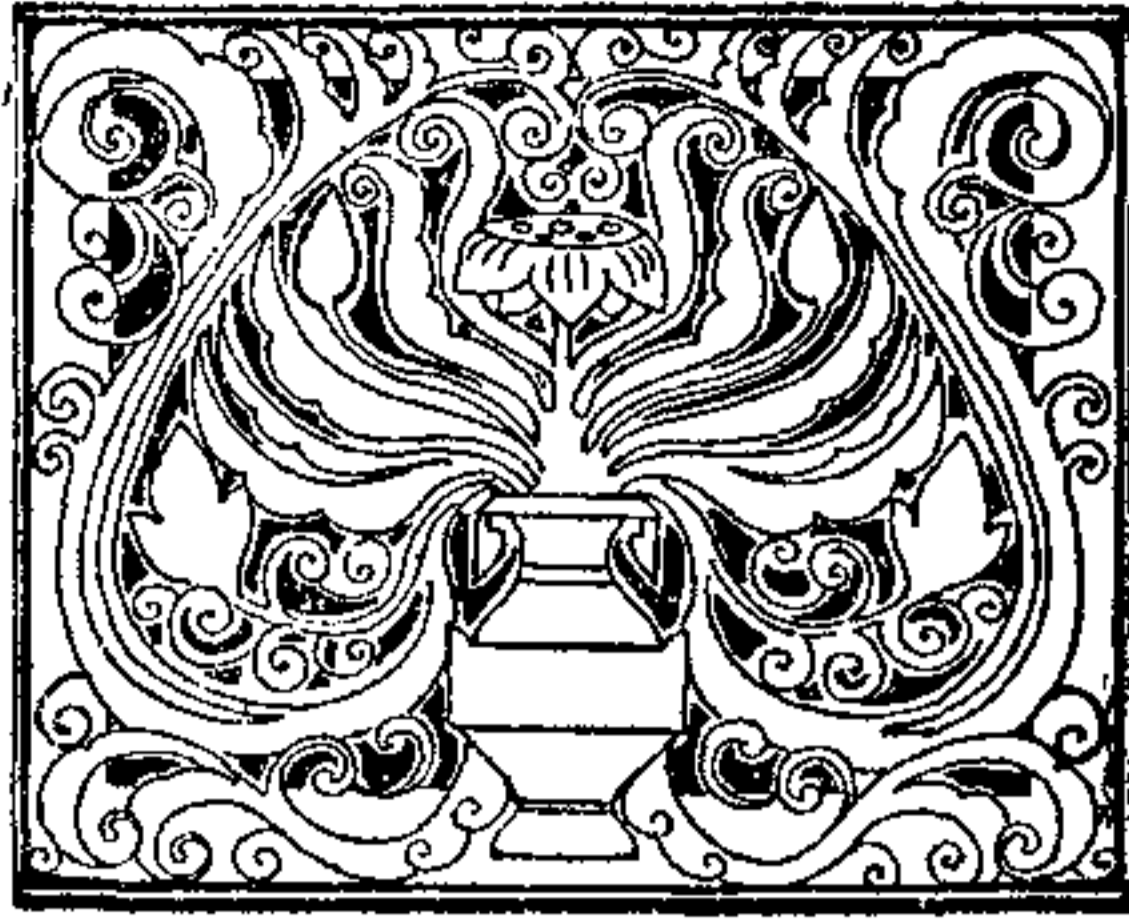


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**Prabuddha**  
**Bharata**  
*OR*  
**AWAKENED INDIA**



**ADVAITA ASHRAMA, MAYAVATI  
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# Prabuddha Bharata

VOL. LXXVIII

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No. 5

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

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## SRI RAMAKRISHNA ANSWERS

Question: (posed by himself): 'But can one not see God as formless Reality?'

Sri Ramakrishna: 'Of course one can. But not if one has the slightest trace of worldliness. The rishis of olden times renounced everything and then contemplated Satchidananda, the Indivisible Brahman.

'The Brahmajnanis of modern times<sup>1</sup> sing of God as "immutable, homogeneous". It sounds very dry to me. It seems as if the singers themselves don't enjoy the sweetness of God's Bliss. One doesn't want a refreshing drink made with sugar candy if one is satisfied with mere coarse treacle.

'Just see how happy you are, looking at this image of the Deity. But those who always cry after the formless Reality do not get anything. They realize nothing either inside or outside.'

Sri Ramakrishna sang a song to the Divine Mother:

O Mother, ever blissful as Thou art,  
Do not deprive Thy worthless child of bliss!  
My mind knows nothing but Thy Lotus Feet.  
The King of Death scowls at me terribly ;  
Tell me, Mother, what shall I say to him ?  
It was my heart's desire to sail my boat  
Across the ocean of this mortal life,  
O Durga, with Thy name upon my lips.  
I never dreamt that Thou wouldst drown me here  
In the dark waters of this shoreless sea.  
Both day and night I swim among its waves,  
Chanting Thy saving name ; yet even so  
There is no end, O Mother, to my grief.  
If I am drowned this time, in such a plight,  
No one will ever chant Thy name again.

---

<sup>1</sup> A reference to the members of the Brahma Samaj.

Question (asked by Mahima): 'Can a man live in the world if his mind is once directed to God?'

Sri Ramakrishna: 'Why not? Where will he go away from the world? I realize that wherever I live I am always in the Ayodhya of Rama. This whole world is Rama's Ayodhya. After receiving instruction from His teacher, Rama said that He would renounce the world. Dasaratha sent the sage Vasishtha to Rama to dissuade Him. Vasishtha found Him filled with intense renunciation. He said to Rama: "First of all, reason with me, Rama; then You may leave the world. May I ask You if this world is outside God? If that is so, then You may give it up." Rama found that it is God alone who has become the universe and all its living beings. Everything in the world appears real on account of God's reality behind it. Thereupon Rama became silent.

'In the world a man must fight against passions like lust and anger, against many desires, against attachment. It is convenient to fight from inside a fort—from his own home. At home he gets his food and other help from his wife. In the Kaliyuga the life of a man depends entirely on food. It is better to get food at one place than to knock at seven doors for it.<sup>2</sup> Living at home is like facing the battle from a fort.

'Live in the world like a cast-off leaf in a gale. Such a leaf is sometimes blown inside a house and sometimes to a rubbish heap. The leaf goes wherever the wind blows—sometimes to a good place and sometimes to a bad. Now God has put you in the world. That is good. Stay here. Again, when He lifts you from here and puts you in a better place, that will be time enough to think about what to do then.

'God has put you in the world. What can you do about it? Resign everything to Him. Surrender yourself at His feet. Then there will be no more confusion. Then you will realize that it is God who does everything. All depends on "the will of Rama".'

Question (asked by Girish): 'Narendra says "Is it ever possible to know all of God? He is infinite".'

Sri Ramakrishna: 'Who can comprehend everything about God? It is not given to man to know any aspect of God, great or small. And what need is there to know everything about God? It is enough if we only realize Him. And we see God Himself if we but see His Incarnation. Suppose a person goes to the Ganges and touches its water. He will then say, "Yes, I have seen and touched the Ganges." To say this it is not necessary for him to touch the whole length of the river from Hardwar to Gangasagar.'

---

<sup>2</sup> It is the custom of monks in India to beg their food from householders.

## ONWARD FOR EVER!

*It is this which constitutes a prophet. He focuses in his own mind the thought of the age in which he is living and gives it back to mankind in concrete form. Krishna, Buddha, Christ, Mohammed, and Luther may be instanced as the great waves that stood up above their fellows (with a probable lapse of five hundred years between them). Always the wave that is backed by the greatest purity and the noblest character is what breaks upon the world as a movement of social reform. Once again in our day there is a vibration of the waves of thought and the central idea is that of the Immanent God, and this is everywhere cropping up in every form and every sect. In these waves, construction alternates with destruction; yet the construction always makes an end of the work of destruction. Now, as a man dives deeper to reach his spiritual nature, he feels no longer bound by superstition. The majority of sects will be transient, and last only as bubbles because the leaders are not usually men of character. Perfect love, the heart never reacting, this is what builds character. There is no allegiance possible where there is no character in the leader, and perfect purity ensures the most lasting allegiance and confidence.*

*Take up an idea, devote yourself to it, struggle on in patience, and the sun will rise for you.*

*Srikananda*

## SPIRITUAL INSIGHTS FROM SANKARA

EDITORIAL

I

A Sanskrit stanza in praise of Śaṅkara compares him to a sun whose glory dispels the darkness of this world and whose wisdom-rays, striking the sun in the sky, pale him into a moon. Those who are acquainted, however modestly, with the life and works of Śaṅkara will readily agree with the poet's eulogy. Even after the lapse of well over a thousand years, Śaṅkara's writings stand undimmed and unsurpassed in their intellectual brilliance and philosophical profundity. "Lucid (*prasanna*) and deep (*gambhīra*)", his commentaries on the triple texts of Vedānta have astonished and commanded the respect of spiritual seekers, philosophical students, and scholars for centuries. He rose on the Indian scene at a crucial juncture of the country's religious and cultural history when Buddhism was decadent and Hinduism disorganized. He fought the lingering Buddhist influence through his irrefutable logic and unimpeachable ethical principles, and put Hinduism on the philosophical foundations of Vedānta, and its disorganized house in order. As long as Vedānta and Hinduism last, so long will Śaṅkara's glory endure.

Dazzling, undoubtedly, are the intellectual acumen, logical skill, and scholarly sweep of Śaṅkara's commentaries and other writings. Pandits and academicians rightly go into raptures over them. However, we would be entirely misled if we considered Śaṅkara as only a great intellectual, as a man with plenty of grey matter and deep cerebral fissures. That is what, we are afraid, a good many scholars, both East and West, are trying to make out of him. Śaṅkara is brilliant, to be sure; but his brilliance is that of a *brahma-jñānī*, a sage, of one with an enlightened consciousness. When a man goes to the Source of all

intelligence and is constantly in contact with It, his intelligence exhibits a rare type of brilliance. Without that, acquired by spiritual illumination, Śaṅkara could not have unveiled in his commentaries the mystical significance of the Upaniṣadic passages or the *Gītā*-verses. The Upaniṣads and the *Gītā*, let us remember, are outpourings of illumined seers and teachers, and none but an illumined seer can dig into them deeper than their semantic crusts. That Śaṅkara has done so and struck luminous spiritual springs in them, is evident to anyone who is not dazzled by the intellectuality of his exegesis. We might well pray to Śaṅkara in the fashion of the *Īśā-upaniṣad*: 'O Śaṅkara, O Sun of Vedānta, the door of the Supreme Truth is covered by the golden disc of your intellectual brilliance. O Enlightener of souls, remove it so that I who have been worshipping the Truth may behold It.'

Śaṅkara's spiritual insights are no doubt found in abundance in his minor works like *Viveka-cūḍāmaṇi* and *Upadeśa-sāhasrī*. But here we concern ourselves with his major works, the amazing commentaries on the Upaniṣads, the *Bhagavad-gītā*, and the *Vedānta-sūtras*. It is in these metaphysical marble mines that we discover rich gold veins of Śaṅkara's spiritual insights. A few of them, dealing with spiritual practice and realization, are taken up for a brief study here.

## II

### *Fitness for the Higher Life and the Need for a Guru*

Śaṅkara, great spiritual teacher that he was, does not mince matters when it comes to speaking about the qualifications of an enquirer about Brahman or an aspirant after Self-realization. He finds the basis for the stringency of the qualifications he lays down, in the Upaniṣads themselves. He is

not interested in bringing Vedāntic truths down to the level of half-hearted, egotistical, pleasure-seeking, so-called aspirants. If they want the highest knowledge and happiness, they must be ready to pay the price. So in his introduction to practically each of the commentaries, Śaṅkara emphasizes the need for fitness in the aspirants. In his introduction to the commentary on the *Kena-upaniṣad*, he says :

'The longing for the knowledge of the indwelling Self arises only in that desireless man of pure mind who has renounced all transitory, external means and ends by virtue of the emergence of a special kind of tendency [in his mind] created by works done in this life or in previous ones.'<sup>1</sup>

He takes a similar stand in elucidating *atha*, meaning 'thereafter', in the first aphorism of the *Vedānta-sūtras*. If there be a prerequisite for enabling one to take up enquiry into Brahman, it is the possession of the four-fold moral and spiritual qualities, such as discrimination between eternal and non-eternal, etc. 'Granted the existence of these', says he, 'Brahman can be deliberated on or known even before or after an enquiry into *dharma*, but not otherwise.'

In deriving the meaning of the term *Upaniṣad* etymologically Śaṅkara does not forget to point out that the seekers of the knowledge contained in the Upaniṣad should be 'detached from the desire for seen and unseen objects' and enjoyments.<sup>2</sup>

According to Śaṅkara, an aspirant after self-realization should resort to a teacher for instruction and guidance. The biographers

1 विशुद्धसत्त्वस्य तु निष्कामस्यैव बाह्याद् अनित्यात् साध्यसाधनसम्बन्धात् इहकृतात् पूर्वकृताद्वा संस्कार-विशेषोद्भवाद् विरक्तस्य प्रत्यगात्मविषया जिज्ञासा प्रवर्तते ।

<sup>2</sup> Introduction to the commentary on *Kaṭha-upaniṣad*,

of Śaṅkara say that he himself sought out such a teacher on the banks of the river Narmada. That was, of course, according to the old Vedāntic tradition. In his comments on a verse in the *Muṇḍaka-upaniṣad*, Śaṅkara makes a significant remark:

‘The emphasis, in “the teacher alone” (*gurumeva*), implies that he [the aspirant] should not seek for the knowledge of Brahman independently, even though he is versed in the scriptures.’<sup>3</sup>

Those with modernistic tendencies of trying to master everything with a ‘do-it-yourself’ kit should note that search for the highest Truth cannot be done like that, because It is not an objective something but the *subject*, hidden behind many veils of false notions, wrong understandings, and mistaken identifications. So a teacher who is established in that Truth should be approached with humility and a spirit of service for receiving the necessary guidance.

#### *Spiritual Disciplines and Their Significance*

‘It is not possible’, says Śaṅkara, ‘for one and the same person to be engaged in the thought of sense-objects and to have the vision of the Self (*pratyagātman*) as well.’<sup>4</sup> The Upaniṣads declare that by turning the course of the senses inward, by giving up the grazing and ruminating on sense-objects, a man can attain immortality. So Śaṅkara lets slip no opportunity to emphasize self-control, calmness, and concentration—the fundamental disciplines of spiritual life. While explaining a *mantra* in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-upaniṣad* (IV. iv. 21), Śaṅkara remarks:

३ शास्त्रज्ञोऽपि स्वातन्त्र्येण ब्रह्मज्ञानान्वेषणं न कुर्यादित्येतत् गुरुमेव इत्यवधारणम् ।

—Com. on *Muṇḍaka-upaniṣad*, I. ii.12.

४ न हि बाह्यविषयालोचनपरत्वं प्रत्यगात्मेषणं च एकस्य सम्भवति ।

—Com. on *Kaṭha-upaniṣad*, II. i.1.

‘...knowing about this kind of Self alone, from the instructions of a teacher and from the scriptures, [one] should attain intuitive knowledge of what has been taught by the teacher and the scriptures so as to put an end to all questioning—practise the means of this knowledge, viz. renunciation, calmness, self-control, withdrawal of the senses, fortitude, and concentration.’

In the *Taittirīya-upaniṣad* there occurs the story of Bhṛgu, son of Varuṇa, who approached his father seeking to be instructed regarding Brahman. Varuṇa briefly tells him about Brahman and asks him to know It through *tapas* or austerity. Bhṛgu earnestly goes through his practices and reports again and again to his father-teacher, who sends him back each time with the same crisp command. Finally Bhṛgu realizes Brahman which is the subtlest, innermost essence and of the nature of supreme bliss. Śaṅkara expresses the practical significance of the episode and the context in one short sentence:

‘Therefore the idea conveyed by this topic is that anyone who is desirous of knowing Brahman should undertake the concentration of mind and external organs, which is the most excellent practice of *tapas* (austerity).’<sup>5</sup>

*Tapas* or austerity is associated by many with physical torture, with fasting, vigils, and so on. This kind of austerity may be beneficial when accompanied by sense-control. But ‘control of passions and mind’ is the real austerity. Then only can *tapas* become an aid in realizing Brahman. Śaṅkara makes this clear in his comments on one Upaniṣadic *mantra*:

‘...moreover, verily through concentration [*tapasā hi*], of the mind and senses, which meaning (of *tapas*) follows from

५ तस्माद् ब्रह्मविजिज्ञासुता बाह्यान्तःकरणसमाधान-लक्षणं परमं तपः साधनमनुष्ठेयमिति प्रकरणार्थः ।

—Com. on *Taittirīya-upaniṣad*, III. vi.1.

the Smṛti.... That kind of *tapas* is the greatest favourable discipline because of its natural tendency towards a vision of the Self, but not so the other kind of *tapas* [austerity], e.g. *cāndrāyaṇa* and the rest.’<sup>6</sup>

Śaṅkara’s approach to the subject of inner life and discipline is manifestly psychological. That is why he gives the pride of place to purity of mind. Since control of the senses leads to mental purity and vice versa, Śaṅkara interprets the Upaniṣadic teachings to bring out this implication. Nowhere is it more pronounced than in the explanation he offers for the word *āhāra*—which commonly stands for ‘food’—in a famous passage of the *Chāndogya-upaniṣad*. If purity of food leads to purity of mind, he argues very logically, ‘food’ in the passage should mean ‘mental food’. In his comments here, he compares the mind to the mirror. A clean mirror gives a clear reflexion of the face. In a clean mind the memory of the infinite Self is unbroken. Says Śaṅkara:

‘Whatever is gathered in (*ahriyate iti*) is *āhāra*, food. Knowledge of sense-objects is gathered in for the experience of the cognizing Self. The purity of knowledge born of sense-perception is purity of food: the meaning thus is that cognition of sense-objects which is uninfluenced by the defects of attachment, hatred, and delusion. When such purity of food prevails, the mind which is possessed of it is purified.’<sup>7</sup>

*Āhāra* in this passage has been explained by the great Rāmānuja in its usual sense of food ingested through the mouth. For many aspirants, at least in the beginning stages, the purity of physical food is found helpful. But this tends to make a man too fastidious about outer details and, when he fails to keep his mind pure, blame others for his failure. In the case of Śaṅkara’s interpreta-

tion of *āhāra*, the whole responsibility is laid squarely on each aspirant for cultivating and maintaining his own mental purity. Nothing from outside can defile our minds unless we allow it to do so.

Man is in search of happiness. A spiritual aspirant also is in search of happiness, but of unending happiness. He knows that that happiness is not to be had through the senses. Trying to get unending happiness through the senses is as foolish as ‘trying to keep up a light all night by striking successive matches’. Religion no doubt promises unmixed and eternal happiness. But in the beginning, as the *Gītā* says, it is bitter and painful. In the end it becomes nectarine owing to the fruition of such disciplines as discrimination and renunciation and by the tranquillity of the Self percolating through the mind. The Upaniṣads point out that desirelessness is the true way to happiness. While commenting on one such passage, Śaṅkara observes:

‘For, this growth in desirelessness is understood to be the means, since it admits of degrees of renunciation. This supreme bliss is known to be the experience of the Vedic scholar who is free from desire.’<sup>8</sup>

Meditation, which is the time-honoured key to unlock the doors of superconscious realization and the supreme bliss, has been very appropriately defined by Śaṅkara in his commentary on a verse of the *Gītā*. This will be found helpful by many :

‘Meditation is one-pointed thinking, after withdrawing the senses such as the ears from objects such as sound, into the mind, and the mind into the inmost Self.... Meditation is the unbroken flow

<sup>6</sup> Com. on *Muṇḍaka-upaniṣad*, III. i.5.

<sup>7</sup> Com. on *Chāndogya-upaniṣad*, VII. xxvi.2.

<sup>8</sup> अकामहतत्वं तु वैराग्यतारतम्योपपत्तेः उत्तरोत्तर-  
भूम्यान्नन्दप्राप्तिसाधनमित्यवगम्यते । स एष परम  
आनन्दो वितृष्णश्रोत्रियप्रत्यक्षोऽधिगतः ।

—Com. on *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-upaniṣad*, IV. iii.33.



of [similar] thought-waves like an oil-stream.'<sup>9</sup>

### *Obstacles on the Spiritual Path*

There are many obstacles on the way to spiritual realization. The Upaniṣads and the *Gītā* warn spiritual aspirants about them. What has been mentioned by just a word or phrase, is elaborately explained by Śaṅkara with great insight and out of compassion for struggling souls. The Upaniṣad, for instance, says that Brahman should be reached 'by an unerring man' or 'by one with an undistracted mind', *apramattena*. Śaṅkara explains it thus :

'... by one who is unerring, who is free from the error of desiring to enjoy external objects, who is detached from everything, who has control over his senses and has concentration of mind.'<sup>10</sup>

The error, let us remember, is the desire to enjoy external objects, which inevitably means distraction of mind and attachment.

The *Gītā* speaks of 'brooding over sense-objects'<sup>11</sup> as the primary cause which sets up a chain-reaction ending in the ruin of the brooder. In that psychologically worked out chain, 'loss of memory' comes toward the end. 'Memory' of what? What is meant by its 'loss'? Śaṅkara makes a revealing remark here :

'From delusion comes loss of memory. The loss is of the memory which is engendered by the impressions of the pre-

९ ध्यानं नाम शब्दादिभ्यो विषयेभ्यः श्रोत्रादीनि करणानि मनसि उपसंहृत्य मनश्च प्रत्यक्चेतयितरि एकाग्रतया यच्चिन्तनं तद्ध्यानम् ।...तैलधारावत् संततः अविच्छिन्नप्रत्ययो ध्यानम् ।

—Com. on *Bhagavad-gītā*, XIII. 24.

१० अप्रमत्तेन बाह्यविषय-उपलब्धि-तृष्णा-प्रमाद-वर्जितेन सर्वतो विरक्तेन जितेन्द्रियेण एकाग्रचित्तेन ।

—Com. on *Muṇḍaka-upaniṣad*, II. ii.4.

<sup>11</sup> *Bhagavad-gītā*, II. 62-3.

cepts of the teacher and the scriptures. Loss is that, when the occasion arises for the manifestation of the memory, it fails to manifest.'

Śaṅkara, in this explanation, flashes a warning to keep the memory of teachings of the scriptures and the guru ever awake within.

A weakness that steals over a sincere spiritual aspirant and may cause his fall in the long run is a false sense of security and confidence while he is still far from his destination. He may be led to think, 'Oh, I have lived the spiritual life now for a long time. My mind is also under check. Now I can relax and sit back.' The scriptures and the teachers warn us to the contrary. The *Gītā*, for example, says :

'He who is able to withstand the force of lust and anger even here before he quits the body—he is a yogi, he is a happy man.'

Śaṅkara's illuminating remark makes it clear why death is made the boundary line here. He points out that a man who lives in the world will inevitably feel the force caused by lust and anger, because there are innumerable provocative causes. So, he gives a grim warning, 'Until death, one should not harbour the [false] sense of security.'<sup>12</sup>

Constant struggle should be carried on to keep the thought of God burning in our hearts. That is the only safeguard against that animalic undercurrent. The *Gītā* says that God is easy of access to one who constantly meditates on Him without giving thought to anything else.<sup>13</sup> It uses two words, *satatam* and *nityaśah*, to stress constancy. Śaṅkara explains the first word as 'without interruption'. By the second, he

<sup>12</sup> यावन्मरणं तावन्न विश्रम्भणीयः ।

—Com. on *ibid.*, V. 23.

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*, VIII. 14.

says, a long time is implied. 'Not six months or a year, but as long as one lives', God must be thought of unremittingly.

### *Divine Grace and Liberation*

Śaṅkara is not, as some people seem to think, against admitting divine grace as playing its role in the achievement of spiritual liberation. Although he seems averse to the idea while commenting on at least one stanza of the *Kaṭha-upaniṣad* with obvious hints about God's grace, still in the commentaries on the *Gītā* and the *Vedānta-sūtras*, he has no such reservations. While commenting on the aphorism of the latter which speaks of meditation on the supreme Lord and the effects of such meditation, Śaṅkara says:

'That similarity [between God and soul], remaining hidden, becomes manifest in the case of some rare person who meditates on God with diligence, for whom the darkness of ignorance gets removed, and who becomes endowed with mystic powers through the grace of God, like the regaining of the power of sight through the potency of medicine, by a man who had lost it through the disease called *timira*. But it does not come naturally to all and sundry.... Bondage comes from ignorance about the nature of God, and freedom, from the Knowledge of His reality.'<sup>14</sup>

### *Characteristics of an Illumined Soul*

Just as the Vedāntic texts speak of spiritual disciplines to attain the knowledge of characteristics of men who have attained the knowl-  
Brahman, similarly they describe the charac-

<sup>14</sup> तत् पुनस्तिरोहितं सत् परमेश्वरं अभिध्यायतः  
यतमानस्य जन्तोः विधूतध्वान्तस्य तिमिरतिरस्कृतेव  
दृक्शक्तिः औषधवीर्याद् ईश्वरप्रसादात् संसिद्धस्य कस्य-  
चिदेव आविर्भवति न स्वभावतः एव सर्वेषां जन्तूनाम् ।  
...ईश्वरस्वरूप-अपरिज्ञानाद् बन्धः, तत् स्वरूप-परि-  
ज्ञानात्तु मोक्षः ।

—Com. on *Vedānta-sūtras*, III. ii. 5.

edge. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-upaniṣad* says in a long passage that the knower of Brahman, having known all about scholarship, should try to live upon that strength which comes of knowledge. The equivalent of 'upon that strength' in the original, is *bālyena*. This also means 'with the nature of a child and is so interpreted by Śaṅkara in the *Vedānta-sūtras*.<sup>15</sup> But here in the *Upaniṣad*, his interpretation is that it means spiritual strength. He says:

'Those others who are ignorant of the Self derive their strength from the means and results of actions. The knower of Brahman avoids that and resorts simply to that strength which comes of the knowledge of the Self, which is naturally different from the means and results of an action. When he does this, his organs have no more power to drag him down to the objects of desire. It is only the fool without the strength of knowledge, who is attracted by his organs to desires concerning objects, visible or invisible. Strength is the total rejection of the vision of objects by Self-knowledge; hence the knower of Brahman should try to live upon that strength.'<sup>16</sup>

The fourth chapter of the *Chāndogya-upaniṣad* has the interesting story of Satyakāma Jābāla's approaching a teacher, Hāridruma Gautama, for instruction. The teacher accepted him as a disciple and sent him off with four hundred lean and weak cows for grazing. Satyakāma followed them into the forest and took good care of the herd till it became one thousand strong. He was, on his return journey, taught by a bull, fire, a swan, and a bird called Madgu, about Brahman. When he finally got back to the teacher, the latter was struck to see his radiant face and exclaimed, 'Dear boy, you shine like a knower of Brahman! Who is it that has instructed you?' Śaṅkara's

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*, III. iv. 50.

<sup>16</sup> Com. on *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-upaniṣad*, III. v.1.

crisp comment on this exclamation of the teacher, about how a knower of Brahman is recognized, is very revealing: *Prasannendriyah prahasitavadanaśca niścintah kṛtārtho brahmadevabhavati*—‘Of a knower of Brahman, the sense-organs are limpid and tranquil, the face is cheerful and smiling, the mind is free from worries, and he is content like one who has accomplished his purpose.’

If Śaṅkara were only a brilliant intellectual, and not a knower of Brahman, he could neither have interpreted *bālyena* as ‘with spiritual strength’ nor drawn this breath-taking word-picture of a knower of Brahman. In these interpretations Śaṅkara perhaps has given posterity a glimpse of the tremendous

power he manifested, and of how he himself must have appeared to his disciples and those about him!

### III

Students of Śaṅkara must learn to receive from him the spiritual heritage as much as the philosophical. In Vedānta and Hinduism, realization and metaphysical formulations are not divorced from each other. They are inseparable, like the river and its waves. In Śaṅkara these two aspects were beautifully blended—as they should be in all philosopher-sages—and all his philosophical systematizing is only the wave-play of a mighty river of spiritual power and realization that flows unimpeded by the passage of centuries.

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## LETTERS OF A SAINT

### THE LORD MY REFUGE

Almora  
19.11.15

Dear—,

Receiving your postcard of the 15th inst., I have felt very happy. I often get your news. Of course, I always think of your welfare.

‘The blue water lily dwells in the water and the moon remains in the sky. [Even then friendship between them is not affected.]

Similarly he who dwells in another’s heart dwells very close to him.’

—Tulasidās, the great devotee, has uttered a deep truth. My heart is with you. Although I am residing in this far-off mountain, I indeed think of you as very near to me.

The Lord’s will alone comes to be fulfilled. What more is there to say in this regard? Coming to know that you are well and that you are devoting yourself more and more to the service of God in the poor, I became extremely happy. ‘By thinking of Nārāyaṇa there is no fear of becoming inert’—this was what Sri Ramakrishna indicated to Swamiji when the latter, citing the example of Jaḍabharata,<sup>1</sup> complained of the Master’s excessive love for himself and

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<sup>1</sup> The story is about the ancient Indian King Bharata who retires to the forest in old age and devotes himself to holy pursuits. After some time he takes under his protection a fawn, rescuing it from the current of a swift-flowing stream. But he becomes very much attached

certain others. I don't see any reason for apprehension on account of my love, etc., for you. You are worshipping Govinda (God), the *dukrñkarane* is only your outer covering. Because that 'never, never protects',<sup>2</sup> and you know it extremely well. 'The doer of good, My son, will never come to grief'<sup>3</sup>—this is a divine dictum. Where is, in this case, the scope for your misapprehension? As for the rest, all well. Please accept my sincere love and good wishes.

SRI TURIYANANDA

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to it. At the dying moment his thoughts were centered on this beloved deer. So, in his next birth, he was born as a deer. Finally, after the death of the deer-body, he was born again as a man. But he had the memory of his past lives. As he did not want to get involved in worldly concerns any more, he appeared to others as a dumb and dull person. So he was called 'Jaḍabharata' meaning 'dull or inert Bharata'. The story is beautifully retold by Swami Vivekananda in a California lecture (*vide: The Complete Works, Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Himalayas, Vol. IV (1962), pp. 111 ff.*)—*Ed.*

<sup>2</sup> The reference here is to Śrī Śaṅkara's famous hymn *Carpaṭa-pañjarikā-stotram* in which the refrain has this line :

संप्राप्ते सन्निहिते काले न हि न हि रक्षति डुकृञ्करणे ।

'When the hour of death draws near, never, never will the rules of grammar protect you.'

<sup>3</sup> न हि कल्याणकृत् कश्चिद्दुर्गतिं तात गच्छति । *Bhagavad-gītā*, VI. 40.

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## SWAMI VIVEKANANDA IN BOSTON, MARCH 1896

MARIE LOUISE BURKE

It has long been known that Swami *Vivekananda* by His Eastern and Western Disciples, and some from old letters and diaries which, for the most part, have been made available to me by generous friends.

I

It cannot be determined at the present writing whether Swamiji arrived in Boston on March 18 or 19, but the probability is that it was on the latter date, a rainy day with a temperature only a little above freezing. In any event, March 19, the third Thursday in the month, was the day on which the Procopeia Club held its monthly reception in one of the parlours of its double house on St. Botolph Street, and

all that has been generally remembered is that he lectured at Harvard University on March 25. Yet this period, short as it was, was a rich and important one in his American life—rich in the number of lectures he gave, important in respect to the quality of his audiences, who were, on the whole, knowledgeable and thoughtful groups. In this present article I hope to present information and material which I have gathered from various sources : some from the newspapers of the period, some from the first edition of the *Life of Swami*

that evening, as the following item from the *Boston Evening Transcript* informs us, the Swami and his friends Mrs. Ole Bull, Miss Emma Thursby, and Mrs. Antoinette Sterling were among the clubs honoured guests:

#### DISTINGUISHED GUESTS AT THE PROCOPEIA

Swami Vivekananda, Mrs. Ole Bull, Miss Emma Thursby, Emil Paur, Wulf Fries, Miss Harriet Shaw, John Orth and Mrs. Antoinette Sterling were the special guests of the Procopeia Club at its rooms on St. Botolph Street, last evening. The reception committee included: Mrs. George Seabury, Mrs. Winifred Barber, Mrs. F. R. Fibbets and Mrs. W. H. Stearns.<sup>1</sup>

The Procopeia Club's monthly receptions 'are always thoroughly informal and home-like, but very largely attended', the young Ralph Waldo Trine, a member of the club who was later to become a well-known writer on metaphysics, had written to the singer Miss Emma Thursby a month earlier, inviting her on behalf of the reception committee to attend and perform at the March gathering. This was, he explained, to be a 'musicians' evening', at which each musician was to 'contribute his or her little share in a selection or two'. As an added incentive, Mr. Trine informed Miss Thursby that the club was 'planning to have Swami Vivekananda as the class teacher . . . about that time'.<sup>2</sup>

Swamiji heard a good deal of music that March evening, all of it—perhaps even to Eastern ears—excellent. As vocalists, Emma Thursby and Antoinette Sterling, both of whom were world famous, could not have been surpassed, and none but a first-rate musician would, one trusts, have presumed to perform on the same programme with either of them. Whether or not Mrs. Bull,

an accomplished pianist, had been invited to contribute 'her little share' is not known. More likely, she was counted among the honoured guests simply because she was at the time hostess to Miss Thursby and Mrs. Sterling in her Cambridge house. As for Swamiji, he too was honoured by courtesy, being scheduled as the club's 'class teacher' for the remainder of the month. It was, in fact, with this festive occasion that he entered upon an eleven-day period which was to form a climactic close to his years of public lecturing during his first visit to America.

Boston was by no means an unfamiliar city to Swamiji. It was there in August of 1893 that he had delivered his first lecture in the West, a semi-public lecture before the Ramabai Circle. It was in Boston also that during this same early period he had been chased by a crowd of men and boys, enraged by the unfamiliar sight of an orange robe to the point of throwing stones. And it was in Boston, shortly after this incident, but not because of it, that he had bought his first somber Western clothes, a black Prince Albert frock coat that kept him warm and, incidentally, unmolested. During his second visit to Boston in May of 1894 he had lectured there, and in September of the same year he had spent almost four weeks in the city, lecturing, as he wrote, 'in several places', and subsequently he had spent a week or so as a guest of Mrs. Bull in nearby Cambridge. He was in Cambridge also in December of 1894, holding a series of classes at Mrs. Bull's during almost the whole of that month. Thus by 1896 Boston knew Swamiji well, and as the *Boston Daily Globe* commented in an article that will be reproduced in full later on, 'society, fashionable, intellectual and faddist, went wild over him'.

In the 1890s Boston was the 'Hub' not only of the solar system but of these three categories of American society, not least of

<sup>1</sup> *Boston Evening Transcript*, 20 Mar. 1896.

<sup>2</sup> Trine to Thursby, 18 Feb. 1896, Thursby Papers, New-York Historical Society.

all the 'faddist'. Despite, or perhaps because of, the city's deep-rooted, ironclad traditions, unorthodox religions, all of which were known in Boston as 'fads', proliferated, ranging from third-rate spiritualists and astrologers who held seances or cast horoscopes in eerily decorated back parlours, to serious and well-organized religious groups. In an article describing these Bostonian unorthodoxies, a correspondent from the *Chicago Inter Ocean* wrote in summary :

No mere résumé of these various activities can give any adequate idea of the force and variety they lend to life. There are the three prominent centers of the 'spiritual temple'—the Theosophical Society, which has its rooms on Mount Vernon Street, and the 'First Church of Christ, Scientist', of which Rev. Marv Baker Eddy is the idolized pastor. There are many and various teachers of 'mental healing' of all shades of belief, no two of which coincide. There is the Procopeia, which stands for a great deal and is a most interesting center.<sup>3</sup>

The Procopeia Club, which has left behind no records of its activities or statements of its purposes, does not appear to have represented any one particular belief but seems, rather, to have been a meeting place for Boston's upper-notch religious 'faddists' of all varieties. The membership was no doubt composed in part of gentle and serious seekers of truth, such as Mrs. Ole Bull, in part of earnest religious teachers and healers, and in part of men and women in various states of high-minded confusion. Socially and economically it was not an exclusive club. It took as its motto, 'To be spiritually minded is life and peace', and asked only that its members agree with this dictum and that they pay five dollars a year in dues (equivalent to twenty dollars

today). Yet knowing that Mrs. Bull was connected with the club, one can be sure that it had its intellectual aspects as well as its noble ideals and that it was eminently respectable. (Although Mrs. Bull, having come originally from the hinterland of Madison, Wisconsin, was not a 'Proper Bostonian', she was by no means Bohemian in her outlook—not even in the relatively mild 1890 sense of that term.)

The club had its headquarters on St. Botolph Street in two adjoining houses that had been thrown into one, 'the parlors on one side forming a pleasant lecture-room, seated with camp chairs, and those on the other side used as a reception-room and library'.<sup>4</sup> During the season extending from November to May, the doors were open every day for social meetings, and the monthly programme consisted of a public lecture every Thursday evening (with the exception of the third Thursday in each month) and of two series of class talks, intended for members only.

Swamiji evidently had a knowledge of the Procopeia Club prior to 1896 and was not altogether pleased with what he knew. Because of its more or less indiscriminate embrace of Boston's various metaphysical cults and ventures, he felt a distaste for it and a reluctance to lecture under its auspices. In February of this same year he had written in a letter to Mrs. Bull, which has not yet been published : '... I have not much faith in working such things as the Procopeia &c—because these mixed up conglomerations of all isms & ities mostly fads—disturb the steadiness of the mind and life becomes a mass of frivolities.... This does not mean I am not coming to Procopeia I will come but it will be only for your sake.'<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> loc. cit.

<sup>5</sup> Swamiji to Mrs. Bull, 6 Feb. 1896, Vedanta Society of North California (hereafter, VSNC).

<sup>3</sup> *Chicago Inter Ocean*, 4 Apr. 1896.

Swamiji spoke five times before the Procopeia Club. Four of these lectures had been intended to constitute a series of closed class talks, while the fifth lecture, to be delivered on Thursday evening, March 26, was to be open to the public. As it turned out, however, all five lectures were public. Although there had been no advertising and only one inconspicuous announcement in the papers, word had spread through Boston that Swami Vivekananda was to speak, and it had shortly become apparent that the Procopeia Club's parlour with its complement of camp chairs would be stormed. Any idea the members had had of keeping Swamiji's classes to themselves was abandoned, and the arena of the Allen Gymnasium, a building situated directly across St. Botolph Street, was rented to accommodate the crowds. Yet even this proved too small, and, as on almost all the occasions in 1896 when Swamiji had lectured publicly, scores of disappointed people were turned away.

On March 21 the *Evening Transcript* introduced Swamiji's current work in Boston with an excellent article, such as one would not find in cities farther west, or, for that matter, farther south. The *Boston Evening Transcript* was no ordinary newspaper. Founded in the 1830s, it had become an institution not to be taken lightly. It was the journal of First-Family Bostonians, ceremoniously delivered every day at teatime to their front doors and religiously read. It reflected their likes and dislikes, their approvals and disapprovals, and guided their intellectual and political thought. 'In the wind of its editorial opinion they [its readers] swayed', said the poet T. S. Eliot, "like a field of ripe corn".<sup>6</sup> It was a bible of sorts and also what might today be considered a status

symbol. It was, as Lucius Beebe has put it in his book *Boston and the Boston Legend*, 'a qualitative hallmark as clearcut in its implications as a coat of arms or membership in the Somerset Club [one of Boston's sacrosanct clubs]'.<sup>7</sup> Even the employees of the *Transcript*, from copy boys to editors, were as dignified, as sedate, and often as well-entrenched socially as were its readers. Nor was the esteem felt for the *Transcript* confined to Boston; the paper was known nationally as the best of thoughtful and sober journals, and it was also acclaimed abroad. When the *Transcript* devoted a long article to Swamiji in its stately pages, it was doing more than giving the news; it was announcing that the 'Athens of America' had welcomed him without reservation. Even Emerson had not been accorded this honour. 'Original thinkers', the *Transcript* had sternly written in connection with the latter, 'are not always practical men, and they are sometimes led into insupportable theories'.<sup>8</sup> Although Swamiji very likely gave little heed to the approval or disapproval of the *Transcript*, the fact remained that the following article was a significant accolade:

### PHILOSOPHY OF FREEDOM

#### SWAMI VIVEKANANDA COMPARES TEACHINGS OF HINDU WISDOM AND WESTERN RELIGIONS

The Swami Vivekananda, who will be remembered as the Hindu delegate to the World's Parliament of Religions, is in the city as the March class lecturer at the Procopeia, 45 St. Botolph Street. The Swami has been doing some most valuable and successful work in systematic class lecturing in New York, with constantly increasing audiences, during the past two winters, and comes to Boston at a most opportune time.

<sup>6</sup> Cleveland Amory, *The Proper Bostonians* (E. P. Dutton & Co., New York, 1947), p. 333.

<sup>7</sup> Lucius Beebe, *Boston and the Boston Legend* (Appleton Century, New York, 1935), p. 185.

<sup>8</sup> Amory, op. cit., p. 336.

The Swami gives the following description of his work. In explanation of the term sannyasin, he said, When a man has fulfilled the duties and obligations of that stage of life in which he is born, and his aspirations lead him to seek a spiritual life, and to abandon altogether the worldly pursuits of possession, fame, or power; when, by the growth of insight into the nature of the world, he sees its impermanence, its strife, its misery, and the paltry nature of its prizes, and turns away from all these, then he seeks the true, the eternal love, the refuge. He makes complete renunciation (sannyasin) [*sic*] of all worldly position, property and name, and wanders forth into the world to live a life of self-sacrifice, and to persistently seek spiritual knowledge, striving to excel in love and compassion, and to acquire lasting insight; gaining these pearls of wisdom by years of meditation, discipline and inquiry, he, in his turn, becomes a teacher, and hands on to disciples, lay or professed, who may seek them from him, all that he can of wisdom and beneficence.

A sannyasin cannot belong to any religion, for his is a life of independent thought, which draws from all religions; his is a life of realization, not merely of theory or belief, much less of dogma.

In giving some idea of his work and its methods the Swami says he left the world because he had a deep interest in religion and philosophy from his childhood, and Indian books teach renunciation as the highest ideal to which a man can aspire.

The Swami's teaching, as he expresses it, "is my own interpretation of our ancient books in the light which my master (a celebrated Hindu sage) shed upon them. I claim no supernatural authority. Whatever in my teachings may appeal to the highest intelligence and be accepted by thinking men, the adoption of that will be my reward. All religions have for their object the teaching of devotion, or knowledge, or activity, in a concrete form. Now, the philosophy of Vedanta is the abstract science which embraces all these methods,

and this is what I teach, leaving each one to apply it to his own concrete form. I refer each individual to his own experience, and where reference is made to books, the latter are procurable, and may be studied for each one by himself." The Swami teaches no authority from hidden beings, through visible objects, any more than he claims learning from hidden books or MSS. He believes no good can come from secret societies. "Truth stands on its own authority, and truth can bear the light of day." He teaches only the Self, hidden in the heart of every individual, and common to all. A handful of strong men, knowing that Self, and living in its light, would revolutionize the world, even today, as has been the case of single strong men before, each in his day.

His attitude towards Western religions is briefly this. He propounds a philosophy which can serve as a basis to every possible religious system in the world, and his attitude towards all of them is one of extreme sympathy. His teaching is antagonistic to none. He directs his attention to the individual, to make him strong, to teach him that he himself is divine, and he calls upon men to make themselves conscious of divinity within. His hope is to imbue individuals with the teachings to which he has referred, and to encourage them to express these to others in their own way; let them modify them as they will; he does not teach them as dogmas; truth, at length, must inevitably prevail.

The Swami will give a series of four class-lectures on the Vedanta philosophy at the Procopeia on the evenings of Saturday, March 21, Monday, the 23d, Friday, the 27th, Saturday, the 28th. He will also give the Thursday evening public lecture on the 26th, on "The Ideal of a Universal Religion." No charge will be made for the class-lectures to those who are not members of the club and who wish to attend them. He will also give two afternoon lectures at the home of Mrs. Ole Bull in Cambridge, and will lecture to the graduate students in the department of philosophy at Harvard University.



The first three class lectures were entitled 'The Science of Work', 'Devotion', and 'Realization, or the Ultimate of Religion'. As is apparent not only from their titles but from newspaper reports as well, these lectures were expositions of, respectively, *karma-yoga*, *bhakti-yoga*, and *rāja-yoga*. During his fourth 'class' Swamiji read from the Upaniṣads, giving his commentary, which no doubt constituted a discourse on *jñāna-yoga*. In this series one finds, then, a sort of summing up of his winter's class work in New York, during the course of which he had given talk after talk on these four *yogas* and had prepared for publication a book on each. (*Jñāna-Yoga* as we know it today differs from the book that was contemplated in 1896 but never printed.) The subject of Swamiji's officially public lecture at the Procopeia Club (March 26) was 'The Ideal of a Universal Religion'—a subject on which he had lectured publicly in almost every town he had visited during this 1896 season. This was a lecture in which he enunciated for America the principle of unity in variety in religious doctrines and quests, a principle which he no doubt felt was essential to the future development and well-being of western culture. The subject, in fact, constituted an intrinsic and vital part of his message to the West. So also did those of his lectures at Harvard and at the Twentieth Century Club (of both of which more later), entitled respectively 'Vedanta Philosophy' and 'The Vedanta: Its Practical Bearings'. Indeed in his seven lectures given in or near Boston one finds the most essential aspects of his western message, which he had by now so completely and concisely formulated and so fully delivered.

Unfortunately, the Procopeia Club lectures were not transcribed, or, at any rate, not published, and it is from the newspapers alone that we learn a little about them. A correspondent from the *Chicago Inter Ocean*, who often described life in

Boston and Cambridge, seems to have attended at least one of the lectures; and while her following paragraph from the *Inter Ocean* of April 4, 1896, betrays a confusion regarding Swamiji's teachings, it is nonetheless of value for its information, some of which is not to be found elsewhere:

### VIVEKANANDA

It is under the auspices of [the Procopeia Club] that the Swami Vivekananda has just been giving a course of lectures, which attracted such throngs of people that the Allen gymnasium, just across the street, had to be engaged as a lecture-room. The hour was 8 o'clock, but by 7:15 o'clock every seat would be filled, and even the aisles crowded to suffocation with people, who stood for three-quarters of an hour before the lecture began in order to hear it. The Swami lectured on Karma Yogi as an ideal of universal religion, and devoted his last evening to readings from the Sanskrit, with interpretations that were extremely interesting. Anything more musical than his reading from the Sanskrit could not be imagined. One listened as if to unknown magic.

After Swamiji had given his first two lectures at the Allen Gymnasium, the *Boston Daily Globe*, a solid journal, wrote on March 24 appreciatively of the monk who had come from 'the mountains of India'. The writer had evidently interviewed Swamiji:

### OUT OF THE EAST

Message Brought by the Swami Vivekananda—In His Country the Gods Are "Bright Ones" That Help.

The Swami Vivekananda is enjoying as great a degree of popularity on his present visit to Boston as he did when society, fashionable, intellectual and faddist, went wild over him on his former visit.

This monk has come from the mountains of India, where he wandered in

solitude, occupied with spiritual meditations. He comes weighted with the maxims and principles of an ancient religion. He comes to tell the people of this western continent, struggling with scores of varying creeds, the simple, unified thought of the Hindu teachings. He is not here to proselyte or to found a new religion, but simply to make men conscious of the divinity within them.

The Swami has talked before not only intellectual audiences and in fashionable drawing rooms, but he has sought out and made friends with the workingmen with whom he is able to get on so well, because he believes that all great truths are expressed in simple forms.

A New York paper published an interview with the Swami, in which he is reported to have expressed the opinion that in Boston "the women are all faddists, all fickle, merely bent on following something new and strange." But Swami Vivekananda says that this is an exaggerated and distorted presentation of a criticism which he made upon all American women, that they were too superficial and too prone to follow the sensational and to change from one thing to another. This he says his observation has forced upon him. The American women are intellectual, but they are not steady, serious and sincere.

The first of the Swami's lectures was delivered before an audience of 400 people in the Allen gymnasium, Saturday evening on "The Science of Work," and the second one of the course on "Devotion" was given in the same place, the hall being filled and a number turned away unable to gain admittance.

The lecture was exceedingly interesting and the speaker's manner was very magnetic. In his country, said the Swami, the gods were the "bright ones" who gave help to men and received help from them. The gods are only human beings who are somewhat elevated after death, but God, the highest, is never prayed to or asked for help. He is given only love and worship without anything being asked in return. There are two phases of this God, the one, the abstract God be-

hind the substance of the universe, and the other the personal God who is seen through human intellect and given attributes by it.

The love which is given to God never takes, but always gives, and it does not depend on anything. The worshiper does not pray for health, money or any other thing, but is content with the lot apportioned to him.

People who ask about religion from mere motives of curiosity become faddists, they are always looking for something new and their brains degenerate until they become old rags. It is a religious dissipation with them.

It is not the place that makes heaven or hell, but the mind. Love knows no fear, there can be no love where it is. In love of any sort external objects are only suggested by something within—it is one's own ideal projected, and God is the highest ideal that can be conceived of.

Hatred of the world does not drive good men from it, but the world slips away from the great and saintly. The world, the family and social life, are all training grounds, that is all.

When one realizes that God is love, it does not matter what his other attributes are, that is the only essential.

The more a man throws himself away, the more God comes in, hence self abnegation, which is the secret of all religion and all morality.

Too many people bring down their ideals. They want a comfortable religion, but there is none such. It is all self-surrender and upward striving.

From the *Boston Evening Transcript*, which published four articles about Swamiji, one learns more of his lectures. The first of these articles, or reports, has been reproduced above. The second, a brief report of his public lecture 'The Ideal of a Universal Religion', appeared on March 27:

Said a Universal Religion Is Impossible. Swami Vivekananda told the large audience that crowded the Allen Gymnasium to hear him speak on the "Ideal of a

Universal Religion," last night, that the recent Parliament of Religions at Chicago proved, to that date, that universal religion was impossible. "Nature," he said, "is wiser than we have thought her to be. It is competition of ideas, the clash of thought, that keeps thought alive. Sects have always been antithetical, and always will be splitting into little varieties of themselves. And the way to get out of this fight of religions is to let the sects go on subdividing.

"There is no unity in the three elements of religion—philosophy, mythology and ceremony. Each theologian wants unity, but his idea of unity is the adjustment of all other creeds to his own. I agree with the old prophets as long as they agree with me. But there is an element of religion that towers above all; that is, philosophy. The philosopher seeks truth, which is one and the same always. And it is acceptable to the four sides of every religious nature—the emotional, mystical, active and philosophical. And he who dares to seek the truth for truth's sake is greatest among men."

The third *Evening Transcript* article about Swamiji appeared on March 28 and was even briefer than the above, being no more than a mention of his lecture 'Realization, or the Ultimate of Religion'. For the sake of completeness, it is given below:

### VIVEKANANDA ON THE 'FUTURE OF RELIGION'

In the Allen Gymnasium, last evening, about four hundred people heard the Swami Vivekananda speak under the auspices of the Procopeia on "Realization, or the Ultimate of Religion." Tonight the last lecture of the course will be given, to be followed by a general philosophic discussion. On Monday the Indian philosopher will return [?] to Chicago.<sup>9</sup>

It was on Monday, March 30, that the *Evening Transcript* printed its fourth and longest article about Swamiji, summarizing his work in the city and at Harvard with understanding and appreciation. But before reproducing this article, we shall look at another side of Swamiji's life in Boston. His stay there was not all work; there was a holiday aspect to it, for several of his close friends had come from New York and were staying in Cambridge as guests of Mrs. Ole Buil.

(To be continued)

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<sup>9</sup> Swamiji had come to Boston from Detroit, not Chicago. His head quarters in 1896 were New York

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On the seashore of endless worlds children meet. Tempest roams in the pathless sky, ships are wrecked in the trackless water, death is abroad and children play. On the seashore of endless worlds is the great meeting of children.

—from *Crescent Moon* of Rabindranath Tagore

## OVERCOMING TEMPTATION

SWAMI BUDHANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue)

### CHRISTIAN TEACHINGS ON OVERCOMING TEMPTATIONS

In Christian mystical literature we find elaborate discussion and invaluable guidance as to how we can overcome temptations. In Christian mysticism down the centuries the phenomenon of temptation has received a most penetrating study and analysis. From this have emerged certain basic principles for converting temptations into a great spiritual power.

Temptations can be converted into spiritual power only through enduring them in the right manner. We have already discussed the importance of cultivating a right attitude to temptations.

The practical aspect of having a right attitude to temptations brings us to knowing how to endure them. On this we have entirely to learn from those who had themselves gone through fire—we mean the saints. We shall here present mostly in our words only a few precepts<sup>21</sup> from authentic Christian mystics, which will help every one of us. The mystics admonish us :

1. Do not try to fly from temptations, but set the heart right. For many while trying to fly from them, have fallen more grievously into them, like falling from the pan to the fire. (It is obvious that not trying to fly from temptation, does not mean that one should court them. The meaning is that one should not be panicky, or

<sup>21</sup> These precepts are mainly culled from *Philokalia*, 1951, pp. 188-89 and some other sources.

nervous about it, nor should we deliberately make it easy for temptation to assail us. All spiritual aspirants must live a cautious and conservative life which means a way of life which conserves physical and mental energy.)

2. When temptation assails you, the mystic says, do not seek to understand why and wherefore it comes, but only pray that you may not be overcome by it.

In other words: do not psychoanalyse yourself too much, but bring your case quickly to God of your heart.

3. Do not seek to know the cause of temptation.

In any case, as far as the aspirant is concerned, it is unnecessary wastage of mind. By acute analysis of darkness, you do not get light. Such an attempted search may involve the aspirant in greater difficulty.

4. When temptation assails your mind, keep the body pure.

5. Even when temptation aggressively assaults your body, do not give your inner consent.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>22</sup> The testimony of how this can be done is most magnificently narrated by Sītā in the *Rāmāyana*. After Rāvaṇa had been vanquished and Laṅkā conquered Sītā was rescued from captivity and brought to Rāma's presence. But Rāma addressed to her the most unexpected and startling words [later of course it was revealed why he did so] meaning that the war had been waged to retrieve his own name and his family's honour and he had no need of her, for '...what self-respecting man born in a high

6. Never submit to despondency. Discard all cowardice and discouragement.

7. Little by little by patience and long suffering, through God's help, temptations will be overcome, but not by violence on oneself or by disquiet.

Further, the mystics advise, 'make no haste in times of trouble.'

The best advice will surely appear to us to be absurd. But if we stop and think, the wisdom of it will at once impress us.

In times of trouble we are generally confused. Confusion means mental darkness. If a person moves hurriedly in darkness, he can only expect greater calamity than mere being in darkness could have meant for him.

Any day the man who stands still in darkness and waits for light, is wiser than the man who impatiently runs to get out of darkness and quickly gets into greater trouble.

This is a very important advice to remember.

Thomas à Kempis points out in the *Imitation of Christ*:

'There is no order so holy, no place so secret, that is fully without temptation, and there is no man that is fully free from it here in this life: for in our corrupt body we bear the matter whereby we be tempted, that is, our inordinate concupiscence, wherein we are born.

'As one temptation goeth another cometh, and so we shall always have somewhat to suffer: for we have lost

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family will take back a woman who has lived in another's house'. After recovering from the terrific shock of such an insulting insinuation, Sītā wiped her tears and spoke slowly in a broken voice glorious words of power. What is specially relevant to us here are these words: '... if another's body has touched me, I am not to blame; what is in my control, that, my heart, is wholly in you ...' The battle which frail Sītā fought and won most easily against Rāvaṇa's forces was indeed a greater victory than Rāma's, and her only weapon was keeping the heart pure and refusing consent to all the temptations of the world with which Rāvaṇa surrounded her,

our innocence. Many folk seek to flee temptation, and they fall the more grievously into it: for by only fleeing we may not have victory, but by meekness and patience we be made stronger than all our enemies.

'He that only flieth the outward occasions and cutteth not away the inordinate desires hid inwardly in the heart shall come to him again, and grieve him more than they did first. By little and little, with patience and sufferance, and with help of God, thou shalt sooner overcome temptations than with thine own strength and importunity. In thy temptation it is good that thou oft ask counsel, and that then be not rigorous to a person that is tempted; but be glad to comfort him as thou wouldst be comforted.'<sup>23</sup>

As regards how temptations assail a man Thomas à Kempis says:

'First cometh to the mind an unclean thought, and after followeth a strong imagination, and then delectation and diverse evil motions, and in the end followeth full assent, and so by little and little the enemy hath full entry, for he was not wisely resisted in the beginning.'<sup>24</sup>

In his helpful book *Introduction to the Devout Life*,<sup>25</sup> St. Francis de Sales devotes as many as 15 sections of one part to 'Overcoming Temptation' and provides some authentic and precious insights into the problem. And his precepts can help, when followed, aspirants belonging to any religion.

The most important points he makes are these:

The first thing needed is to clearly understand the difference between temptation and sin. Sin is not a synonym of temptation,

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<sup>23</sup> Op. cit., pp. 21-22.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.* p. 23.

<sup>25</sup> We have used here the translation by John K. Ryan. Published by Doubleday and Company, New York, 1962.

they are not interchangeable terms. Temptations are transformed into sins only when we have consented to and taken delight in them. Otherwise, temptation may stay with us throughout our whole life, but it would not be displeasing to God.

St. Paul, St. Francis, St. Bernard, St. Anthony, St. Catherine of Siena suffered long from temptations, but by that they did not only not lose grace of God, on the other hand by going through temptations, all of them became saints.

According to St. Francis de Sales, there are three steps leading to descent into iniquity: temptation, delight, consent. Although these three steps may not be noticed in all kinds of sins, yet they are clearly seen in great and enormous sins.

In the face of temptations one must be courageous and clearheaded. The saint says:

'Never think yourself overcome by temptations as long as they displease you, observing well this difference between feeling and consenting. That is, we may feel temptations, even though they displease us, but we can never consent to them unless they please us, since to be pleased with them ordinarily serves as a step toward our consent....'<sup>26</sup>

No matter how long the temptation may last, it cannot harm us as long as it is displeasing to us.

Then in respect to the delight that may follow temptation, it should be known that there are as it were two parts of the soul. Hence it frequently happens that the inferior part takes delight in temptation, without consent, nay against the will of the superior.

This is that inner warfare about which St. Paul says that 'the flesh lusteth against the spirit and that there is a law of the members, and a law of the Spirit.'

It is possible that our whole being may be conquered as it were by the inferior part, yet if in the centre of our soul there is an agony, like embers within ashes, then the delight is involuntary and it cannot be sinful.

On this point St. Francis de Sales cites the case of St. Catherine of Siena's struggles of sin, and shows that because in the heart she had the felt agony she was not only saved but also sainted.

## VI

Now what about remedies for temptation?

Here we shall discuss briefly only the remedies suggested by St. Francis de Sales.

There are temptations and temptations. There are big temptations and small temptations. According to the saint, big and small temptations are to be faced and overcome by different methods.

In regard to great temptations St. Francis de Sales says:

When you notice yourself to be tempted, follow the example of the children when they see a wolf or bear in the country. What do they then do? They immediately run to the arms of their father or mother. Or if they are not nearby, they cry aloud in their name. Turn in the same manner to God and implore His mercy and his help.

If you find the temptation continuing, hold fast unto God, continue to protest that you will never consent to temptation. While doing so, do not commit the mistake of looking the temptation in the face, but keep your vision fixed in God. Turn your thought to some good and commendable matters.

One sovereign remedy against all temptations, small or big, is to lay open your heart, and communicate its suggestions, feelings, and afflictions to your spiritual teacher. Because sin wants you to keep silent, when you declare its designs to your teacher its attempts get shattering blows.

If, even after this, temptations should continue to assail you, you have just to endure

<sup>26</sup> Op. cit., pp. 233-34.

and refuse consent. As girls cannot be married as long as they say 'no', so the soul, no matter how long the temptation may last, can never sin so long as she says 'no'.

Finally we must remember that although we must oppose great temptations with all our courage and strength, and the victory thus attained will be of great advantage to us, yet it is true that it is by resisting the small temptations in a proper manner that we develop the strength to fight the great temptations.

This brings us to the consideration of the methods for overcoming small temptations.

On this St. Francis de Sales has important, and, we may say, interesting lessons to impart. He says:

'Wolves and bears are certainly more dangerous than flies; yet they do not give us so much trouble, nor exercise our patience so much.'<sup>27</sup>

To exemplify this the saint says:

'It is easy to refrain from murder, but it is extremely difficult to restrain all the little outbursts of temper, the occasions of which present themselves every moment.

'It is easy for a man or a woman to refrain from adultery, but it is not as easy to refrain from glances of the eyes, or from uttering or listening to flattery; it is easy to refraining from defiling the marriage bed, but it is hard not to disturb married love.

'It is easy not to steal other men's goods, but difficult not to covet them; it is easy not to bear false witness in court, but difficult never to tell a lie; it is easy to refrain from drunkenness, but difficult to observe sobriety; it is easy to refrain from wishing another man's death, but difficult to refrain from desiring what may discomfort him; it is easy to abstain from defaming him, but sometimes difficult to refrain from despising him.

<sup>27</sup> Vide *Letters from a Saint* (St. Francis de Sales), Henry Holt and Co., New York, 1957, p. 110.

'In short, these small temptations to anger, suspicion, jealousy, envy and so forth are continually assaulting even those who are the most devout and resolute. That is why I say that the more victories we gain against these little enemies, the greater will be our glories with God.'<sup>28</sup>

Proceeding he directly preaches how to overcome smaller obstacles:

'Now as these smaller temptations, like flies and gnats, continually hover about us, and it is impossible to be altogether freed from them, the best defence that we can make is to try to ignore them. For although they may tease us, they can never hurt us so long as we continue firmly resolved to dedicate ourselves in earnest to the service of God.

'Despise, then, these petty assaults, without so much as even thinking of what they suggest. The best means to overcome the enemy is to turn your heart gently toward Jesus, (meaning God), and perform some actions of a contrary nature to the temptation.'<sup>29</sup>

Then the saint concludes:

'This is the best means to overcome small as well as great temptations; for as the love of God contains within itself the perfection of all the virtues, so it is also the sovereign antidote against every kind of vice. Moreover, as soon as the devil perceives that his temptations incite us to form acts of divine love he ceases to have anything to do with us.'<sup>30</sup>

No one can fly away from temptations. Understood from the mystic's standpoint, through temptations God approaches us in a trying fashion. If only we can through temptations keep our minds fixed on Him,

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.* pp. 110-11.

<sup>29</sup> This teaching of St. Francis de Sales reads like a commentary on Patañjali's *Yoga-sūtra*: वितर्कबाधने प्रतिपक्षभावनम् 'To obstruct thoughts which are inimical to yoga, contrary thoughts should be brought' (II.33).

<sup>30</sup> *Op. cit.* III. 112.

then temptations can only do all good, bring us blessings.

For this, and for everything else, let us never cease to crave His grace for ever and ever more.

### CONCLUSION

In the ultimate analysis, grace alone (of God and our own mind) can save us from becoming victims of temptations. Complacence can lead us to be taken unawares and so become buried in the mire of temptation. When we lose or do not carefully cultivate the genuine spirit of humility, we become vulnerable to temptation. Though not apparent on the surface, there is a causal relationship between lack of humility and becoming a victim of temptation. St. Augustine says from his own experience: no one can be continent without God's grace. But as Sri Ramakrishna says: waters of divine grace cannot accumulate on the high mound of one's egotism. Christ says the same thing in different words: blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Once, when a devotee told Holy Mother with an air of self-assurance that no evil thoughts came to his mind, the Mother shuddered in fright as it were, warned the devotee against being smug, and advised him to remain prayerful. She laid great em-

phasis on the repetition of God's name in order both to be saved from temptation and to develop love God.

Holy Mother teaches: 'One who always thinks of his Chosen Ideal (*Iṣṭa*), how can evil (*amīṣṭa*) ever approach him?'<sup>31</sup>

Sri Ramakrishna teaches by implication that the Divine Mother, seated in our heart, should be taken wherever we may go. Then we are saved by Her presence and power from within under all situations. Referring to an extreme case of possible peril he says:

'When you go to a wrong place take the Blissful Mother along with you. In that case, even if you have any inclination to an evil deed, you will be saved. In the presence of the Mother, out of a sense of shame, you will not be able to perform any evil deed.'<sup>32</sup>

Above all, as we have mentioned before, and this will bear repetition, Sri Ramakrishna teaches us to wholeheartedly take refuge in God, to pray constantly for pure love of God and for salvation from the world-bewitching *māyā*.



<sup>31</sup> Vide Swami Ishanananda, *Mātr-Sānnidhye* (Bengali) Udbodhan, Calcutta, 1st ed., 1375, p. 249.

<sup>32</sup> *Śrī Śrī Rāmakrishna Dever Upadesh* (Bengali) compiled by Suresh Chandra Dutta, The Harimohan Publishing Agency, Calcutta, 1375, p. 53.

## SKANDA-VIDYĀ

DR. P. S. SASTRI

The seventh chapter of the *Chāndogya-upaniṣad* presents the instruction given by the great sage Sanatkumāra. The instruction opens at a point that marks the end of the knowledge hitherto obtained by Nārada. Nārada studied the Vedas, *itihāsa-purāna* (epics and ancient lore), numbers, rituals, divination, treasures, logic, ethics,

etymology, *brahma-vidyā* (the ancillary knowledge of the Vedas), the science of elemental spirits, the science of war, astronomy, the science of serpents, and the fine arts. All this, says Nārada, gave him an ability to remember and interpret the texts. He could not know the Ātman. He was eager to know the Ātman because the



knower of the Ātman crosses the barrier called sorrow. As Sanatkumāra put it, Nārada had only a knowledge of words or names (*nāmaivaitat*). Beyond *nāma* (words or names) is *vāk* or speech.

*Vāk* appears under the forms of *parā-pāśyantī*, *madhyamā*, and *vaikharī*. Each succeeding form is the effect of the preceding one. *Parā vāk* is consciousness. *Manas* or mind transcends *vāk* because it comprehends both speech and name. Greater than *manas* is *saṅkalpa* or will. Beyond *saṅkalpa* lies *cittam* or intelligence which comprehends objects and events after a critical evaluation. *Dhyānam* or contemplation transcends *cittam* because it involves tranquillity and contentment. The next higher one is *viññānam*, and it is superseded by *balam* or strength which is the capacity to comprehend the knowledge presented or conceived. This is transcended by *annam* or food. In this way we have *āpaḥ* (water), *tejas* (fire), *ākāśa*, *smara* or memory, *vāśā* (aspiration, hope), and *prāṇa* (the universal power called *hiranyagarbha*). Each succeeding principle transcends the preceding one.

Nārada's goal was *Ātma-jñāna* or Self-knowledge. He began at the level of words and names. The process was directed towards the ultimate foundation or basis which in later times came to be treated as *svayam-siddha*, the foundational principle. Words and names arise from speech, and speech has its origins in the mind. At this level mind is that aspect of the mind which issues in action. Such an action needs will or *saṅkalpa*. In order to will something, we need an intellectual or rational awareness of the goal. This awareness is called *citta*. At each level the causal factor is to be contemplated upon as Brahman. Then the journey is from the manifest to the unmanifest, from the effect to its immanent and transcendent principle.

When we withdraw names and words and the rest to the state of the *citta*, then

contemplation or *dhyāna* becomes possible. But contemplation requires *viññāna* which arises from the strength (*bala*) of the mind. So far the process has been one of proceeding inward. Then Sanatkumāra suddenly moves outwards when he states that food is needed for mental strength and stability. Once again we have a causal series. Food needs water, and water presupposes fire. In another Upaniṣad the causal series appear as *ākāśa* (space), air, fire, water, earth, herbs, and food. Here the series are *ākāśa*, fire, water, and food. While another Upaniṣad derives *ākāśa* from the Ātman, here it is from *smara* or memory. The quest is now at the purely psychic level. Memory is activated because of aspiration (*vāśā*), and aspiration needs *prāṇa*. Here *prāṇa* is identical with the universal power called *hiranyagarbha*. It is the power of knowledge and movement. Because of *prāṇa*, one acts and speaks. And we are thus brought back to our original second stage characterized by speech.

At this stage Sanatkumāra moves away from the argument that has moved in a circle. He observes that one must speak *with truth* (*satyena*). This *satya* is the Absolute Truth. If one were to speak *with truth*, one must undertake *satya-jijñāsā*, an enquiry into Truth.<sup>1</sup> One speaks Truth only when he knows (*viññāti*) it. He does not speak Truth without knowing it. Hence we must enquire *viññāna* or knowledge.<sup>2</sup> This *viññāna*, according to Śaṅkara, is self-awareness. This knowledge arises from reflection (*manana*) alone; and without *manana*, there can be no *viññāna*. Consequently we must enquire *mati* (or *manana*).<sup>3</sup> So far we have the series *satyam*, *viññānam*, *mananam*.

<sup>1</sup> सत्यं त्वेव विजिज्ञासितव्यम् ।

*Chāndogya-upaniṣad*, VII. 16.1.

<sup>2</sup> विज्ञानं त्वेव विजिज्ञासितव्यम् । *ibid.*, VII. 17.1.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, VII. 18.1.

When can a person reflect and meditate successfully? He needs a steadfast faith (*śraddhā*) in what he longs to reflect upon. Thus the enquiry leads to *śraddhā* which involves a conviction that the spiritual Reality exists (*āstikya-buddhi*). This *śraddhā* arises only when one approaches with a steadfast mind. Approaching with steadfastness is expressed by the word *nistiṣṭhati*. Sanatkumāra asks Nārada to enquire *niṣṭhā*. In order to approach the teacher one must be prepared to receive the instruction willingly and earnestly; and to achieve such an approach one must have a control over one's senses and an ability to concentrate. Such a twofold activity has to be cultivated. But in order to act, one must seek to be happy or satisfied (*sukham*). There must be a deep yearning for the realization of the supreme happiness.

Having come to this stage, Sanatkumāra proceeds to explain the nature of this supreme happiness. Absolute happiness or *sukham* is called *bhūman*. Śaṅkara interprets this word by using the terms *mahat* and *nir-atīśayam*, transcendental. In this context *mahat* is a synonym of *br̥hat* and therefore of Brahman. It is the all-inclusive, comprehensive Reality. The *bhūman* alone is happiness; for anything finite cannot give happiness. Hence the enquiry is to be turned towards *bhūman*.

In the 24th section of this chapter we have an account of *bhūman*. *Bhūman* is that wherein one sees nothing else, hears nothing else, and knows nothing else.<sup>4</sup> That is, *bhūman* is the realization of identity. There one does not see anything other than *bhūman*. If the other is seen or heard or known, there we have the finite (*alpam*, the little). *Bhūman* alone is immortal (*amṛtam*).

Nārada then asks the ground or foundation of *bhūman*. Is it its own ground, or no? Sanatkumāra declares that *bhūman* is its own ground and that it is identical with I (*aham*). This is corrected in the 25th section to mean the infinite and all-pervasive Ātman. From this Ātman arise *prāṇa*, *āśā*, *smara*, *ākāśa*, *tejas*, *lāpaḥ*, *annam*, *balam*, *viññānam*, *dhyānam*, *cittam*, *saṅkalpa*, *manas*, *vāk*, *nāma*, *māntras*, *karma*, and everything. One who realizes this Ātman has no death, no illness, and no sorrow; and he sees everything and realizes everything.

Then follows a significant passage which concludes the seventh chapter:

‘When nourishment is pure, reflection and apprehension become pure. This leads to a strong memory which puts an end to all the knots. When all his impurities were washed off in this way, Nārada was shown the shore beyond darkness by the revered sage Sanatkumāra. That they call *skanda*.’<sup>5</sup>

The last sentence is usually rendered as ‘Him they call *skanda*’. Before we seek a meaning of this sentence let us look at the passage closely.

*Āhāra-śuddhi* or purity of food is the same as the *sāttvika* food outlined in the *Bhagavad-gītā* (XVII. 8). When the food is pure, it leads to the purity of *sattva*. Here *sattva* is the internal organ or *antaḥkaraṇa*. The purity of this internal organ enables one to have an unbroken memory of *bhūman*. As a result of this one can reflect upon it and contemplate it. Then the impressions and thoughts of earlier experiences which have been imprisoning the self can be broken. That is, purification of the mind is necessary to this realization. *Āhāra* can also mean the food of the mind; and then it will be that which has been perceived and imagined. The mind

<sup>4</sup> यत्र नान्यत्पश्यति नान्यच्छृणोति नान्यद्विजानाति

स भूमा ।      *ibid.*, VII. 24.1.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, VII. 26.2.

is pure only when it can receive the proper impressions. The impressions are proper when they are not conditioned by one's own desires, likes and dislikes, and delusions. That this metaphorical interpretation is valid, is suggested by the expression *mṛdita-kaṣāyāya* (to him after his impurities had been washed off). The mind is like a cloth dyed with cravings, hatred, and the like. When the dye is bleached, the mind becomes pure. Nārada has thus come to have a stainless, pure mind, through the instruction given by Sanatkumāra.

Simple instruction alone is not enough. Nārada approached Sanatkumāra with an ability to interpret words. He wanted to realize the Absolute Reality called *bhūman*

or Ātman. The process of realization is not an intellectual one. It involves *sādhanā*, a yogic activity. Sanatkumāra *showed* (*darśayati*) the shore beyond *darkness* (*tamas*). This *tamas* is the same as *māyā*. The Absolute is beyond *māyā*. That Absolute is called *skanda*. This word *skanda* is a synonym of *stamba* and *sthānu*. In the *Bhagavad-gītā* the word *sthānu* has been used as a synonym of the Ātman.<sup>6</sup>

*Skanda* has also come to mean a wise one. This probably explains why Śaṅkara treated *skanda* as an epithet of Sanatkumāra.

<sup>6</sup> नित्यः सर्वगतः स्थाणुरचलोऽयं सनातनः ।

*Gītā*, II. 24.

## SOME CORRESPONDENCE OF SISTER NIVEDITA

SWAMI VIDYATMANANDA

(Continued from the February issue)

In the final paragraph of the letter of July 26, Nivedita inquires as to who George Montagu was and what he had done. She indicates she cannot doubt but that George was one of the future devotees singled out by Swami Vivekananda.

The Ninth Earl of Sandwich was a man of many parts. He loved Hinchingsbrooke and improved it; and he took great pride in his children, two boys and two girls. George wrote excellent poetry. But his most outstanding talent was shown as connoisseur of modern art. Through a remarkable ability to recognize artists of promise, mostly French painters of the post-impressionist school, he built up a superb collection of paintings. When I visited Hinchingsbrooke Castle in 1952 I saw and marvelled at this collection—nearly three hundred paintings,

many of great value, including one of the best private collections in the world of canvases by Modigliani (1884-1920). Much of this went to the nation at George's death in 1962 at the age of eighty-six.

I am not able to say how well the marriage went and how far Nivedita's high hopes for a spiritualized union were realized. Or whether George was a follower of Vedānta. Nevertheless, the two partners maintained a lively interest in matters relating to Vivekananda and his order, and in 1912 visited India. Following are some passages from the account of that trip George wrote for *Vedānta and the West* more than forty years later:

At Benares we had the good fortune to meet Swami Turiyananda and Mahendra, the famous M., the school-master who

was the first to put on record the sayings of Sri Ramakrishna. I went with them in a boat on the Ganges along the ghats where many were bathing. Swami Turiyananda was a gay companion in contrast to the dark bearded Mahendra, who kept silent most of the time.

Dr. J. C. Bose, the distinguished botanist, took us to Belur Math. On arriving at the Math we were received by the Swamis Shivananda and Premananda. To my surprise and also somewhat to my embarrassment Swami Premananda seized me in his arms and embraced me, as might have been I were a long-lost child.

The climax of our stay in Calcutta was a visit to the Holy Mother. We took the dust of her feet. She spoke little, but I shall always remember the calm and somewhat detached expression of the eyes set in that noble countenance.

It seems therefore that Nivedita's hopes for the new member of the Vivekananda family were realized. Anyone acquainted with direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna and embraced by one of them; anyone who has touched the feet of Holy Mother, will have been made good—or more likely, was already good. In some way perhaps not outwardly apparent, Nivedita's high hopes must have come true.



The next letter is from Nivedita to Josephine MacLeod, in response to a letter from Miss MacLeod describing the wedding. It is dated August 17, 1905. S. Sara is Mrs. Sara Bull, an American disciple of Vivekananda, who was a friend of the Leggetts and a friend and supporter of Nivedita. Baby is Alberta's half-sister, Frances, born in 1897. M. Nobel was Mr. Gerald Nobel, a family friend of the Leggetts. I have not identified Madame W.

17 Bose Para Lane  
Bagh Bazaar  
Calcutta, Aug. 17 [1905]

My dearest Yum

It was so lovely of you to tell me all

about Albert's wedding—all white and silver and Annunciation lilies. How beautiful the early celebration in the little chapel. Dear Albert! Our wedding present will have to go to her late, in England, & I do not even know her English address, but suppose Bruton St. will do.

How beautiful the words you told me about England being richer for this marriage. And the words of Mr. Montagu's mother go so deep with the Indian heart.

It is Christine's birthday today, and I am hourly expecting a box containing a gown for her from her sisters—which kind S. Sara has had made. It will be wonderful if it comes to-day. Last year the box from you and Mrs. Heiliger arrived on the very day. I wrote to Mrs. Patterson, telling her how sorry we shall all be to lose them. I feel that they would scarcely notice a letter from us, yet that a link is really broken with their going. And I suppose it makes your return here in the future less likely. But I really feel a little anxious about them beyond this, for it will mean a serious change for them will it not? I suppose I am very silly to think of things like that.

I wrote to dear Madame W. the last thing last night—a wonderful moonlight night, & the anniversary of my Father's death. I wish I could have shown you my letter before sending it, for it sounds stiff & self-conscious I fear. But I personally appreciate privacy so much, and I did not want her to feel that hers was invaded. I told her that I did not even know what religion she belonged to—only that she was your friend & M. Nobel's; & of course she would understand that I knew she had had a crushing sorrow.

And today is the anniversary of Mr. Bull's death. But time, in the history of the soul, is nothing.

I have such a strange feeling nowadays about Love and about Death—these two things—that if I want to know *anything*, I have got the clue to both, and have only to look and see.

I read Albert's beautiful note to myself, to Christine, and she said "How wonderful, without experience to know

that about *Motherhood*"! And I said "How wonderful, without experience, to know this about joy"!

I trust that you will be having S Sara at Ridgely to see Albert in this great happiness. How lovely about Swamiji's Mala [? ]! And I am so glad that it is now safe for Baby. I was always afraid it would not be.

Ever lovingly your childe  
Margot

My love to Ridgely, and everyone and everything about it.

★

The seventh letter is to Josephine MacLeod and is dated from Calcutta on September 13, 1905. It is the only letter in the collection in which Nivedita refers very specifically to the large events with which her life was connected in India. Lord Curzon had aroused the anger of all India by partitioning Bengal into two states, thus giving a political colouring to the Moslem-Hindu feeling. The partition occurred in the summer of 1905. The people responded in many ways, one of which was to organize a boycott against foreign goods. Nivedita speaks of this action of Curzon—possibly bad in itself—as something eventually good for India because it would arouse the people and give them a sense of their own identity. And it is true that the British, forty years later, had to go.

The 'Holl' referred to is Hollister Sturges, the brother of Alberta.

17 Bose Para Lane  
Bagh Bazaar  
Calcutta Sept. 13 [1905]

Dear Yum

It is I think 2 weeks since I wrote you—so I must not miss tonight. I could not help it; it was a fit of deadly exhaustion. I had to cancel all lectures, and do nothing. I cd barely write from dictation 3 days a week. I feel very different however today. And we go to Darjeeling with the Boses in the first days of October, Dear Albert! So

it will be her birthday on Sunday! I have obtained 2 lovely saris for her and trust that they may mean something to her, late wedding gift though they be. What she will do with them I do not know—but from our point of view, they are beautiful.

Please give or send my love to Holl and his sweetheart. I am sure he will choose well—and tell him please that I think so well of him that I think she *is*, and trust he feels himself, extraordinarily lucky. I do hope they will face the small and modest days together. Why in the world shd everyone want a fortune before he feels that he has a right to a home with the sweetest woman he ever saw?

India appears to be waking up in these days. The incubus of Curzon is off, & of course you have heard of the Boycott. No one knows where it may all end. For the People are feeling their power. I think Curzon has broken the British Empire.

It is so nice to think I may expect a letter this week!

With love to all at Ridgely,  
Margot

Envelope:  
Miss MacLeod  
Ridgely Manor  
Stone Ridge

Endorsed at  
Stone Ridge, N.Y.  
Oct. 13 [?]

★

The last letter was written six years later, on August 3, 1911. It was addressed to Alberta. It is a letter very different in tone from the earlier correspondence—warm, perfectly cordial, but restrained. It reflects, it seems to me, Nivedita's spiritual maturity. At the time she wrote the letter Nivedita had only six more weeks to live.

In 1910 Sara Bull became very ill at her home in Boston. She had been such a friend, such a supporter of Nivedita's projects and activities, that Nivedita felt she must go to America to look after Sara. Nivedita reached Boston in November of 1910. Sara Bull died two months later. During the final days of Sara Bull's life, and

immediately after her death, Sara Bull's daughter, Olea, acted very badly toward Nivedita. She accused her mother's friend of too great an influence over her mother, of trying to get her money for her personal use, and even of bringing about the death by poisoning. Heavy of heart, Nivedita sailed back to India, arriving there in April of 1911. Alberta had evidently heard all about this and had written to Nivedita about it.

There was no envelope with this letter.

17 Bose Para Lane  
Bagh Bazaar  
Calcutta, 3.8.11

My dearest Berta,

Thank you so much for your warm letter. Oh I am so glad it is all over. It is the clamour that seemed so terrible. And the *tragedy*. Mrs. Burton seems to feel, as no one else does. Poor S. Sara!

I ought to have written to you, to congratulate you on the birth of the little daughter [Elizabeth (Betty)]. How glad I am that you had your wish! But there is something so witch-like about these wishes of yours! They are always fulfilled. Do let me have a photograph of yourself & the 3 children, taken beside a piece of old wall, that you sent to Yum. It is not only that the group is so beautiful. There is also such a wonderful feeling of *garden* about it! What is it that makes this difference between old gardens & new? The feeling of vastness & leisure about each inch of them is such a puzzle to me. But there it is, in the setting about you! What an exquisite place Hinchingsbrooke must be, to mother your children in!

I could not send you a better wish when your baby was born, than that you might find in her something of the joy & pride that your own mother has had in you. May England, too, in noble ways, have cause to bless her birth!

With warm warm love and thanks to you both & to you all, ever, beloved Alberta,

Your loving  
Margot

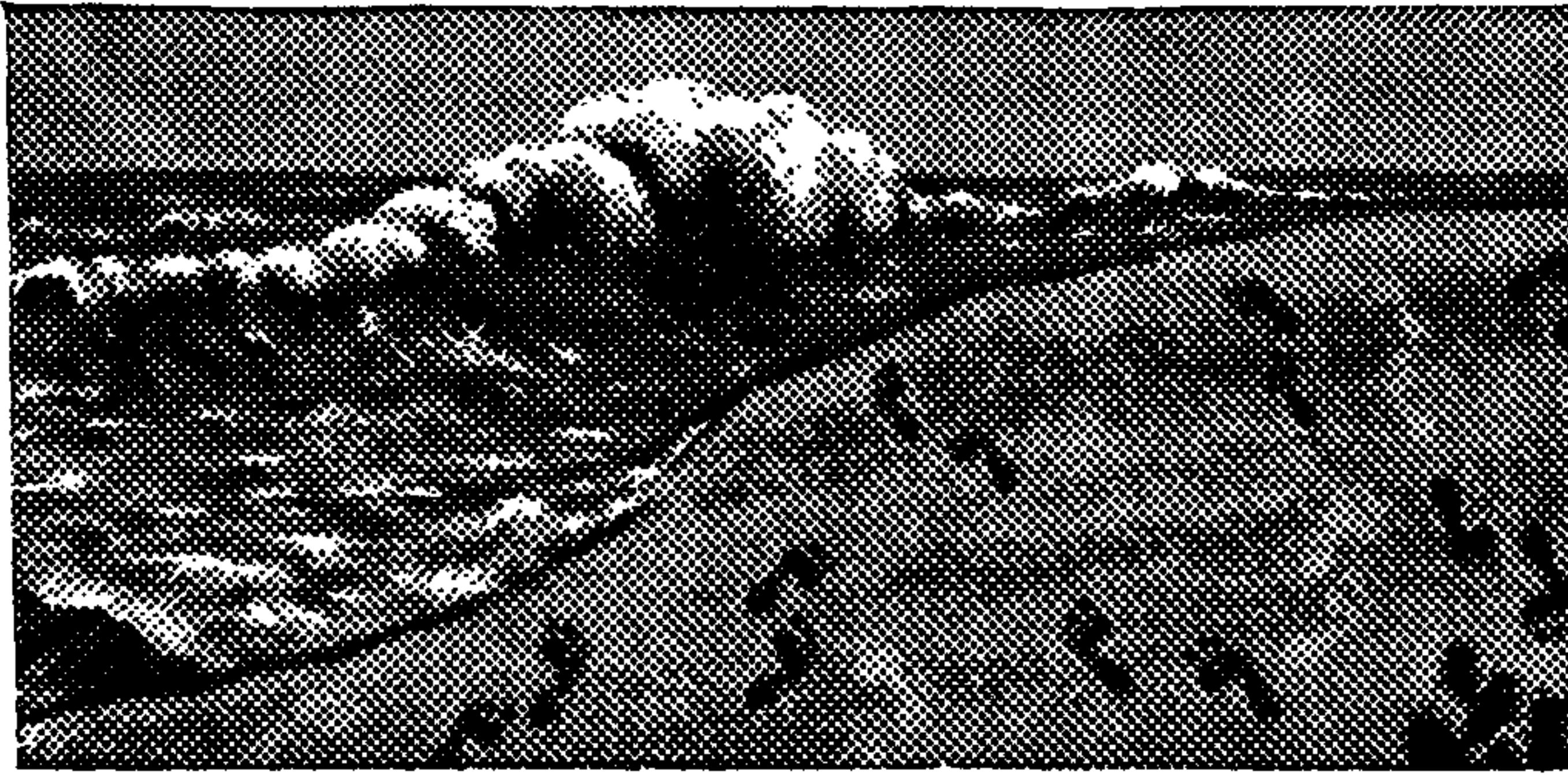
★

Sister Nivedita died at Darjeeling in the Himalayas on October 13, 1911. All India was shocked at the news of her passing. Obituaries appeared in the papers, there were memorial services, and at the place where she was cremated a monument was erected: 'Here reposes Sister Nivedita who gave her all to India.'

In one of his lectures Swamiji says that if there were but a few selfless people, utterly dependent upon God, who dared to stand up and say, 'I have nothing but God', the whole world could be changed. Nivedita, we may say, took those words literally. Once Nivedita had prayed, 'God grant me to speak brave true words in my Guru's name before I die, words with his life flowing through them; untainted, unimpaired—that I may feel, passing into Eternity, that I have not disappointed him.'

The word Nivedita means 'the dedicated one'. We see from her public life that she was dedicated to Vedānta, to her Guru, to her adopted country, to the noble ends of Indian uplift and independence. All that is well known. But by way of these simple, very personal, letters that I have at last put before the reader, touching unimportant matters, we see more intensely what the word means. In small matters she was dedicated also—because this quality was a part of her. Nivedita was all of a piece. It is clear that she was dedicated all the way through.

(Concluded)



# HUMAN TRENDS

## EDUCATION : MODERN TRENDS

The most obvious characteristic of the general picture presented by the experience of modern education the world over and, in particular, in the West today is criticism, dissatisfaction with itself. In this, of course, its situation is the same as that in almost all other spheres of modern life. There is a feeling that man is at the end of an age and that another is about to begin. The question is, what shape should it take, how far is man in control of his destiny, what part can criticism helpfully play? This strong, almost universal feeling—one cannot speak for the real experience as distinct from the official lines taken by authority in Communist countries—pervades politics and economics, the whole field of culture, the theory and practice of most of the professions particularly medicine, and much else. Life is a process of change but the pace and nature of change vary from period to period. The present is one in which that pace is extreme and the nature radical.

Some will say at once this is all to the good. Life itself is a process of change: the healthy organism can only develop by change. So that to them the immense changes in the sphere of education for instance are a clear indication that education is very much alive. Others will ask, is all change good? Granted that all living

things whatsoever, a plant, an animal, a human being, only grow by means of organic changes within their own substance and structure, there are other modes of change that suggest disease and decay. Metamorphosis, yes, they will say: this is the vital living kind of change proper to the process. It proceeds from the law of the organism, it finds its impulse from within, it is natural change. Can one say that about much of the experiment, alterations of direction, applications of new methods, resorts to machinery even that are now the fashion in the large and lively world of education? Probably not.

But let us look at this dissatisfaction that all agree is so prevalent these days in education, not let it be noted among the boys and girls alone, nor among college and university students, but among plenty of teachers. Young teachers specially, as well.

To understand it you have to know the cultural scene and much more, the whole industrial, commercial and professional complex, of each country: you have to be able both to see the pattern and distinguish the threads; not an easy thing for the outsider to do. What is said here will only be very partially true of India and the Far East.

No doubt evolution itself has a lot to do

with it. For, as India knows better than Europe or America, there is an evolution of consciousness as well as that more generally accepted external evolution of species. The most marked characteristic of this new form of consciousness which more helpfully than anything else explains why there is so much uncertainty, so much questioning and dissatisfaction in the West, is the intense preoccupation with the self that marks the younger modern generation. This is a phenomenon unique in history and will help us to understand much of what is now going on. It is as well to emphasize this because most writers on this subject look for sociological, political, and in particular for economic explanations, and would confine their own interpretation of the current revolution to these. Consider existential philosophy and art for a minute and you will note that these are particular products of the West: they have not taken natural roots in the East as yet. Eastern writers will copy them, it may be, as they will write learned disquisitions on them. The point is that the one single subject and content of this literature is self-consciousness, in particular the perplexing burden of the uncertain self, the attempt to have meaning through responsible choice in most difficult situations to a life and a world that are felt by so many to have no meaning in themselves. Existentialism thus is in many ways a standing proof of the failure of traditional Christian culture in Europe and America to satisfy the spiritual needs of the young.

But one must be much more specific also. Apart from the general conviction that the very bases of western society and the structure in terms of commerce and industry that are built on them are open to question, there is the general feeling that education as it has been practised is far too little concerned with and relevant to the needs of real life. It is too academic, general and

abstract, it is felt; it gives no help to the young men or women about to enter the world's life as participants in it. The teachers are seen to be paper men, as it were, not real people in a real world but creatures made out of the contents of books. The self-conscious boy and girl, more still the young men and women, preoccupied with the infinite and almost infinitely difficult problems of war and peace and social justice, want a personal relationship with someone who being older than themselves could be expected to know more and be able to offer more useful views than their own on these matters of such urgent importance.

From disappointment with the conventional teacher who is seen to be the last person to give the young the help they need, there is disapproval of books as the principal accepted instruments of education. They too are felt to be unrelated to the real life that is being lived, the real problems that are being experienced. The information they contain is dull, dead, irrelevant, useless, however well-intentioned and accurate. Thus the modern young who test everything not by the standard of general principles accepted from the past nor by abstract theory, but instead ask of everything that they are set to read in school and college: How will this be helpful to me and my life in the world in which I find myself? Does it give a true picture of what this world is really like, a genuinely scientific explanation of it? And does it convincingly indicate how it could be changed for the better? The young, remember, the western young in particular, feel they have been landed with an impossible world, an impossible situation. They believe, however inarticulately, that theirs too is a major responsibility for changing it. They are almost more than conscious of the utter injustices of all kinds in today's world, convinced too that their



elders have not done anything like enough to remedy them.

And then again they oppose the system, the establishment. Examinations in particular strike them as being no more than a precarious and very doubtfully fair and sensible means of testing real intelligence. They may test knowledge, if knowledge is equated with information; but the young feel that it is certainly not to be so equated. Thus they see the pluggers and plodders, those who with industry have accumulated the so-called facts of the subject, rewarded disproportionately with better jobs and bigger money. Whereas those whom society really needs for its reform, those gifted with ability to think independently, to imagine, to undertake original enterprises, are discouraged by the system. This explains in part the decision of so many to drift, to drop out, to opt out and abandon the accepted ways. Opting out of this kind is again a complex phenomenon. The malaise, the feeling of dissatisfaction whether consciously or unconsciously, with modern materialist western life, not of course of school, college and university life only, underlies all of it. This and the other side of the negative, the desire while they are still young, to explore, to travel, to make all sorts of journeys. Journeys of the soul as well as journeys of the body, and endlessly to experiment. The world, again it has to be recalled, that youth lives in is vastly larger and more various and complex than the world its parents knew. Among the young again, nationalism is out, every young man or woman is or wants to be a citizen of nothing less than the world.

Then again, of course, there is the fact of that social revolution which every western country is now passing through. Knowledge is multiplying and so are the numbers of those applying for it. Education is for all, the road to the top must be open to the poorest. This too, it will easily be

seen, is a reason for the distrust of or the feeling of the relative uselessness, the mere luxury value, of the old classical education of the rich. There just is not time to learn Greek or Latin in the modern world of the West. Besides, is it so obvious that the great writers of the past can now tell us better than the moderns what we need to know? Thus the preference for modern languages, science and 'modern' subjects. Society is felt to be in danger, so sociology is the most popular subject. Indeed as one or other aspect of American life in particular falls into danger of breakdown, a new 'science' will be invented to study it. This may be a wry joke to Europeans, smiling at the empiricism and superficiality of their western neighbours: but to a student of modern education it is only a more vivid indication of the prevailing set-up.

Disorder, the general questioning of authority, the unwillingness to accept authority purely because it is authority, are fairly familiar things to the mental spectator of the ways of western youth. Again that fact of self-consciousness, the stage in the evolution of consciousness that has now been reached in the West, is the main explanation. It is not, as too often it is asserted, that youth in the West are innately and always rebellious. Rather it is that this new intense consciousness of the personal self takes the form of insisting that its actions and decisions must be its own, made on its own perception and responsibility and of its own choice. Thus the imposition of every sort of authority, a moral code, a religious creed, a set of college rules is felt in some sense to be in itself inhuman and immoral, a threat to the almost sacred right and duty of every individual, however young and inexperienced, to think and act of his own volition alone.

But what, a reader may now be asking, of the actual changes that have been made

over the last ten or twenty years? What of the language-laboratories, teaching-machines, the closed-circuit television, for instance? Are they being found beneficial or not: have they come to stay or are they only passing manifestations of change? What the answer must be, it is impossible to say. They have not been with us long enough for us adequately to judge their advantages and disadvantages.

One or two things may be said about them, however, though in this controversial matter different people will judge of them by their personal predilections and much more, by their cherished presuppositions. Roughly, maybe, it could be said that if you take account of the vast and increasing numbers of students in school and college and of the likely, and in some parts the experienced, shortage of teachers, you cannot but agree that education has to call machinery to its aid. But this is a very big subject and touches deep spiritual issues; and there is not space to go far into that here. As for television and its part in education the common view in the West is that potentially it is a great assistant though actually it may be found imperfect. In England the largest university could be called a television university, the University of the Air. Most people would probably argue that here is future education's greatest hope. Here, they will say, you can have the most well-known experts in every field talking not to a classroom of 30 or 40 or a lecture-room of 200 or 500 young people. One man, the most famous in his field, can talk to millions. Surely this must be a blessing.

Is it, however? Has not education been traditionally in every civilization and period hitherto been felt, to be, built on personal relationship? Is not this personal relationship, with the attention to each separate individual's needs and possibilities, the very heart of education? Some will ask

questions of this kind and others will reply: Yes, of course, the matter of personal relationships is all-important but this is the business of parents and primary school teachers. When any subject is being authoritatively taught by those most expert in it, and in the case of the sciences in particular, there is no need for personal views and personal relationships to enter. To which the traditionally minded person will object: Nothing human is above question; it is of the essence that every student however junior should be allowed to question every teacher however eminent, and in television this is impossible. The teacher looks at you, looks as if he knows you, makes gestures, smiles, tells jokes; and the implication is that a dialogue is in progress. But it is a lie, if after the lecture or the lesson was over the teacher were to meet his class, they would all be completely strangers to him. There is this sort of controversy on the one hand and on the other the more technical physical one of the effect of television on the eyes and on the nerves. Some who have looked carefully into this matter assert that the pictures which in fact are immense numbers of photographs passed with very great speed before the spectators' eyes have very harmful effects on the retina; and, behind that, on the nerves. They insist too that though viewers are not conscious of damage or pain, this is hardly to the point: harm is being unconsciously done. The harm may not be obvious now but it will be in 20 or 30 years' time. Again, you see, the real question is the matter of the ego, the self of man. Is it insulted by teaching of this kind, or is this a merely sentimental suggestion? But if television is approved, what shall we say of the mechanical devices that enable information, points of view and so on to be served to the young person, devices placed under his pillow at night, so that he is being taught while he sleeps?

Some will approve of this too on the ground presumably of its economy and effortlessness: if you really can learn in your sleep without conscious effort, why ever not do so? But maybe those who might approve television in education will draw the line here. Again it is a matter of the nature and dignity of the self. Should not education be as far as possible a conscious process? Is there not something ominous and sinister, suggestive of the horrible and subtle means of indoctrination by political agents, in this? After all, surely the young person, or the old person for that matter, who accepts this mode of learning, is allowing himself to be treated as a thing, an object, a recipient for all manner of information and misinformation it may be, who in his passivity is in no position to argue or rebut or reject. The content may be excellent; that is not to the point, it is still no more than 'conditioning'. Perhaps one could ask, were a person well-equipped with experience, intelligent and sensitive, to take an overall look—not a casual passing glance but a look that endeavoured to penetrate beneath the surface of all that he sees happening in the sphere of what is now called education—, would he be likely to arrive at any opinions of interest?

Probably he would. What would perhaps strike him as the most obvious phenomenon would be one of some such contrast as this. On the one hand all this criticism and activity, all these means (and nothing has been said of such recent experiments as team-teaching and project work) of encouraging more people to learn or to learn in new ways; and on the other, the unwillingness to begin at the beginning, the omission of primary questions, particularly on the real nature of the child and thus the proper object of education. Presumably it is felt that there is no need to ask such questions as all practitioners of education

are agreed, or sufficiently agreed on the answers. Or may it not be that there is an unconscious preference for not raising such questions, seeing that if they were raised, disagreements between people of different philosophies and religions would arise and some would be embarrassing and would make agreed answers impossible? Thus local and national education authorities tend to follow what they take to be the general consensus of humanist opinion. This will satisfy the majority but what if there is an intelligent minority that is convinced that the majority is wrong? The fact is that little or nothing is said about, say the spiritual nature of the young person; and little too about the proper goals of an education which saw the spiritual self in the child as far and away the most important thing about him.

Is there any system, are there any schools or colleges, it may be asked, where the child is from first to last seen and treated as a spiritual being, one who has had many lives before this one and will have many more to follow? An education, that is to say that takes full account of a young person's karma and tries to fashion his education to fit his needs? One might go on from this inquiry to ask if there is a superior psychology of education to the current one which after all treats the child as little more than a brain on two legs. For there is no doubt that the present system, with the exception of a very few schools, is one in which, whatever is officially said in denial, treats education as a wholly or mainly intellectual process. That is, the attention to the child as a being of feeling and will is wholly inadequate. It is felt that the child's imagination, for instance, is his personal concern and he must develop this, if he has one, privately on his own, or with his friends; not at school. He has come there to acquire learning. To say that this is the only con-

clusion the perceptive spectator of present practice in education would arrive at, would be silly of course. But perhaps it would be his main one. For there are few schools, a growing number fortunately but still unrecognized and so unhelped by the state, in some European countries mainly, which take a very different view of the child than the one that underlies education generally at present. They insist that from first to last a true and scientific education must be a spiritual one. Looking, moreover, at the child they see that physiologically he undergoes important organic changes at roughly seven-year intervals. At seven he loses his milk teeth and develops those that should remain his for the rest of his life; at fourteen or thereabout he reaches puberty. A scientific education, these schools (largely associated, it should be mentioned, with the educational principles of the Austrian thinker, Rudolf Steiner, who died as long ago as 1925) would maintain, would arrange the teaching according to the child's physiological developments. The human being they insist is physically and spiritually a threefold person, possessing a head, heart and limb system. With his head he thinks, with his heart he feels and dreams (often only subconsciously), with his limbs and his entire metabolic system he wills (usually quite unconsciously). The point is that the soul and consciousness of the child lives not in the first only, the thinking of the head, but in the feeling and the willing also. Thus the importance of sleep in the educative process. One must, that

is to say, educate the whole child, not as the present system does, only part of him. How one does this there is not space to recount here: but for any who are interested there are books in plenty on the subject. Examinations loom much less large in this system; the great thing is, it is felt, in a world increasingly inhuman, to teach humanity, the specific quality of the human being. If life really is a rat-race then let us be thankful there are still a few who refuse to be rats. Opponents of this education maintain that students of Steiner Schools are less academically qualified on leaving school and that their subsequent careers suffer in consequence. Others say this is not so. At twenty young people from other private or state schools may have an advantage. But look again ten or twenty years later and the picture will be different, for the Steiner School child has by then caught up with others and in addition he has through his education gained spiritual resources that have given a breadth and balance, a spiritual depth to his life moreover, which others do not know. Which leads one in conclusion to suggest that it might be a useful piece of educational research to examine relatively the later lives and success and above all the physical and nervous health of those who had, in the current phrase, had 'brilliant' school or college careers and others who had not reaped high academic honours through intense labour in their early years. Some interesting and important conclusions might be reached.

PROF. J. S. TURNER

## WHAT VEDANTA MEANS TO ME

JOEL MIDDLETON

I am a convict. Although I am certainly not proud of this fact, my world for the past five and one-half years has been a small concrete cell. It is a very confined, a very lonely, and a very real world.

Why does a man come to prison? Now, more than ever before, there seems to be strong public interest in this question. But it is too frequently from a public that associates prisons with riots, strikes, and dramatic escape attempts. The convict is usually viewed as either a violent and dangerous man or an incorrigible misfit wisely isolated from society for the protection of his saner fellowman.

This is simply not true. For every 'desperado' there are three other men in prison who are there simply because they made a mistake; men not quick enough to clear the hurdles of a competitive and often harsh society. Such men require the rehabilitative medicine of understanding—not ostracism and contempt.

Can, then, prison offer such men (I do not mean the hardened criminal) any positive help? Yes! Every decent prison makes available educational and vocational opportunities to the inmates; psychiatric and other self-help programmes are there as well. But too frequently these programmes are large and impersonal. They do help, but they also neglect that part of man most in need of attention: his spiritual Self.

The seeds of modern psychology were planted thousands of years ago when philosophy began to concern itself with *people* (as opposed to the interest in natural science), and Socrates reiterated the maxim of the Delphic oracle: 'Know Thyself.' This is the goal of good psychology, to help a man know himself.

This is not the time, however, to enter

any arguments as to whether man is essentially spirit or merely a combination of elements. But we can state that a number of psychologists in the West—notably C. G. Jung, Gordon Allport, and William James—have accepted the existence of the transcendental Self. Man, according to them, is more than a product of biological evolution.

It is this essential aspect of man, the spiritual, which has for the most part been neglected inside our prisons. There are, to be sure, chapels and church groups; but they do not teach Self-understanding, they do not generate real inspiration in a negative and sterile atmosphere. It is in this atmosphere, however, that I have had to live.

To maintain interest in life in the beginning years, I attended prison classes and received my high school diploma. I went to lectures, group therapy sessions, and other meetings. But the only real consolation I received during this period was from the study of philosophy. At last, something to stimulate my thinking! At the same time, it caused me to question many preconceived beliefs and values. But my philosophical searching caused me a great deal of confusion. So many thinkers and so many different viewpoints for right living. Though I had gained a desire to learn and improve my way of looking at life, I still felt something was missing. Was it that inner peace certain sages spoke of? Or the 'true happiness' mentioned by the scriptures? I won't list all the philosophers I studied, but I covered the field pretty well, from early Greek philosophy to modern existentialism—and back. Always, however, I found the same confusing diversity of ideas, the same intellectual gymnastics. Still I lacked peace of mind.

It was during my second year of study that I began to read Eastern philosophy. Again I found myself confronting the same perplexing problems. So many ideas and theories; all making some sense, yet all apparently contradicting one another. Where was unity? Then, at last, I began my study of the religion last on my list: Hinduism.

Here was diversity (for I found not one, but six different philosophical systems); but among them there was one which spoke of the universality of truth and the divinity of man—Vedānta. In Vedānta I found not confusion, but clarification. It was a string, as one teacher stated, running through many pearls. Vedānta taught that all philosophies really stated the same truth from different points of view. The central truths of Vedānta were not dogmatic, intellectual exercises, but, as Kant had propounded, universal maxims of action.

There was, I found, no need to deny the truth of one philosopher or another in order to accept the truth of Vedānta. For Vedānta brought together and clarified the truths of Plato, Descartes, Kant, Boethius, and Jesus; as well as the wisdom of Confucius, Buddha, Lao-Tzu, and Mo Ti. They were all speaking the same language, uttering the same timeless truths that Vedānta had first uttered centuries before them. They were inexplicably a part of Vedānta, and Vedānta was a part of them. I was both impressed with my discovery and happy in my new-found knowledge. My quest had come to an end. Or had it?

I spent the next few months reading, and corresponding with the Vedānta Society of Southern California. And as I read more and more Vedāntic literature, I began to realize that Vedānta talked about something other than intellectual satisfaction. I found that its primary concern was 'realization'. This was, I learned, beyond philosophy. I was enjoying the study of truth, but I wasn't as Vedānta said I should be, participating in truth. I was learning about the Self, but I wasn't 'knowing' the Self.

I've just begun to accept Vedānta apart from philosophy as a way of life. Although I have found it more difficult to search within myself for knowledge than in a book, I know that only within can it be found.

The vast majority of prison programmes, as I have stated earlier, neglect any concern with the transcendental quest. But my discovery (even if only an intellectual one at this point), I can truthfully say, has been rehabilitative. Two California penal institutions have begun Hindu study groups. A combination of inmate interest, Vedānta Society concern, and the institution's willingness to establish worthwhile programmes, when they are made available, has brought to a few men (and made available to thousands) the profound benefits of meditation and inner searching.

What Vedānta means to me is an opportunity to understand myself and to share the means to the all-important goal of Self-knowledge with others.



## 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. 148-9; Question 2, pp. 617-8; Question 3, p. 702.

The words quoted in 'Onward For Ever!' are from *The Complete Works*, Vol. VI (1963), pp. 134-5.

In this month Śaṅkara will be honoured in many parts of the country on the occasion of his birthday. The *Editorial* spotlights an aspect of the great Vedāntic teacher which is very little discussed. As it is a topic helpful for practical spiritual life, we have quoted rather profusely from the Sanskrit sources.

'Swami Vivekananda In Boston, March 1896' by Marie Louise Burke, of San Francisco, brings alive to our mind's eye a sparsely filled chapter of Swami Vivekananda's first visit to America. Swamiji spent about twelve days in this month in Boston, the 'Athens of America', and all that the current biographies say about this period mainly refers to his lecture 'The Vedānta Philosophy' at Harvard's Graduate Philosophical Club and the discussion that followed the lecture. Actually Swamiji also did a great amount of preaching work then and created a stir in the city. Marie Louise Burke, who is now well known to the readers of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature, has done a remarkable piece of research work and come up with richly rewarding results. We shall be offering this significant article in three convenient instalments, the first of which appears in this issue.

'Skanda-vidyā' is a brief but spiritually helpful study of the deeply significant seventh chapter of the *Chandogya-upaniṣad*. This chapter is well known for its statements about the 'Bhūman', and the 'purity of food' as a means to unbroken memory of the Ātman. Dr. P. S. Sastri, M.A., Ph.D., is the Professor and Head of the Dept. of English, Nagpur University, Nagpur.

This is the third and final instalment of 'Some Correspondence of Sister Nivedita', the first of which appeared in our January number. Swami Vidyatmananda, who must be well known to our readers by now, is a monk of the Ramakrishna Order and the Assistant Minister at our Centre in Gretz, France.

Prof. J. S. Turner, a teacher for many years, has taught both in England and in the Indian subcontinent. With the perspective gained by practical experience he examines some aspects of modern education and suggests an approach which will look upon the human child as a spiritual being having a body and mind and which will educate the whole child. 'Education: Modern Trends' was written out by him for *Prabuddha Bharata* when he stayed with us at Mayavati for a few weeks this summer.

'What Vedānta Means to Me' is a very earnest piece of writing from one who introduces himself as a convict. In this article, Joel Middleton, Vacaville, California, speaks of his sincere efforts at philosophical quest that led him to Vedānta. He incidentally puts his finger on two important aspects of Vedānta which have appealed to him, namely, 'universality' and 'self-realization'.

## REVIEWS AND NOTICES

**APROPOS OF PURUTAMA:** BY MR. K. P. JOG. Published by University of Poona, 1969. Reprinted from the Journal of the University of Poona, No. 30.

**ON VENKATA MADHAVA'S INTERPRETATION OF THE SIMILES BEGINNING WITH VIPO NA IN RIG VEDA:** BY MR. K. P. JOG. Reprinted from the Journal of the Oriental Institute, Vol. XVIII, No. 3.

Commenting on the Rik I.5.ii Venkata Madhava states that since purutama has the accent on the third syllable, he does not recognize it as the form of the word in the superlative degree. Mr. Jog successfully shows that the commentator has not given the same meaning to the word at different places. He applies the Paninian principle of accentuation and derives *tama* from the root *tam*. Then the word would mean 'the one desired by many' or 'the one desiring many'. Mr. Jog has done a commendable job, though his dismissal of Sayana's interpretation is a little cavalier-like.

The Riks IV. 48 i; VI, 44.vi; VIII. 19.xxxiii have similes beginning with *vipo na*. Mr. Jog rejects the interpretation of these similes given by Venkata Madhava, and he offers an interpretation based on the accent. This enquiry is more substantial and it is acceptable.

DR. P. S. SASTRI

**RAMAKRISHNA AND THE VITALITY OF HINDUISM:** BY SOLANGE LEMAITRE, published by Funk and Wagnalls, New York City, 1969, pp. 244, xviii, price \$ 4.95.

'Among the innumerable faces of Hindu spirituality that have illumined the sky of India, that of Sri Ramakrishna glows with splendour all its own, like a star of the first magnitude...still...stirs the world, to which, moreover, he sets the example of universal love and...understanding of all religions.'

Thus Solange Lemaître, a French author, introduces his moving biography of Sri Ramakrishna. Romain Rolland's brilliant biographies of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda seem profoundly to have influenced the author, as well as his personal contact with Swami Siddheswarananda, founder of the Ramakrishna Centre at Greta. Among reasons for writing another biography, the author says: 'He (Ramakrishna) had countless faces and so it might be said that no book devoted to Ramakrishna is unimportant: each has its value and represents

a stone in the edifice erected to his memory... My goal is simply to try to give some new sense of his love of God, that *Bhakti* that made him sing divine praises all through the day, that *Bhakti* that, he declared, was his sole reason for being.'

The book is in five chapters. The first, 'Hindu Tradition', deals briefly with the Vedas and other chief scriptures, basic to the Hindu tradition in which Ramakrishna was brought up, so as to show their influence in shaping his life. The second and longest chapter tells concisely the life-story of the saint, keeping good balance among its many 'faces', with only slight over-stress on the *bhakti* above-mentioned. Perhaps a little too much emphasis is given to Keshab Sen and the Brahma Samaj; yet for Western readers this is quite allowable.

The third chapter, 'The Teaching of Ramakrishna', outlines the unique role of Ramakrishna as a guru, giving life-sketches of his monastic disciples (for some reason omitting Trigunatitananda and Advaitananda). All are well done except for a rather harsh brevity in some cases. Further, sketches of two of the great householder disciples are given, leaving us some regret at absence, e.g., of disciples such as Nag Mahashaya and 'M'. In the fourth chapter is a short history of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission—a workmanlike result of condensing a great deal of data into modest space. 'The Message of Ramakrishna' forms the last chapter. Lemaître stresses that it was a Universal one: it 'infused Indian civilization with a renewed energy.... the essence.... lies entirely on the level of God.... Its range is not geographically limited to India, any more than from the religious point of view it is confined to Hinduism'.

The book is profusely illustrated, although the copies of photos of Ramakrishna and his admirers seem inferior to many of the fine 'background photos'; printing paper, and get-up are good. A brief chronology of Indian history is appended, as well as adequate glossary, and index; bibliography is somewhat confused by admixture of French and English titles. It seems likely that this charming little biography, written in all earnestness and humility, has already filled the place in French which Isherwood's (rather more comprehensive) *Ramakrishna and His Disciples* fills in English.

However, we would suggest that much revision is necessary in the translated text before English readers will be happy with it. Mr. Markmann's English is notably smooth; yet an equally notable number of errors of a factual nature have somehow



entered the text. Many, of course, derive from the 'double (or even triple) translations': from Bengali to English, to French, back to English. For example, we briefly checked 30 of the many 'quotations' from *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Nikhilananda: New York, 1942). In none was the text the same as Nikhilananda's; and many of the changes were unfortunate. E.g.: (p. 110) 'The Son of Man "kissed" the Son of the Divine Mother' instead of 'embraced'. Some are real cause for concern, as on p. 159 where a 'quote' from a severely Advaitic passage in the *Gospel* is warped, by change of only a word or two, into a bulwark for the author's *bhakti*. Further, in several cases the page-reference is wrong; and seven of these are completely un-locatable by us! Again, other types of confusion in the text raise doubts as to whether translator or author is responsible. E.g.: 'Latu, who followed no discipline ...' (p. 150); 'the soul is born and dies ...' (p. 32). Others are simply errors of fact: 'all Ramakrishna's disciples were adolescents when they embraced the monastic life' (p. 169); 'Narendra ... at the Master's bedside ... experienced nirvikalpa samadhi', etc. And with the briefest of scannings, we found 20 mistakes in spelling of Sanskrit or Bengali words.

All these are simply details, large or small, which can readily be corrected in the next English edition—especially by simple reference to the original *Gospel*, in English. All the facts are available, since fortunately Sri Ramakrishna's life has been documented as no other Saviour's ever was. As the author says about the book, he has added 'a stone in the edifice ...', a stone of good solid composition; only let the rough edges be smoothed, that the building may be firm.

S. S.

#### BENGALI

VEDASTUTI: BY SRI KALIPADA BHATTACHARJI, Published by Smt. Savitri Devi, 5C Katuakhati

Lane, Bhawanipur, Calcutta 25, Bengali Era 1376 (1969-70 A.D.), pp. 64, Rs. 3/-.

The book represents translation in verse of seventeen select Vedic poems that cover a wide and important field in the life and culture of civilized mankind. With each poem is indicated the reference to the original Vedic poem to help the reader to trace the original if he feels like doing so.

The lucid translation, without deviating in the least from the sense of the original Vedic verse, speaks high of the diligence and talent of the author. The book helps the reader to enter into the spirit of Vedic culture and life even without knowing Sanskrit and reading the original verses.

The author in his Introduction has very correctly drawn our attention to the fact that today much of our decline is due to our apathy towards religion, something that the greatest intellectual of France of today, M. Julien Benda, has immortalized in his theme and book of the same title—*La Trahison des clercs* (Betrayal by the Intellectuals). *Veda-Stuti* is a sharp and necessary reminder of the fact that religion is the foundation of our culture and life and nowhere it has been better embodied than in the Vedas.

*Veda-Stuti* is a contribution and we congratulate the author for presenting it to us.

DR. PARESH NATH MUKHERJEE

#### BOOKS RECEIVED

INTRODUCTION TO INDIAN PHILOSOPHY: BY RUTH REYNA, Published by Tata McGraw-Hill Publishing Co. Ltd., New Delhi, 1971, price not mentioned.

INDIAN PHILOSOPHICAL ANNUAL VOL. SIX: *Veda-Stuti* is a sharp and necessary reminder of the Centre of Advanced Study in Philosophy, University of Madras, Madras 5, 1971, price Rs. 10/-.

## NEWS AND REPORTS

### RAMAKRISHNA MISSION ASHRAMA, CHANDIGARH

REPORT FROM 1ST APRIL 1971 TO 31ST MARCH 1972

The Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Chandigarh (Madhya Marg. Sector 15-B, Chandigarh-17) is the only accredited branch of the Ramakrishna Mission in the regions of Chandigarh, Haryana,

Himachal Pradesh and Punjab. Started in 1956, its activities have grown to include the following:

(1) *Spiritual and Cultural*: Maintenance of the Shrine; conducting fortnightly *Rama-nama-sankirtan*, weekly lectures and classes at the Ashrama by the Secretary and others, plus special observance of birthdays of the great Saviours; guidance of the group of earnest devotees forming the Rama-

krishna-Vivekananda Centre of Simla; personal interviews with sincere spiritual seekers; conducting of Library (1,572 volumes) and Book-sales Section. Of special note were the combined public celebrations of the birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother, and Swami Vivekananda, during the month of February 1972, with many eminent speakers, and audiences far in excess of present accommodations.

(2) *Educational*: The *Vivekananda Students' Home* for College boys, started in 1960, provides a wholesome, calm environment, free from political, communal or social narrowness, under the personal attention and help of supervising Swamis. It thus attracted fine boys—to the present capacity of 41. As evidence of its efficient functioning are the results of examinations in the summer of 1971, when 13 out of 34 were placed in first class. Weekly classes directed toward building up character were held by the Secretary and other Swamis. Meanwhile in August 1970, work began for the completion of the first floor of the Building, which, with generous donations from local and national government plus private sources, was completed within a year. It was consecrated by Swami Chidatmananda on July 18, 1971.

(3) *Medical*. The free Homoeopathic Dispensary continued its service to the sick. 4,822 patients were served, of whom 2,527 were new cases.

#### RAMAKRISHNA MISSION SEVASHRAMA, VRINDABAN

REPORT FOR APRIL 1971—MARCH 1972

Serving the sick and needy of the area since 1907, the work of the Sevashrama has grown to include a well-equipped hospital with 103 beds. Total number of cases admitted in the year under review (Apr. 1971—Mar. 1972) was 3,341; and among these, 1,583 surgical operations were done, including Eye-surgery.

*Nandababa Eye Department*, a notable feature, was started in 1943 with the help of two Bombay devotees, who continue to contribute largely to its maintenance. During this year, 693 cases were treated Indoors, and 10,327 in Outdoor division. Moreover, the fortnightly out-patient Eye Clinic for the rural area at Kosi, 25 miles from Vrindaban, continued to grow, serving about 100 patients in each session; and in March 1972, 42 operations were done at its 'Eye camp.'

*Maneklal Chinai Cancer Dept.*: Since 1969 this has consisted of a ward of 8 beds, plus related Outdoor facilities, and in the current year treated 66 cancers, Indoors, and 70 Outdoors. Surgery included four radical excisions, nine local, and 39 referrals for radio therapy.

*Outdoor Dispensary*: Total number of patient-visits in this year was 1,98,450, of which 37,811 were new cases. A total of 1,419 surgical operations was done, including those of the Eye department. An average of 542 daily visits, as compared with 458 in previous year, was typical of the growing load of almost all departments.

*Clinical Laboratory*: This continued to carry out all routine examinations needed, and special ones where indicated.

*X-ray*: 3,882 diagnostic X-rays were taken during the year.

*Physiotherapy*: 920 treatments were given in this department.

*Homoeopathy Department*: Conducted under an eminent Homoeopath, this department treated 3,429 new cases, and 17,050 visits by old patients occurred.

*Training*: At the request of the Gurukul Viswa Vidyalaya, six of its students (in combined Ayurvedic and Allopathic medicine) are taking training in our Hospital. They assist in the practical work of various departments, and receive bed-side teaching and didactic classes, from the Staff.

*Library and Recreation*: The Sevashrama has patients' reading-room and library, and separate medical library for use of medical officers. Donations of books are always welcomed. Hospital wards have loudspeakers for educational Radio programmes; and audio-visual programmes are occasionally held for patients and others.

*Relief and Welfare*: During the year, Rs. 573.99 was given in cash to needy patients and others, and textbooks with other related equipment to poor students, worth Rs. 1,689.38.

*Immediate Needs*: (1) To clear accumulated loans: for Hospital Maintenance Fund, Rs. 42,285.48; Building Fund, Rs. 23,500. (2) 'New' Building Maintenance of Beds: Rs. 50,000. (3) Endowments for maintenance of Beds: Rs. 15,000 each bed. (4) Go-Seva Fund: Rs. 25,000. (5) Road Construction, Land Development: Rs. 50,000. (6) Sanitary installations: Rs. 60,000. (7) Covering open verandahs of Hospital building: Rs. 20,000.

17 Boor Para Lane.

Ragh Raygan.

Calcutta. 3.8.11.

Jyotsna - Pothi.

Thank you so much for your  
name letter. We are so glad it's  
all over. On the Clamson Road  
seemed so terrible. And the tragedy  
Mrs Bowler seems to feel, as no one  
else does. Poor S. Sana!

I ought to have written to  
you to congratulate you on the  
birth of the little daughter. How

you children in!

I could not send you a better  
wish than your baby was born,

than that you might find  
in her something of the joy  
I pride that you own Mother  
has had in you. May God  
too, in better ways, have  
care of them in birth!

With warm warm love and

thanks - to you both & you all -  
Ever, beloved Mother -  
Your loving Margot.