effected in the worshipper’s attitude especially towards women. Where formerly he would have seen objects to be possessed as a source of selfish, animal enjoyment, he now sees the images of the cosmic Mother. Many hymns refer to the divinity of women, as visible representatives of Her—an idea which is very much needed by human society today the world over. ‘Do you know who is the real “Sakti-worshipper”?’ asked Swami Vivekananda of a disciple; and answered, ‘It is he who knows that God is the omnipresent force in the universe, and sees in women the manifestation of that force.’<sup>10</sup> The *Devī-māhātmyam* declares in one of its four exquisite hymns:

‘All sciences come from You, O Goddess, and all women in all the worlds are parts of You. By You alone, O Mother, is the universe filled . . .’<sup>11</sup>

A hymn from the *Viṣṇu-purāna* concludes on this lofty note:

‘Whatever is designated as male among gods or animals or men should be known to be the Lord Hari, and whatever female, Lakṣmī, the Divine Mother. There is nothing besides them.’<sup>12</sup>

#### PRAYERS TO WIN THE MOTHER’S GRACE

With its mother the child’s relationship is one of deep love, unlimited freedom, and absolute informality. The matrix in which their bonds of love are enclosed is so vast and sturdy that it can very well withstand anger, quarrelsomeness, querulousness, banter, and challenge. This should be

<sup>10</sup> *The Complete Works* (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Himalayas), Vol. V (1959) p. 26.

<sup>11</sup> *D.M.*, XI. 5.

<sup>12</sup> देव-तिर्यङ्-मनुष्येषु पुंनामा भगवान् हरिः ।

स्त्रीनाम्नी श्रीश्च विज्ञेया नानयोर्विद्यते परम् ॥

*Lakṣmī-stotram*

See also *Rudra-hṛdaya-upaniṣad*: ‘Rudra is the Male Principle, Umā is the Female Principle; Obeisance to Him, obeisance to Her.’

<sup>7</sup> Śaṅkara : *Devī-bhujāṅgaprayāta-stotram*, 4.

<sup>8</sup> VII. 15, 17.

<sup>9</sup> *Viveka-cūdāmaṇi*, 444.



a million times truer in respect of the relationship of every worshipper with the Divine Mother. Because, with Her our relationship extends far beyond the physical and genetic levels. She it is who is life and intelligence in us; it is again She who is the Soul of our soul, and the ultimate goal of all souls. Some of the saints and devotees have prayed to the Mother adopting the attitude and tone of a spoiled child, holding Her responsible for all mischief. One such stanza says:

'To my mind, it is no fault of ours that, leaving Your worship, we are immersed in our riches; the delusion, created by You, is ruling over us; therefore, O Mother, You whose nature is compassion, why are You not compassionate to us?'<sup>13</sup>

The well-known appeal of Śaṅkara in one of his beautiful hymns, asserts that 'a bad son may sometimes be born, but never has there been a bad mother', thereby shoving all the responsibility onto the Divine Mother to save the supplicant from his predicament. Another poet-devotee sings:

'Mother, Beloved of the Supreme, You Yourself must speedily turn me away from the ignoble path, I being stupid and bereft of discrimination between good and evil. Is a mother indifferent towards her child which is desirous of jumping into a well?'<sup>14</sup>

The same devotee tells Her that he is not asking for salvation nor heaven, nor any other kind of happiness from Her. What he seeks is only devotion to Her. 'And', he asks with a greatly aggrieved tone, 'if You hesitate to grant even this, what shall I do?'<sup>15</sup>

Another devotee picks an argument with the Mother and tells Her that, gracious as

She is, She need not take to scrutinizing the balance-sheet of his karma! He says:

'If You have the compassion towards me that I should be saved, then save me; why bother Your head about my good and bad deeds? You who are unfettered to create or annihilate the world, to abide by karma! Who is going to be bamboozled by this?'<sup>16</sup>

Veṅkaṭādhvarin, the seventeenth century Vaiṣṇava poet and writer of South India, goes further and declares audaciously:

'Mother, don't be angry for this cheeky statement I am going to make now: the Power that is in You to do, undo, and alter,—had I a modicum of it, I would have led everybody to immortality in a moment. We can't understand why You, who are condensed compassion, are still indifferent to us in this manner.'<sup>17</sup>

The unbounded mercy of the Mother is meaningful because there are so many of us Her unfortunate children to be saved. Otherwise it would be as vain as the appearance of the cure without the malady for which it is a specific!<sup>18</sup> And the Mother's loving heart does shower its mercy on us. A devotee pictures to us how She intercedes on our behalf when the Lord becomes angry with us. He says:

'O Mother, Your dear Lord, once in a while, becomes angry—like a father who intends well of the children—with someone who is full of transgressions. Then You tactfully make Him forget our faults by such words as, "What's this? Who is there in this world that is absolutely faultless?" and make us Your own. That is why You are truly our own Mother.'<sup>19</sup>

If but once the mind becomes attached to the Mother through loving devotion, how can it not forthwith become pure, though it may have been sin-stained? The iron

<sup>13</sup> *Devī-bhāgavatam*, VI. v. 39.

<sup>14</sup> Veṅkaṭādhvarin: *Lakṣmī-sahasram* (L.S.), XXIV. 3.

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*, XXIII. 16.

<sup>16</sup> Nīlakaṇṭha Dikṣita: *Ānandasāgara-stavaḥ* (A.S.), 42.

<sup>17</sup> L. S., XXIII. 17.

<sup>18</sup> *Vide Ādyādi-Mahālakṣmī-hṛdaya-stotram*, 77.

<sup>19</sup> Parāśarabhaṭṭa: *Śrī Guṇaratnakośaḥ*, 52.

touched by the philosophers' stone turns at once into gold. The drain-water joining the holy river Gaṅgā becomes pure.<sup>20</sup> Surely the mind of the worshipper also becomes pure through devotion to the Mother.

That the Mother is eager to grant even the highest reward to one taking refuge in Her is beautifully brought out by Śrī Śaṅkara in a verse of *Saundarya-lahari*. He says:

"The devotee wishing to address You, "O Bhavani ! You be pleased to cast a compassionate glance on me, Your servant", begins by saying "O Bhavani ! You . . .". And at once, even before he finishes the sentence, You bestow on him *sāyujya* (salvation through union) which is illuminated by the crowns of Viṣṇu, Brahmā, and Indra.'<sup>21</sup>

Trying to express the limitless generosity of the Mother towards a devotee who does as much as salute Her, Parāśarabhaṭṭa (a twelfth century devotional writer both in Sanskrit and Tamil) almost makes the ultimate statement. He says:

"To one who comes to You with joined palms, O Mother, You give away wealth, liberation, and the highest status. "Oh, I haven't rewarded him worthily"—thinking thus, You look very bashful. What unexcellable generosity this is, tell us, Mother.'<sup>22</sup>

#### SELF-SURRENDER TO THE MOTHER

In certain other moods, the great devotees of the Mother simply resigned themselves to Her mercy. On the one hand, they were deeply aware of their unworthiness to receive

Her grace ; on the other, they knew in their inmost being that She *is* their own Mother. 'Alas, I don't know Your *mantra* and *yantra* (symbolic diagrams),' pleads Śaṅkara, 'nor praises nor meditation nor *mudras* etc. But O Mother, this I know : that to follow You is to remove all my suffering.'<sup>23</sup> In another hymn he prays to the Mother:

'O Mother, of pious deeds and pilgrimages, I have performed none. I have never yearned for salvation nor do I know how to merge the mind in the Divine. I have no devotion, nor have I observed any vows even. Therefore, O You Mother of the universe, You alone are my refuge ; You alone are my refuge.'<sup>24</sup>

When the act of self-surrender is sincerely accomplished, the devotee feels a sense of relief which approximates to the state of liberation. This fact is very well phrased in a verse by Nīlakaṅṭha Dīkṣita, a seventeenth-century poet-devotee of South India. He says:

'Mother, that You will in future remove my bondage and extend to me happiness—all that is there undoubtedly. The immediate feeling of relief I have on throwing all burden on You—what is there in salvation greater than this ?'<sup>25</sup>

The following prayer reflects the spirit of absolute surrender by a childlike devotee who has remained anonymous:

'Throw me, O Mother, to the bottom of the nether world, or instal me as the emperor of all the worlds. I shall never let go Your two feet. Never shall I leave them, for a certainty.'

<sup>20</sup> Vide Śrī Śaṅkara : *Ānandalahari*,

<sup>21</sup> S. L., 22.

<sup>22</sup> Śrī Guṇaratnakośaḥ, 58.

<sup>23</sup> *Devyaparādha-kṣamāpaṇa-stotram*, 1.

<sup>24</sup> *Bhavānyāṣṭaka-stotram*, 4.

<sup>25</sup> A. S., 50.

# LETTERS OF A SAINT

THE LORD MY REFUGE

20-5-1916

Almora

Dear—,

I am in receipt of your letter of the 13th instant. On reading it, the feelings of both joy and sorrow rose in me: joy in seeing your indifference and disregard for worldly enjoyments and knowing your devotion to duty and sincere effort in discharging it; sorrow because of your unreasonable feelings of hopelessness, inferiority, and dejection. Of course, self-conceit is not good. But, on that account, ceaseless brooding on thoughts such as 'Our life is in vain', 'Nothing is achieved by me'—indicative of despair—is not conducive to welfare. Our Master hated self-conceit, but he did not tolerate a miserable, lowly and weak attitude either. Rather he used to advise us to establish a relation with God and to feel proud of it. He used to ask us to vigorously assert: 'I am His child, what fear have I? By His grace, I shall easily cross over (to the other shore of life's ocean)'. In Rāmprasād's songs, too, this idea is always present: 'He who has a Mother who is Brahman's embodiment, by whose threat will he be frightened?' What is more, he is not slow even in quarrelling with the Mother. 'I won't any more call "Mother, Mother"'—there are many such songs, where all sorts of petulant demands are directed towards the Divine Mother.

Sri Ramakrishna also used to inculcate very much this attitude in us. Therefore, you must get rid of this feeling of dejection. Are you an insignificant person? Though remaining in the midst of such great activity, you are making time to think of God. You are devoting all your leisure to that. What is noon or evening? All time is His; the entire life His only. Besides, if one could take refuge in Him wholeheartedly for a moment, life would become blessed and purified, and all sins and sufferings disappear—such a faith is wanted. I had read 'Vedastuti' long back; now I don't remember it much. I only remember that its language was tough. But however that may be, this much is true: without devotion to God and Guru, no one is eligible to enter into the truth of God. Yet the Lord, you see, is abiding in our own hearts; were He not in the heart, there would be no hope of getting Him anywhere else. And the Guru, too, is He: 'My Lord is the Lord of the universe; my Guru is the Guru of the whole universe.'<sup>1</sup> If this were not true, what would be the use of any God or Guru? God and Guru are always dwelling in our hearts. If they were not abiding there, how would we have survived at all? Who is protecting us all the time? By whose grace is living made possible? He is bestowing grace on everyone. Only he who wants Him, sees Him. Even this domestic cat becomes the wild cat if it goes into the woods. These very eyes, this skin, these hands become unearthly, supernatural, by attaining Him. Learning mere words is fruitless. Words become

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fruitful when they are related to God, who is at their beginning, middle and end. The word is significant because it tries to express Him.

Śrīdhara Swāmin has indeed spoken truly.

The Master used to say that all jackals howl alike.

‘Those men who are free from all desires, who have known that Brahman in Its formed and formless aspects, who remember at all times Nārāyaṇa, the Guru of the gods, and who, through meditation, are rid of all pains born of sins—they do not again drink a mother’s breast-milk (i.e., they are not born again).’<sup>2</sup>

His (The Lord’s) feet are holy and all-pervading—‘His one foot is [this universe and] all these creatures.’<sup>3</sup> We live in the refuge of those feet. Leaving the adoration of those feet, what else should we worship? We have the full right to worship those feet. ‘He is the *prāṇa* (vital force) of our *prāṇa*, and eye of the eyes.’<sup>4</sup> Whether we know it or not, He is our all-in-all; there is not the least doubt about it. Therefore let us by surrendering our mind and heart to Him, dwell wholly, as it were, in Him. Let us not have to see anything else but Him. Here I close. Om.

My best wishes and love.

Your well-wisher,  
SRI TURIYANANDA

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<sup>2</sup> Brahmā’s words in *Prapanna-gītā*.

ये मानवा विगतरागपरावरज्ञा नारायणं सुरगुहं सततं स्मरन्ति ।  
ध्यानेन विगतकिल्बिषवेदनास्ते मातुः पयोधररसं न पुनः पिबन्ति ॥

<sup>3</sup> पादोऽस्य विश्वा भूतानि । *Rg-veda-saṁhitā* (‘Puruṣa-sūkta’), X. 90. 3.

<sup>4</sup> प्राणस्य प्राणः चक्षुषश्चक्षुः । *Kena-upaniṣad*, I. 2.

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# THE MESSAGE AND INFLUENCE OF VIVEKANANDA

J. V. NASH

[ In our September issue last year we reprinted an article from *The Open Court* magazine, by J. V. Nash, captioned 'Indians At The World's Parliament of Religions'. In it there was a reference to another article by the same author on Swami Vivekananda published in *The Open Court* in December, 1925. At our request, a xeroxed copy of the earlier article was made available to us through the good-willed offices of the Vedanta Society of Chicago. We would have been very happy to have offered this first part of that fine essay to our readers in September, very intimately associated as that month is with the memory of Swamiji's appearance at the Chicago Parliament of Religions, in that month eighty years ago. But it could not be done, owing to want of space. Incidentally we acknowledge our indebtedness to the publishers of *The Open Court*.

J. V. Nash appears to have been well read in Vivekananda's literature and to have possessed broad-hearted sympathy for religions and teachers other than his own. He quotes Swamiji's 'Response to Welcome' at the Parliament of Religions, in full, and also gives some peeps into Swamiji's activities in the post-Parliament days. —ED.]

Perhaps the most significant and fruitful element in the liberalizing of religious thought among Western peoples during recent years has been the awakening of interest in the sacred literature of the East, and a growing appreciation of the spiritual values which are to be found outside of Christianity.

For centuries, Christian speakers and writers had been content to lump all non-Christians together as 'heathen', a word about which clustered the most odious and disparaging connotations. For generations, too, the Christian churches at great expense sent out their missionaries, not only to uncivilized lands such as Africa and the South Sea Islands, but likewise to China, Japan, and India, firm in the belief that all non-Christian religions were equally degrading and their followers doomed to perdition.

That the great religions of the East might have helpful spiritual contributions to offer to the West, that Christianity might enter

into an *entente cordiale* with other historic faiths, would have seemed nothing short of blasphemous to the religious leaders of Christendom until well toward the close of the nineteenth century. Orthodox theology, based upon the Bible as an unique, infallible, and all-sufficient revelation of God, permitted no other point of view. The doctrine of exclusive salvation made Christianity the sole custodian of the keys of Heaven, its representatives unreasoning and intolerant propagandists.

Today, even orthodox Christian clergymen acknowledge with thankfulness the good in non-Christian faiths. An example of this changing attitude will be found in an incident related by Dr. G. B. Smith, of the University of Chicago Divinity School:

'Dr. Cuthbert Hall, who was at one time the Barrows lecturer to India, was a man himself of conservative theology, a very profoundly religious man, but with the spirit of a Modernist. When he came back from

his lectures in India, he was constantly telling people in the West that when you went to India you found people who made religion their first business. He was greatly impressed with the large place which religious experience had in the life of the devoted Indian people, and he said that the Christianity of the future is going to be enriched and enlarged from what we may learn from the Orient.'

The gradual abandonment of the old hostile and scornful attitude toward non-Christian faiths and peoples is traceable to several factors. First, there was the enlarging conception of the universe, following the great discoveries of nineteenth century science, in biology, geology, and astronomy, and a radically modified evaluation of the Scriptures in the light of this growing scientific knowledge and of the new scholarship brought to bear upon their interpretation by the higher criticism.

Again, the revolution in transportation brought the East and its peoples closer to us, our contacts with them thus became more frequent, our understanding deeper and most sympathetic, and age-old prejudices tended to disappear.

Still further, the work of great Oriental scholars, such as Max Müller in England, Professor Deussen in Germany, and Dr. Paul Carus in America, made accessible to the Western public the unsuspected wealth of inspiring spirituality in the ancient books of the East, particularly those of India.

Finally, there has been the interpretation of Oriental religions and philosophies by their own spokesmen who in late years have been coming among us as visitors, lecturers, and writers.

Now, since the war has revealed the pitiable bankruptcy of Western ecclesiasticism as a saving force, the Occident is more than ever receptive to spiritual influences from Asia, the venerable mother of religion; the world itself may find renewal of youth in

the waters of those life-giving springs which have been flowing through the ages from the slopes of the Himalayas.

It is not too much to say that a new religious era was ushered in with the opening of the historic Parliament of Religions in connection with the World's Columbian Exposition at Chicago in 1893. It was a rather heterogeneous gathering, and, owing to the lack of rules and precedents, it could only feel its way, sometimes awkwardly. Nevertheless, for the first time in history, the spokesmen of all the great religions, Christian and non-Christian on an equal footing, were given an opportunity on the public platform and in a friendly atmosphere, to set forth the values which they respectively emphasized, to show the service which each sought to render, and to make known the special contribution which it might make to the spiritual needs of the world at large.

The numerous religions and creeds which sent delegates to the Parliament of Religions were in the main ably represented. Some of the speakers, indeed, were religious thinkers of international reputation. But among all the men and women who took part in the sessions of the Congress, there was one who aroused a singular and absorbing interest, one whose work at the Parliament became the basis of a great world-wide mission.

This was a young Hindu *sannyasin*<sup>1</sup> who had come to Chicago without official credentials; he represented no recognized religious organization; he was utterly unknown to the world. When he appeared on the platform at the opening session, he had never made a public speech in his life, and he had no prepared notes. 'Throughout the

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<sup>1</sup> Literally, 'one who has renounced',—the Hindu name for a man who gives up everything and devotes himself to the religious life either as a hermit or as a wandering pilgrim.

morning', says one account, 'he kept putting off his turn to be introduced, whispering each time to the President, "Let someone else speak first." So again in the afternoon, until about five o'clock, when Doctor Barrows, rising, named him as the next speaker.'

When he was introduced, he looked out upon a yawning audience which had sat through a tiresome day of manuscript reading. He hesitated, nervously. Then a sudden access of power and eloquence came upon him, and he began to speak. As by an electric shock, the assembly became galvanized into eager attention. Before half a dozen words had left his lips, the great hall was shaking with storms of applause as in a political convention, and when his brief extemporaneous address was concluded everyone began asking: 'Who is this brilliant, eloquent, handsome, magnetic young Hindu, the Swami Vivekananda?'

In a letter dated Chicago, November 2, 1893, Vivekananda gives us in his own words a vivid picture of the scene at the opening of the Parliament and relates the circumstances attending his own introductory address:

'On the morning of the opening of the Parliament, we all assembled in a building called the Art Palace, where one huge and other smaller temporary halls were erected for the sittings of the Parliament. Men from all nations were there.... There was a grand procession and we were all marshalled on to the platform. Imagine a hall below and a huge gallery above, packed with six or seven thousand men and women representing the best culture of the country, and on the platform learned men of all the nations of the earth. And I, who never spoke in public in my life, to address this august assemblage! It was opened in great form, with music and ceremony and speeches; then the delegates were introduced one by one, and they stepped up and spoke. Of course, my heart was fluttering and my tongue

nearly dried up; I was so nervous and could not venture to speak in the morning. Mazoomdar made a nice speech—Chakravarti a nicer one, and they were much applauded. They were all prepared and came with ready-made speeches. I was a fool and had none, but bowed down to Devi Sarasvati and stepped up, and Dr. Barrows introduced me. I made a short speech. I addressed the assembly as "Sisters and Brothers of America",—a deafening applause of two minutes followed, and then I proceeded, and when it was finished I sat down, almost exhausted with emotion. The next day the papers announced that my speech was the hit of the day, and I became known to the whole of America. Truly has it been said by the great commentator Sridhara—'Who maketh the dumb a fluent speaker.' His name be praised!'

In this little introductory address which so captivated the great audience, Vivekananda said:

'It fills my heart with joy unspeakable to rise in response to the warm and cordial welcome which you have given us. I thank you in the name of the most ancient order of monks in the world; I thank you in the name of the mother of religions; and I thank you in the name of the millions and millions of Hindu people of all classes and sects.

'My thanks, also, to some of the speakers on this platform who have told you that these men from far-off nations may well claim the honour of bearing to the different lands the idea of toleration. I am proud to belong to a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance. We believe not only in universal toleration, but we accept all religions as true.

'I belong to a religion into whose sacred language, the Sanskrit, the word *exclusion* is untranslatable. I am proud to belong to a nation which has sheltered the persecuted and the refugees of all religions and all nations of the earth. We have gathered in our bosom the purest remnant of the Israelites, a remnant which came to Southern India and took

refuge with us in the very year in which their holy temple was shattered to pieces by Roman tyranny. I belong to the religion which has sheltered and is still fostering the remnant of the grand Zoroastrian nation.

I will quote to you, brethren, a few lines from a hymn which I remember to have repeated from my earliest boyhood, which is every day repeated by millions of human beings: "As the different streams have their sources in different places and mingle their waters in the sea, O Lord, so the different paths which men take through different tendencies, various though they appear, crooked or straight, all lead to Thee."

"The present convention, which is one of the most august assemblies ever held, is in itself a vindication, a declaration to the world of the wonderful doctrine preached in the Gita: "Whosoever comes to me, through whatsoever form, I reach him; all men are struggling through paths that in the end always lead to me."

"Sectarianism, bigotry, and its horrible descendant, fanaticism, have possessed long this beautiful earth. They have filled the earth with violence, drenched it often and often with human blood, destroyed civilization and sent whole nations to despair. Had it not been for these horrible demons, human society would be far more advanced than it is now. But their time is come and I fervently hope that the bell that tolled this morning in honor of this convention may be the death-knell to fanaticism, to all persecutions with the sword or the pen and to all uncharitable feelings between persons wending their way to the same goal."

Descriptions of Vivekananda and interviews with him filled columns upon columns in the newspapers. Here was a man, the product of a religion popularly supposed to set as its goal the utter negation of personality, who by the very force of an extraordinarily distinctive, attractive, and winsome personality, had brought America to his feet. What a paradox! How could it be explained? A tree is known by its fruits. It no doubt was subconsciously felt that a spirit-

ual tree which could flower in a Vivekananda had not received a fair hearing. So it was that the public everywhere became eager to see and hear Vivekananda.

Immense crowds flocked to the Parliament to hear his subsequent addresses, and now the chairman purposely put him last on the program in order to hold the audience through the other speakers' addresses. "They patiently waited and waited," said a newspaper report, "while the papers that separated them from Vivekananda were read." Another journalist wrote: "This man, with his handsome face and magnetic presence and wonderful oratory, is the most prominent figure in the Parliament."

Doors were opened wide to him wherever he chose to go. Finally, in response to the insistent demand for his message, he went on a speaking tour which carried him from coast to coast,<sup>2</sup> lecturing and teaching. This work kept him strenuously engaged for some two years after the close of the Parliament. In his letters he speaks of the friendliness which was accorded him wherever he visited. Even orthodox clergymen warmed to him. On the other hand, he had a friendly meeting with Robert G. Ingersoll, who remarked to him that if a non-Christian religious teacher had ventured to visit America fifty years earlier he would doubtless have been killed. In the course of a lengthy conference with the members of the Harvard Graduate School of Philosophy, the young Hindu easily held his own with the pundits of America's oldest university.

"It is the life of teachers which is catching, not their tenets," says Walter Bagehot. Certainly, the character and charm of Vivekananda had much to do with securing a

<sup>2</sup> Swami Vivekananda, though he travelled and preached extensively in America in the post-Parliament days, did not visit the West Coast then. This he did during his second visit to America, 1899-1900.—*Ed.*



sympathetic hearing for his doctrines.

The influence which he thus exercised upon the religious thought of the country can hardly be overemphasized. From that period dates the widespread interest in Oriental religion, which is today one of the marked characteristics of American life. Vivekananda was the first great missionary in modern times from Asia, the homeland of religion, to the peoples of the West.

Hindu though he was, Vivekananda was deeply permeated by the best in Christianity. His talks abound with references to and quotations from Jesus, which show a remarkable familiarity with the New Testament. One of his loftiest discourses is on 'Christ, the Messenger'. In it he says:

“The Kingdom of Heaven is within you.” Where goest thou to seek for the Kingdom of God? asks Jesus of Nazareth, when it is there, within you. Cleanse the spirit, and it is there. It is already yours. How can you get what is not yours? It is yours by right. You are the heirs of immortality, sons of the Eternal Father. . . .

‘Let us . . . find God not only in Jesus of Nazareth but in all the great Ones that have preceded him, in all that came after him, and all that are yet to come. Our worship is unbounded and free.

They are all manifestations of the same Infinite God. They are all pure and unselfish; they struggled, and gave up their lives for us, poor human beings. They each and all suffer vicarious atonement for every one of us, and also for all that are to come hereafter.

‘In a sense, you are all prophets; every one of you is a prophet, bearing the burden of the world on your own shoulders. . . . The great prophets were giants—they bore a gigantic world on their shoulders. Compared with them we are pigmies, no doubt, yet we are doing the same task; in our little circles, in our little homes we are bearing our little crosses. . . .

‘Our salutations go to all the past prophets, whose teachings and lives we have inherited, whatever might have been their race, clime, or creed! Our salutations go to all those God-like men and women who are working to help humanity, whatever be their birth, colour or race! Our salutations to those who are coming in the future—living Gods—to work unselfishly for our descendants!’

Though uttered twenty-five years ago by a Hindu, such thoughts sound strangely like the latest statements of the faith of Christian Modernists!

*(to be concluded)*

# WHY WE ARE WHAT WE ARE

SWAMI ASHOKANANDA

*(Continued from the previous issue)*

## IV

But let us now think of a person who has not reached that condition, who thinks that this material world is the reality. He will not even question it, he will just say, 'Yes, there is this world. I see it. Here it is.' He never thinks that he is separate from the body. If he believes that he has a soul or consciousness or some such thing, he thinks of it as somehow mixed up with his body; he will not agree that body and soul can be separated. Most western philosophers are of that school. It is very difficult to call them philosophers. They have a brain and they write big books full of arguments, but their starting point, as well as their ending point, proves that their perception of reality is sense-bound, no more than that. And yet they have to explain consciousness and mind. For the most part, they say that mind comes out of matter and consciousness comes out of mind. If they are asked how, some say that suddenly out of matter comes life, and suddenly out of life comes mind. Suddenness is no explanation. Here is a clear example of the connection between the perception of a person and his own status of inner growth, or, you might say, inner degradation.

If a person is sense-bound, he naturally thinks the sense world is real. *Māyā* is having full sway over him, and therefore he is subject to all its after-effects. As I told you, first *māyā* produces self-forgetfulness, and then it imposes the sense of finitude. Out of this sense all kinds of laws and conditions and forms are produced for him and are there to dominate him. How can such a man expect that he will escape from the effects of law?

You might ask, 'Are not great souls also subject to law?' No, they are not. For them there is no necessity of law, for in the highest consciousness there is no law. Does it mean, then, that a great soul can do anything and everything he likes? Well, you see, doing things takes place *under* the influence of law; it is itself a by-product of the bondage of law. 'But,' you may say, 'if I can do whatever I like, isn't it freedom? Even though you call it license, you must admit that there is some freedom in it.' No, doing as you like is not a sign of freedom; there is no freedom in it, there is only compulsion. The lower instincts have taken hold of you and are compelling you to run around like a madman. Do you think that is freedom? The Yoga books liken the mind in the lowest state, when it is scattered and bound, to a mad and drunken monkey: by nature a monkey is a restless creature, but it is given a dose of liquor so that it becomes still more restless, then it is bitten by scorpions, and after that it is whipped. You can well imagine how restless it is then. The mind is like that. Would you call it free? When we think that we are acting freely because we are doing as we like, all it means is that we are being maddened and whipped and bitten. When you are really free, the desire to do anything and everything does not arise. Yet there is no law there.

The lower your status—the more unconscious you are of the true reality and of your true self—the more you are bound by the laws of the gross plane. If you are bound by laws physically, you are also bound by them mentally and morally; therefore what you experience has a peculiar effect upon you. It requires a sturdy mind to be able

to see and experience all kinds of things and let them pass over without leaving any impression on the unconscious. A free soul can do this, but not a bound soul. A soul whose status is low has to be very careful what he experiences, because he will not be able to throw off its effect. His experiences will stick to him since he is bound by laws. The law here is that the mind receives the impress of whatever you experience, good or bad, and will conserve it; it will put it away somewhere in the unconscious. These impressions are all lying there stored up for you, and you cannot give them up. As long as you are seeking experiences in the outside world, you need them, you are not sure of anything, and therefore you are as it were keeping notes of whatever you experience for reference in comparing and judging future experiences.

Let us see how the impressions of experience are stored up in the unconscious. To put it in simple language, every karma or action, physical or mental, makes an impression on the mind, and, as I said, that impression remains there. But when impressions of the same or similar experiences are repeated and you accumulate a number of such impressions, they all naturally join together and become a power—they become what we call *samskāras*, or tendencies. This is the difference between an impression and a *samskāra*.

Both *samskāras* and impressions, however, have behind them a certain view of life and reality. A person who is very much sense-bound will always want sense experience. Some of these experiences may be repeated again and again, while others may not be; nevertheless both proceed from the same state of mind and presuppose a certain state of existence. However, the experiences that are often repeated become stronger, and because of this they become *samskāras*—tendencies or habits. *Samskāras* seem to have a sort of precedence over all other impressions; their power to come up to the

conscious mind and compel us to act according to them is greater than the power of those impressions which have not become strengthened by repetition.

Now, as the Hindus recount the story of the soul, its state of self-forgetfulness did not originate with this birth but must have had a past—in fact, an almost infinite past. It must have passed through innumerable lives in which many experiences similar in nature left their impressions on the mind. So you can imagine how many tendencies have been developed and how strong they are. If you try to sort them all out and classify them, you will be surprised to find that they have certain well-defined characteristics. One division, or classification, will be the impressions of things which are not of the world of the senses.

Suppose that in some past life you have come across a great knower of God. Maybe he was a neighbour of yours. You saw his smile, you saw his action, you heard his voice. These were sense experiences; but in and through these experiences of him you came in contact with something you did not find in other persons. A knower of God, as it is said in one of the great hymns written by Śaṅkara, is like 'a bright light set within a pot full of holes'. You look at such a man and find his inner illumination shining out even through his physical appearance and his actions. You did not care for God and God-realization or even understand it; nevertheless your mind received that impression. Such an impression is a mixed impression. It is the sense perception of a man on the one hand; yet on the other hand it contains a supernatural or superconscious reality. Or suppose in a past life you had had some spiritual awakening—perhaps you went to a place of pilgrimage or to a temple or church and felt a stirring within yourself, a feeling you had never had before. In your mind that impression would have remained apart from the impressions you had received of

mere sense experience, and it would subsequently be strengthened by the impressions of every new experience of a similar nature.

We say, therefore, that the contents of the unconscious should be understood as being divided into two parts, one part consisting of impressions of the higher reality, and the other of impressions of the lower or accustomed reality. This twofold division is made according to your sense of value. Who imposes this sense of value? You do not impose it; it is inherent in the reality itself. Wherever there is a sense of reality there is also an instinctive sense of value; these are not two separate things at all.

Those impressions left by the experiences of the accustomed reality, in addition to being one of the two main divisions of the impressions in the mind, are themselves found to fall within three larger groups. These groups are not always kept separate in our minds, but even when they are mixed up they represent three kinds of experience: one is experience of sex and all that goes with it; another is experience of possession—possession of your own body, of your own people and of things, as well as the desire to possess; and the third is the sense of power. The *vrttis*, the movements which Patanjali speaks of as continually rising in the mind, pertain in the case of an ordinary sense-bound person essentially to these three things, and as long as a person is dominated by them, he will continue to have the same three kinds of experience even if he is born a million times on this earth. New instalments will always be ready—for as long as these three things are strong, mother nature never comes to an end of her ingenuity in writing scripts—but we will still be unsatisfied, because satisfaction is not to be found here.

These three strong instincts themselves are but distortions of some higher functions of our consciousness. Sex, even in the lowest sense, is a desire for unity. And

because the soul is the very seat of the sense of oneness, it has been found that if a person can meditate on the idea that within himself there is infinitely more of all he has been seeking in human love—more beauty, more love, more of the sense of unity—then he becomes free from the sense of sex. If some of you say that is just sublimation, I say it is not sublimation at all; it is going back to the truth. If an error has produced all these troubles for you, go back to the truth and you will become free from the consequences of the error, and its power will no longer be able to affect you. It goes without saying, however, that the ordinary gross-minded person is not capable of listening to such advice, much less of practising it, and so he will continue to be dominated by his lower instincts and will keep repeating sense experiences. Corresponding impressions will be made and will become bound up together and formed into tendencies, and these, with repeated experience, will become stronger and stronger. So, under the impulsion of the three essential tendencies I mentioned, the soul goes through life after life, life after life, seeking the same things.

Fortunately, however, a time comes for an awakening, when nature no longer provides her script. Individually it is very difficult to judge when the awakening will come, except in isolated circumstances. It is rarely given to an individual to have a life so dramatic that, though beginning in a low state, at the end he realizes the highest state. Yet our Sanskrit poets have depicted many a character as beginning this life full of worldly enthusiasm and romance, and then slowly undergoing a transformation until he reaches a state of renunciation. You will find invariably that in the plots of the most successful Sanskrit dramas there is first a romance, then some kind of trouble arises and there comes a separation between the lovers, then comes a period of asceticism in which they go through great

agony, followed by a life of utter self-surrender, and finally comes a reconciliation on a higher level—a love in which there is no longer any sense of the body or any domination of the senses. Continually this theme is presented. I am not saying we should try to follow this scheme of life, for although in fiction you find such cases, in reality, for the majority the whole process has to stretch over a long period of many lives before it is fulfilled.

Collectively, also, you see the same process. You find that a nation starts with a great desire for acquiring things and doing things and enjoying life. Then comes a period in which it becomes sober, then idealistic, and then philosophical. Materially speaking the country may lose its power, but mentally speaking it becomes refined and no longer wants to do or acquire or enjoy the silly things it sought as an adolescent nation.

Now, the impressions of sense experiences fall within three general categories, regardless of their character. In one, the impressions are lying totally inactive: they will not be used for a long, long time, and so they are just packed and stored away in one corner. These are called *sañcita*, 'stored up'. Another group of impressions and tendencies is composed of karmas which are active in the individual's life at the present time. These are the activities in which he is very much involved and to which all his energies and thoughts are devoted. These are called *prārabdha*, 'begun', because they have already begun to function. Lying between these two extremes is a third or middle group of tendencies. These are called *āgāmī*, 'coming'. They are neither active at the present time nor stored away in a remote corner of the mind, but are on the threshold of consciousness, semi-active, waiting for an opportunity to come out and become active in life. A person says, for example, 'You know, I have always wanted to paint, but I have been so busy that I

just haven't found time for it. Maybe when I retire I can start.' This means that just back of his active life this desire is lurking, and when he is free from his other activities, it will seize the opportunity to come to the forefront and will compel him to buy canvas and pigments and brushes and begin to paint.

You might ask here how this threefold classification of impressions is determined in any individual case. I think the explanation can be found by studying our life even as it is now. When a certain desire is very strong, its opposite generally does not have any chance. I must admit, though, that the mind is a very peculiar thing: sometimes a certain tendency of the mind has a way of producing exactly the opposite tendency; for instance, you sometimes find complete reversals in people, as when an evil-doer suddenly changes his way of life. But generally speaking, the opposite of the present tendency does not have a chance to express itself; only those which are similar to one's present tendencies can come into the middle group and have, therefore, some chance of coming to the conscious state.

A sort of selection like this happens at the time of death. It is said that when a soul is going to leave this body it will carry all its impressions with itself. At death only the physical body is left behind; the mind goes with the soul—and these impressions are, of course, in the mind. And at that time a kind of sorting takes place. This sorting is somehow instinctive; it is not a conscious, deliberate effort on the part of the individual. Certain ideas, generally those that are similar to the ideas of *this* life, come to the forefront and take precedence. These are the forces which, in the next incarnation, will occupy the central stage of conscious existence, while others remain in the background. That is the explanation given by Hindu philosophers. In the *Bhagavad-gītā*, for instance, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says that whatever thoughts become domi-

nant at the dying moment will determine the character of the next birth.

I think there is good reason for thinking this to be true. It is but natural that a person who has worked the whole day in the office should, as he is about to leave for home, arrange his files and papers as he puts them away. This is not only a clearing up and filing away of the papers pertaining to the day that has just ended, but also an arrangement of things pertaining to the next morning so that what he wants to work on will be at hand. Similarly, it is reasonable to think that at the dying moment, when all the impressions of the mind come to the surface, a sort of arrangement should take place, not only to put away what is not necessary, but also to bring to the forefront and make easily available what will be necessary in the next birth. It is also reasonable to think that the impressions that come to the forefront are those that have been closest to your conscious mind, waiting for an opportunity to find expression. During your lifetime they were not given a chance, so now when you are dying, they come to the fore. Further, just as a man, while at home, reviews his day's work at the office and decides how he should proceed the next day, and the following morning, on his way to work, begins to make definite plans, so the soul, during the period of post-mortem existence, reviews its past. Then, when the time for rebirth comes and it begins to think about its next life, certain ideas come to the forefront, and it is born according to those ideas. Often, you see, these are the same ideas that had come to the fore at the dying moment of the previous life. They now become predominant in the next life; they are the *prārabdhas*, the karmas that have begun to function.

## V

The thing to remember about impressions is that each one is a power unit. If mind

is power, then mind is dynamic; and the mind certainly is powerful, intensely powerful. One man's mind can arouse and activate immense physical energy. A dictator, for example, may be so governed by the idea of conquest that huge armies and armaments are built up, and for years whole nations engage in war—all out of one thought, one *vr̥tti* in his mind. Just imagine what power is in the mind! In fact, mind is power. Through *māyā*, the all-powerful Being, God, first becomes mind; then He becomes matter; thus more power is evident in mind than in matter. Everything in the mind is powerful. It is through power that I experience things; it is through power that I receive the impression of things.

Every impression is like a charged battery that I have marked with a certain stamp; and although I have put it away, it is a power unit. That is why it has such dynamism, why it wants to come forward, and why, even when it is lying in the unconscious, it goes through a tremendous process of organization, during which, as I have told you, similar impressions all become joined together into a tendency. Just consider how a thought, buried deep down, comes to the surface at the slightest opportunity and overcomes you in one moment. Through what process does it come? If you study those things, you will understand what a tremendous, dynamic power is working in the unconscious. I am telling you this to impress on your mind the idea that karma is powerful, impression is powerful, and tendency is powerful. Karma is not just something you can laugh off and forget. If it were that easy the whole world would appear as nonsense. But, you see, there is a lot of method in the madness of this world. Since karma is power, you have to deal with it in such a way that it will become transformed or nullified by another kind of power; otherwise you cannot get rid of it.

In Hinduism as well as in Christianity there is the doctrine of divine grace. A

Christian would say that through divine grace one becomes free of sin. A Hindu would express the same idea as becoming free from the bondage of karma. The psychological effect of the different words may be different, but in both cases the fact is the same. Why did Christ have to shed his blood for the redemption of man's sins? Surely he could have said, 'Your sins are forgiven'—finished. No, that would not have been enough. He had to suffer for what he was redeeming. You see, he redeemed the souls, but he had to pay for it by taking their bondages and sins upon himself. That is vicarious atonement. Someone has to pay for it. We are paying for our sins now, but in the very paying we are acquiring more sins, more karmas; so we are always in debt. When Christ, on the other hand, took the sins of others on himself he did not incur more sin, because he was divine, he was free. Religions in every part of the world have had doctrines similar to the Christian doctrine of redemption by vicarious atonement. It is not unique with Christianity. In India, for instance, the sign of a Divine Incarnation is that he can take away the sins or karmas of others.

Now, if an individual is left to free himself of his own karmas, what does he have to do? He has to counteract the impressions of bad karmas by creating impressions of good karmas, just as to remove darkness one must light a lamp. What are the good karmas? Actions that are done, not for yourself, but for the true benefit of others—those are the karmas that will nullify your bad karmas. Power acts against power and neutralizes it. Therefore Hinduism teaches that you should never take your good actions to yourself, you should never claim their fruits; otherwise you will never be able to work out your bad karmas, but will continually build new ones. Suppose you go to a banker and say, 'I want to repay my loan.' He brings out your note, but when

you have counted out the money you pick it up and put it back in your own pocket. The banker will certainly not consider that you have repaid your loan. The burden of debt will still be yours. Just so, unless good deeds are unselfishly performed without an eye to their fruits, they will not free you from the effects of bad action. This is one reason one should renounce the fruit of one's action. However, it has been found that a person's good deeds are not sufficiently profound or powerful to counteract his bad karmas unless he actually becomes free from any motives for gain whatsoever. And of course such motivelessness does not come to a person unless he has caught a glimpse of the higher reality, his own spiritual Self, or God. There is also the extreme doctrine that a person cannot attain to the highest except through knowledge of God—good works alone will not liberate him.

Out of these doctrines has come the practice of offering everything to the Lord. By offering the fruits of one's actions to God—by keeping your eye on Him, as it were—you begin to turn your mind to the truth about all things; you begin to attain to knowledge, *jñāna*. I have already said that knowledge of the truth is what breaks the spell of ignorance and awakens us from our own miserable dream. When we become aware of the spiritual truth and reality, the whole foundation of karma becomes undermined, and eventually all its binding laws are destroyed. Śrī Kṛṣṇa said in the *Gītā*, 'As a fire, well kindled, reduces wood to ashes, so, O Arjuna, does the fire of Knowledge reduce all works (karmas) to ashes.' Patañjali said: 'Just as fried seeds will not sprout, in the same way, your own karmas, looked at through the knowledge, the experience, of your own higher Self, become as it were fried and cannot produce any further effect.' You become free of them.

But until then it is another story. Our work is at best only half finished by the

time we have to depart this life. There are so many questions unsolved, so many desires unfulfilled that we are not ready to say, 'Enough!' We should be able to say, 'Living in the body is a pleasure, but it is followed by greater suffering. If there is youth, there is also middle age and old age; if there is health there is illness; if there is the joy of living in the body there is the pain of being separated from the body.' All these contradictions are there, but we are not philosophical enough to say, "No, there is no use coming back to this order of existence." Although suffering comes at death, very soon the memory of that suffering goes away, and again the desire arises to come back and continue with the same experience.

You may remind me here that some people believe there is no coming back; they will go to heaven, and there they will fulfil their desires. Friends, you have never experienced going to heaven, have you? If you were forced to go to heaven without being ready for it, there could not be anything more tormenting. Have you ever lived in the company of a spiritual person? If you are not ready for it, you will find it unbearable; you will feel that you might as well be burned in actual fire. Living in their company is like being forced to climb to the top of a mountain twenty thousand feet high; your lungs are bursting, you cannot breathe, you feel you are dying. If your mind is not ready to live in heaven in companionship with God, you will call it hell, not heaven. These things are spoken of so glibly! It is easy to be thoughtless; life is so simple when you do not have to think for yourself. Somebody else thinks for you; even if he says impossible things, you do not want to think about them because to do so would be inconvenient. But just think a little; here you live the grossest kind of life, and then when you die you want to live with the angels in companionship with God! There has

to be preparation for that. It has been rightly said, therefore, that first the soul has to pass through purgatory. Now, what is purgatory, what is its function, and what are the conditions it must provide for the soul?

You cannot really relieve a man's desire for wealth just by putting him in a cell whose walls are painted with all kinds of luxurious objects. Nor will a man's hunger be satisfied by placing lifelike pictures of food before him. Nothing but actual objects will satisfy desire. Purgatory cannot do good to the soul still bound by this gross conception of reality, unless it is the exact replica of this earth. The Hindus say we need not give two names to it; we can just call it earth. This earth is purgatory. It is here that the worldly soul has to come to fulfil its worldly desires. If there are in this universe other earthly globes where the soul can do this, it may go to them, but exactly the same conditions will have to be there. Our sense desire has to have opportunity for satisfaction. Through that satisfaction will come dissatisfaction; through dissatisfaction will come discontent; and discontent will bring about awakening. Then the higher life will flash before us.

But this earth is not just for sense-bound souls; it is a very great place, and great souls also come here until they have realized the highest. According to the Hindus, life on this earth is an absolute condition for the freedom of the soul; there is no other way. The very fact that the soul has come into this body shows there is a purpose in it, and unless this is an altogether cruel universe with no provision for kindness, it is but natural to think that the soul should have an opportunity of coming here again and again, fulfilling its desires, and awakening to its higher nature. This is what life on the earth is for.

The idea of karma follows from the basic idea of the present constitution of man and



all the ways in which the mind functions, and as long as these conditions obtain, there will be reincarnation. It is also through the idea of karma that we explain why we are what we are. Some of us are fulfilled, others unfulfilled; some are blinded, others half blinded; light is just breaking for some, for others it is still very dark; some have caught a glimpse of the higher reality, others are still buried deep in the darkness of the lowest reality. It all depends upon the present state of the mind of the individual.

In closing, I shall remind you, as I did at the very beginning, that it does not matter in what state a person is; if by some means he can be made aware of his own true nature, in one moment he can wake up from this terrible dream of life and reality. If you say, 'Let us be practical about it,' I shall concur, but I shall add, don't wait till the whole story is finished to wake up. Let the first chapter be finished if you will. After that, friends, why not wake up? This story will never come to

an end; so after you have enjoyed the first part of it you can say, 'It is that kind of story; I don't have to finish it.'

Yes, it is possible for the soul to wake up, and this is why from the Divine Providence, which is infinitely gracious, great Incarnations and prophets and saints and saviours are born in this world to teach us. This is also why every civilized country has scriptural texts containing their experiences and teachings, and why in every civilized country there are religions and places of worship and people who can guide us to this knowledge and teach us ways and means by which it can be acquired. All these things are evidences of divine grace, and if we avail ourselves of them there is no reason why we have to go to the bitter end before we wake up; we can wake up *now*. After all, we have not just begun human life in this birth; many times in our past lives we have had experiences of the very things we are now running after. Friends, what is the sense of repeating them?

(Concluded)

*ESSAY ON APPLIED RELIGION*

## ON MAKING SPIRITUAL PROGRESS

SWAMI BUDHANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue)

After finishing his education and making suitable reverential gifts to his teacher, at whose home-institution he had been educated, the vigorous, celibate, young man of character, learning and promise, returns home and duly enters the stage of the householder's life through sacramental marriage.

As a student the discipline was enjoined on him that he was a *brahmacārin* who was to eschew sex-life as deadly poison. Any premarital sex-relation was known as heinous sin. As a student he was taught how to practise self-control, how to use his brain in a disciplined manner, how to ex-

ercise his will-power in such a manner that he would never lose sight of the ultimate goal of life, which was the realization of God. He was taught that he had duties to perform to the gods, sages, ancestors, parents, society, and the other living beings of the world.

These duties, however, were to be performed by entering the next stage of life—that of the householder (*gr̥hastha*) through sacramental marriage. Marriage was taught as a discipline and a sacrament, and for the householder sex-life with the wedded wife was obligatory. But it was to be subordinated to the disciplines of dharma and demands of other duties he had to perform in the world in the light of the scheme of values he had been taught. He was to continue to practise religion, into the subtleties of which he had been initiated, to earn money, look after his worldly interests and well-being, and do his duties to his family, society, and the world. He was encouraged to aspire after all the legitimate aims of life, such as wealth, good name, religious merit. He was to take loving care of his parents, wife, and children, and not neglect the claims of other relatives on him. Just as premarital sex-life was absolutely forbidden for the *brahmacārīn*, the chaste student, extramarital sex-relations were absolutely forbidden to the *gr̥hastha*, for if he lost the purity of his married life, the trail of consequences would flow down the line of his family, with dire consequences for it and for society. Social scientists of ancient India clearly saw that adult delinquency was the root of juvenile delinquency, which was more a biological problem than a social one; for the son is the father re-born.

When the householder had done his duties in the world, reared children who now in their turn had become parents, the sages enjoined that it was time for him now to retire from the world, entering the

stage of *vānaprastha*, and devote his energies to religious and altruistic pursuits preparatory to his final renunciation of the world. Before entering the stage of *vānaprastha*, the good householder who had lived a life of self-control would have given up sex-life, and now though he might yet live in the world, he lived as it were on its fringe pursuing other-worldly interests and the practice of spiritual disciplines. This was the stage when retiring parents who had relinquished the intense pursuit of the values of *artha* and *kāma*—wealth and pleasure—and were now continuing to work mainly for *mokṣa*—liberation of the spirit—would communicate to their children and grandchildren whatever lessons they had learned from life.

Finally, the grandsire renounced all possessions and home, and entered the stage of *sannyāsa* (life of a monk) and lived on alms exclusively devoting himself to spiritual pursuits, awaiting his soul's release in communion with God.

Referring to the wisdom of this unique Hindu planning of life, Paul Deussen wrote:

‘ . . . the whole life should be passed in a series of gradually intensifying ascetic stages, through which a man, more and more purified from all earthly attachments, should become fitted for his “home” (*astam*) as the other world is designated as early as Rigveda (x. 14. 8). The entire history of mankind does not produce much that approaches in grandeur to this thought.’<sup>43</sup>

It will have been noticed that premarital and extramarital sex-life were strictly forbidden in the Hindu scheme of life. The reason behind it is the subtle perception of the sages, who conceived the whole of life as a great pilgrimage to God-seeing and Brahman-

<sup>43</sup> Paul Deussen: *The Philosophy of the Upanishads* (Dover Publications, Inc., New York, 1966), p. 367.

becoming. What prevented seeing God was mainly body-consciousness, attachment to the body. Attachment to one's own body was difficulty enough on the way. Still, in spite of this, the fact could not be overlooked that most human beings had cravings of the flesh. So sex-pleasure was permitted, but it had to be gone through in such a frame of discipline that instead of being its slaves, men could after seeing through it, rise above it and not stay its slaves all their lives. The meaning of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's teaching, *dharmāviruddho bhūteṣu kāmosmi*, 'I am desire in beings unopposed to dharma',<sup>44</sup> is that enjoyment of legitimate desires in the manner sanctioned by dharma—that is to say, which would not impede a man's spiritual progress—is permissible. The institution of sacramental marriage was a farsighted provision by the seers of India, who had deep knowledge of human psychology and also metaphysical truths.

It is to be noticed that the seers permitted legitimate sex-enjoyment at a particular stage of life of a man of sound character, who had received education not only in academic subjects, but in using his head, heart, and hands properly in the context of the soundest set of values. Moreover he had learnt how to control his mind and body and keep a sense of direction towards the ultimate purpose of life, which was generally accepted to be the liberation of the spirit.

Some of our modern educationists, even in India, have been clamouring these days to give so-called sex education even to school-children, before they have done anything to train them properly to use their minds, hearts, hands and feet, to build their characters and develop their powers of discrimination, concentration, and will. These amazing learned men and women do not see the absurdity of emphasizing one organ of the body beyond all limits while other organs cry for legitimate

recognition. This indeed is a pathological trend of educational thinking in the world of today. Soon we may see even worse things than this happening in a world where the human head and heart are given less recognition by educationists than sex.

Behind the hoary Hindu tradition of planning of the entire human life—as distinguished from fragmentary 'family planning' which concerns itself only with pleasure and wealth, the two lower *puruṣārthas* (values of life)—there was the unerring vision of the seers which delved deep in human nature and devised means for gradual spiritual growth of the individual until he attains the liberation of the spirit. Modern planners know hardly anything better than planning for the lower half of man—his belly and sex. Little do they realize that when planning does not take the whole man and his spiritual destiny into perspective, by lop-sided planning they can only whet the appetites of people, never knowing whence to supply the wherewithal for their satisfaction.

Thus spiritual aspirants all over the world, irrespective of the religion they belong to, may learn a few lessons from the wisdom of the Hindu sages:

First: the foundation of spiritual life has to be laid early in life, in the celibate student days.

Second: as students, along with academic learning, children should be taught—if they have not already learnt at home—to mould their characters and the resulting good conduct, to practise self-control, other-regard, and to aim at the four *puruṣārthas* (values of life). They should be taught to 'develop muscles of iron and nerves of steel', powers of discrimination, will, and concentration.

Third: besides the fundamental ethical disciplines, which Patañjali calls great vows meant for all, duties of life conducive to spiritual uplift vary according to one's station, stage and situation in life. The householder or one in any of the first three

<sup>44</sup> *Bhagavad-gītā*, VII. 11.

stages can make spiritual progress by faithfully discharging the duties of his station in life. But he cannot do it by following the monk's way of life.

We read in the *Gospel* that Sri Ramakrishna, speaking to 'M', says:

'Pratap's brother came here. He stayed a few days. He had nothing to do and said he wanted to live here. I came to know that he had left his wife and children with his father-in-law. He has a whole brood of them! So I took him to task. Just fancy! He is the father of so many children! Will people from the neighbourhood feed them and bring them up? He isn't even ashamed that someone else is feeding his wife and children, and that they have been left at his father-in-law's house. I scolded him very hard and asked him to look for a job. Then he was willing to leave here.'<sup>45</sup>

In scolding Pratap's brother Sri Ramakrishna was underscoring the fact that by neglecting his duties as a householder to his wife and children, this person was only hurting his spiritual future. His spiritual progress depended on finding a job and looking after his dependents properly, and not on imitating the life-style of the renouncer of the world. In fact, Pratap's brother was only a self-seeker and not a seeker of God, for otherwise he would have fulfilled his duties to the members of the family who depended on his earnings for their sustenance.

In the case of another, Niranjana, who was to become a monastic disciple, Sri Ramakrishna said almost the opposite of what he said to Pratap's brother:

'I feel as a dark veil has covered your face. It is because you have accepted a job in an office. One must keep accounts there. Besides, one must attend to many other things, and that always keeps the mind in a state of worry. You are

servicing in an office like other worldly people; but there is a slight difference, in that you are earning money for the sake of your mother. One must show the highest respect to one's mother, for she is the very embodiment of the Blissful Mother of the Universe. If you had accepted the job for the sake of wife and children, I should have said: "Fie upon you! Shame! A thousand shames!"'<sup>46</sup>

The striking difference in Sri Ramakrishna's teachings to these two different persons can be understood only in the light of the doctrine of *svadharma* as taught in the *Gītā* (II. 33; III. 35; XVIII. 47). Sri Ramakrishna knew that Niranjana was destined to become a *sannyāsin*. So his duties (*svadharma*) were to be different from those of a confirmed householder like Pratap's brother.

Thus the spiritual progress of these two persons depended on two different courses of action: for Pratap's brother, finding a job; for Niranjana, getting rid of his job as quickly as he could after providing for his mother.

Here we need mention one very important point regarding the Hindu scheme of life characterized by the four stages (*āśramas*) and four values (*puruṣārthas*). The four stages were enjoined on the sound concept that only by going through the three earlier stages would a person become competent to enter the fourth—that of *sannyāsa*. This held good for the generality of people. But it was not that all became fit for *sannyāsa* merely by going through the three previous stages. Equally true it is that all had not necessarily to go through the householder's and recluse's stages of life to enter that of *sannyāsa*. If the law of reincarnation is accepted as a fact of life, one cannot help accepting the possibility that some may be born with the spirit of renunciation as a result of experiences in previous lives. So the

<sup>45</sup> 'M' *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (tr. by Swami Nikhilananda, pub. by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 1947) p. 3.

<sup>46</sup> *ibid.*, p. 401.

scriptures enjoined that such people as felt this spirit at the stage of the celibate student could enter the stage of *sannyāsa* directly, without having to waste time going through the experiences of the householder and the recluse. The scriptural injunction is that: 'Whenever one feels the upsurge of the spirit of renunciation within.' The obligation of judging whether the spirit of renunciation is genuine or not remains with the person himself and the person who is to give him the vows.

These teachings of the scriptures underline the great importance of *sannyāsa* for making spiritual progress for those who have a real spirit of renunciation. We are aware that there are different views in this regard in the Hindu fold itself. All are welcome to hold fast to their views sincerely. Only let all go forward in their spiritual life step by step towards the goal.

No scripture or teacher has any authority to say that *sannyāsa* is for all or that *sannyāsa* is for none.

It is important to understand the crucial role of *svadharma* in the spiritual life of an aspirant. From our respective situations of life issue our personal duties to home and the world. The way of making spiritual progress is through properly discharging those duties. It is not said that one cannot change or outgrow his particular duties of a certain period of his life. For example, in his early youth Abraham Lincoln had to fell trees and split rails with the help of an axe—this was the duty of necessity, the *svadharma* of that period of his life. As President of the United States his duty was to take decisions in regard to affairs of state and see to their implementation. His way of spiritual progress in youth was through doing his job well with the axe, and as President, the way was obviously different. The central idea of *svadharma* is the sincere performance of one's obligatory duties and the dedica-

tion of the fruits of action to God.

An obscuration of this idea which has been more or less universally accepted in India, has taken place to the general spiritual detriment of the people. Through misguided indoctrination many have come to believe that to neglect one's duties in office or factory or farm is quite in order as long as he follows the dictates of his labour union. But the point is, that even if one can draw his full salary while not properly working for even a quarter of it, one cannot but injure one's spiritual prospects. Not only that. Even if he is an atheist, the only way of attaining excellence in life is through properly doing his work. The man who does not do so decays, his family decays, for the son imitates the father and the consequences follow.

Through handling two things given to him, namely, thought and action, a man brings about his qualitative improvement, without which no spiritual progress is possible. Those who deliberately refuse to work properly for the salary they get in any occupation, cannot make spiritual progress, notwithstanding their other practices of spiritual discipline. By neglecting his *svadharma* a man gradually destroys the possibility even of worldly improvement. Further, by adopting this way of life he becomes an unethical person, who has no chance of spiritual progress as long as he continues to be so.

However humble may be our duty in the world, through proper performance of it we may expect to progress spiritually. Of this there can be no doubt. For the Lord teaches in the *Gītā*:

'Devoted each to his own duty, man attains the highest perfection. How engaged in his own duty, he attains perfection, that hear.

'From whom is the evolution of all beings, by whom all this is pervaded, worshipping Him with his own duty, a man attains perfection.

'Better is one's own dharma (though) imperfect, than the dharma of another well-performed. He who does the duty ordained by his own nature incurs no evil.'<sup>47</sup>

Hence this can well be said: *svakarma* (one's own work) is *svadharmā* (one's own religion). There is no way of making spiritual progress without performing one's own work to the best of one's ability.

#### ONWARD MOVEMENT STEP BY STEP

We have already made some references in passing, to the need for step-by-step progress. Because of the importance of this point, some elaboration of it is being made here.

Theoretically speaking it is open to and possible for every person to rise gradually to a high state of spiritual realization, from an unregenerate state, through unflagging practice of spiritual disciplines suitable to him.

But when we take to spiritual striving, we face certain facts of the inner life so far unknown to us. We discover that scaling the sunlit spiritual heights which had appeared not so difficult before we started the journey, begins to appear exceedingly difficult as we try to move ahead on the path. Why does it happen thus?

It is obvious that men are of different temperaments, and so the rationale of various approaches to the Divine is easily understood. But it is not so obvious that all men are not at the same stage of spiritual evolution. We may even accept this theoretical proposition. But we cannot accept easily the fact that we ourselves may not have been born with exceptional spiritual endowments. Therefore in our ignorance we are apt to overestimate our capacity and hurry too fast, and end up in a tumble. In the *Philokalia* it is taught:

'The attempts of those who try to obtain before its time that which comes in its

own time, and who strive to force their way into the harbour of passionlessness without due preparation, are called by the holy fathers madness. For he who knows no letters cannot read books.'<sup>48</sup>

It is not well realized by many that spiritual progress cannot be made by way of high jumps, long jumps, or hundred-metre dashes. Progress, to be sure, can be made, but only step by step.

Swami Vivekananda teaches:

'Every one without exception, every one of us, can attain to this culmination of Yoga. But it is a terrible task. If a person wants to attain to this truth, he will have to do something more than to listen to lectures and take a few breathing exercises. Everything lies in the preparation. How long does it take to strike a light? Only a second; but how long it takes to make the candle! How long does it take to eat a dinner? Perhaps half an hour. But hours to prepare the food! We want to strike the light in a second, but we forget that the making of the candle is the chief thing.'<sup>49</sup>

We must remember that no impetuous, self-opinionated, hurried or callous movement can take us nearer the goal. What is needed is energetic steady practice of disciplines according to the authentic teachings about the chosen path. Swami Vivekananda warns:

'The great danger is that every man wants to jump at the highest ideal, but jumping is not the way. That ends only in a fall. We are bound down here, and we have to break our chains slowly.'<sup>50</sup>

After some discursive reading of religious books and stories of the spiritual attainments of great ones, we are apt to think that, after all, we are also human beings endowed with

<sup>48</sup> E. Kadloubovsky and G. E. H. Palmer: *Writings from the Philokalia on Prayer of the Heart* (Faber & Faber, London, 1951), p. 272.

<sup>49</sup> *The Complete Works* (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Himalayas), Vol. II (1963) p. 36.

<sup>50</sup> *The Complete Works*, Vol. IV (1962), p. 7.

<sup>47</sup> XVIII, 45, 46, 47.

the same spiritual potentialities, and so why can we not get into *samādhi* quickly? There is no doubt about the fact that man is potentially divine. All Vedānta texts declare this truth unreservedly. But we easily forget that those who attained *samādhi* had to do a great deal of painstaking *sādhana* before attaining it. They did not get it by snapping of the fingers.

Those who have been brought up in the affluent societies of technologically advanced countries—where they get so many things by just putting a coin into a slot—are easily deluded into thinking they can get those wonderful spiritual realizations by some chemical or other instant means: for are they not highly advanced people? They proudly think they need not do spiritual things in antiquated desert-father style; they will rather do them in modern push-button style. The Lord however refuses to be tricked! He who is the timeless does not seem to be in a hurry to be realized by the unprepared and the undisciplined.

Swami Vivekananda teaches:

‘. . . No amount of doctrines or philosophies or ethical books, that you may have stuffed into your brain, will matter much, only what you *are* and what you have *realised*. So we have to realise religion, and this realisation of religion is a long process. When men hear of something very high and wonderful, they all think they will get that, and never stop for a moment to consider that they will have to work their way up to it; they all want to jump there. If it is the highest, we are for it. We never stop to consider whether we have the power, and the result is that we do not do anything. You cannot take a man with a pitchfork and push him up there; we all have to work up gradually. Therefore, the first part of religion is Vaidhi Bhakti, the lower phase of worship.

‘What are these lower phases of worship? They are various. In order to attain to the state where we can realise, we must pass through the concrete—just as you

see children learn through the concrete first—and gradually come to the abstract. If you tell a baby that five times two is ten, it will not understand; but if you bring ten things and show how five times two is ten, it will understand. Religion is a long, slow process. We are all of us babies here; we may be old, and have studied all the books in the universe, but we are all spiritual babies. We have learnt the doctrines and dogmas but realised nothing in our lives. We shall have to begin now in the concrete, through forms and words, prayers and ceremonies; and of these concrete forms there will be thousands; one form need not be for everybody. Some may be helped by images, some may not. Some require an image outside, others one inside the brain. The man who puts it inside says, “I am a superior man. When it is inside it is all right; when it is outside, it is idolatry. I will fight it.” When a man puts an image in the form of a church or a temple, he thinks it is holy; but when it is in a human form, he objects to it!

‘So there are various forms through which the mind will take this concrete exercise; and then, step by step, we shall come to the abstract understanding, abstract realisation. . . .’<sup>51</sup>

Swami Brahmananda, a brother-disciple of Swami Vivekananda, teaches a profound truth which every aspirant seeking to make spiritual progress should make a principle of his life. He says: ‘It is of vital importance that a man begin his spiritual journey from where he is.’ It will be greatly helpful for us to remember his entire teaching in this context.<sup>52</sup>

A disciple asked: ‘Maharaj, what is the significance of all these gods and goddesses? Do they really exist? And what is the meaning and purpose of ritualistic worship?’

The Swami gave this illuminating and exhaustive answer:

<sup>51</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 35-6.

<sup>52</sup> Swami Prabhavananda: *The Eternal Companion* (The Vedanta Press, Hollywood, Calif., 1947), p. 115.

'The many gods and goddesses represent but so many different aspects of the one Godhead. Men differ in their temperaments, and so are inclined to different ways of worship. To meet the needs of all, the scriptures prescribe four distinct methods of worship.

'One method is the ritualistic worship of God embodied in an image or symbol. Higher than this is the worship of God with prayer and japam. By this means the aspirant prays and chants and meditates upon the shining form of his Chosen Ideal within his own heart.

'Higher still is meditation. When a man practises this form of worship, he keeps up a constant flow of thought toward God, and becomes absorbed in the living presence of his Chosen Ideal. He goes beyond prayer and japam, but the sense of duality remains.

'The highest method of worship is meditation on the unity of the Atman and Brahman. This leads directly and immediately to God. The aspirant experiences Brahman; he knows that God is. It is an actual realization of the omnipresent Reality.

'These are the different stages through which the aspirant progresses. It is of vital importance that a man begin his spiritual journey from where he is. If an average man is instructed to meditate on his union with the Absolute Brahman, he will not understand. He will neither grasp the truth of it, nor be able to follow the instructions. For a while he may try, but sooner or later, he will tire of the struggle and give up.

'However, if that same man is asked to worship God with flowers, incense, and other accessories of the ritualistic worship, his mind will gradually become concentrated on God, and he will find joy in his worship. Through such worship, devotion to the performance of japam grows. The finer the mind becomes, the greater is its capacity for the higher forms of worship. Through japam the mind inclines toward meditation; thus the aspirant gradually and naturally moves towards his Ideal.

'Take the illustration of a man standing in the courtyard of a house. He wants

to reach the roof, but, instead of climbing the staircase step by step, he permits himself to be thrown up bodily. What happens? He is seriously hurt. So it is with the spiritual life. One should follow the gradual path, for, just as there are laws governing the physical world, so are there laws governing the spiritual world also.'

It is by such stages that one progresses spiritually. But it is the guru who through his insight and understanding points out to an aspirant in what particular stage he is and how he should advance on the path. After receiving instructions from the guru, it is all a question of personal striving according to prescribed methods.

#### SUSTAINED MAXIMUM STRIVING NEEDED

To make spiritual progress, the aspirant has to put forth his maximum effort, and that in a self-integrated manner. In the *Gītā*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa teaches: 'An agent who is free from attachment, non-egotistic, endued with fortitude and enthusiasm, and unaffected in success or failure, is called *sāttvika*.'<sup>53</sup> Spiritual striving in the manner of the *sāttvika* doer guarantees sustained ability to undertake the long-drawn spiritual practices that are needed for progress. No qualities are more necessary for a marathon journey like this, year in and year out, than fortitude and enthusiasm. Only those who are free from attachment, non-egotistic, and unaffected by success or failure can have a perennial supply of fortitude and enthusiasm. Many break down on the way and fail to make spiritual progress because their inner supply of these qualities falls short. The great secret of perpetual fortitude and enthusiasm is in continence, physical and mental chastity, which makes for clarity of understanding and certitude of spiritual convictions. What Śrī Kṛṣṇa calls 'one-pointed determination' (*vyava-*

<sup>53</sup> XVIII. 26.



*sāyātmikā buddhi*)<sup>54</sup> can be had only by being truly continent. An aspirant cannot have singleness of purpose unless he is sure that what he is aiming at is the highest, after attaining which nothing higher remains to be attained. Fortitude and enthusiasm are the natural psychic inflow in a person who has conserved his physical energy and given it a higher direction. When this conservation becomes well-confirmed, one develops *ojas*, that spiritual energy through the exercise of which subtle divine truths are comprehended and realized. Others may be pious or religious, but he alone is truly holy whose inner life is grounded in attained *ojas*. Such a person never lacks fortitude and enthusiasm.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa's thundering spiritual precept to all spiritual seekers of all times is that one should elevate oneself by one's own self and that there is no other friend or foe than oneself.<sup>55</sup>

This is a great message, for here man is taught that he is the maker of his spiritual destiny. The aspirant who captures this truth in the firm grasp of faith will find that when he starts lifting himself by himself, all the forces around, which had seemed to be antagonistic, begin quietly to become helpful.

Echoing, as it were, the import of the above-mentioned precepts, the *Dhammapada* teaches :

'By oneself the evil is done, by oneself one is defiled. Purity and impurity belong to oneself, no one can purify another.'

'You yourself must make an effort. The Tathāgatas (Buddhas) are only teachers. The meditative who enter the way are freed from the bondage of Māra.'

'He who does not rouse himself when it is time to rise, who though young and strong is full of sloth, whose will and thought are weak, that lazy and idle man

will never find the way to wisdom.'<sup>56</sup>

Patañjali, the great teacher of yoga, says : 'Success (in yoga) is speedy for the extremely energetic. 'The success of yogīs differs according as the means they adopt are mild, medium, or intense.'<sup>57</sup>

But this putting forth of energy should be done, as pointed out by Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the *Gītā*,<sup>58</sup> according to the methods taught in the scriptures. In individual cases, instructions of the guru will clarify how the precepts of the scriptures are to be applied in personal life.

Now the question arises: if it is true that a man can take a forward step only from where he stands, how does the man who has an overpowering element of *tamas* or *rajas* in him, take even one step? The aspirant who fortunately has a preponderance of the *sattva* element will naturally gravitate towards spiritual striving and easily develop a sustained inflow of fortitude and enthusiasm. As it is not easy for the aspirant with an excess of *tamas* to suddenly become *sāttvika*, how does he at all take a spiritual step forward from where he stands?

The scriptures in effect give two types of answers to such questions: Firstly, you can transform your nature, or the combination of *guṇas*, in order to bring about the preponderance of *sattva*, the natural outcome of which will be inflow of fortitude and enthusiasm. Secondly, you can go frontally, as you are, and worship God in the manner of your being, with what you have. And that will very well do, if you are sincere.

As to the first method, that is, changing the constitution of the mind and bringing about the preponderance of *sattva* in our nature, and finally transcending *sattva* also, Śrī Śaṅkarācārya teaches with marvellous brevity :

<sup>54</sup> *Bhagavad-gītā*, II. 41.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, VI. 5, 6.

<sup>56</sup> Verses No. 165, 276, 280, respectively.

<sup>57</sup> *Yoga-sūtras*, I. 21, 22.

<sup>58</sup> VI. 36.

'*Tamas* is destroyed by both *sattva* and *rajas*, *rajas* by *sattva*, and *sattva* dies when purified. Therefore do away with your superimposition through the help of *sattva*.'<sup>59</sup>

As to the second method, we have helpful hints in the teachings of Jesus Christ and Sri Ramakrishna. There is this teaching of Christ in St. Matthew's Gospel: 'And from the days of John the Baptist until now the Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.'<sup>60</sup>

By itself this teaching will appear difficult to understand. In the *Writings from the Philokalia*, however, we find a helpful interpretation given by Hesychius of Jerusalem. The saint teaches:

'It is impossible to live our present life without food and drink. So, too, it is impossible for the soul to attain anything spiritual and pleasing to God, or to be free of inner sin, without guarding of the mind and purity of heart, in other words, without sobriety, no matter how much a man strives to refrain from committing sins in deed through fear of future torment.

'Still, those who force themselves to refrain from committing sin in deed are also blessed before the Lord, the angels and men, since "the violent take" the kingdom of heaven "by force".'<sup>61</sup>

Sri Ramakrishna teaches:

'As worldly people are endowed with *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*, so also is *bhakti* characterized by the three *gunas*...

'A devotee who possesses it [*sattva*] meditates on God in absolute secret, perhaps inside his mosquito net. Others think he is asleep. Since he is late in getting up, they think perhaps he has not slept well during the night. His love for the body goes only as far as appeasing his hunger, and that only by means of rice and simple greens. There is no elaborate arrangement about his meals, no luxury

in clothes, and no display of furniture. Besides, such a devotee never flatters anybody for money.

'An aspirant possessed of rajasic *bhakti* puts a *tilak* on his forehead and a necklace of holy *rudraksha* beads, interspersed with gold ones, around his neck. At worship he wears a silk cloth.

'A man endowed with tamasic *bhakti* has burning faith. Such a devotee literally extorts boons from God, even as a robber falls upon a man and plunders his money. "Bind! Beat! Kill!"—that is his way, the way of the dacoits. . . One must take the firm attitude: "What? I have chanted the Mother's name. How can I be a sinner any more? I am Her child, heir to Her powers and glories."

'If you can give a spiritual turn to your *tamas*, you can realize God with its help. Force your demands on God. He is by no means a stranger to you. He is indeed your very own.'<sup>62</sup>

Those who are in despair with the discovery that *tamas* predominates in their nature—maybe the largest number of seekers—have a very hopeful and helpful message here.

For continuing in our sustained maximum striving, one thing that we must always watchfully guard against is—despondency. In the chapter 'Directions in Spiritual Work', in *Writings from the Philokalia*, it is taught:

'Above all beware of the spirit of despondency, from which all evil and a variety of temptations are born. Why does your heart weaken and despair because of sufferings caused you by Christ's flock? Listen attentively to my words: longsuffering is the mother of all blessings. Look at Moses, who chose "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season" (Heb. xi. 25).'<sup>63</sup>

There may be innumerable apparent reasons for being despondent, but not one real reason. Two basic spiritual facts are:

<sup>59</sup> *Vivekacūdāmani*, 278.

<sup>60</sup> Matthew, XI. 12.

<sup>61</sup> p. 300 (Numbers 109 and 110).

<sup>62</sup> M.: *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras-4, 1947), pp. 75-6.

<sup>63</sup> p. 347.

1) God is our very own ; 2) In essence we are identical with the Supreme Spirit. These two facts cannot be negated by any power in the world ; they can only be temporarily veiled by our own ignorance. Hence our spiritual future is assured. The only battle we have to face is the onslaught of our own ignorance on ourselves. When we develop an insight into this basic fact behind all our spiritual struggles, we can keep at bay all forces of darkness within and without, and ultimately defeat them by divine grace.

But if unfortunately we give in to despondency even for a short while, it may overcome in a few moments our toilsome spiritual work of years, and run us over like a fierce tidal wave.

Therefore for making sustained spiritual effort, a firm dynamic attitude towards life is needed. Sri Ramakrishna teaches :

'You cannot achieve anything by moving at such a slow pace. You need stern renunciation. Can you achieve anything by counting fifteen months as a year ? You seem to have no strength, no grit. You are as mushy as flattened rice soaked in milk. Be up and doing ! Gird your loins !

'I don't like that song :

"Brother, joyfully cling to God  
Thus striving, some day you may attain Him."

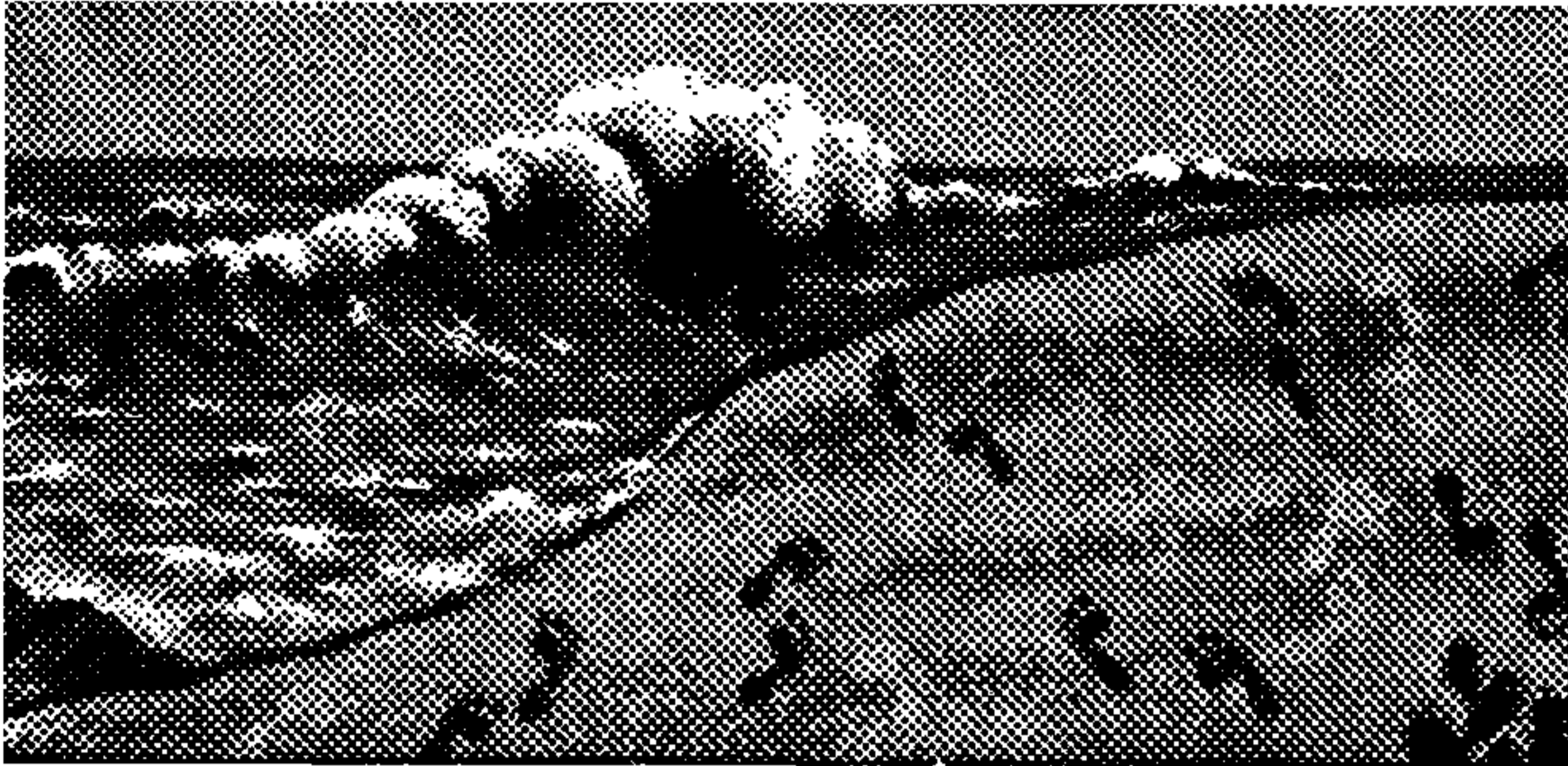
'I don't care for the line, "Thus striving, some day you may attain Him." You need stern renunciation. . . . You ask me why you don't feel stern renunciation. There is a reason for it. You have desires and tendencies within you. . . . You practise japa and austerities, no doubt, but they all leak out through the holes of your desires.'<sup>64</sup>

So in order to make spiritual progress, we must learn how to plug these holes. Even after discovering that all the results of our spiritual striving are leaking out through the holes, we must not get despondent, for at least someone has definitively told us in the most unflattering language what is to be done about the situation. This should enthuse us to stir ourselves up, and for this we need the grace of our own minds above everything else.

*(To be continued)*

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<sup>64</sup> *Gospel*, pp. 578-9.



# HUMAN TRENDS

## EXPANDING RELIGIOUS HORIZONS OF YOUTH IN U. K.

It is not an uncommon thing for Christian churches in England to hold conferences for Sixth Formers (High-School Seniors) in the summer-time. This year something rather remarkable happened. The event was perhaps of no great importance in itself, but it is an indicator of the indubitable ferment in religious ideas and patterns which is at work in the country today.

The Christian Education Movement, which is an organization for youth sponsored and staffed by the Church of England, wrote to the Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre, London, for a leader of a seminar on Hinduism at a Sixth Formers' Conference to be held in July. One of the Swamis attended this conference, held at the Swanwyck Conference Centre near Derby.

Picture to yourself a rambling complex of buildings, some very old, some very new, able to house and feed nearly 300 young men and women, complete with conference halls, committee rooms, libraries, chapel and recreation facilities, set out in the green countryside with spacious fields and farms all round. Here, for five days, 110 active boys and girls just leaving school were gathered at their own expense with their leaders for study, discussion and fellowship. They came from all parts of England, and included a group of a dozen or so from

West Germany as well. The subject of the conference was 'Commitment': What does it mean to belong to something, such as a political party or a particular faith? What is the nature of such a commitment? Does it involve a change in one's whole style of life? What happens when one's commitment to an organization, such as a trade union, or a doctrine, comes into conflict with one's commitment to the laws of one's country—the old dilemma of what is Caesar's and what is God's?

Such were the problems on which these young people were to exercise their mental energies. Our representative could not help thinking how indicative it was of the level of sophistication and leisure this culture provides. Could a Sixth Former in India, much as he might actually be absorbed in practical problems of this type, ever imagine a conference organized just to discuss them, and moreover, paying to attend such an affair?

Three seminars of 2½ hours each were to be held by each leader, two on successive mornings, one in the afternoon. From a field of eight topics each student would choose three, the group size being limited to about 14. In this way each leader eventually met with about 42 students of the total group.

What were the topics of the seminars?

An incredible little list, if one thinks about it: 1) the political party 2) the trade-union movement 3) working for the Third World (underdeveloped countries) 4) Marxism 5) the institutional Church 6) Buddhism 7) Hinduism 8) Yoga. The full panoply of commitments, from left to right and West to East!

Before leaving for the conference we had been curious about who the leader of the yoga seminar was going to be. As it turned out, he was an Englishman, a monk of an Anglican order, a longtime student and practiser of the *āsanas* (postures). In his order no objection has been raised to the use of yogic techniques in the monastic discipline. He and our representative became good friends, and he confided to the latter that he would be giving the students 'the beginnings of meditation' as well. Asked what exactly he was planning to use for this, the Brother replied, 'Just the instruction about it by Swami Vivekananda in his book *Raja Yoga*.'

The Buddhist seminar too was held by a Britisher, a monk already known to us as a member of the London branch of an order from Thailand. This means that of the eight leaders of these young people three were monastic—a fact which we thought quite significant in itself.

The Swami began each seminar with the questions suggested by the organizers, on a paper the students had already received. 'What do you think is the purpose of life? What is conscience? Do you think it important to have some kind of a vision of what the world ought to be or how men

ought to behave? Is it worth having such a vision if it causes trouble and conflict?' The boys and girls were given the first hour to discuss these problems, the exchange of views being only stimulated and channelled by the leader. Many of these students were trying themselves out on such questions for the first time in their lives. This period was followed by a break for tea. When the session resumed, a 20-minute statement was read on 'What It Means to be a Hindu' (explaining the life-style and 'commitments' of an adherent of the faith). The gathering was then opened for questions from the students, for the remainder of the period. Finally they were encouraged to look over the books which had been laid out on a table.

Our representative left the Conference when his part was over, and was not able to see its conclusion, but heard later that these young people had reckoned the whole affair a resounding success, well worth the time and money they had invested in it.

It is difficult to assess the full meaning of a happening of this sort. We are too close to it. Certainly it shows the human trends today in the world of education in Great Britain. That an opportunity to learn of such matters from 'the inside'—that is, persons themselves committed to such ways of life—should be given by forces of the Established Church to boys and girls from secular schools all over (and outside) the country, speaks volumes for itself, and there is little that we can add.

—S. Y.

## NOTES AND COMMENTS

### IN THIS NUMBER

Questions and answers are from : 'M' : *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, translated by Swami Nikhilananda, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 1947. References : Question 1, pp. 1007-9; Question 2, p. 948.

The words quoted in 'Onward For Ever !' are from *The Complete Works*, Vol. I (1962) p. 92.

In our editorial essay last October we discussed at some length the concept of the Motherhood of God. We referred *en passant* to the topic of prayer to the Mother. This month we have discussed the theme of prayer rather elaborately, quoting profusely from various poet-devotees who have composed their hymns in Sanskrit. The month being specially consecrated to the Mother in the Hindu almanac, we hope our readers will find the theme very topical.

The second and concluding part of 'Why We Are What We Are', by Swami Ashoka-

nanda, former head of the Vedanta Society of Northern California, deals with the psychological aspects of karma and the means of overcoming karmic bondage, and gives a fervent call to earnest enquirers to awake from this ever-repeating dream-series of relative existence.

In our contemporary world of diminishing distances and expanding human contacts and sympathies, inter-religious goodwill and understanding need greatly to be fostered. To do this effectively, we would do well to catch men and women young. Child psychologists tell us that children learn faster and are more perceptive than when they grow older. Many adults may not be aware of this fact or may underestimate it.

An interesting account of an ecumenical get-together of Sixth-Formers sponsored and guided by discerning elders and teachers at the Swanwyck Conference Centre, near Derby, U.K., is brought to our columns by 'S. Y.'

## REVIEWS AND NOTICES

ANARKALI: BY DR. V. RAGHAVAN, Published by The Samskrita Ranga, 7, Srikrishnapuram St., Madras, 14, First edition, 1972, pp. xx+92, Rs. 8.50.

*Anarkali* is a new experiment in Sanskrit dramaturgy by a great Sanskrit scholar, Dr. V. Raghavan. It is a break with the traditional concept that a particular character or language has an inseparable relationship with a particular religion or race. It is a drama the subject whereof is the story of Akbar the Great, his son Saleem, and Anarkali, the former's foster-daughter and the latter's beloved. The story of Anarkali is very well known in India. Students of Indian history, particularly of the mediaeval period, know very well what a wonderful contribution towards national unity and communal harmony was made by these two Moghul emperors.

Saleem later became the Emperor Jehangir. In this drama the classical language of the scriptures has beautifully acted as the medium for these Muslim characters, thereby highlighting the resilience it possesses. The facts are based on the author's deep study of authentic sources of history. The drama as a whole will shake even the most biased and orthodox out of their tradition-bonded thinking. A modest attempt at such a departure was first made by Pandita Kshama Rao, who made Muslim characters, mostly imaginary ones, the subject of her short stories in Sanskrit. The drama under review is by far the biggest step forward in this direction. It will go a long way in fostering the social and emotional integration which our nation needs today as never before. Herein lies

the further significance of this work as also the substantial contribution of its author.

However, the author could have done more justice both to the cause of Sanskrit drama and audience-effect, by employing as far as possible the more common words and phrases instead of less used words and compounds. Yet as the playwright is an ardent protagonist of the spread of Sanskrit—including the simplification of its grammar—the element of incomprehensibility interwoven in the otherwise idiomatic and lucid diction may only be noted with mild surprise.

SRI DHARMENDRA DEV

**CHITSHAKTI VILAS—THE PLAY OF CONSCIOUSNESS:** BY SWAMI MUKTANANDA, Published by Shree Gurudev Ashram, Ganeshpuri, 1972, pp. 268 and 38, Rs. 15/-.

Besides an introduction running to 23 pages, this book consists of two parts and an appendix and glossary at the end. Part I comprises two chapters, the first dealing with the path trodden by the practitioners in what is called 'Siddha Yoga' and the second with the spiritual experiences of the author. Part II comprises seven chapters. All of them set forth the instructions which adepts in Siddha Yoga could give to the beginners. The appendix describes in detail the experiences of the masters in 'Siddha Yoga'. The glossary gives the exact English equivalents of the technical terms, both Sanskrit and Hindi, occurring in the course of the exposition. Where exact equivalents are not available the terms are explained in an intelligible manner.

The book pertains to the practice of 'Kundalini Yoga' which is here spoken of as 'Siddha Yoga' and 'Chitshakti Vilas'. This Yoga has to be practised with the utmost care, as there are many pitfalls on the way. The guidance of a guru is therefore indispensable. The grace of the guru, referred to as 'Shaktipat' in the book, descends on the young practitioner and guides him safely through all the stages to the final consummation. 'The Kundalini shakti, aroused by the guru's grace, penetrates the system of 72,000 nerves, purifies and strengthens all the circuits which carry blood and *prana*, releases vital energy into all of them and thus transforms the body.' Thus transformed, the body becomes fit for spiritual *sadhana*. The Kundalini shakti is roused from the Muladhara and, proceeding through Swadhishtana, Manipura, Anahata, Visuddha and Ajna, reaches the Sahasrara which is the goal to be attained by the practice of the Yoga. The striver, when he is firmly established in the Sahasrara, ex-

periences bliss which passeth all understanding. In the intermediate stages he has the vision of 'Pitri-loka', 'Indraloka', and 'Brahmaloka'. The impediments, which are to be guarded against and overcome with an iron will, are also clearly set forth.

The book is one sustained glorification of 'Kundalini Yoga'. The glorification however is based on the felt, authentic experiences of the author.

We heartily commend the book to all who are interested in the practice of 'Kundalini Yoga'.

SRI M. K. VENKATARAMA IYER

**SWAMI VIVEKANANDA AND HIS MESSAGE:** BY SWAMI TEJASANANDA, Published by Ramakrishna Mission Saradapitha, P.O. Belur Math, W. Bengal, 711-202, 2nd Edition, 1972, pp. 209, Rs. 5.60.

This is the second edition, slightly revised, of a noteworthy book, originally published as an article in the *Vivekananda Centenary Memorial Volume*, and then in book form in 1965, as result of public demand. Written by a distinguished monk of the Ramakrishna Order, it combines deep scholarship, with broad emotional appeal, all written in lucid English. Any attempt to present the life and work of such a many-sided spiritual genius as Vivekananda in so small a compass, faces great obstacles; the author's success is a lasting contribution to the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature.

The original volume was already well gotten-up; the present one has further been improved by adding a Table of Contents, by removing the occasional typographical uncleanesses, by helpfully increasing the distance between the lines, and by centering the pages more accurately.

Y. C.

**GANDHI'S SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY—PERSPECTIVE AND RELEVANCE:** BY B. N. GANGULI, Published by Vikas Publishing House, Pvt. Ltd., 5 Daryaganj, Ansari Rd., Delhi, pp. 453, Rs. 50/-.

It is impossible to bid good-bye to Gandhi, though several so-called sophisticated progressives would ridicule his relevance to the modern age. Apparently, everything in the current development of world-civilization is totally un-Gandhian, if not anti-Gandhian, and the harsh critics of the Mahatma give ample vent to their venomous ire. It is precisely for this reason that Dr. Ganguli's beautiful analysis of the social philosophy of Gandhi on an academic, scientific basis is most welcome to all who are involved in the passionate pursuit of truth for its own sake. A Research Publication of the Council for Social Development, New Delhi, it is a work

of profound erudition, in a lucid style, with insistent attention to the achievement of thoroughness. The main objective of the book, in the author's words, is '...an humble effort to view the somewhat enigmatic and controversial painting in the details of its perspective, its composition and the image it presents in the delicacy of its line and colour and form. I am not so vain as to imagine that I can possibly recapture the spirit, the vision and the certitude of truth that inspired a great work of art. I shall be happy if the reader discovers that at least my book is not another daub that blurs the luminous painting.' The reader does not have the least feeling that anything like a daub blurs this painting. Far from it. There is real illumination regarding several academic issues.

Was Gandhi a philosopher at all like the famous philosophers of either the East or the West? Was he like Sankara or Ramanuja, Kant or Hegel? Obviously Gandhi was not a builder of philosophical systems. He was primarily a man of action, out to break the fetters of the British Empire and emancipate the masses from grinding poverty and oppression. This, of course, does not preclude him from having a philosophy of his own.

Gandhi had an abiding faith in God and the potential divinity of every person, howsoever brutish and degraded at a particular time due to particular circumstances. This faith had its roots in Gandhi's 'Oriental lineage', as the author puts it; and his birth and upbringing re-inforced the approach of Mahavira and Buddha, which he adopted as a means to fight the British as well as domestic exploiters. His 'western affiliations' gave him a firm faith in the philosophy of Emerson, Thoreau, Ruskin, etc., and made him a fearless soldier without weapons. Gandhi turns out to be the strongest

character in the cause of Truth and Non-Violence and the massive use of the power of persuasion, as against the use of violence. Dr. Ganguli gives an excellent account of the influences responsible for the emergence of a powerful personality which could hold sway over the greatest minds of the times.

Success in building a new metaphysical school of thought is one thing, and success in the practical affairs of the world is another. Gandhi's place in the former still needs to be revalued on a more scientific basis than in this book; his place in the latter sphere is readily appreciable.

The chapters dealing with economic problems and the Gandhian approach to their solution are by far the best. Issues relating to capital and labour, Trusteeship, State-ownership and control, Swadeshi and employment, challenge of Industrial civilization etc., are thrashed out on a rigorously scientific basis.

The last part of the book describes the non-violent techniques of resolving conflicts in society, and their potential strengths.

Dr. Ganguli gives a very clear picture of what the Gandhian 'Model' looks like, with the vivid vision of a great thinker; and that is what makes the book a rare *magnum opus*.

—SRI H. G. KULKARNI

#### BOOKS RECEIVED

HINDUISM THROUGH THE AGES, By D. S. SARMA, Publ.: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Chowpatty, Bombay-7, IV Edition, 1973, Rs. 6/- pp. 300.

SRI SAMKARA'S VIVEKACUDAMANI (with Commentary of Sri Candrasekhara Bharati of Sringeri), Transl.: P. Sankaranarayanan, Publ.: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1st Edition 1973, pp. 536, Rs. 23/-.

## NEWS AND REPORTS

### THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION VIVEKANANDA SMRITI MANDIR, KHETRI

REPORT FROM APRIL, 1971 TO MARCH, 1972

Founded in 1958, in the palace of the Maharaja of Khetri, the noted disciple of Vivekananda, this Centre is for the time being the only regular Centre of the Ramakrishna Mission in Rajasthan. Besides being a place of pilgrimage for admirers of Vivekananda, the Centre conducts:

(a) *Maternity Home and Child Welfare Centre,*

staffed by a trained midwife, two *dais*. Homoeopathic medicine was distributed. In the current year it handled 118 indoor delivery-cases; its staff made 3225 ante-natal and post-natal visits. All these services are free.

(b) *Sarada Shishu Vihar*: a 'Balwadi', run on Kindergarten lines, begun in 1965 for children from ages 3 to 10. Currently 223 students were on the roll, of whom over 60 belonged to Harijan and other backward classes; 63 were given full and half concession in fees. It has a library of 836 books, and



an adjoining Recreation Park. All students were given vitamin supplements and poor children were given clothings, books, and stationery. The children celebrated important religious, cultural, and national festivals; and prepared some dramas for annual celebrations.

(c) *Library*: contains 4279 books, of which 2721 book-loans were made; average daily attendance at the Reading Room was 50.

(d) *Cultural and Religious Activities*: Scriptural classes as also discourses on the *Gita* and the Upanishads in Hindi, were given for inmates; and public discourses at Pilani, Nim-ka-Thana, Jaipur,

etc. The birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother, and Swami Vivekananda were celebrated with public meetings; the children of the School were fed each time. Christmas Eve was also solemnly celebrated. The concluding functions of the three-week annual celebrations, included several lectures, film-shows on Mira, etc., and dramas for inculcating high ideals. For the younger children, a 'Balamela' attracted children from all the schools of Khetri, with competitions, health-parade and exhibitions of children's handiwork. For Primary and Higher Secondary Schools, competitions were also held in speech, essay, recitation, and handwriting.

## MAYAVATI CHARITABLE HOSPITAL

### AN APPEAL

The Advaita Ashrama at Mayavati belonging to the Ramakrishna Order was started in 1899 under the inspiration of Swami Vivekananda. The Ashrama is situated in the deep Himalayan regions near the northern frontier of India. The Mayavati Charitable Hospital forms a part of the Ashrama activities. It came into being as a small dispensary in 1903 in response to the crying need of the very poor villagers in neighbouring villages. Since then it has spontaneously grown through the years into a small well-equipped rural hospital of 23 beds, serving the needs of nearly 1300 villages within 20 miles radius. People come here for treatment from further distances also.

One unique feature of this hospital is that here patients get treatment and medicine completely free of charges of any kind.

*What a great artist wrote about this small hospital long ago:*

'Saw the Mayavati Ashrama hospital—a veritable river of love and compassion on the mighty bosom of the Himalayas, indrawn and steeped in meditation—and was filled with admiration.'

26.6.1942

NANDALAL BASU—A PILGRIM  
Shantiniketan  
Birbhum

*Chart of Number of Patients treated during last five years:*

Year	Outdoor	Indoor
1968	19,756	729
1969	22,503	684
1970	21,367	438
1971	20,002	415
1972	21,696	579

*What a Government Official wrote recently:*

'... The patients of this area looked upon this hospital as a real angel and helper to them in their misfortune; hence travelled from long distances on Khachar, horseback and on their relatives' backs ...'

Dr. M. P. Chaturvedi,  
June 9, 1970      Assistant Director  
Medical and Health Services  
II Range Agra

To meet the increasing demand on its services the hospital needs more money. We appeal to generous-hearted people who feel for the suffering poor to make liberal donations. The hospital can be greatly helped by making endowments.

All contributions will be thankfully received and acknowledged. Crossed cheques and drafts may kindly be issued in favour of *Mayavati Charitable Hospital* and sent *only by registered post to*: The President, Mayavati Charitable Hospital, P.O. Mayavati, via Lohaghat, Dt. Pithoragarh, U.P., India. *Donations are exempted from Income-tax in the hands of the donors, according to section 80-G of Indian Income-tax Act, 1961, vide I.T. Case No. 11-029-AY-3086 CAL/RC (A).*

1st October 1973

*Swami Budhananda*  
PRESIDENT

## SWAMI VIJAYANANDA

### AN OBITUARY

With a heavy heart we announce the death of Swami Vijayananda, aged 75, Founder-Leader of Ramakrishna Ashrama, Bella Vista near Buenos Aires, Argentina. He was suffering for some time from heart ailments and the end came on 1st September 1973 at 3-25 a.m. (Argentina time), at the Ashrama.

The Swami, known in pre-monastic life as Pasupati Nath Ghosh was born in Sahibganj in Santhal Parganas. He was a brilliant student of the Calcutta University. He joined the Order at Belur Math in October, 1919. At the Math, he had the good fortune to come in close contact with several direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna and was initiated by Swami Brahmananda, the first President of the Order. He had his *sannyasa* from Swami Shivananda, the second President, in the year 1923.

He was sent to South America in 1932 for preaching and he founded the Ramakrishna Ashrama at Buenos Aires, Argentina in 1933. In 1941 the Ashrama acquired its own house in the small town of Bella Vista, about 30 km. from Buenos Aires. Till now this has been the only affiliated centre of the Order in the Southern hemisphere. Within a short time, the Swami learnt the Spanish language and could create interest among the local people in the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother and Swami Vivekananda. This prompted the Swami to write many books on them in Spanish.

Due to his efforts, the centre at Buenos Aires has come to stay. The Swami had endeared himself to many devotees by his open-hearted simplicity. In him the Order has lost a monk with zeal and enthusiasm. May his soul rest in peace!