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Prabuddha Bharata

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CONTENTS

Sri Ramakrishna Answers	321
Onward for Ever!	323
Indian Independence with its Silver Lining— <i>Editorial</i>	323
Letters of a Saint	331
First Meetings with Sri Ramakrishna : Mahendranath Gupta — <i>Swami Prabhananda</i>	332
<i>Bhagavad-Gītā</i> —A Philosophy of Cosmic Consolidation— <i>Dr. K. B. Ramakrishna Rao</i>	336
On Making Spiritual Progress — <i>Swami Budhananda</i>	344
Notes and Comments	353
Reviews and Notices	355
News and Reports	359
Swami Nikhilananda : An Obituary ..	360

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No. 8

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

SRI RAMAKRISHNA ANSWERS

Question (posed by himself): 'Do you know what the God of worldly people is like?'

Sri Ramakrishna: 'It is like children's saying to one another while at play, "I swear by God." They have learnt the word from the quarrels of their aunts or grandmothers. Or it is like God to a dandy. The dandy, all spick and span, his lips red from chewing betel-leaf, walks in the garden, cane in hand, and, plucking a flower, exclaims to his friend, "Ah! What a beautiful flower God has made!" But this feeling of a worldly person is momentary. It lasts as long as a drop of water on a red-hot frying-pan.

'You must be firm in one ideal. Dive deep. Otherwise you cannot get the gems at the bottom of the ocean. You cannot pick up the gems if you only float on the surface.'

Question (posed by himself): 'What does Vedanta teach?'

Sri Ramakrishna: 'Brahman alone is real and the world illusory. Isn't that so? But as long as God keeps the "ego of a devotee" in a man, the Relative is also real. When He completely effaces the ego, then what is remains. That cannot be described by the tongue. But as long as God keeps the ego, one must accept all. By removing the outer sheaths of the plantain-tree, you reach the inner pith. As long as the tree contains sheaths, it also contains pith. So, too, as long as it contains pith, it also contains sheaths. The pith goes with the sheaths and the sheaths go with the pith. In the same way, when you speak of the Nitya, it is understood that the Lila also exists; and when you speak of the Lila, it is understood that the Nitya also exists.

'It is He alone who has become the universe, living beings, and the twenty-four cosmic principles. When He is actionless, I call Him Brahman; when He creates, preserves, and destroys, I call Him Sakti. Brahman and Sakti are not different from each other. Water is water, whether it is still or moving.

'It is not possible to rid oneself of "I-consciousness". And as long as one is aware of this "I-consciousness", one cannot speak of the universe and its living beings as unreal. You cannot get the correct weight of the bel-fruit if you leave out its shell and pith.

'The brick, lime, and brick-dust of which the stairs are made are the same brick, lime, and brick-dust of which the roof is made. The universe and its living beings exist on account of the Reality of Him who is known as Brahman.

'The devotees—I mean the vijnanis—accept both God with form and the Formless, both the Personal God and the Impersonal. In a shoreless ocean—an infinite expanse of water—visible blocks of ice are formed here and there by intense cold. Similarly, under the cooling influence, so to say, of the deep love of Its worshipper, the Infinite reduces Itself to the finite and appears before the worshipper as God with form. Again, as, on the rising of the sun, the ice melts away, so, on the awakening of Knowledge, God with form melts away into the same Infinite and Formless.

'As long as a man analyses with the mind, he cannot reach the Absolute. As long as you reason with your mind, you have no way of getting rid of the universe and the objects of the senses—form, taste, smell, touch, and sound. When reasoning stops, you attain the Knowledge of Brahman. Atman cannot be realized through this mind; Atman is realized through Atman alone. Pure Mind, Pure Buddhi, Pure Atman—all these are one and the same.

'Just think how many things you need to perceive an object. You need eyes; you need light; you need mind. You cannot perceive the object if you leave out any one of these three. As long as the mind functions, how can you say that the universe and the "I" do not exist?

'When the mind is annihilated, when it stops deliberating pro and con, then one goes into samadhi, one attains the Knowledge of Brahman. You know the seven notes of the scale: sa, re, ga, ma, pa, dha, ni. One cannot keep one's voice on "ni" very long.'

Question (posed by himself): 'What will you gain by merely being intuitively aware of God's existence?'

Sri Ramakrishna: 'A mere vision of God is by no means everything. You have to bring Him into your room. You have to talk to Him.

'Some have heard of milk, some have seen milk, and some have drunk milk. Some have seen the king, but only one or two can bring the king home and entertain him.'



ONWARD FOR EVER!

Duty ceases for him who is free; what power can constrain the free being? He does good, because it is his nature, not because any fancied duty commands it. This does not apply to those who are still in the bondage of the senses. Only for him, who has transcended the lower self, is this freedom. He stands on his own soul, obeys no law; he is free and perfect. He has undone the old superstitions and got out of the wheel. Nature is but the mirror of our own selves. There is a limit to the working power of human beings, but no limit to desire; so we strive to get hold of the working powers of others and enjoy the fruits of their labours, escaping work ourselves. Inventing machinery to work for us can never increase well-being, for in gratifying desire, we only find it, and then we want more and more, without end. Dying, still filled with ungratified desires, we have to be born again and again in the vain search for satisfaction. 'Eight millions of bodies have we had before we reached the human,' say the Hindus. Jnana says, 'Kill desire and so get rid of it'. That is the only way. Cast out all causation and realise the Atman. Only freedom can produce true morality. If there were only an endless chain of cause and effect, Nirvana could not be. It is extinction of the seeming self, bound by this chain. That is what constitutes freedom, to get beyond causality.

Sri Kanchi

INDIAN INDEPENDENCE WITH ITS SILVER LINING

EDITORIAL

THE SILVER LINING

Twenty-six years ago, on 15th August 1947, at the stroke of midnight hour, when a vast part of the Eastern hemisphere lay hushed in sleep, India awoke 'to life and freedom'. Hundreds of thousands of her children had sacrificed and staked their all for winning the precious fruit of political independence from the fists of the foreign rulers. Though fissured and stained with the blood of communal carnage, the precious fruit was in the hands of India's children, whose joy knew no bounds at the historic achievement. Through many a trial and vicissitude of fortune the Indian people has clutched this fruit to its bosom and kept it safe over these two and a half decades. With the dedication and diligence of her children and the blessings of God, let us earnestly hope, India will preserve this freedom for all time to come.

During the first few months of Indian Independence, observers all over the world had wondered if India could make a going concern of her freedom. Even today foreign observers of the Indian situation wonder how this gravity-defying Jagannāth-car of a nation manages to keep steadily moving. India, in these twenty-six years, has made some progress in education and industry, administration and technology, transport and telecommunication, scientific research and agricultural output. She has fought six wars with her neighbours, most of them with Pakistan, and these wars were thrust upon her unwilling hands. Most of the time, she has been able to keep in peace and harmony her different religious communities and heterogeneous racial components. She has so far endeavoured to follow democratic procedures and a parliamentary form of government as envisaged in the national Constitution. All these make up the silver lining to the dark clouds surrounding India's independence and

we sincerely hope that this peripheral glory will expand and suffuse all aspects of national life.

THE CLOUD OF PROBLEMS

The silver lining, however, must not blind us to the black mass of problems and perplexities overshadowing the Indian nation today. Winning of political independence was only the initial step to the winning of what Mahatma Gandhi called the 'organic Swaraj'. Organic Swaraj, according to Gandhiji, comprises four freedoms: political, economic, social, and moral. An Act of Parliament can give us constitutional Swaraj, declared Gandhiji, but it will profit us little if we are unable to remove the internal weaknesses.¹ We have tended to keep our eyes shut to the 'internal weaknesses' and so the other three constituents of the organic Swaraj are eluding our grasp. A host of problems arising from un-won economic, social, and moral freedoms is demanding our attention. But we are either ignoring the problems or seeking to patch them up. Enormous tensions born of poverty, inflation, soaring prices, overpopulation, unemployment, social and economic inequalities, corruption in administration, nepotism and indiscipline, are rising menacingly. It is high time that the leaders of the ruling party and the opposition, both at the Centre and in the States, as well as the public, took serious notice of and came to grips with them. Further neglect of these problems and tensions may push the whole country to the brink of chaos.

REBUILDING FROM THE TOP

For centuries this country lay enslaved, inert, and somnolent. Through the efforts of many illustrious leaders, the last of whom was Mahatma Gandhi, the country shook off its somnolence and awoke to freedom and

activity. On the eve of political freedom, three hundred million Indians were ready to start the reconstruction of a new India brick by brick. And Gandhiji and some of his predecessors had laid out a detailed plan for that herculean upbuilding. But the leadership that took over the reins from the British rulers had not the robust, down-to-earth common sense of those great ones. They borrowed plans and capital from foreign countries, offered a sort of socialism which turned out to be a pacifier to the masses, and commenced the reconstruction of India from the top. The majority of the masses who had been awakened to national consciousness went back to their age-old slumber. The reconstruction from the top yielded quick and spectacular results. The educated and the employed felt that they were riding the wave of prosperity. With the magic wand of socialism, some of us believed that we had brought progress and prosperity to this ancient, poor, and backward country!

FAILURE OF THE HUMAN FACTOR

Let it not be construed that we are questioning the bona fides of our distinguished leaders, most of whom are not with us today. Any country or society can be legitimately proud of such leaders. Their intentions were noble but their strategy was rather short-sighted. An economic plan, for example, that works wonders in Russia or America may flop in India for the simple reason that the Indian is not a Russian or an American; the Indian Government is not a totalitarian set-up nor, on the other hand, a two-party, presidential form of democracy. Learning from others is right and the duty of all men, but copying or imitation is often wrong and ruinous. This short-sightedness in strategy can also readily be seen in other fields like education and social amelioration.

The illusory wave of opulence, the indiscreet investment spree, and the government's misconceived policy of socialism in-

¹ *Young India*, 13-9-28

flamed the native and very human weakness of greed in our countrymen. Nationalism, patriotism, unselfishness, and dedication to duty, evident in them during the struggle for independence, were swept away by the upsurge of greed and selfishness. No one seemed to ask what he owed to the country; everyone seemed bent on demanding his supposed dues from the society and nation. The 'lottery mentality' of getting a maximum return for a minimum investment became manifest everywhere. Planners and leaders in India entirely overlooked and left out of calculation the most vital factor in the success of any plan or project, namely, the human factor.

With all our spiritual and moral heritage, we have to admit that our countrymen, in large segments, are insincere, self-centred, egotistic, and indolent. 'Our insincerity in India is awful,' regretted Swami Vivekananda in one of his Indian lectures.² It is rather difficult for us to imagine a country where its people rob and steal from its railways and buses, burn and destroy public property and buildings, and dip their hands into funds collected for National Defence. Twenty-five years of political independence brings to our mind the example of a railway conductor demanding an unlawful payment for allotting a couple of vacant third-class berths to a family which was first on the waiting list. Ironically enough, that day was the Silver Jubilee Anniversary of our Independence! Hundreds of such instances are occurring around the country each day of the year.

PSYCHOLOGY OF DEPENDENCE

'The whole national character', wrote Swami Vivekananda once from America, 'is one of childish dependence.'³ What he said more than seventy-five years ago is equally

true of the Indian national character today. Most of us continue to harbour the colonial assumption that 'somebody is going to do it all for me'. As Michael Manley, the Prime Minister of Jamaica, remarked to a journalist, roughly a year ago, 'One of the greatest tragedies of the whole colonial period is the tendency to come out of a dependent situation with a psychology of dependence.'⁴ Unfortunately for us in India, not only the people but also the leaders and rulers cherish and perpetuate this 'psychology of dependence'. 'Swaraj or self-government', wrote Gandhiji, 'means continuous effort to be free of Government control—foreign or national. It will be a sorry state of affairs if people were to look up to Government for the regulation of every detail of life.'⁵ It is indeed a sorry state of affairs that we are in. The Government of the country suffers from the 'grandmother complex'—trying to make the people dependent on it for almost everything. In their turn the people show no desire to grow into manhood, and display childhood tantrums with endless demands and violent demonstrations.

No doubt every government and people under the sun will have their drawbacks and failures. And the Indian Government and people are more than true to this law. To be sure, serious problems did arise and the country tackled them as best it could. During national crises the country stood united and the leaders acted with courage and statesmanship. But what is strange about our present Government is the way it goes about covering up its failures by inventing scapegoats. 'The search for a scapegoat', said Dwight D. Eisenhower once, 'is the easiest of all hunting expeditions.' From the failure of seasonal rains to the alleged activities of some foreign intelligence agency, the list of scapegoats is variegated

² *The Complete Works* (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Himalayas), Vol. III (1960) p. 431

³ *ibid.*, Vol. V (1959) p. 67

⁴ *Time* (U.S.A.), Aug. 21, 1972

⁵ *Young India*, 6-8-25

and ironically amusing. A few months ago we had occasion to witness a very well got-up and expensive show in the Capital arranged by the Information and Broadcasting Ministry of the Government of India. It was entitled *Badhte-Kadam* or 'Progressive Steps'. So far as it depicted the struggle for Indian freedom, it was a worth-while and educative show. But it had some political overtones in it. Any intelligent viewer could easily make out that the show had hints tending to push the blame for administrative failures on to foreign rulers of by-gone days. This is neither a manly approach to life and its struggles nor a good example to be set before the public. Our people in their turn naturally exonerate themselves for their inefficiency and indolence and rend the Government for all the economic and social ills plaguing the country.

STRATEGY OF RECONSTRUCTION BASED ON 'MAN'

Gandhiji had some of the clearest ideas about achieving true freedom or, as he called it, organic Swaraj, based on the efforts of each citizen in the country. His ideas are best summarized in these lines :

Swaraj or self-government is a resultant of individual self-rule and is to be achieved by the same means as are required for individual self-rule. The full realization of its content will be circumscribed by the quality and strength of the efforts of individuals to realize these freedoms [i.e., political, economic, social, and moral] in their own selves. Internal reform on a national scale by organization and unity in which everybody can participate, is the only answer to this challenge. Internal weaknesses only frustrate such reform. So patient constructive labour is the alpha and omega of organic Swaraj.⁶

⁶ See M. K. Gandhi: *Political and National Life and Affairs* (Compiled and ed. by V. B. Kher, Pub. by Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad-14, 1957), Vol. I. p. xviii

Any effort at rebuilding India must start with the individual Indian. Each one must be involved in this grand venture of building our country anew. A country does not become strong, productive and prosperous if a few thousand elected representatives, legislators, M.P.s, and ministers move about briskly in jet planes. On the contrary, when its masses begin to work with dedication and diligence, the country, even with very few legislators and ministers, starts on its road to prosperity. If the average citizen in India does not feel identified with the nation-building programme, of the Government, there is good reason for it. He feels he has no role to play in it, that the 'prosperity' is being manufactured for him, and that when angry for some flimsy reason he can destroy public property as if it belonged to some alien government. Undoubtedly, the process of building from the bottom is very slow, especially in the Indian milieu, and not at all spectacular in results like the process of building from the top down. But there is no need for unseemly hurry. If this country and its people have had to wait for centuries to earn political freedom, they should now be prepared to work patiently and steadily for a few generations to achieve the more difficult economic, social, and moral freedoms. Imprudent impatience will only complicate the present situation. Wealth and prosperity for a nation cannot be achieved in five or fifteen years like growing a mango tree in a bottle. Parliamentary debates, budgeting tricks, and magic formulas of borrowed 'isms' may impress mortals but not Lakṣmī, the Goddess of wealth and prosperity!

Planning in India must not be through carbon copies of Russian or American or other strategies. It must be adapted to Indian conditions, natural and human. Our internal weaknesses are many and seriously hinder large-scale planning where coordination, discipline, efficiency, and hard work

are absolutely necessary for success. Heavy industries, for instance, may be necessary in a country with underpopulation. But in India, with its staggering overpopulation, more of them would only accentuate the problem of unemployment. Dividing the country into smaller viable zones and trying to make each one of them self-sufficient regarding food, housing, and employment, may prove a good strategy and would be in consonance with Gandhiji's economic ideas as well as with Swami Vivekananda's stress on self-reliance. In turning the enormous population itself into an asset and a rich source of energy, India can seriously examine modern China's experience. As for the policy of nationalization, we would say, 'First generate enough nationalism in our citizens to enable them to have minimum working honesty and then do whatever you like, including nationalization. Without first achieving that, nationalization will prove, as it is now in most cases, a carte blanche to inefficiency, indolence, corruption, and national decadence.' Though aware of the possibility of stirring up comments about advocating capitalism, we would still recall here a few wise words from an editorial of *The Daily Telegraph*, London :

'What India needs is not socialism, but sense and prosperity. These objectives will not be best reached by measures of nationalization... Rather, they demand the fostering, protection and support of those private sectors which are India's only genuine industrial assets.'⁷

NEED FOR HARD WORK AND DISCIPLINE

The American Government has a declaration on its dollar bills which reads, 'In God We Trust'. But the Americans' trust in God is well combined with intelligent, hard, organized work. They have a sort of gold standard too to support their currency.

⁷ Quoted in *The Hindustan Times*, New Delhi, dated 15-3-71

That is why the American dollar dominated the international money market for many years. But even such a strong currency is going into a tailspin owing to great political and economic pressures. Strangely enough, we in India are trying to achieve prosperity and a high standard of living through a currency which has neither the backing of gold nor of hard work. Sloganeering will not produce wealth. An average worker or office-goer in India will agitate tirelessly to get bonuses and increments but will never agree to a cut of his holidays, or even work whole-heartedly on working days! The Government, which is bewildered by runaway inflation, helplessly follows a policy of labour appeasement. Trade unionism in our country seems to put a premium on indiscipline and to be determined to thwart production targets. Sri H. V. R. Iyengar, former Governor of the Reserve Bank and an astute economist, gave the following very practical counsel to our countrymen some two and a half years ago:

'...the solution for the problem of inflation in India is hard work, discipline, feeling for productivity, and a sense of restraint in pushing cost claims. 'If people at all levels put in dedicated work with a sense of discipline, rapid and sustained momentum could be effected in economic growth without having to go through the sufferings of inflation and without sacrificing the liberties of a free society.'

He followed this up with a stern warning, if the country failed to accept and carry out the simple solution of 'hard work and discipline' to combat economic crisis:

'If we are not prepared to do this under a system of free democracy, we may have to submit ourselves to the rigours and horrors of a dictatorship.'⁸

CULTIVATE A SPIRIT OF MANLINESS AND SELF-RELIANCE

'Stand up, be bold, be strong,' Swami

⁸ *The Hindu*, Bangalore, dated 13-2-71

Vivekananda urged men everywhere. 'Take the whole responsibility on your own shoulders, and know that you are the creators of your own destiny.'⁹ He was a man-maker and his message was strength and manliness. An independent nation, especially one like India which was long enslaved, acutely needs this message. 'What freedom really confers', said Michael Manley, 'is the opportunity to be totally responsible for one's own fate.' We must look within ourselves for the causes of our failures. To hunt for scapegoats is weakness and unmanliness. To insinuate that some outside agency is torpedoing all our constructive plans for eradication of poverty shows not only political inefficiency but lack of honesty to ourselves. Our countrymen must be brave, manly, and adventurous. 'It is our laziness, quarrelsomeness, greed and selfishness which are responsible for the backwardness and stagnation of our country and economy. Let us overcome our weaknesses and usher in a new era through hard work and discipline'—that should be the type of our approach to national problems. We should drastically limit the receiving of foreign monetary assistance if not altogether stop it. 'Nations, like individuals,' wrote Swami Vivekananda to one of his close associates at Madras, 'must help themselves. This is real patriotism. If a nation cannot do that, its time has not yet come.'¹⁰ As far as the national economy is concerned, the private sector is as important as the public sector and there should be wholesome cooperation and friendliness between the Government and the private sector. As one eminent economist recently said, 'The Government and the people should think of only one sector and that is the national sector.'¹¹

⁹ *The Complete Works*, Vol. II (1963) p. 225

¹⁰ *ibid.*, Vol. V p. 108.

¹¹ N. N. Palkhivala, in a report of *The Hindusthan Times* dated 3-5-72.

In this great task of national reconstruction and regeneration, the leaders in every sphere have a great part to play by setting an example of unimpeachable integrity, dedication, discipline, and diligence. If in the last quarter-century attempts for national reconstruction have not been successful, it is not a little due to the failure of leadership.

If there has been a wrong approach to economic strategy, it needs to be recognized and corrected. There is no meaning or gain in persisting in the pursuance of an unpractical *modus operandi*. Every one, including great leaders and big governments, may commit mistakes. That is only human. But it is also human to admit them and change for the better. As Gandhiji said, 'Confession of error is like a broom that sweeps dirt and leaves the surface cleaner than before.'¹²

YOUTH'S RESPONSIBILITY AND NEED OF MAN-MAKING EDUCATION

The responsibility of rebuilding India and the challenge of accomplishing this awesome task will have to be largely faced by the youth of the country. And education should be the best means of preparing them for this onerous enterprise. No doubt, the secondary and collegiate education in India is in rather an agonizing state at present. Heaps and heaps have been written and spoken on how to reform education. Hardly anything effective seems to have been done in practice. We only would say, let education be 'man-making'. Swami Vivekananda wanted it that way. A mass of implication is capsuled in that phrase, 'man-making'. The most obvious and essential points in man-making are strength, self-confidence, character, endurance and tenacity, dedication and discipline. If these are not taught and practised in schools and universities,

¹² *Young India*, 16-2-22.

let the youth learn them from our national heroes who laid the foundation for the winning of independence. Among them, Swami Vivekananda's life and character give us one of the best illustrations of the process of 'man-making'.

RELIGIOUS FELLOWSHIP AND COMMUNAL
HARMONY ESSENTIAL FOR UNITED
ENDEAVOUR FOR PROSPERITY

In the process of history, the Indian nation as well as its civilization has turned out to be a successful experiment in the fusing of many religions, races, and cultures. No other country in the world can lay claim to having accomplished this integration and fusion enduring for such a long period of historical time. The citizens of the country must absorb this spirit of harmony, tolerance, and integration, and transmit it to posterity. In these days of racial rivalries and ethnic animosities, the method of India should serve as a true and powerful formula for resolving national problems of racial and religious origin all over the world.

'National union in India', declared Swami Vivekananda, 'must be a gathering up of its scattered spiritual forces.'¹³ The gathering of 'scattered spiritual forces' should start within each of the various religions. Then it must become an inter-religious convergence. Spirituality is the essence of religious life. Forms, books, and churches are secondary. A truly spiritual Buddhist will have enough spirit of brotherhood to live in peace with a true Hindu or Christian or Moslem. That is why Swami Vivekananda said, 'A nation in India must be a union of those whose hearts beat to the same spiritual tune.'¹⁴ Irrespective of the religions or denominations men profess, if they are spiritual, they can live with mutual love, brotherhood, and understanding.

Especially in the context of strengthening Hindu-Moslem cordiality, we wish to point out that Sri Ramakrishna, the Prophet of Resurgent India, has made a unique and powerful contribution. He not only walked the various paths of spiritual striving provided by Hinduism but went out of its pale to taste the bliss of God according to Islam and Christianity. After attaining the goals as pointed out by these two other religions, he declared that the same Supreme Spirit called Brahman in Vedānta is designated as Allah by Moslems and Father-in-Heaven by Christians. If a man is sincere, irrespective of the path he walks, he attains the summit of Reality which is only one. Sri Ramakrishna taught this great truth to all his disciples, the foremost of whom was Swami Vivekananda. Swamiji, with his inborn genius for applying transcendental truths to practical situations, explained how a synthesis of Vedānta and Islam can be achieved in the Indian context. He was writing to a Mohammedan friend in Naini Tal in 1898; in the course of the letter he observed:

'We want to lead mankind to the place where there is neither the Vedas, nor the Bible, nor the Koran; yet this has to be done by harmonizing the Vedas, the Bible and the Koran. Mankind ought to be taught that religions are the varied expressions of THE RELIGION, that is Oneness, so that each may choose the path that suits him best.

'For our own motherland a junction of the two great systems, Hinduism and Islam—Vedanta brain and Islam body—is the only hope.'¹⁵

And, seeing through his prophetic eyes the vision of the future glorious motherland, he added, 'I see in my mind's eye the future perfect India rising out of this chaos and strife, glorious and invincible, with Vedanta brain and Islam body.' With religious

¹³ *The Complete Works*, Vol. III (1960) p. 371.

¹⁴ *loc. cit.*

¹⁵ *The Complete Works*, Vol. VI (1963) p. 416

fellowship and communal harmony well established, people's energies can be bent for national upliftment.

INDIA'S SPIRITUAL MISSION

A lot of talk is afloat in the Indian atmosphere about banishing poverty. All healthy and conjoint efforts should be made to that end. But, let us remember, the efforts must come from within Indian humanity. If at all poverty can be banished from Indian soil, it can be as a result of 'growth from within', and not because of extraneous efforts and agents, including the Indian Government. With economic improvement there must be social and moral uplift too.

Let alone India, can poverty be banished at all, from any part of the world? As an inspiring slogan it may be all right. But not as a fact of human life. Even in the most affluent countries, there is poverty, there is malnutrition, there are slums, illiteracy, and superstitions. India has been a poor country for ages; possibly she will remain poor for many years to come. In addition to making efforts for increase of wealth, let us try for a more equitable distribution of it and for cultivating the virtue of contentment. Let the rich and the well-to-do voluntarily share their resources with their less fortunate brethren. Let the have-nots work for improving their lot with dignity and unity, discipline and dedication.

But let us beware lest we look down upon and hate the poor and poverty. In this land of the half-naked Vedic *Rṣis*, of Buddha, Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja, of Caitanya, Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, of Dayananda, Ram Tirtha, Gandhi, and a whole host of saints and sages, let us not consider poverty as a social crime. If wealth were everything in the world, why would children of affluent societies be roaming the streets like poor beggars in their own country and elsewhere? What makes them come in shoals to India? What do they hope to get in this 'poor', 'backward' country?

With all her faults and seeming degradation, India is continuing to discharge her great mission on this earth, namely, guiding the human soul out of *Māyā's* mazes, back to God. Even today, compared to any other country on the globe, we believe, the atmosphere of India is more spiritual and conducive to God-mindedness. That ancient quest for the meaning of life—the quest for the solution of the riddle of life, the sacred quest for immortality and illumination—goes on in this land, silently, unobtrusively, steadily. If it is necessary to increase material wealth, it is also necessary to increase spiritual wealth. Let those souls who are awake to this great truth manfully endeavour to earn the spiritual wealth. Many struggle for the ideal but few succeed. Even if only a handful succeed, their spiritual power and vibrations go all over the world and help the sincere, aspiring souls in their onward march to Truth, Blessedness, and Infinity.

That is the true mission of this country. In the stirring words of Swami Vivekananda:

"This national ship... has been ferrying millions and millions of souls across the waters of life. For scores of shining centuries it has been plying across this water, and through its agency, millions of souls have been taken to the other shore, to blessedness. But today, perhaps through your own fault, this boat has become a little damaged, has sprung a leak; and would you therefore curse it? Is it fit that you stand up and pronounce malediction upon it, one that has done more work than any other thing in the world? If there are holes in this national ship, this society of ours, we are its children. Let us go and stop the holes. Let us gladly do it with our hearts' blood; and if we cannot, then let us die. We will make a plug of our brains and put them into the ship, but condemn it, never... if we are to sink, let us all sink together, but never let curses rise to our lips."¹⁶

¹⁶ *ibid.*, III (1960) p. 227.

LETTERS OF A SAINT

SRI RAMAKRISHNA'S HOLY FEET THE REFUGE

Almora

10. 2. '16

Dear B —,

This morning I got the registered letter sent by you. May the Lord keep you all happy ; the Master's [Sri Ramakrishna's] grace on you three friends is revealed by the fact that you are all of similar temperament, thus resulting in happiness in every way. It is possible to obtain everything in the world but it is very difficult to have a penchant for the feet of the Lord. And if that is not developed, why then, you may gain anything else whatsoever—all that is useless. For none of these serves any purpose. All know this fact and can understand it. Life becomes sweet if devotion for God is obtained. Otherwise it is burdensome. But then, the Lord has granted you the wealth of devotion—we are mighty glad about it. If a person can fix his mind on His feet and obtain the company of those who are His, and serve them, life's purpose will be achieved. Through His grace your disposition has become like that—this is a matter of no small fortune. Tulsī-dās, the great devotee, has said that even sinners get wealth, friends, earthly glories, etc., but devotion to Hari [the Lord and holy company fall to the share of the truly fortunate few. It is not surprising that all the monks have love and are caring for you ; for, those who have surrendered themselves to the Lord are the dearest and nearest [to them]. Their relationships are through Him alone ; they have no relationship of māyā with anyone.

I already got detailed news about Swamiji's [Vivekananda's] birthday celebrations at the [Belur] Math. These [celebrations] are spreading every day, everywhere. The more the days pass, the more will these spread in the world. The more the people know and understand about them, the more will they become freed from the clutches of ignorance and will feel and understand truth. And thereby becoming eligible for unsullied bliss, they will be able to make their lives blessed. Blessed indeed is the compassion of the Lord, blessed His glory.

... Whatever is His will is for the good. If a person can keep his mind at His lotus feet, there can be no cause for fear and anxiety. That He may be pleased to allow us to keep our minds at His feet—this is my sole, one-pointed prayer to Him.

Your well-wisher
Sri Turiyananda

FIRST MEETINGS WITH SRI RAMAKRISHNA: MAHENDRANATH GUPTA

SWAMI PRABHANANDA

Mahendranath Gupta (1854-1932), better known by the pen-name 'M', happened to meet Sri Ramakrishna by a coincidence. Although the meeting was not exactly planned, it was in fact predestined, as Sri Ramakrishna knew, for he himself told 'M' one day:

'I am shown everything beforehand. Once I saw Gauranga and his devotees singing kirtan in the Panchavati. I think I saw Balaram there and you too... I recognized you on hearing you read the *Chaitanya Bhagavat* [a life of Chaitanya]. You are my own. The same substance, like father and son. All of you are coming here again. When you pull one part of the kalmi creeper, all the branches come toward you... Before you came here, you didn't know who you were. Now you will know.'¹

Born of Madhusudan Gupta and Swarnamayee Devi on 14 July 1854 at Calcutta, Mahendranath grew up in an atmosphere of piety and nobility. Once when he was four years old he went with his mother to the '*ratha-yātrā*' (a Hindu car festival) at Mahesh on the western bank of the Gaṅgā, and on the way back the party stopped at Dakshineswar to see the newly-built temple² of Bhavatārinī. In later days 'M' recalled the incident: 'The temple was all white then, new and fresh. While going round the temple I lost sight of my mother and was crying for her, standing on the dais of the temple.'

¹ 'M': *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Tr. by Swami Nikhilananda, Pub. by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras-4, 1947), p. 305.

² The temple of Bhavatārinī, that is, the Divine Mother Kālī, was then popularly known as Rasmani's temple after Rani Rasmani, who had constructed it at a cost of 9,00,000 Rupees and had had it consecrated on May 31, 1855.

A young man then came out of one of the buildings and comforted me and began to call out, "Whose child is this? Where has his mother gone?" 'M' came to believe that it was Sri Ramakrishna who stood by him even when he was a child. Another incident of his young days also stuck in his memory. He discovered a special significance when one day Sri Ramakrishna asked him, 'Do you remember the cyclone of the month of *Āświn* (5 October 1864)?' 'M' replied, 'Yes, sir. Then I was quite young—nine or ten years old. I was praying to God earnestly in one room all alone.'

A bright product of the Calcutta University, 'M' worked for some time in a business firm and then took to teaching. He served as headmaster of several schools and also as lecturer in colleges, thereby earning a fine reputation. When he met Sri Ramakrishna first, he was a teacher in the Metropolitan Institution, established by Pundit Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar.

Soon after his contact with Sri Ramakrishna he introduced to the master dozens of boys who seemed to be spiritually gifted; hence Sri Ramakrishna's devotees used to call 'M' in fun 'the kidnapping teacher'.³

Like all other 'Englishmen'⁴ of the day 'M' acquired a fondness for western philosophy and science. Attracted by the magnetic personality of Keshab, particularly by his powerful speeches, 'M' leaned towards

³ Swami Saradananda: *Sri Ramakrishna, The Great Master* (Tr. by Swami Jagadananda, Pub. by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras-4, 1956 p. 782). On hearing this Sri Ramakrishna would say, 'It is the right appellation for him.'

⁴ Sri Ramakrishna called Mahendra and other English-educated young men 'Englishmen'. See *The Gospel*, p. 275.

Brahmoism and in that way tried to satisfy his religious craving. It is very likely that in the Brahma meetings or in parlour talks with Brahma devotees 'M' first heard of the Paramahansa of Dakshineswar. As an admirer of Keshabchandra he must have read about the Paramahansa in the *Indian Mirror*, *Theistic Quarterly Review*, etc. Furthermore, his near relation, Nagendranath Gupta,⁵ had met Sri Ramakrishna in 1881. He had related the charming experience of this meeting to 'M' and pressed him to visit Dakshineswar soon. So this may also have predisposed Mahendra to meet the Paramahansa. Still, this background of the knowledge about the saint of Dakshineswar was not enough to induce the religious-minded school teacher actually to make the visit.⁶

While still in college he had married a girl, Nikunja Sen, who was a cousin of Keshabchandra Sen. Soon after his marriage, Mahendra's domestic life became beset with storm and stress. Adverse circumstances made his life so miserable that the docile and placid Mahendra became utterly disgusted. He went so far as to contemplate suicide. In such a disturbed state of mind he left home one night after ten o'clock. It was a Saturday. Apprehending her husband's intentions, Nikunja Devi accompanied him taking the children with them. While they were going in a hackney carriage, one of its wheels gave way near Shyambazar.

⁵ Nagendranath Gupta, Editor of *The Tribune*, Lahore, wrote in 1947 in his 'Reflections and Reminiscences': 'After seeing and hearing Ramakrishna I went to see Mahendranath Gupta, who was related to me and was my senior by several years, and told him everything and urged him to go to Dakshineswar. This he did the following year....'

⁶ Although Nagendranath Gupta in his book *Ramakrishna-Vivekananda*, p. 11, has claimed, 'I recall with grateful and humble satisfaction that it was at my instance that Mahendranath first went to Ramakrishna....'

Mahendra decided to spend the night in the house of a friend who lived nearby. However, the cold reception he and his family got there disheartened him so much as to make him leave the house immediately. He went to a stable in the locality and persuaded a coachman to drive them to the northern part of Baranagore where they took shelter in the house of Ishan Kaviraj,⁷ his brother-in-law.⁸

Although 'M's' elder sister received the couple cordially, the bitter experiences of his family life rankled in his memory and made life almost unbearable. Now, to assuage the anguish of his lacerated heart, his friend and distant relation, Siddheswar Majumdar (Sidhu), took him to visit several gardens in Baranagore.

It was Sunday, 26 February 1882.⁹ They walked leisurely through several gardens. (In Baranagore were garden-houses of several Calcutta grandees). As they were walking in Prasanna Banerji's garden, Siddheswar suggested, 'There is a charming place on the bank of the Ganges. Would you like to go there? A holy man, a Paramahansa, lives there.' 'M' assented and they started immediately for the Rasmani's temple-garden at Dakshineswar. They arrived at the main gate in the late afternoon.

A soft spring wind was blowing. The smell of jasmine, chameli, and other flowers,

⁷ Ishan Kaviraj, the husband of 'M's' elder sister, had a reputation as a *kavirāj* (physician). He had treated Sri Ramakrishna for some time. It is very likely that 'M' had heard about Sri Ramakrishna from Ishan too.

⁸ This part of 'M's' life-story has been adapted from the Introduction (pp. 23-24) to *Śrī-Ma-Darśan* (Bengali) (General Printers and Publishers, Calcutta, Vol. I, 2nd ed.) by Swami Nityatmananda.

⁹ 'M's' first visit to Sri Ramakrishna took place a few days after Sri Ramakrishna's birthday, that is, 23 February 1882. Again, 'M' writes that it was a Sunday in February (*The Gospel*, p. 1). The only Sunday between 23rd February and the end of the month fell on the 26th.

and the sight of the garden on the bank of the Gaṅgā appealed to 'M's' poetic disposition. He felt relieved and happy. He found a room crowded with people. 'M' learnt that the Paramahansa lived there and that many people from Calcutta came to listen to the religious talks of the holy man. 'M' became curious to see and hear him.

They went to the Paramahansa's room and found that all the people, seated on the floor, were listening with rapt attention. The Paramahansa was seated facing the east on a small wooden couch by the side of a bigger one. He was talking of God. His voice was soft and melodious. 'M' found that the Paramahansa was rather dark-complexioned with a short beard and introspective eyes. He was of medium height, slender almost to leanness. He was forty-six years of age. He spoke with a very slight stammer in rustic Bengali. 'M' had never heard anyone speak so charmingly as he did. It was an unbroken flow of profound spiritual wisdom.

They did not disturb the gathering but stood quietly in one corner of the room. Though absorbed in religious conversation, Sri Ramakrishna did not fail to notice the new arrivals.

'M' was then twenty-seven years old. A tall man of fair complexion and wearing a long beard, 'M' impressed others by his humility, sweet manners, and placid temperament. His face, with wide-open eyes and a broad forehead, was bright with the light of his intellect. He was verily spiritual tinder waiting for a spark from the Divine Fire to be set ablaze.

Sri Ramakrishna could recognize 'M' at first sight as one of those select few for whom he had prayed to the Divine Mother, crying, 'Mother, if I do not find the devotees I shall surely die. Please bring them to me immediately.' Looking at 'M' Sri Ramakrishna started in surprise. Later he

narrated his experience to M: 'You are my very own, my relative... Once I saw the companions of Chaitanya; not in a trance but with these very eyes... I think I saw you there, and Balaram too. You must have noticed that when I see certain people I jump up with a start. Do you know why? A man feels that way when he sees his own people after a long time.'¹⁰

Adept physiognomist that Sri Ramakrishna was, he immediately studied the features of the new arrival and made an estimate of his spiritual potentiality. Later Sri Ramakrishna gave out his conclusion: 'I can see from the signs of your eyes, brows and face, that you are a Yogi. You look like a Yogi who has just left his seat of meditation.'

'M' was so drawn to the words of Sri Ramakrishna that he did not find time to look at his surroundings much. He stood there speechless. His first impression he recorded in these words:

'It was as if he were standing where all the holy places met and as if Sukadeva himself were speaking the word of God, or as if Sri Chaitanya were singing the name and glories of the Lord in Puri with Ramananda, Swarup and the other devotees.'

Sri Ramakrishna was saying:

'When, hearing the name of Hari or Rama once, you shed tears and your hair stands on end, then you may know for certain that you do not have to perform such devotions as the sandhya any more. Then only will you have a right to renounce rituals; or rather, rituals will drop away of themselves. Then it will be enough if you repeat only the name of Rama or Hari, or even simply Om. The sandhya merges in the Gayatri, and the Gayatri merges in Om.'¹¹

'M' looked around him with wonder and

¹⁰ *The Gospel*, pp. 275-6.

¹¹ *ibid.*, p. 1.

said to himself: 'Ah, what a charming place! What a fascinating man! How beautiful his words are! I have no wish to move from this spot.'

It was getting dark. As soon as Sri Ramakrishna's conversation ended his visitors, who had sat all through in rapt silence, prepared to leave for home. Now 'M' thought, 'Let me take a look around first; then I'll come back here and sit down.'

As he left the room with Sidhu, he heard the sweet music of the evening service arising in the temple from gong, bell, drum, and cymbals. The music from the *nahabat* (music tower) at the south end of the garden, too, reached him. The sounds travelled over the Gaṅgā, floating away and losing themselves in the distance. A soft spring wind was blowing, laden with the fragrance of flowers; the moon had just risen. It was as if nature and man together were preparing for the evening worship.

'M' and Sidhu visited the temples of Bhavatāriṇī and of Rādhākānta, and the twelve temples of Śiva, and watched the services before the images. Evening service over, the two friends returned to Sri Ramakrishna's room. They found the door shut. Brinde, the maidservant, was standing outside. 'M' learnt from her that the Paramahansa was in his room and that he had read no books, for, 'They are all on his tongue'.

'M' said, 'Perhaps it is time for his evening worship. May we go into the room? Will you tell him we are anxious to see him?'

Brinde: 'Go right in, children. Go in and sit down.'

Entering the room, 'M' saluted Sri Ramakrishna with folded hands and at the latter's bidding he and Sidhu sat on the floor. Sri Ramakrishna was sitting on the small wooden couch in the midst of the

smoke of incense which had just been burnt. In answer to Sri Ramakrishna's queries 'M' gave details about himself. 'M' noticed, however, that Sri Ramakrishna now and then seemed to become absent-minded. Later he learnt that this mood was called *bhāva*, ecstasy, and that Sri Ramakrishna would often go into it after dusk, sometimes losing outward consciousness totally. 'M' said, 'Perhaps you want to perform evening worship. In that case may we take our leave?' Sri Ramakrishna (still in ecstasy): 'No—evening worship? No, it is not exactly that.'

The conversation continued for a while. 'M' saluted Sri Ramakrishna and took his leave. Sri Ramakrishna said sweetly, 'Come again.'

Sri Ramakrishna had stolen his heart. Ever since he had met the Master he was feeling the pull in his heart. He thought of his blissful form and recollected his enchanting words.

During his second visit Sri Ramakrishna advised him:

'Do all your duties, but keep your mind on God. Live with all—with wife and children, father and mother—and serve them. Treat them as if they were very dear to you, but know in your heart of hearts that they do not belong to you.'¹²

During his third visit, Sri Ramakrishna, speaking of one who has commitments in the world, told 'M':

'From time to time he should live in the company of holy men, and from time to time go into solitude to meditate on God. Furthermore, he should practise discrimination and pray to God, "Give me faith and devotion".'¹³

On that occasion 'M' saw for the first time Sri Ramakrishna in *samādhi*. It left an indelible impression on his mind and he

¹² *ibid.*, p. 6.

¹³ *ibid.*, p. 12.

returned home deeply moved. So intoxicated had he become in the holy company of Sri Ramakrishna, like the 'peacock fed with opium', that he was unable to banish the thought of Sri Ramakrishna for a moment. He wondered how a man could acquire such deep knowledge without being a scholar. The Master explained 'M's' attitude with an apt illustration: 'He ('M') is like a mother with seven or eight children. Day and night she is busy with her worldly duties. But now and then she makes time to serve her husband.' This principle showed him how to harmonize his worldly duties and this new spiritual life.

So filled was he with the thoughts of Sri Ramakrishna that he began carefully recording the latter's words. Although he avowedly did so for his own¹⁴ benefit, it is evident from Sri Ramakrishna's actions and

¹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 965. 'M' to Girish Ghosh: 'I am writing it for myself, not for others ... You may get it when I die.'

remarks on various occasions that it was not of 'M's' own will that he kept a record. It seems it was part of the divine plan. Subsequently he changed his mind and published his notes in English in pamphlet form. This was well received.¹⁵ But owing to the insistence of some of his friends¹⁶ he switched over to Bengali and published the dialogues in five volumes under the title *Śrī-Śrī-Rāmakṛṣṇa-kathāmṛta*, which has been translated into English and published as *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*.¹⁷

¹⁵ Swami Vivekananda congratulated 'M' thus: 'C'est bon, mon ami—now you are doing just the thing. Come out, man! No sleeping all life; time is flying. Bravo! That is the way.' (*The Complete Works*, Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Vol. VI (1963), p. 412.)

¹⁶ Ramchandra Dutta: *Tattwamañjarī*, Vol. I, pp. 184-7.

¹⁷ Aldous Huxley paid his tribute to this memorable work: '.... "M" produced a book unique, so far as my knowledge goes, in the literature of hagiography. No other saint has had so able and indefatigable a Boswell.' (Foreword to *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*).

BHAGAVAD-GĪTĀ—A PHILOSOPHY OF COSMIC CONSOLIDATION

(LOKASANGRAHA)

DR. K. B. RAMAKRISHNA RAO

I

INTRODUCTION

The *Bhagavad-Gītā* forms a part of the great epic of India, the *Mahābhārata*. In importance it is next only to the Upaniṣads, and presents one of the most authentic expressions of the philosophical and religious perspective of the Hindus. Coming later than the major Upaniṣads, and perhaps after the formulation of the early Buddhism

and Jainism, the text makes a bold attempt at a synthesis of the existing philosophical, religious, ethical, and social speculations and practices of the times, and presents Reality in a new key. It even sets a guideline for the later development of thought on Vedāntic lines.

The contents of the text are brought out in the form of a dialogue between Kṛṣṇa, whom the Indian tradition believes to be

the Lord incarnate, and Arjuna, a warrior prince of the Kuru dynasty. The situation in which both the characters are placed is a battlefield, wherein Arjuna has come to fight, by force of circumstances, his own cousins, nephews, elders of the family, teachers and friends, but ranged against him. Where the situation demanded a concerted and unwavering action in the form of a fight, Arjuna turns back dejected at the sight of his own kith and kin and, refusing to engage them and kill them in the battle, prefers a quiet withdrawal. Kṛṣṇa, literally and symbolically a 'charioteer', pulls up Arjuna and rouses him to a sense of responsibility and action by showing the relevancy of his action against the background of a comprehensive picture of Reality, and what it demands of each individual at each moment of his life.

Whether the situation permitted a long-drawn dialogue or discourse on philosophy and ethics of action—such as are found in a book of 700 verses—is a point that should not bother us now. For looking at the length of the epic itself or the vista of life that it reviews, neither the length of the *Gītā*, nor its elaborate teaching is too great. Again, whether teaching of this sort, both elaborate and deep, is relevant at the battlefield when fighting is imminent, should also not detain us, for it has a dramatic significance creating a sense of urgency and wisdom in a desponding mind. Metaphorically, the battle is the battle of life wherein each individual is a fighter looking for light and wisdom, and if they were to come from the very source, greater would be the satisfaction. And it so happens in the case of Arjuna.

The key to the mystery of the teaching of the *Gītā* lies in the fact that where normal circumstances demand restraint and withdrawal from war and bloodshed, advice is given to the contrary by no less a character than Kṛṣṇa whom tradition takes to be the

Guardian of the universal law of righteousness.¹ The secret of the Eternal Theme behind the universal law is to be discovered in its setting right a slackness or a discordant note struck by Arjuna in the rhythm of an unerring Reality, by his refusal to fight.

THE DISTINCTIVE CHARACTER OF THE TEACHING OF THE GĪTĀ

The distinctive character of the text of the *Gītā* is that unlike the message of the Upaniṣads which embodies the revelation of truth through the intuitions of seers, who have passed it on to us as 'heard' messages (*śruti*), and unlike any human teacher expounding a systematic philosophy of life and action, Kṛṣṇa, the Guardian of universal law, presents an account of what constitutes the 'real' or 'reality' in its infinite dimensions, and shows the place of each 'constituent' in the scheme of things. It is a perspective which Reality presents of Itself and of the constituent elements including us, the humans, and is *not the estimation of Reality by a constituent such as a human being*. This is usually missed in the interpretations of the *Gītā*. Certainly then, Reality's presentation of Itself ought to be different from all human estimates of It.

DYNAMIC PHILOSOPHY

Naturally, it is a dynamic philosophy of the Real we find in the *Gītā*, a Real or Reality which is all comprehensive, eternal and indivisible, transcending the dichotomies of individual perception or conception. Reality does not allow Itself to be its opposite, and does not work against Its own being, and so points to a *being* whose dialectics is plainly that of consolidation'. It is a self-creative or regenerative 'sacrifice'

¹ शाश्वत-धर्मगोप्ता । *Bhagavad-gītā*, XI. 18

(*yajña*) but not a suicidal movement.² This is the hidden theme of the *Gītā*, and how consolidation of *being* is achieved in all its details of manifestation, cosmic and individual, life and matter, thought and action, is presented by Kṛṣṇa, the Lord Incarnate, in the most unusual manner available anywhere. That is, when it is Reality that speaks to us, It has Its own way, an *ātma-yoga*, as the Lord calls it.³ It speaks the truth, and we hear it; shows the instances of truth consolidated as being and value;⁴ and makes us live the truth, and we live it! It is this third aspect which is significant, for in no ordinary teacher-taught engagement is a first-hand experience of the truth given. The whole mystery behind a chapter in the *Gītā*, namely, 'Viśwarūpa-darśana-yoga' (Ch. XI), is this. We find here an insight into an actual participation in Reality as distinguished from a theoretical exposition. The disciple in the *Gītā* has this unusual type of treatment given to him by his teacher, who says, 'Know, see, and authentically participate'.⁵ Exposition and illustrations finished, the disciple is plunged into a direct experience of what constitutes Reality. Śrī Kṛṣṇa destroys his feeling of separation and of individual existence by effecting a depersonalization of his being. He is disintegrated, as it were, and drawn up into the dynamics of a cosmic life. For once he

² Whether it is the monistic, organic or pluralistic conception of reality, in no case does an interpretation admit of a 'disintegration' or 'annihilation' of Reality, or aspects of Reality. And the final understanding always approves of an 'integration' or 'consolidation' of Reality either by subsuming the elements into the whole or making them depend on the whole.

³ 'By My *ātma-yoga* this has been shown to you... This is realized not by the study of the Vedas, obtained not by sacrifice, nor by gifts, nor by penance....' *ibid.*, XI 47-8.

⁴ आत्म-बिभूतयः । *ibid.*, X. 19

⁵ *Vide*, *ibid.*, Ch. XI. 54

feels the pulse of the indivisible infinite existence carrying or pushing on everything—the living and the non-living, mind and matter—in the scheme of consolidation of a cosmic design and purpose beyond the visions of an ordinary truncated life. It is this which gives Arjuna a sense of responsibility and participation, and therefore he seeks fulfilment by picking up his bow and arrow to fight. It is really not getting up to fight, but awakening to the truth of life, not of the individual but cosmic. Arjuna, as a responsible 'instrument', and as commissioned by a trans-individual law and purpose, seeks fulfilment in participation in a primordial theme which has given him his own being.⁶

In what follows, a short sketch is made of the idea of Reality, Its structure of constituents, the functions of constituents and the mode of functioning, and the meaning of self-realization in the total being of Reality.

II

THE CONCEPTION OF REALITY

An uncompromising yet comprehensive definition as it were of Reality is provided as a prelude to all discussion:

'There is no existence of the unreal, and of the Real there is no cessation of existence. To discover the distinction between them is wisdom, and the Seers of the Truth see it.'⁷

Obviously, then, the invitation is to look

⁶ Many have interpreted the passage, *nimitta-mātram bhava Savyasācin*, 'Be an instrument only, O Arjuna' (XI. 33), as meaning that Arjuna is to become a mechanical implement or instrument in the hands of the Lord with no obligations or responsibilities on his part! This is a wrong estimate. In the scheme of Reality portrayed in the *Gītā* an individual attunes himself to submit by a yoga which gives him a status of responsibility for an action. He acts with a 'submission' to a law of Infinity with an understanding of it. It is only then he can rightly be an 'instrument' of function, otherwise not.

⁷ *ibid.*, II. 16

for the 'unceasing', which alone constitutes the Real. All that registers change—the physical 'body or the mind, and all the transitory in the physical nature or any kind of organic or inorganic groupings and dis-integrations—must be incidental. To speak from the common point of view, they have a birth and a death, or a coming into being and passing away. If the search is for the Real, it should be directed beyond the groupings, beyond the psycho-physical or biological complexes towards a principle of consolidation, which is described as the 'permanent' (*nitya*), the 'eternal' (*śāsvata*), or more properly, the 'undiminishing' (*avyaya*) or the 'undecaying' (*akṣara*).

At first it may seem that two ultimate sources are suggested—one forming the primordial nucleus of what we ordinarily call the physical and the concrete, and the other the spiritual, the former being the *avyakta prakṛti* (unmanifest nature) and the latter being *puruṣa* or *ātman* or the self. According to the *Gītā*, the latter is the real *psyche*, and the mind, with which it is commonly confused, is but a derivation of *prakṛti* at a particular condition of the dynamics of the Real.

But any distinction of the sources is just preliminary, for according to the *Gītā*, and if we gather the *gestalt* of the teaching, there is no final dichotomy in the being of the Real. *Prakṛti* is only assimilated as the nature of the self, but unmanifest. As the latent power of the self or Spirit, it is also called *māyā*, and is projected at the will of the Spirit; it operates as directed by the Spirit, and for all practical purposes is the agent of all action in the creative theme. There is no plan that *prakṛti* has, unless it is a plan designed by the Spirit. The rhythm of nature or *prakṛti* is the rhythm of the will (*kratu*) behind. The forms that it puts up are not evolved by nature of its own accord, but are fashioned by a Will that is

not physical nature.⁸ Obviously, the *Gītā* disposes of any concreteness of matter as a lasting characteristic of the material forms. It is pushed back to a source which is anything but concrete, and so is called *avyakta* (unseen or unmanifest). And the *Gītā* prefers to call it the 'divine power or energy' (*daivīmāyā*). Its luminosity or divinity is emanating from the 'self-luminosity' of the 'Divine Self'.

Thus the search for the 'unceasing' should culminate in the Self or *Ātman*.

Here, then, is the second criterion of what constitutes Reality. The Real is the Self, or the Self is the Real. The Real is the spiritual entity, or is a principle of sentience beyond the simple luminosity which even a physical entity can possess.

In terms of existence then, mere existence is not reality, but that which is sentient existence, and it is the unceasing Reality. It is unceasing or enduring in the sense that beyond all the phases of changing existence, beyond the separative waves of individual consciousness and material forms (of which mind also is one) it is that sentience which is operating as the ocean of intelligent Principle. It is sentience that does not admit of divisibility, either in terms of space or time or space-time, and so is verily the universal Principle of Awareness, the un-sleeping Witness of all existence and forms. It is the Witness in all beings, eternal and indivisible.⁹

Again, the Real is not simply the eternal or timeless (*nitya*), in the sense of a thing at no time being non-existent; it is immortal (*amṛta*). This is not said so much with reference to time as it is said of a principle which is uniquely living. It is non-dying, which only means it is non-born (*aja*). It is Life incommensurate and beyond mortality and origination. One may call this Divine

⁸ *ibid.*, X, 39

⁹ *ibid.*, IX, 17-18

Life—a sentient living Existence—and that is the Real.

Further, the Real is the Infinite (*ananta* or *vibhu*). As Infinite It exists, and as Infinite It operates. And at whatever level the Real may exist and operate, It passes beyond measurements, and so is the Incommensurable (*aprameya*). Its incommensurate Self-existence and operation is called *yoga-māyā*, a secret by which the Infinite puts up varieties of forms and movements—sentient and insentient, macro and micro—sustains and propels them in such a way that nothing escapes the law of Infinity or damages Its being as the Infinite. One has only to get the insight of the transcending dialectics of the Infinite Being (*param bhāva*) when It directly speaks to us as to how It exists and operates:

‘The Unmanifest has now become the manifest—so think the unwise of Me. They do not know the (secret of My) transcending nature of undiminishing (*avyayam*) and unsurpassing (*anuttamam*) being.

‘Shining from within My creative mystery (*yoga-māyā*), I am not visible to one and all. Me the unborn (*aja*) and the undiminishing (*avyaya*) the unwise of the world do not know.’¹⁰

Yoga-māyā is the creative mystery by which the Undiminishing is seen as ‘diminishing’, the Unsurpassing as the ‘surpassable’, the Unmanifest as the ‘manifest’ and the Unborn as the ‘born.’ In this ‘creative dialectics’ which is the mystery of the transcendent being, none of these latter apparent attributes affect or cause a diminution of the ‘supreme glory’.¹¹ And it is this very mystery which passes all comprehension, for it is that by which one is the other: the Unmanifest is the ‘manifest’, the Undiminishing the ‘diminishing’, the Unsurpassing the ‘surpassable’, etc. There is no transforma-

tion here, nor creation, nor even appearance! *It is the total being from first to last.*

Perhaps the meaning of *yoga-māyā* or creative mystery will be sadly missed by us in describing its dialectics either as creation, transformation or appearance! It is a transcending dialectics, whose truth perhaps we will underestimate, and so miss the meaning of a being which is unalterably Infinite throughout. While we doubt, those who see the truth blissfully experience the glory of the Infinite in its invisible and indivisible wholeness.¹²

The implications of this undiminishing Infinity are to be seen in the fact that nothing is set up as a theme in parallel to it, to constitute a reality in itself. It is blasphemous to think of a manifest, a born, or a finite existence as being a reality or real in an infinite Existence. It is as if cutting something out, and calling the rest of being, ‘infinite’. The secret of universal consolidation of the Real is to be seen here.¹³ Nothing is finite in the scheme of the Infinite! Every instance of being, every movement of being is to be seen on the canvas of the supreme, undiminishing Infinite. Time, space, individuality, name, form, number etc., are all drawn into the all-assimilating Infinity, which ‘speaks’ to us thus:

‘There was no time when I was not, when you were not, when these kings were not, and there will be no time when we will not be!’ (2.12).

‘Other than Myself, nothing can exist.’¹⁴

But what puzzles us most is the re-

¹² *ibid.*, IX. 13

¹³ The organic-relationship and dependent-relationship of the selves and the world, with Brahman, in Viśiṣṭādvaita and Dvaita philosophies respectively, are vindications of a natural difficulty which seems to require a compromise in maintaining the uniqueness of Brahman as Absolute against the eternal being (ontologically) of the selves and the world.

¹⁴ *ibid.*, II. 12; VII. 7

¹⁰ *ibid.*, VII. 24-5

¹¹ तेजोराशिम् । *ibid.*, XI. 17

currence of the 'individual' in our experience. How does it happen, if it happens at all? However, from the point of view of the Infinite, the 'individual' is that which is the unique, and stands at a level towards which the ordinary tends. By a law of Infinity, the Infinite is everything, yet it is pointedly so in its bounty and grandeur in the 'unique'.¹⁵ Think of a plant, an animal, a mountain, a star, a seer, a god, and the 'unique' in each of these—it is verily Me, says the Lord in the chapter on the Dynamics of Self-projection ('Vibhūti-yoga', Ch. X). How can a finite exist, if existence is Infinite?

Perhaps, the perspective of the *Gītā* is to be gathered in two ways to account for the incidence of what we may ordinarily call an individual. In one sense there is no individual at all, if it means a separated entity, for all individuals are only unique points of the universal Spirit Itself (*ātma-vibhūtaḥ*) and are said to be so emphatically.¹⁶

In another sense, it is not the individual that matters, but the *species* that it represents. For in the scheme of universal consolidation, the individual is just a species consolidating a value. And these—the species and the value—are universal. We shall see about this a little later.

With regard to the individual or the finite, perhaps we are baffled and seek comfort in speculative philosophies and try to square up difficulties using empirical analogies—for instance, that the Infinite changes into the 'finite' by a transformation, or that it is due to 'creation'. It is not unusual to find within the range of Hindu speculation the theory of *parināma* or transformation actual or apparent, or alternatively of a creation. But a keen investigation of the text of the *Gītā* reveals that none of these is asserted as the answer.

With regard to creation, if it is to mean production of new things, we are not sure. All creatures are put out and absorbed by a Law of Periodicity or Cycles, wherein birth is no beginning and death is no end.¹⁷ Not seeing the Law of Continuity, we see birth and change.

The dynamics or the dialectics of the infinite Being is that by the definition of infinity, It is the other and *does not become* the other: 'If I am Kapila of the Siddhas, I am as well Vāsudeva of the Vṛṣṇis, and Arjuna of the Pāṇḍavas, let alone the other beings animate and inanimate at the same time'¹⁸—the Lord would say. Consideration of distance in time between these personalities, or of their individual existences, or kinds of being are transcended here. The Infinite is the *Other*, but is always Its own undiminishing Self. Can we grasp this magic, as it were? Nonetheless Kṛṣṇa says: 'See My Divine *yoga*' (XI. 8), and blasts the mind preoccupied with the visions of the finite, in the chapter, 'Cosmic Depersonalization' ('Viśvarūpadarśana-yoga'). Individualities, so-called, are only punctuation marks of the *vibhūtis* (manifestations) of the Lord, but not distinct parts of the Infinite. This is the incommensurate nature of the Infinite by which it rests indivisibly in the divided, as the one in the many, where the divided and the many are not 'distincts' from the Infinite Reality.

This is actually rendering a transformation of the individual—of his own *being*. The individual of ordinary conception is thus metamorphosed into the cosmic, with links and responsibilities which are cosmic. This is where the theme of cosmic consolidation is to be seen. The note that Kṛṣṇa strikes in every heart is this: Whether we know it or not we are elements of a limitless or infinite mass of Reality linked at each point

¹⁵ *ibid.*, XI. 40-41

¹⁶ *ibid.*, X. 39, 41

¹⁷ *ibid.*, VIII. 16-19; IX. 7-8

¹⁸ *cf. ibid.*, X. 26, 37, 20

of Its own cosmic being. In this theme or being it is not that the individual men *X Y Z* are, but that *humanity* is. It is not that individual plants or animals are, but that the *species* is. It is not that groups of living beings collectively or individually are, but that *life* is. In this scheme, it is not 'who' that matters, but 'what'—as for example, it is not who builds up values (truth, goodness, uprightness, harmony, peace, etc.), but it is value that is important, and what value has been built up. And the crux of the demand is, can any one be *that* individual who builds up *this* value? If so, that is being a *yogī*—and one should aim to be that¹⁹—and one then becomes a cognizable instance in the scheme of consolidation—a Kapila, a Vāsudeva, an Arjuna, etc., worth the name. Reality is another name for value, and It is the consolidation of value. Should this be determined in terms of time, or individual personalities? Or, does It speak of a transcending existence consolidating Itself?

The metamorphosis of the individual into the cosmic, places the individual in a position of greater responsibility both in being and function. It makes him realize a relation far more universal than he ordinarily feels, and makes him shape and share a function beyond his immediate range. The highest level of this realization makes him throb with a feeling that he is not 'he' that exists independently, but he is a being continuous with a reality that has no beginning nor end—that he is a functioning moment in the infinite Existence. It is a sublimation or elevation of character that Kṛṣṇa works up in the individual called Arjuna. Elevated in character, an individual feels that he is working in accordance with a law not of the moment, and that he has not to 'start' a function anew. This is the sense of continuity of the self or personality, and a man

picks up a function or work which he laid down on a previous occasion, and perhaps, far beyond the mortal conditions. This is infinitisation of an individual character and expansion of the meaning of the individual as a cosmic existent.

How the infinite Reality involves Itself at all levels of Its being, in what we have called 'individuals', is well depicted by Kṛṣṇa by pointing to a situation called 'life' (or the 'universe of life', *jīvaloka*, XV. 7). However it is to be remembered that the field of life does not exhaust the possibilities of infinite Being. And Kṛṣṇa's intention in elaborating on a situation relevant to 'man' should not be mistaken to mean that all his teaching is confined to man and exhausted in man. He selects a *sample area* of infinite Being and shows that the Infinite (*Purusottama*) is the warp and weft on which the self and matter come together giving rise to the feeling and experience of individuality.²⁰ At this level of the individual, the effective meaning of life is *to be in tune with the Infinite, and is called 'Yoga'*, which is shown to be the expression of a cosmic dialectics effecting a consolidation of being and purpose. It is not that there are three elements here—the *puruṣa*, the *prakṛti* and the *Purusottama*—in an eternal scheme of pluralism or dualism, but that the Infinity has ways of preserving Itself beyond distinctions. And each *distinct* is willed not to be independent of this being. One may even call oneself metaphorically a reagent in the scheme of cosmic consolidation. The distincts last as long as the relevant universe of life lasts. This is the meaning of Kṛṣṇa when he says that *prakṛti* and *puruṣa* are both *anādi* or eternal.²¹ In relation to life—the dynamics of being—the *jīva* or the *puruṣa* is the name for a

¹⁹ तस्माद्योगी भवाजुं न । *ibid.*, VI, 46

²⁰ See the chapters: 'Kṣetra-kṣetrajña-yoga' and 'Purusottama-yoga' (chs. XIII and XV).

²¹ cf. *ibid.*, XIII, 19

localized centre of illumination, and *prakṛti* is the name for the localized field of manifest energy. In accordance with the law of consolidation of being, it is the phenomenon of life that puts forth the complements of *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*; and beyond these two, it is 'life' that matters, and a cosmic purpose is to be seen in life which is an expression of the cosmic theme. And all the values that emerge, namely, truth, goodness, harmony, understanding, selflessness, peace, etc., form a part of the consolidating theme of 'life', which has been painted, as it were, on the canvas of the Infinite. From the perspective of the infinite Being life itself is a cosmic state or poise, an aspect of *ātma-yoga*, which the Lord implies, of the order of *vibhūti* (manifestation)—'of the existents I am life'.²² And the universe of life (*jīvaloka*) accordingly is a purposeful manifestation, and will have to serve as a crucible for the development of values, which make Reality not a dry and desert-like existence.

Incidentally it is implied that there is a cosmic demand on each living individual to raise the quality of life and the value thereof. The theme that is working itself up is to be judged in terms of consolidation, or value, and the level of growth in life in terms of unique individual's contribution to that value or consolidation. Human 'evolution' is to be judged in terms of this rise registered by his accomplishments in *yoga*, which is nothing but the universal or cosmic balance or harmony of/in reality as against discordance and imbalance.

This is the conception of reality taken not piecemeal but as a total entity of an infinite order whose universal concordance

makes it a value that is called 'peace'. In fact this is the highest ideal towards which all existence tends.²³ Reality is a movement towards it; or *is it* in an eternal being? All morality, virtue, uprightness, control of passions, non-violence, truth, etc., are estimated as value in so far as they (and not their opposites) restore the balance of being called *yoga*. In this scheme of 'cosmic yoga' (*ātma-yoga*), wisdom is that which looks ahead, which looks at the totality, and sets right the discordance in the individual's behaviour at every single moment, not making him look for results beyond. This is recoilless function achieving a consolidation at each point of the infinite existence or being.

If this is a dynamic conception of reality, there is no scope for tardiness, and no scope for wasting one's intelligence, devotion or application. The greatest message of the *Bhagavad-gītā* is responsible activism and eternal vigilance, where no detail is worthy of negligence. It is a total philosophy, which is interested in carving living figurines of value or perfection, which are, however, not to be put away as idols in niches.²⁴ The perfection that is aimed at nonetheless consists in a calm collectivity that fosters a further life, a further forging that sets the being of order and balance in its eternal consolidation.

The purpose of the present endeavour will be finished if we just mention in brief a state or poise of being called *yoga* (for that is the mysterious theme of Reality, put forth by Kṛṣṇa) that an individual should cultivate on this plane of consolidation, one aspect of which is 'life' itself.

(To be continued)

²² *ibid.*, X. 22

²³ *ibid.*, II. 70-1; IV. 39; V. 29; IX. 31; XVIII. 62

²⁴ Janaka is one supreme example among human

ON MAKING SPIRITUAL PROGRESS

SWAMI BUDHANANDA

WHAT IS SPIRITUAL LIFE

To be sure, those who are sincere seekers in varying degrees, would like to make spiritual progress.

But how is spiritual progress made ?

Before this question is answered we require to understand as clearly as we can, what exactly is 'spiritual life'. A clear concept of spiritual life itself is a basic factor in spiritual progress.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa says in the *Gītā* that God dwells in every heart.¹ To dwell constantly on this great fact of God's dwelling in our heart, and grow in it through what we may or may not think and do in this life, is spiritual life.

Or, spiritual life may be viewed from another angle too. Man is a curious amalgam of matter and spirit. Man's body and mind are products of matter. His Ātman or self is non-material. This Ātman is the essential man. Ātman is all-pervasive and omnipotent, being identical with the Supreme Spirit. Yet somehow body and mind usually dominate the Ātman in such an absolute manner that we are not even aware of its existence. But it is possible through the practice of spiritual disciplines to bring about a revolution in the whole situation, and make the Ātman rule over the body and the mind. The process of bringing this about together with the consummation of this process is known as spiritual life.

Therefore, precisely speaking, deliberate, ardent, determined, and purposive movement towards God-seeing and Ātman-realizing constitutes preparation for entry into spirit-

ual life. The consummation of this process is the fulfilment of spiritual life.

Spiritual life is indeed a hero's job. It is the job of an inner revolutionary within man.

The words 'spiritual life' mean life of the spirit and in the spirit. Those of us who seek the inspiration of religion and want to build up a spiritual life, are in a higher state of evolution than the mere animal. We are mainly psychophysical beings. Our life is both physical and mental. Through the cultivation of the mind we come to know that life is more than matter and mind. There is a higher principle involved in life—call it God, call it Ātman or Brahman.

First we know of this fact theoretically. But a time comes when this theoretical knowledge exercises a tremendous hold on our mind and we become anxious to actualize this fact in life. We want to see God. We want to realize in experience the fact that our true being is not the body and the mind but the Ātman. In an absolute sense that alone can be the meaning of spiritual life. Only after actually experiencing the spirit or the Ātman can one live a life which is spiritual. Only after seeing God can one live a life that is truly divine. But here we are not going to use the term 'spiritual life' in this absolute sense. For our purpose we shall use the term in a relative sense, meaning the sincere strivings of a true seeker to realize the Ātman or to see God.

We have used the words 'to realize the Ātman or to see God'. Philosophically speaking, some difference is made between the two concepts. But spiritually speaking

they amount to the same thing, which is illumination or attainment of liberation of the spirit from the transmigratory existence. When we think of reality in a personal way we call it God. When we think of it in an impersonal way we call it the Ātman or Brahman, which are interchangeable terms in an absolute sense.

The case being such, such terms as 'self-realization', 'God-realization', 'attainment of illumination', 'attainment of liberation', or 'nirvana', all spiritually mean the same thing.

FOR WHOM IS SPIRITUAL LIFE ?

Now, whether we understand it in the absolute sense or the relative sense, spiritual life is the noblest adventure, which, as far as we know, only human beings can undertake.

Let us make no mistake about this fact, spiritual life is a hero's job. It is the job of the revolutionary, for it really means inner revolution. It is not for the weak and the undecided. The *Mundaka-upaniṣad* says:

'This Ātman cannot be attained by one who is devoid of strength and earnestness....'²

The spiritual life is not for the drowsy and the dopey. It is for the awakened and the determined. It is for him who is ready to go through all the rigours, pains, and lacerations of life in a continuous and unbroken process of self-regeneration.

Spiritual life is not for the pharisees of any religion of any epoch. Those crass worldly people who turn religion into a commercial concern, may well make a lot of money, but they cannot earn spirituality until they shed their worldliness and cry for God.

Rāmprasād, the great Indian mystic, says in a song addressing the Divine Mother :

² III. ii. 4

'O Mother, I have put my sleep to sleep ; I stay awake ever and anon through yoga.'

The spiritual life is not for him who has happily made truce with all the comforts, illusions and delusions of the world, and refuses to face the inconvenient or unpleasant questions, gnawing at the roots of his being. It is for him who sits up in the deep darkness of midnight, facing the loneliness of the desolate universe, and asking in utter earnestness these tremendously simple questions: 'Who am I?' 'Whither do I go from here?' 'What does all this mean?' It is for him who seeks and weeps for something which the whole world of matter cannot give.

When a man stays on the physical level, nothing seems to him so queer and meaningless as the strivings of a spiritual seeker. But those whose illusions have been knocked out, whose sleep of self-hypnosis has been broken, for them spiritual life holds out the most tremendous attraction. Such all-devouring attraction it holds out to the awakened, that for its sake kings and queens have renounced their thrones willingly; people have torn down with their own hands all the bastions of security. They have dried up their flesh in painful but purifying austerity. They have cheerfully submitted their necks to the sword of the tyrant. For the sake of the life of the spirit men have for years on end breathed in and out the name of God, without caring for the profit-and-loss of the world.

No man can escape spiritual life for all time to come. As spirit is inherent in man, so spiritual life also is inherent in man. Nothing in the universe is more inevitable about man than that some day or other his spirit will have full sway over the material part of his being. The degree of this sway of the spirit over the material part of our being, marks the stages of spiritual progress in one's life.

But how is this spiritual progress made ?

Does it come about by chance, or are there ways for working it out?

In finding out how spiritual progress is made we have always to turn to those who have walked all the way from the common human state of their being to the fully illumined state. It is only from the illumined souls, saints and incarnations of God, that we shall learn in this matter. We should never make the mistake of seeking the answer from mere intellectual philosophers, however great and honourable they may be.

In our answer to the question, how is spiritual progress made, we are going to say what we may learn from such teachers of the world.

Generally speaking, there are two sets of teachings on this issue. One set points out what prevents spiritual progress; another, what helps spiritual progress. Both sets of teachings are equally important.

WHAT IMPEDE SPIRITUAL PROGRESS?

What are the factors which impede spiritual progress?

(1) Sri Ramakrishna says with the greatest emphasis, that if there is 'theft in the chamber of attitude', one cannot make spiritual progress. By the words 'theft in the chamber of attitude', he means duplicity of heart, or variance in profession and practice. The person whose thoughts, words, and actions have no relation to one another, has not yet stepped into the precincts of the spiritual life.

(2) A self-despiser cannot make spiritual progress. Under all circumstances, whatever may be one's faults and sins, one must maintain a basic regard for one's essential being. One must also have a confidence in one's capacity to have the full and final illumination.

(3) A man without faith cannot make spiritual progress, for faith is the root and foundation of spiritual life.

(4) He who cultivates the habit of fault-finding cannot make spiritual progress, because this habit fills him with the impurities of other minds, not to mention the impurities he already has.

(5) One who is habitually hurrying and worrying cannot make spiritual progress. Such a person has a state of mind which is not conducive to proper practice of spiritual disciplines such as concentration and meditation.

(6) One who is wedded to a soft life cannot make spiritual progress, for spiritual life is a hard struggle. If a seeker has no inner struggles, he is then perhaps degenerating by making truce with his lower nature. Subjugation of our lower nature does not depend on any freak of chance. It is the result of laborious self-application and practice of prescribed disciplines.

(7) One whose senses are not controlled cannot make spiritual progress. As Śrī Kṛṣṇa says:

'For the mind, which follows in the wake of the wandering senses, carries away his discrimination as a wind (does) a boat on the waters.'³

When discrimination is lost, spiritual progress is no longer possible.

(8) A party of drunkards once wanted to have a boat ride. Heavily and happily drunk they got into a boat. And with all the energy and enthusiasm that alcohol can provide they rowed the whole night singing merry songs. When by the dawn their intoxication wore off, to their utter surprise they found that they had not moved an inch from the place they had started. They had simply forgotten to weigh the anchor.

Those who do not weigh the anchor cannot make spiritual progress. Taking up the anchor in spiritual life means uprooting the ingrained evil tendencies within us through

³ *Bhagavad-gītā*, II. 67

proper ethical culture. The *Kātha-upaniṣad* says:

'He who has not first turned away from wickedness, who is not tranquil and subdued, and whose mind is not at peace, cannot attain the Ātman...'⁴

FIRM ETHICAL FOUNDATION NEEDED

Moral turpitude effectively prevents us from fixing our gaze on the Supreme. With a blurred vision we cannot apprehend the Real. Therefore we find that all the great spiritual masters of the world laid the greatest emphasis on the necessity of fixing the foundation of spiritual life deep into the base of sound ethical culture.

In Hindu religious thought, contrary to what some western savants have erroneously written, ethical culture has given deep attention to the minutiae of human thought, conduct, and action. This is not the occasion to go into the details of the Hindu concept of ethics. We are only here pointing out that for making spiritual progress the aspirant's life and conduct should be grounded in ethical culture. In Sanskrit the word 'dharma' is often used to connote the word ethics. Yājñavalkya, one of the great law-givers of the Hindus, teaches:

'Truthfulness, absence of theft, absence of anger, modesty, purity, intelligence, self-possession, self-control, restraint of the senses, learning—this is declared to be the whole of dharma.'⁵

An aspirant who does not manifest these virtues as strands of his character cannot enter the inner precincts of the spiritual life though he may be wearing a spiritual garb for many years. Such a person, if he wants to make spiritual progress, should apply himself in cultivating these ethical qualities. And these qualities can be mastered through wakeful self-application.

When the aspirant is grounded in ethical

culture, he will spontaneously manifest what Śrī Kṛṣṇa calls, in the *Gītā*, *daivī sampat*, divine attributes. These attributes are as follows:

'Fearlessness, purity of heart, steadfastness in knowledge and yoga, charity, control of senses, *yajna*, reading of the scriptures, austerity, uprightness non-injury, truth, absence of anger, renunciation, tranquillity, absence of calumny, compassion to beings, uncovetousness, gentleness, modesty, absence of fickleness, boldness, forgiveness, fortitude, purity, and absence of pride.'⁶

It will be seen that some of the ethical virtues are included by Śrī Kṛṣṇa as divine qualities and at the same time there are other qualities which are listed among the divine ones. This indicates that without being ethical one cannot be spiritual, but being spiritual is more than being ethical. The one thing that distinguishes the spiritual from the ethical is the awareness of the fact of God or the Ātman. An atheist can be an ethical person but he cannot be a spiritual person in the truest sense of the term. Being spiritual is concerned with the Spirit. A person to be spiritual must not only be ethical but also be emotionally aware that he has a relation to God, or he must have at least an apprehension that there is more to him than his body and mind, which cannot be perceived by sense organs.

EXTREMES OF LIFE TO BE AVOIDED

Extremes of self-indulgence or self-mortification are big obstacles to spiritual life. So Śrī Kṛṣṇa says in the *Gītā*:

'Yoga is not for him who eats too much nor for him who eats too little. It is not for him, O Arjuna, who sleeps too much nor for him who sleeps too little. For him who is temperate in food and recreation, in his effort for work, and in sleep and wakefulness, yoga becomes the destroyer of misery.'⁷

⁴ I. ii. 24

⁵ *Yājñavalkya-smṛti*, III. 66

⁶ XVI. 1-3.

⁷ VI. 16-17.

Yoga means real spiritual progress. Buddha in his famous teachings on the middle path, emphasizes the same truth.

One who tries to overshoot his mark cannot make spiritual progress. There is such a thing as a time factor in spiritual life which has to be respected. It is wrong to ask for an experience before we are prepared for its recognition. In other words, too much preoccupation with and overanxiety for spiritual progress is not conducive to spiritual progress. In the famous book *Philokalia* we have the teaching:

'If a man is desirous of attaining what comes after this—about which it is not timely to speak at present—he must adhere strictly to the following rule:

"Not to seek before its time that which will come in its own time: for the good is no longer good if it be not rightly done." And St. Mark says: "It is not profitable before working at the first practice to know about the second; for knowledge without doing puffeth up but charity edifieth, for it beareth all things."⁸

Sri Ramakrishna teaches:

'...the mother bird doesn't break the shell until the chick inside the egg is matured. The egg is hatched in the fullness of time. It is necessary to practise some spiritual disciplines.'⁹

Sri Ramakrishna further teaches about the efficacy of step-by-step progress:

'As a man begins to learn writing by drawing big scrawls before he tries to master a smaller hand, so a person must acquire the power of mental concentration by first fixing the mind upon forms, and when he has attained success therein, he

may easily fix it upon the formless later on.

'A marksman learns to shoot by first having big objects to shoot at; and as he acquires more and more facility in shooting, he aims more and more easily at the smaller marks on the target. So when the mind has been trained to become fixed on images having form, it is easy for it to become fixed upon things that have no form.'¹⁰

Patañjali teaches:

'*Yama, Niyama, Āsana, Prāṇāyāma, Pratyāhāra, Dhāraṇā, Dhyāna and Samādhi* are the eight limbs of yoga.'¹¹

In the practice of yoga the aspirant should not try to skip over steps in order to reach a higher step. Take, for example, the first discipline, *yama*. Non-killing, truthfulness, non-stealing, continence, non-receiving, are called *yama*. Patañjali calls this discipline *sārva-bhaumā mahāvratāḥ*—universal great vows unbroken by time, place, purpose, and caste rules. Those who have not steadily and correctly practised even the first discipline—*yama*—should not expect to attain *samādhi*, the state of illumination. But, strangely, many persons wanting to be seriously religious, try to do exactly that! To think that this discipline is for common aspirants and not for one like this particular seeker, is sheer egotism, which is the greatest obstacle to spiritual life. As long as he is under such delusion, spiritual progress is not for that person.

This much in regard to negative teachings.

When we say 'spiritual progress is not for such and such a person', we do not mean that there is a particular person who is barred from making any spiritual progress for all time. There is no such case. It is emphasized in these negative teachings that in a certain state of mind spiritual progress

⁸ *Writings From The Philokalia on Prayer of the Heart*, by E. Kadloubovsky and G. E. H. Palmer (Faber & Faber, London, 1951), p. 232. The book is a collection of writings by Fathers of the Eastern Church from the fourth to the fourteenth century.

⁹ *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, tr. by Swami Nikhilananda, (Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 1964), p. 310

¹⁰ *Saying of Sri Ramakrishna* (Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 1938), Saying No. 323, 524.

¹¹ *Yoga-sūtras*, II. 29

is not possible. When that state of mind is changed for the better, the same person who was a victim of many obstacles can make wonderful spiritual progress. This is how it has become possible for sinners to become saints.

Why then have we discussed the negative teachings at this length? Sri Ramakrishna in one of his parables says:

Once a farmer wanted to bring water from a reservoir to his sugarcane field. They do this in the countryside of India with the help of a long wooden contrivance. Water is ejected from the reservoir with the help of that wooden contrivance, which is manually operated. Water passes through a drain connecting the reservoir and the field. Now this farmer ejected the water during the whole day. In the evening he came to see how the field was irrigated. But to his utter surprise he found that the field was as dry as it was before. For not a drop of water had entered the field throughout the whole day. How could this happen? On examination he found that all the water had vanished into the earth through several big rat-holes at the entrance of the field.¹²

All these negative teachings point out the rat-holes which drain away the results of all our spiritual practices. We may work hard but unless these rat-holes are properly closed, the field of our life cannot be spiritually irrigated.

When on self-examination we find that we are not only stagnating but degenerating too—though we have been in spiritual life for long—it is time we make a search for rat-holes in our life and close them properly.

This is one of the most important practical lessons for spiritual life given by Sri Ramakrishna.

POSITIVE STEPS FOR MAKING SPIRITUAL PROGRESS

We now turn to the positive teachings in regard to making spiritual progress.

It is a truism to say that spiritual progress presupposes a start in spiritual life. How does spiritual life start? Each individual's conscious spiritual life may begin in a different way. But there is a general law behind all the varying positions of a start in spiritual life.

It starts with a felt want within, which may be the result of various experiences of life. And this want cannot be satisfied with anything of this empirical world. This is the awakened hunger of the soul, the intimation of the Ātman. It makes one feel the vacuity in the universe in a terrifying manner, notwithstanding all one's possessions and prepossessions. Perforce one is then driven to seek in the undefined wilderness of the unknown a new prop for life.

Swami Vivekananda teaches :

"The chief thing is to *want* God. We want everything except God, because our ordinary wants are supplied by the external world; it is only when our necessities have gone beyond the external world that we want a supply from the internal, from God. So long as our needs are confined within the narrow limits of this physical universe, we cannot have any need for God; it is only when the need is there that the demand will come. Have done with this child's play of the world as soon as you can, and then you will feel the necessity of something beyond the world, and the first step in religion will come."¹³

In this inner situation one is required to believe, for the sake of survival, that behind the universe seen, there is something unseen, which holds and sustains this universe. Within this body there is something

¹² Cf. *Words of the Master*, compiled by Swami Brahmananda (pub. by Udbodhan Office, 1 Udbodhan Lane, Calcutta, 1962) p. 53.

¹³ *The Complete Works* (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Himalayas), Vol. IV (1966), p. 19.

more and greater, which moves both the body and mind.

This compelling inner requirement leads one eventually to an act of faith, that there is a God and that only through seeing Him and being in and for Him alone, can life attain its meaning and fulfilment. Also that there must be a way of seeing Him, because He has already been seen by others.

This act of faith, to start with, is oftener than not what is called a 'blind faith'. We cannot have a 'seeing faith' without having seen. At the beginning we require a working faith for spiritual life. Strictly speaking, even the adoption of a working faith is not an actual start in spiritual life, even in the relative sense. That may be said to be the actual start in spiritual life, when we turn away from all evil ways of life and resort to that which is good.

We must remember it for all times as we have hinted before, that no one can attain the spiritual by-passing the ethical. This is why every religion teaches its ethical code. But it is possible for a morally flawless man to be spiritually illiterate. For gaining spiritual literacy one has to do much groundwork in a well-directed manner.

The aspirant does this ground-work in his own mind through the creative cultivation of an enlightened code of living. He conserves his mental energy by philosophically accepting certain proven inevitables of life, such as disease, old age, death, change of fortunes, and the operative force of the law of karma. He sees the futility and harmfulness of harbouring any kind of pride of possession, pedigree or accomplishment. This helps him to attain a degree of inner calmness. He converts ethical precepts into conduct and trains himself to be scrupulous, conscientious, detached, frank, straightforward, temperate, free from ill-will to anyone, and self-possessed.

He is no longer easily pushed around by outer forces. He stands firm on his own

ground and transmutes his power of faith into a dynamic inner force. Through cultivating conscientiousness he throws out from his life the grip of wrong thoughts, words, or deeds. He utilizes even the power of fear to ward off all wrong thoughts and actions, and gradually attains fearlessness, a quality which is so much needed to be truly spiritual. He energetically discards what is wrong and more energetically adopts what is right. Now, being in a position to cultivate his developing power of insight, he better understands the true nature of things and thus cuts the roots of delusion and sorrow.

GUIDANCE OF GURU IMPORTANT

No doubt all the religions and teachers have laid great emphasis on ethical culture. This has led some people to equate the ethical with the spiritual. As we have noted, however ethically flawless one may be, one will still be moving about on the periphery of the spiritual world, without knowing how to enter it.

In these days when cheap paperbacks of the world's religious classics are easily available, and what may be called 'window-shopping in religion' is fashionable, the truth should not be lost sight of that there can be study of comparative religion but there cannot be anything like comparative practice of religion. Study of comparative religion is good for the intellectual stimulation or moral edification of those who are well grounded in their own faiths. But just as a person cannot fly in two or more planes at any one time, for reaching anywhere earlier, so, for making spiritual progress, he cannot practise more than one religion at a time. In other words, for making spiritual progress there must be wholesouled acceptance of and commitment to the disciplines of one faith as elucidated by authentic scriptures and taught by the accepted competent teachers of that faith.

The best religion for any person who is earnest about practising disciplines for making spiritual progress, is the religion in which he is born. But there are many persons who are, so to say, not born in any religion. They may be children of agnostic families or of families in which religion is not practised at all. Such children are left to themselves to find out their own faith. Or there may be persons who even after sincere efforts have failed to find spiritual inspiration from the faith in which they were born. In such cases, adopting another faith may be an imperative need. But in every case, for making spiritual progress the seeker must practise the disciplines taught in the faith to which he belongs. One must emotionally belong to one faith alone, though he may intellectually appreciate other faiths and have reverence for them.

Sri Ramakrishna teaches :

'If people feel sincere longing, they will find that all paths lead to God. But one should have *nishtha*, single-minded devotion. It is also described as chaste and unswerving devotion to God. It is like a tree with only one trunk shooting straight up. Promiscuous devotion is like a tree with five branches. Such was the single-minded devotion of the gopis to Krishna that they didn't care to look at anyone but the Krishna they had seen at Vrindavan—the Shepherd Krishna, be-decked with a garland of yellow wild-flowers and wearing a peacock feather on His crest. At the sight of Krishna at Mathura with a turban on His head and dressed in royal robes, the gopis pulled down their veils. They would not look at His face. "Who is this man?", they said. "Should we violate our chaste love for Krishna by talking to him?"

'The devotion of the wife to her husband is also an instance of unswerving love. She feeds her brothers-in-law as well, and looks after their comforts, but she has a special relationship with her husband. Likewise, one may have that single-

minded devotion to one's religion; but one should not on that account hate other faiths. On the contrary, one should have a friendly attitude toward them.¹⁴

Without this chaste and unswerving devotion to God one cannot really make any headway in spiritual life. Again, it is important that this unswerving faith also be devoted to wholeheartedly cultivating the essentials of the faith. By mere study of scriptures, one may have clarification of ideas, sometimes confusion also, but what is needed for growing spiritually is diving deep. Instructing a monk, Sri Ramakrishna said:

'Dive deep; one does not get the precious gems by merely floating on the surface. God is without form no doubt; but He also has form. By meditating on God with form one speedily acquires devotion; then one can meditate on the formless God. It is like throwing a letter away, after learning its contents, and then setting out to follow its instructions.¹⁵

Śrī Kṛṣṇa teaches in the *Gītā*:

'He who, setting aside the injunctions of the scriptures, acts under the impulse of desire, attains not to perfection, nor happiness nor the goal supreme.

'So let the scriptures be your authority in ascertaining what ought to be done and what ought not to be done. Having known what is said in the injunctions of the scripture, you should act here.¹⁶

About how to bring the teachings of the scriptures into the stream of life for becoming spiritually transformed, Sri Ramakrishna taught:

'There are many scriptures like the Vedas. But one cannot realize God without austerity and spiritual discipline. "God cannot be found in the six systems, the Vedas, or the Tantra."

'But one should learn the contents of the scriptures and then act according to their injunctions. A man lost a letter. He

¹⁴ *Gospel*, p. 158

¹⁵ *ibid.* p. 299.

¹⁶ XVI. 23, 24.

couldn't remember where he had left it. He began to search for it with a lamp. After two or three people had searched, the letter was at last found. The message in the letter was: "Please send us five seers of *sandesh* and a piece of wearing-cloth." The man read it and then threw the letter away. There was no further need of it; now all he had to do was to buy the five seers of *sandesh* and the piece of cloth.

'Better than reading is hearing, and better than hearing is seeing. One understands the scriptures better by hearing them from the lips of the guru or of a holy man. Then one doesn't have to think about their non-essential part. Hanuman said: "Brother, I don't know much about the phase of the moon or the position of the stars. I just contemplate Rama."

'But seeing is far better than hearing. Then all doubts disappear. It is true that many things are recorded in the scriptures; but all these are useless without the direct realization of God, without devotion to His Lotus Feet, without purity of heart. The almanac forecasts the rainfall of the year. But not a drop of water will you get by squeezing the almanac. No, not even a drop.

'How long should one reason about the texts of the scriptures? So long as one does not have direct realization of God. How long does the bee buzz about? As long as it is not sitting on a flower. No sooner does it light on a flower and begin to sip honey than it keeps quiet.

'But you must remember another thing. One may talk even after the realization of God. But then one talks only of God and of Divine Bliss. It is like a drunkard's crying, "Victory to the Divine Mother." He can hardly say anything else on account of his drunkenness. You can notice, too, that a bee makes an indistinct humming sound after having sipped the honey from a flower.

'The *jnani* reasons about the world through the process of "*Neti, neti*", "Not this, not this". Reasoning in this way, he at last comes to a state of Bliss, and that is Brahman. What is the nature of a

jnani? He behaves according to scriptural injunctions."¹⁷

But one difficulty an earnest seeker is likely to face in following the injunctions of the scriptures. There are so many scriptures even in one religion like Hinduism—sometimes one contradicting the injunctions of the other—that an aspirant is puzzled as to which instructions to follow. This difficulty may be minimized by choosing one's path according to one's inner inclinations as directed by an authentic teacher.

It must never be forgotten that life is proverbially short and uncertain, and inner and outer impediments on the spiritual path are many. So it makes no sense, serves no purpose to waste time in haphazard, wilful and futile experiments. Here exactly arises the need of the guidance and help of a competent spiritual teacher. The Upaniṣad says: 'One who has a teacher knows.'¹⁸ Hinduism lays great emphasis on the need of being guided by a guru, teacher. It is also said that when a seeker really feels the need of a teacher, he himself comes to the seeker.

About the guru, one devotee asked Sri Ramakrishna, 'Sir, is it necessary to have a guru?' The Master replied, 'Yes, many need a guru. But a man must have faith in the guru's words. He succeeds in spiritual life by looking on his guru as God Himself . . .'¹⁹

Sri Ramakrishna teaches elsewhere:

'Satchidananda alone is the Guru. If a man in the form of a guru awakens spiritual consciousness in you, then know for certain that it is God the Absolute who has assumed that human form for your sake. The guru is like a companion who leads you by the hand. After the realization of God, one loses the distinction between the guru and the disciple.'²⁰

'It is Satchidananda that comes to us in

¹⁷ *Gospel*, 430-1.

¹⁸ *Chāndogya-upaniṣad*, VI. 14.2

¹⁹ *Gospel*, p. 179.

²⁰ *ibid*, 152.

the form of the guru. If a man is initiated by a human guru, he will not achieve anything if he regards his guru as a mere man. The guru should be regarded as the direct manifestation of God. Only then can the disciple have faith in the mantra given by the guru. Once a man has faith he achieves all.²¹

In answer to a devotee's question: 'Sir, what is the way?' Sri Ramakrishna said:

'Faith in the guru's words. One attains God by following the guru's instructions step by step. It is like reaching an object by following the trail of a thread.'²²

A seeker is, however, free to choose his

teacher after duly testing him. But after accepting a person as teacher, the seeker must follow his spiritual instructions implicitly, for reasons explained above by Sri Ramakrishna. Otherwise, like the patient who takes his own medicine by the side of the one prescribed by the doctor, he may land himself in difficulty.

A seeker should not take spiritual instructions from more than one teacher, unless he is eager to be confused. The seeker has to learn about the methods of practising spiritual disciplines from the teacher. The teacher not only gives him direction, but also helps him on the way. In other subsidiary matters, he may take instructions from other worthy persons.

²¹ *ibid.* 233.

²² *ibid.* 483.

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. References: Questions: 1, p. 591; 2, p. 784; 3, p. 785.

The words quoted in 'Onward For Ever!' are from *The Complete Works*, Vol. VIII (1959), pp. 26-7.

On the 15th of this month, India will be celebrating the twentysixth anniversary of her independence. She has set sublime goals before herself and made some headway towards them. But there seems to be considerable colonial hangover in our thinking. There seems to be great confusion about how the goals of economic and social amelioration are to be gained. Independence to us means self-reliance, strength, and manly

endeavour. It is not that we are trying to advocate any particular 'ism' here. Our and our readers' time and energies are too precious to be spent disputing over labels. Any ism is all right so long as the people learn to stand on their feet, take the responsibility on their own shoulders, and look the world in the eye. That is what we learn from some of the great national heroes—Vivekananda, Tilak, and Gandhi. To some our analysis may appear negative and simplistic. But we do not believe in shutting our eyes to our mistakes. They must be seen, exposed, and corrected. Otherwise we stagnate and degenerate. Our purpose is to tell the people and the leaders to become self-reliant and manly, and to point out that the true mission of India lies beyond the earthly goals of economics and material advancement.

Mahendranath Gupta or 'M' is very dear to every reader of the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* or its Bengali original *Śrī-Śrī-Rāma-kṛṣṇa-kathāmṛta* (in five volumes). Some details of 'M's' first few meetings with Sri Ramakrishna—so fascinatingly presented by 'M' in the first chapter of the *Gospel*—are known to many. Swami Prabhananda, a monk of the Ramakrishna Order, here concentrates on the first meeting and brings together some more material from other published sources to provide the psychological background of 'M' at the time of the meeting.

The *Bhagavad-gītā* is a much discussed scripture and warrantably so. Its profundity and universality provoke and sustain repeated discussion and reflection. Śrī Kṛṣṇa, its Teacher, was a remarkably rounded spiritual genius and the *Bhagavad-gītā*, His soul's song, has all the characteristics of that Divine Musician. The impersonality and abstraction in the teachings of the major Upaniṣads—though the teaching was taking on personality and concreteness in the *Śvetāśvatara*—have been beautifully turned into an easily comprehensible personal-impersonal, practice-oriented religion in the *Gītā*. To the *Gītā* belongs the great credit of wiping out the demarcations between the so-called sacred and secular. According to the *Gītā*: 'To labour is to pray. To conquer is to renounce. Life is itself religion. To have and to hold is as stern a trust as to quit and to avoid.' Rightly has the *Gītā* been accorded an honoured place among the

prasthāna-traya, the three authentic scriptures of Vedānta Philosophy.

In '*Bhagavad-gītā—A Philosophy of Cosmic Consolidation*', Dr. K. B. Ramakrishna Rao makes an offbeat approach to the central message of the *Gītā*. He says that the *Gītā* provides 'a perspective which Reality presents of Itself and of the constituent elements including us, the humans, and is not the estimation of Reality by a constituent such as a human being'. In such a perspective all conflicts are resolved and all opposites reconciled. The author incidentally discusses the significance of *yoga* as taught by the *Gītā*, and answers the objections that the *Gītā* is pantheistic or fatalistic.

Dr. K. B. Ramakrishna Rao, M.A., Ph. D., is well known to our readers. He is the Professor of Hindu Philosophy, Mysore University, Manasa Gangotri, Mysore. The concluding portion of the article will appear in our next issue.

Spiritual aspirants everywhere would be well advised to check their conduct and experiences with those of the saints and sages who have successfully walked the narrow and arduous path of the inner life. Their 'footprints' are preserved for posterity in the records of their lives and in the authentic religious scriptures. In '*On Making Spiritual Progress*', the first instalment of which is offered to our readers in this issue, Swami Budhananda maps out this inner journey in the light of the lives and authentic teachings of great saints and world-teachers.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVES: A SELECTION OF ESSAYS: BY PROF. D. M. DATTA. Published by Bharati Bhavan, Patna, 1972, Pages 184, Price Rs. 20.00.

Professor D. M. Datta is not a stranger to the philosophical world. The author of *The Six Ways of Knowing* is a profound scholar who knew Indian thought as intimately as the Western thought. In the present volume six papers cover problems of logic and metaphysics, five deal with religion and ethics, three are about society and culture, and two approach the question of India's debt to other lands.

Professor Datta pleads for the recognition of the limits of human knowledge and logical thought (p. 17). Arguing for an objective philosophy, he rightly draws our attention to a belief in verbal testimony as a necessary presupposition (pp. 23-4). The sixth paper presents a brilliant rejection of radical pluralism.

In the second section, Prof. Datta argues that religion is not a dogmatic way of life, but a pursuit of truth. He defends on rational grounds the use of symbols in religion. There is an interesting paper in the volume showing that the Advaita Vedanta gives due importance to the outer life in the world (p. 91). In the paper 'Philosophical Basis of Social Revolution' there is a valid defence of a moral non-violent revolution. Another paper warns against sectarian religiosity (p. 139).

We wish that the other papers of Prof. Datta lying scattered in various journals are similarly made available in the form of another volume.

DR. P. S. SASTRI

NARADA'S WAY OF DIVINE LOVE, THE BHAKTI SUTRAS: TRANSLATED WITH A COMMENTARY BY SWAMI PRABHAVANANDA, Published by Vedanta Press, Hollywood, California, 1971, pp. 176, Price \$ 4.95.

Narada's *Bhakti-sutras*, eightyfour in number, have been rendered into English and explained very clearly in this book. The *sutras* (aphorisms) are divided into nine sections and dealt with in as many chapters, with headings such as 'Supreme Love Defined', 'Renunciation and Self-surrender', 'Exemplars of Divine Love', 'The Highest Goal of Human Life', 'How to Attain Supreme Love', 'Seek Holy Company' and so forth. At the end there is a very useful glossary explaining all the technical terms occurring in the book. Christopher Isherwood has written the Introduction to this book.

An important feature of the book is the number of quotations from other sacred books to elucidate the import of the *sutras*. The author has drawn freely from his wide range of studies and has cited passages from the Upanishads, the *Gita*, *Srimad Bhagavatam*, Sri Sankara's writings, especially his *Vivekachudamani*, the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* and many non-Hindu scriptures as well. Several anecdotes are also given. They serve to enliven the exposition which may otherwise look rather dry and even dreary.

There are, however, two corrections to be made in the book. Narada refers to the four paths, *karma*, *bhakti*, *dhyana*, and *jnana*, and expresses his preference for the second. Such preference is easily intelligible. It is an accepted principle that one can have preferences though one could have no exclusions. When such an easy explanation is possible it is unnecessary to go in for a far-fetched one. The author seeks to defend the preference by making out that *bhakti* does not mean the path of devotion but the ultimate and which is union with Brahman. He writes (p. 67): '...bhakti has two meanings—the realized goal and the path which leads to the goal.' *Bhakti*, as all religious teachers have understood the term, means only the path of devotion. Nowhere, so far as we know, has *bhakti* been identified with the goal, namely, union with Brahman. Nor is there any point in comparing *bhakti* in the sense of the realized goal, with *karma*, *dhyana* and *jnana* in the sense of paths. Only if *bhakti* is also understood as a path is there sense in comparing it with the other three paths.

On page 71 the author writes: 'In one of the Upanishads we read that a man of realization becomes a "Nativadi", that is, he becomes humble and does not assert himself.' This is incorrect. It is said in the *Chhandogya* (VII. xv. 4): 'Verily Spirit is all this; one who sees thus and knows thus becomes a high-talker (ativadi).' Sankara explains 'high-talker' as one who becomes capable of talking of those things which are beyond these already mentioned, beginning with 'name' and ending with 'life'. There is no word like 'Nativadi', nor does the word mean one who is humble and does not assert himself.

These are, however, the very minor lapses. The book has outstanding merit. It is therefore a very useful addition to the extant literature on the subject. We wholeheartedly recommend the study of the book to all lovers of Hindu culture.

M. K. VENKATARAMA IYER

[Note: Though the learned reviewer has the right to point out what according to him are mistakes in the book, and though we are not fond of raising controversies, still we should like to say that the author is on safe grounds regarding the 'two corrections' suggested by the reviewer. In his statement about *bhakti's* being both the path and the realized goal, the author, we believe, has the full support of Narada in his aphorisms 25 and 26. The *bhakti* that is the path is the *gauni* or lower one, and the *'bhakti* that is the goal is the *para* or supreme love for God.

About the second correction pointed out by the reviewer, we will only say that *nativadi* occurs in *Mundaka-upanishad*, III. i. 4. —Ed.]

SANSKRIT :—ESSAYS ON THE VALUE OF THE LANGUAGE AND THE LITERATURE : BY DR. V. RAGHAVAN, published by The Sanskrit Education Society, 14, East Mada St., Mylapore, Madras-4, 1972, pp. 181, price Rs. 6/-.

This is a compilation of papers written by the learned author on various aspects of Sanskrit, highlighting its rich legacy in all the disciplines of human knowledge and advocating its promotion to the status of the national language of India. Dr. Raghavan has discussed quite objectively the problem of the lingua franca in India, and suggested Sanskrit in its simplified form, written in Devanagari script, as the most reasonable and the least disputable solution. In his opinion the Sanskritized Hindi—and not the Persianized Hindi—bears close affinity with the regional languages of the South as well as of the North. The growing tendency to amalgamate Sanskrit vocables with regional languages including Hindi, could serve as a stepping-stone and could facilitate the gradual adoption of Sanskrit as the national language. The controversy over the issue of Dravidian languages versus Hindi or Sanskrit has also been analysed and a good many misgivings have been dispelled. The author has aptly delineated the overwhelming influence of Sanskrit literature, both sacred and secular, on the literatures of the Occident and the Orient. This language, as the earliest branch of the Indo-European family, has of late assumed a special philological significance and made it imperative on all to study it—more particularly its Vedic form—so as to enable men and women to appreciate properly the gradual development of the languages and religions of the populations of vast regions of Europe and Asia.

The compilation is really a valuable handbook

for those who love Sanskrit as well as for those who harbour in their minds certain unresolved doubts with regard to its relevancy to the modern life of the Indian nation. It offers a guiding light to the Government and the people of India to move forward in a direction where a better national integration can be ensured, where by rightly understanding the background, the various social problems can be better treated, and where solutions appropriate to the Indian milieu can be found out with far greater ease.

SRI DHARMENDRA DEV

THE THREE FOUNTAINHEADS OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY : BY N. V. JOSHI, published by Somaiya Publications Pvt. Ltd., 172 Naigaum Cross Rd., Dadar, Bombay-14, 1972, pp. 146, Rs. 25/-.

It is a common belief among the serious-minded in our country that Ultimate Truth and Reality, or the Supreme Brahman, cannot be realized through 'reason' but only through love, devotion, and non-self-centred *bhakti*. When this intense devotional attitude is translated into the technical language of metaphysics, it reads thus: Logic (or epistemology, to use a more comprehensive term) is incompetent to solve the deeper problem of ontology. And this is exactly what Dr. N. V. Joshi is out to demonstrate in his closely packed metaphysical brochure under review. In his excellent Introduction Dr. Joshi surveys certain outstanding trends in Indian as well as European philosophy to convince the reader that ontology is pre-eminent and that epistemology and axiology are of very minor significance in any true metaphysical system. The author surveys ancient Indian sacred scriptures, including the *prasthanatraya* (the three authentic texts on Vedanta philosophy) to demonstrate his main contention that no amount of logical subtlety could ever reveal the nature of Truth—that is, ontological Reality. We agree. But the brilliant exposition of the position taken up by the author is presented to the reader in a series of care-perience of *sakshathara*, realization, 'the contradictions—Well, if this is not logic, what else is it? To disprove the supremacy of logic, the author has to argue logically. Why then should one decry logic?

In the second place, to one who has had the experience of *sakshathara*, realization, 'the contradictions and illusions' to which Dr. Joshi draws the reader's attention in the last and most original chapter in the book, appear in an entirely different light. For him the Ultimate ontological Reality is both with form and without form; it is One and many at once; it is static and dynamic at once.

The fact is that one has to transcend not only logic and axiology, but ontology too—in fact all metaphysics, if one is to have a glimpse of that which is Real. Mere philosophy is impotent to guide one in the search for That.

However, this is an excellent brochure and will suggest new lines of thought to the serious-minded reader. The price is exorbitant for a thin brochure of about 150 pages.

PROF. P. S. NAIDU

OUR GANDHIAN HERITAGE : By R. N. BOSE, Bookland Private Limited, Calcutta-6, 1970, pages 111, Price Rs. 15.00.

Gandhi the politician may be a controversial figure; but Gandhi the individual is always an inspiring figure. Steeped in Indian thought and culture, Gandhi by his writings offers the flowering of the Indian Renaissance which was set in motion by Swami Vivekananda. The thought-provoking writings of Gandhi offer a stimulus to the modern mind; and the living ideas in those writings are capable of offering a moral satisfaction even in this sophisticated age. Sri R. N. Bose has done well in exploring some of the ideas of Gandhi and in persuading the reader to believe that these ideas can still be of immense help. Sri Bose has rightly emphasized the inseparability of theory and practice found in the writings and life of Gandhi. This is a book which must be read by everyone, particularly by those who believe that Gandhi's greatness lies only in his political philosophy. The thirteen chapters cover a wide range of subjects. There are chapters comparing Gandhi with Schweitzer, Einstein, and the great Americans. These are the best chapters in the book.

DR. P. S. SASTRI

SHRIMA—DARSHAN : VOLS. IX AND X, BY SWAMI NITYATMANANDA, Published by Sri Ramakrishna SriMa Prakashan Trust, 579, Sector 18-B, Chandigarh, Price Rs. 8/- each.

Shrima-Darshan is a book in several volumes whose origin is the day-to-day diary of one who kept close company with Mahendra Nath Gupta ('M'), the well-known lay disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. The great value of the books lies in the fact that the sayings of a man of God are recorded here for the benefit of all who have an inclination to spirituality. No pains have been spared to make them an authentic record. The writer received direction in this regard from the saint himself who,

in compiling *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, set an example of how to keep such a record.

Readers will feel elevated by reading these volumes. God and God alone is to be realized. Nothing else can be the goal of humanity. All our daily acts should be turned towards its achievement. This is the substance of all the volumes. Therefore repetition of the same ideas in different perspectives can never be redundant, at least not to those who are on the spiritual path. The printing and get-up are both good.

SWAMI JYOTIRUPANANDA

A SOURCE BOOK OF ADVAITA VEDANTA : BY ELIOT DEUTSCH AND J.A.B. VAN BUITENEN, Published by The University Press of Hawaii, Honolulu, 1971, pp. 335, price \$ 15.00.

This book consists of three parts. Part I gives an account of the background in tradition of Advaita Vedanta. This background is dealt with under three subdivisions: Revelation, Recollection, and System. Selections from the *mantras* of the Veda and the Upanishads are given under Revelation. Selections from the *Bhagavad-gita* are given under Recollection and a topical analysis of the *Vedanta-sutras* is given under the third head, viz., System.

The philosophical and cultural background of Advaita Vedanta is dealt with under Part II. It comprises three chapters dealing respectively with 'Early History and Cultural Values of Vedanta', the 'Common Philosophical Problems' discussed in the several systems of Indian thought and Sri Sankara's 'Criticism of Rival Systems'. The sources of Advaita Vedanta proper are given under Part III. Selections from Gaudapada, Sankara, Sureswara, Mandana Misra, Padmapada, Vachaspati Misra, Sarvajnatman, Vimuktatman, Vidyaranya, Madhusudana Saraswati, Sadananda, Dharma Raja, and Appaiya Dikshita are given *in extenso*. The concluding chapter gives a succinct summary of the central ideas of Advaita Vedanta under suitable heads such as 'Metaphysics', 'Meta-psychological', 'Epistemological', and 'Axiological'. A useful bibliography and index cum glossary bring up the rear of the book.

Between its two covers this book makes accessible to the reader all the relevant texts that are needed to form a correct idea of Advaita Vedanta in all its aspects. The materials have been selected with much care and in a very painstaking manner. To the student whose knowledge of Sanskrit is not equal to what is needed to read and understand the texts in the original, this compilation is bound to prove very useful.

A few corrections, however, seem to be necessary. Differing from the previous translations which in the author's opinion are too much influenced by Sankara's interpretation, the author translates the *Chandogya* text *vacharambhanam vikaro; nama-dheyam ... satyam* as follows: 'Breathing is seizing with Speech; the Name is *satyam*.' (p. 11) Defending his interpretation, the author proceeds: According to Sankara's interpretation any product is no more than a verbal handle, a name given to it; only the cause is real. The produced phenomenal world is not quite as real as its cause. This is the basic assumption of Sankara. The interpretation here presented is that the process of creation proceeds by naming entities by speech. These entities are names and forms. The statement, 'the name is *satyam*' is best understood in the context of similar speculations on the name *satyam*.

This interpretation is far-fetched and quite out of accord with the sense conveyed by the chapter as a whole. The true sense of the passage is as follows: The usual distinction that we make between cause and effect has its origin in the practical needs of everyday life. It is therefore empirical. Language which is intended to serve the practical needs of life confirms this distinction by using different words, namely, cause and effect. Hence the distinction between cause and effect is a mere matter of words.

Other passages such as *Brihadaranyaka* IV. iii.1 and IV. iii.22 are also incorrectly interpreted.

Speaking of Sankara's commentary on the *Gita*, the author observes that to Sankara the text was not at all congenial (p. 34). Again he says: 'The *Bhagavadgita* is somewhat of an embarrassment for Advaita Vedanta Sankara, accordingly, must strain the text rather considerably in order to bring it into harmony with his advaitic principles.' (p. 213) A review is not the place to discuss the correctness or otherwise of Sankara's interpretation of the *Gita*. It is enough to say that his interpretation alone can do justice to all the important passages in the *Gita*. He can reconcile differences on the principle of *adhikari-bheda*.

We, however, recommend the book to all who wish to acquaint themselves with the basic texts of Advaita Vedanta.

SRI M. K. VENKATARAMA IYER

THE BHAGAVAD GITA: BY T. L. VASWANI, Published by Gita Publishing House, 10 Sadhu Vaswani Path, Poona 1, pp. 246, Price Rs. 18.50.

Sadhu Vaswani's approach to things has always been one of pragmatic spirituality and his under-

standing and exposition of the *Gita* is wholly life-oriented. He steers clear of all philosophical interpretations and studies what message the scripture has to the common man who has faith in the Divine and seeks to realize something of this Divine Truth in his own existence. He observes: 'True philosophy is communion with the Atman,—the Creative Life—the Infinite that flows into and fertilizes the finite, the Eternal that makes the historic process of time rich in meaning. The *Gita* speaks of the Infinite, the Creative Life. Not without reason has the *Gita* been called "Ananta Gita",—the Song of the Infinite. It is a song of freedom, a song of inner liberation. And out of the inner are the issues of outer life.' (p. 18)

Compiled from his discourses and writings, this translation of the *Gita* with notes and explanations anticipates the difficulties of the modern reader and enables him to enter into the spirit of the ancient text.

M. P. PANDIT

STUDIES IN THE PROTO-HISTORY OF INDIA: BY D. P. MISRA, Published by Orient Longman Ltd., New Delhi 1, 1971, pp. 200, Price Rs. 20/-.

This critical survey of the origins and earlier phases of culture of the Indo-Aryans by Dr. D. P. Misra, D.Litt., former Vice-Chancellor of Saugar University and a great scholar and patron in the research on ancient Indian history and culture, is a useful addition to our existing store of knowledge in the field.

The book with a useful index, select bibliography, four maps and six chapters brings out clearly before the reading public all the important aspects of ancient Indian Proto-History. The approach of the book is made clear from the manner in which the six chapters are named. They are 'Devaloka' or the Original Home of the Indo-Europeans; 'Pitri-loka' or the Home of the Indo-Iranians; The 'Devasura' War and the Migration of the Asuras to the Valley of the Indus—The Early Aryans; The Rigvedic Aryans or the Bharatas; and The Kurus.

An attempt has been made in this book to interpret our Proto-History in the light of accounts left in the Vedas, *puranas* and the epics which orthodox historians usually do not take seriously. The learned author has done it very successfully and also brought the researches of foreign and Indian scholars to bear on the subject.

We recommend the book to the scholarly world.

DR. PARESH NATH MUKHERJEE

BOOKS RECEIVED

SELECTED VACANAS OF SRI SIDDHALING-ESVARA : TR. BY PROF. ARMANDO MENEZES, SHRI S. M. ANGADI AND SHRI SANGANNA KUPPAST, Published by Shri H. R. Mahantia, General Secretary, Sri Siddhalingesvara, Fifth Centenary Celebrations Committee, Bangalore 9, Rs. 1.50.

SRI AUROBINDO : BY HARIPADA MONDAL, Published by Calcutta Publishers, 14, Ramanath Majumdar Street, Calcutta 9, Rs. 2.50.

SRI VENKATESWARARCHANASHATAKAM (Rs. 2.00) and **ANDHRABHAGAVATANUVADA** (Rs. 6.00) : Both by Shiromani Sannidhanam Suryanarayana-sastri, Published the author, 44 Zeera, Secunderabad.

NEWS AND REPORTS

RAMAKRISHNA VEDANTA SOCIETY OF SALISBURY (Rhodesia)

REPORT TO SEPTEMBER 1972

The Ramakrishna Mission's message was first brought to Africa by Swami Adyananda, about 40 years ago, followed later by Swami Ghanananda, before he settled permanently in London. But the first permanent establishment has come with Swami Nisreyasananda, who visited East, Central, and West Africa in 1954 for several months, and later returned, on the request of a Study-Circle in Salisbury in 1959, where his stay was gradually extended till in 1965 he was granted Rhodesian citizenship. Meanwhile the Circle was legally established as the United Cultural Institute, which continues with the recent addition (Aug. 20, 1972) of the Ramakrishna Vedanta Society, with rooms at 35, Rhodes Avenue.

The Swami's lectures and classes until this event, were held in private homes, and he was for almost 13 years the house-guest of a devotee. Gradually study groups have been started in several towns in Zambia, Malawi, Republic of South Africa and Mocambique; and several Ramakrishna Vedanta Centres. The Swami is Spiritual Director of all these; but the management is almost entirely in the hands of the local devotees. Even at the Salisbury Centre he held no official position until about six years ago when he accepted the post of Secretary. He strictly follows Vivekananda's motto: 'Preach only universal principles, not the personality'—meaning thereby Vivekananda's own Teacher, Sri Ramakrishna. All discourses are based on the Upanishads, the *Gita*, etc., and books by Indian

and Western authors on Vedantic topics. Vivekananda is often quoted, as, e.g., 'There is no mystery in what I teach—It is wrong to blindly believe. You must exercise your own reason and see whether these things (spiritual realizations) happen or not.'

In the two years since last Report (*P.B.*: Apl. 1971) the Salisbury classes continued as usual, and the Ramakrishna Vedanta Society was installed in an 800-sq.-ft. extension of the house on 35 Rhodes Avenue, with library of over 400 books. Weekly class is held here, Saturday afternoons. During these two years the Swami visited Lourenco Marques and other important towns in Rhodesia and South Africa. Zambian towns were visited only once, due to visa difficulties.

In South Africa, among his many activities, the Swami participated in the sanctifying of the Cultural Hall of the Lakshminarayana temple at Lonasia, which is associated with the local Ramakrishna Vedanta Society and for which the Swami had previously laid the foundation stone. He is also sharing in the formal opening of the temple proper. He has been similarly associated with temples in Pretoria and the Ashrama and Hall of the Ramakrishna Vivekananda Study Circle in Pietermaritzburg.

In addition to all this work, the Swami travelled in India, for over seven months from Dec. 23, 1970, accompanied by a few South African friends. While here, he secured two 16 mm. films showing the lives of Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Sarada Devi. Through the friends who accompanied him, he is also able to use about 600 coloured slides taken in India and Ceylon. On his way back from India, the Swami spent over six weeks in Mauritius.

SWAMI NIKHILANANDA

AN OBITUARY

With a heavy heart, we record the passing away of Swami Nikhilananda, the founder-leader of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, New York, U.S.A. on 21st July 1973, at the Thousand Island Park Retreat of the Center where he had gone only a few days earlier. The Swami had been ailing for quite some time. He was 78.

Swami Nikhilananda, known in his pre-monastic life as Dinesh Chandra Das Gupta, was born in Noakhali, now in Bangladesh, and was educated at Dacca and the University of Calcutta. As a college student, he had the privilege of meeting Swamis Brahmananda and Premananda, two of the prominent direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, during their visit to Dacca in the winter of 1915-16. As a young man he had been actively associated with revolutionary groups; but this meeting with the great souls had a profound influence on his mind. The following year he went to Jayrambati and was initiated by Sri Sarada Devi, the Holy Mother.

During 1916-18, he was interned for a period of two years in consequence of his earlier revolutionary inclinations. After his release, he worked for a time in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, but left the job soon after and went to the Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati. During his stay there, he joined the Order in 1922. He had his initiation into *sannyāsa* in 1924 from Swami Sarada-

nanda, the then General Secretary of the Order and a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. His stay at Mayavati was immensely productive in a literary way. He wrote the first comprehensive *Life of Sri Ramakrishna* in English and translated some works on Advaita from Sanskrit. From 1929 to 1931 he spent two years with the Study Circle at Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama, Mysore, during which period he translated the *Māṇḍūkya-kārikā* and the *Dr̥g-Dr̥śya-Viveka*.

The Swami was sent to the U.S.A. in 1931. He founded the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center in New York in 1933 and was its spiritual leader till a few months before his passing away. Some of his literary contributions are well-known; for instance, his translations of *Śrī Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa Kathāmṛita* under the title of the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, of the Upaniṣads, and of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. His original works include biographies of Swami Vivekananda, the Holy Mother, and also *Hinduism: Its Meaning for the Liberation of the Spirit*. He was well-known as a versatile speaker and prolific writer in the U.S.A. He was a member of the American Philosophical Association.

In his death the Order has lost a brilliant scholar who made a considerable contribution to its literature. May his soul rest in peace!

