

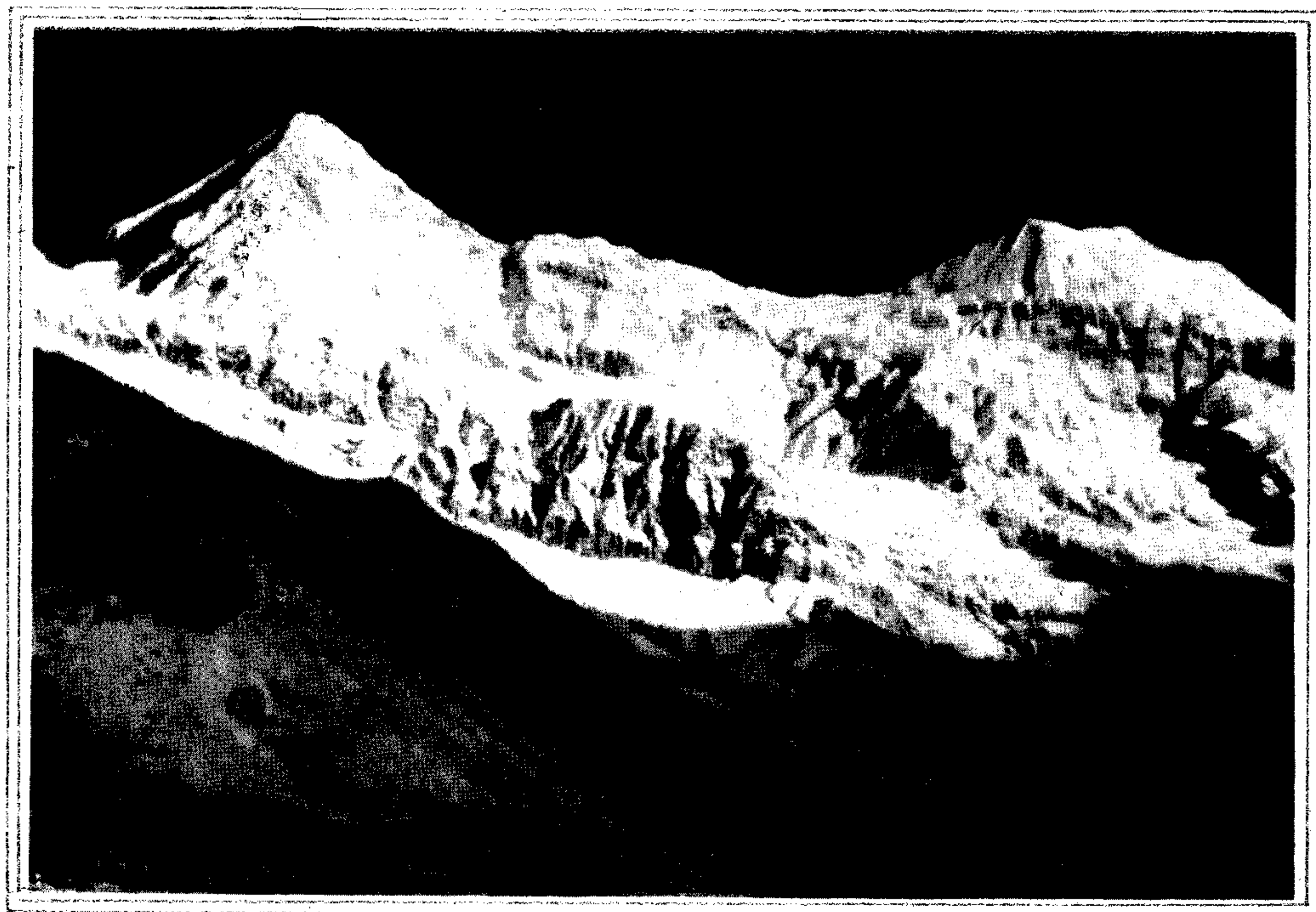
# Prabuddha Bharata

OR

## AWAKENED INDIA

VOL. LXXIX

DECEMBER 1974



ADVAITA ASHRAMA, MAYAVATI  
HIMALAYAS



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Morning Sun over Nandakhat, Central Himalayas

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*Information for subscribers, contributors and  
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# Prabuddha Bharata

VOL. LXXIX

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

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## SRI RAMAKRISHNA REMINISCES

'It is not necessary for all to practise great austerity. But I went through great suffering. I used to lie on the ground with my head resting on a mound for a pillow. I hardly noticed the passing of the days. I only called on God and wept, "O Mother! O Mother!"'

\*

'I used to cry for God all alone, with a longing heart. I used to weep, "O God, where art Thou?" Weeping thus, I would lose all consciousness of the world. My mind would merge in the Mahavayu.'<sup>1</sup>

\*

'Spiritual discipline is necessary in order to see God. I had to pass through very severe discipline. How many austerities I practised under the bel-tree! I would lie down under it, crying to the Divine Mother: "O Mother, reveal Thyself to me." The tears would flow in torrents and soak my body.'

\*

'God talked to me. It was not merely His vision. Yes, He talked to me. Under the banyan-tree I saw Him coming from the Ganges. Then we laughed so much! By way of playing with me He cracked my fingers. Then He talked. Yes, He talked to me.

'For three days I wept continuously. And He revealed to me what is in the Vedas, the Puranas, the Tantras, and the other scriptures.'

\*

'I had two desires: first, that I should be the king of the devotees, and second, that I should not be a dry sadhu.'

\*

'I used to pray to the Mother, crying: "Mother, if I do not find the devotees I'll surely die. Please bring them to me immediately." In those days whatever desire arose in my mind would come to pass. I planted a tulasi-grove in the Panchavati in order to practise japa and meditation. I wanted

---

<sup>1</sup> Mahavayu: Cosmic Consciousness or the Life Force. The word is also used to denote a current felt in the spinal column when the Kundalini is awakened.

very much to fence it around with bamboo sticks. Soon afterwards a bundle of bamboo sticks and some string were carried by the flood-tide of the Ganges right in front of the Panchavati. A temple servant noticed them and joyfully told me.

'In that state of divine exaltation I could no longer perform the formal worship. "Mother," I said, "who will look after me? I haven't the power to take care of myself. I want to listen only to talk about Thee. I want to feed Thy devotees. I want to give a little help to those whom I chance to meet. How will all that be possible, Mother? Give me a rich man to stand by me." That is why Mathur Babu did so much to serve me.'

\*

'Once Krishnakishore asked me, "Why have you cast off the sacred thread?" In those days of God-vision I felt as if I were passing through the great storm of Aswin,<sup>2</sup> and everything had blown away from me. No trace of my old self was left. I lost all consciousness of the world. I could hardly keep my cloth on my body, not to speak of the sacred thread! I said to Krishnakishore, "Ah, you will understand if you ever happen to be as intoxicated with God as I was." And it actually came to pass....'

\*

'I used to go into samadhi uttering the word "Ma". While repeating the word I would draw the Mother of the Universe to me, as it were, like the fishermen casting their net and after a while drawing it in. When they draw in the net they find big fish inside it.'

\*

'It is not good to cherish desires and hankerings. For that reason I used to fulfil whatever desires came to my mind. Once I saw some coloured sweetmeats at Burrabazar and wanted to eat them. They brought me the sweets and I ate a great many. The result was that I fell ill.

'In my boyhood days, while bathing in the Ganges, I saw a boy with a gold ornament around his waist. During my state of divine intoxication I felt a desire to have a similar ornament myself. I was given one, but I couldn't keep it on very long. When I put it on, I felt within my body the painful uprush of a current of air. It was because I had touched gold to my skin. I wore the ornament a few moments and then had to put it aside. Otherwise I should have had to tear it off.

'I once felt a desire to eat the famous sweetmeats of different cities. I had a desire to hear Sambhu's musical recital of the *Chandi*. After fulfilling that desire I wanted to hear the same thing by Rajnarayan. That desire also was satisfied.

'At that time many holy men used to visit the temple garden. A desire arose in my mind that there should be a separate store-room to supply them with their provisions. Mathur Babu arranged for one. The sadhus were given food-stuffs, fuel, and the like from that store-room.'

---

<sup>2</sup> Aswin: the sixth month in the Hindu calendar, falling in the autumn season. Here the Master referred to a great cyclone in 1864.

## ONWARD FOR EVER!

*We are like silkworms; we make the thread out of our own substance and spin the cocoon, and in course of time are imprisoned inside. But this is not for ever. In that cocoon we shall develop spiritual realization, and like the butterfly come out free. This network of Karma we have woven around ourselves; and in our ignorance we feel as if we are bound, and weep and wail for help. But help does not come from without; it comes from within ourselves. Cry to all the gods in the universe. I cried for years, and in the end I found that I was helped. But help came from within. And I had to undo what I had done by mistake. That is the only way. I had to cut the net which I had thrown round myself, and the power to do this is within. Of this I am certain that not one aspiration, well-guided or ill-guided in my life, has been in vain, but that I am the resultant of all my past, both good and evil. I have committed many mistakes in my life; but mark you, I am sure of this that without every one of those mistakes I should not be what I am today, and so am quite satisfied to have made them. I do not mean that you are to go home and wilfully commit mistakes; do not misunderstand me in that way. But do not mope because of the mistakes you have committed, but know that in the end all will come out straight.*

*Swicknurd*

## JESUS CHRIST ETERNAL

### EDITORIAL

Christmas, celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ, is the greatest festival in Christendom. Singing of carols by the young and old alike is an important feature of the celebration. There is, in fact, a vast body of carol songs in many languages including English, and some of these carols are highly poetical and devotional and are deeply touching. They recollect the wonderful events that heralded and attended the birth of God's Son as a humble but radiant child in a manger. They tell us about the angels and shepherds, the stable and manger, Bethlehem and the animals who were the baby's neighbours, the magi and the Star, and the serenely joyous mother with her lovely shining babe in swaddling clothes. A stanza, for instance, from a deeply stirring carol whose authorship is unknown, reads thus:

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed.  
The little Lord Jesus laid down His  
sweet head;  
The stars in the bright sky looked down  
where He lay:  
The little Lord Jesus, asleep on the  
hay....

Jesus (in Hebrew) literally means 'the Saviour', and Christ, 'the Anointed' (Deliverer). Though the Old Testament books contain a number of prophecies about the advent of Jesus, his life, betrayal and crucifixion, still many of his teachings as well as the idea of salvation through Christ's blood, were not acceptable to most of the Jews of his day. The Synoptic and Johannine Gospels and some other parts of the New Testament gave form to the religion of Christianity, in which the Son of God becomes incarnated as man and sacrifices himself for the redemption of humanity. St. John's Gospel makes the advent of Christ a profoundly spiritual and mystical event by declaring that 'the Word was

made flesh, and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth.'<sup>1</sup>

Still, Christianity is a logical and natural extension and fulfilment of Judaism. The Jewish tradition was not ready to accept this, yet without the descent of God's own Son into the world of mortals, a vast mass of humanity would have remained without the inspiration and light to walk on the narrow road which leads one back to the God-head. As Jesus himself says:

'All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.'<sup>2</sup>

It is undoubtedly true that the saving power of Jesus Christ was fully revealed in his Passion and resurrection. Christian theology agrees with that view. But it is also a fact that the saving power of this 'Word made flesh' was manifest even when he was a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes in the manger of Bethlehem. That was why the three wise men from the East were led by the Star to the holy manger and, when they saw the young child with Mary his mother, 'fell down, and worshipped him'. That was why the 'just and devout' Simeon in the temple of Jerusalem took the eight-day-old child Jesus up in his arms and blessed God and said: 'Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.'<sup>3</sup>

Though his ascending the cross as a bloody sacrifice for human redemption and his conquest of death through resurrection were integral parts of the drama, yet the real purpose of Jesus' incarnation lay in attracting

and concentrating the mind and love of humanity towards God. When our selfish earthly love is turned into Christ-love, the heart becomes free from earthiness, materiality; and that is surely 'salvation'. Although the path of looking upon God as one's own Child is not as widely followed in Christianity as in Hinduism, it is not at all absent in the former. St. Anthony among others looked upon Jesus Christ as a baby and established an intimate relationship with him. In the vision of such a devotee, the child Jesus is bound to reveal himself as the divine Saviour. What did the righteous and devoted Simeon, in the temple, see in the eight-day-old Christ-child that made him bless God? He had seen God's 'salvation' in that little bundle of light and joy. Possibly, even the red stigmata on those little hands and feet!

Those who have read the story of *The Selfish Giant* by Oscar Wilde, Irish poet, dramatist, wit, and author, are sure to remember how the Selfish Giant slowly became unselfish by loving children, especially one little child whom he had seen and touched only once in his garden. He spent the rest of his life deeply pining for him. When he grew old and feeble, suddenly one winter morning he saw in a corner of his garden a tree covered with white blossoms, and underneath it stood the little boy he had loved and been pining for. To quote from the story:

In joy, the giant ran out into the garden and approached the child. When he came close, his face grew red with anger. 'Who hath dared to wound thee?' he shouted. For on the palms of the child's hands were the prints of two nails, and the prints of two nails were on his feet.

'Who hath dared to wound thee?' cried the Giant again. 'Tell me, so I may take my sword and slay him!'

'Nay,' answered the child. 'These are the wounds of Love.'

'Who art thou?' said the Giant. Then

<sup>1</sup> St. John, 1. 14

<sup>2</sup> St. Matthew, 11. 27

<sup>3</sup> St. Luke, 2. 29-32

a strange awe fell on him, and he knelt before the little child. And the child smiled on the Giant, and said to him, 'You let me play once in your garden. Today you shall come with me to my garden, which is Paradise.'

We humans are in a way selfish giants. We need the help and saving love of that child of Paradise, with the nail-marks on his palms and feet—the wounds of love—to give us salvation. Thus Christian devotees, just as their Hindu counterparts, have a great opportunity to proceed toward God by loving Him as their own child, and obtain His grace which assures one's deliverance. 'As thou lovest', says St. Augustine, 'so thou art: loving earth thou art earthly, loving God thou shalt be divine.'

Jesus Christ was born on this earth—in space and time—and lived and died for humanity. His wisdom, love, renunciation, unselfishness, compassion, and God-consciousness were beyond our comprehension; they influenced multitudes then, and continue to transform humanity more and more. If there is a temporal aspect to Christ's life, there is also an eternal aspect to it. His birth at Bethlehem, baptism by John, ministry in Palestine, suffering at Gethsemane, crucifixion on Golgotha, and resurrection after entombment have an eternal significance to his followers. Jesus, as readers of the Gospels know, often spoke in figurative language. His words meant far more than their literal meanings. 'Kingdom of Heaven', 'Son of Man', 'living waters', 'bread of life', 'my yoke', etc., are only a handful of the innumerable such examples. His life and personality, too, have a time-defying significance and relevance. It is this eternal Christ that saints and mystics have realized in their lives and poets and artists have sung and portrayed. As Claudfield wrote:

'In each human heart is a Christ  
concealed,  
To be helped or hindered, to be hurt or  
healed,

If from any human soul you lift the veil.  
You will find a Christ there without fail.'

Thus Christmas comes to have a deep significance. It is not merely the annual celebration of the holy event of Christ's birth, an event that occurred nearly twenty centuries ago in Bethlehem of Judea. That event should occur now at the present time, not in any geographical location but in our own hearts. Then alone celebration of Christmas becomes meaningful. This birth of Christ in our hearts can happen only when there is deep love for God. As William Law expressed it so beautifully in his *The Spirit of Prayer*—the desire for God 'will lead thee to the birth of Jesus, not in a stable at Bethlehem in Judaea, but to the birth of Jesus in the dark centre of thy own fallen soul'. There in our heart the Christmas crib should be prepared and the newborn little Lord Jesus will lie there and scatter the darkness of the heart of the fallen soul, and bring it joy, fulfilment, and redemption.

What is the test to determine that Jesus has been born in our heart? The test is simple: our worldliness goes away, our entire soul turns toward Christ, and we begin to perceive his presence within and without. Meister Eckhart, father of German mysticism, says that there are three signs whereby this birth can be recognized. One of them he describes thus:

'If this birth really happens no creature can hinder thee, all point thee to God and this birth. We find in lightning an analogy for this. Whatever it strikes, whether tree, beast or man, it turns towards itself with the shock. So with all whom this birth befalls, they are promptly turned towards this birth with everything present, be it never so earthly. Nay, even what was formerly a hindrance is now nothing but a help. Thy face is turned so full towards this birth, no matter what thou dost see and hear, thou receivest nothing save this birth in anything. All things are simply

God to thee who seest only God in all things. Like one who looks long at the sun, he encounters the sun in whatever he afterwards looks at. If this is lacking, this looking for and seeing God in all and sundry, then thou lackest this birth.'<sup>4</sup>

May he 'who is alive and was dead, and behold he is alive for evermore', and who is 'with us all the days, even to the end of the world', deign to be born within our hearts, crowning our lives with joy, illumination, and immortality! Amen.

<sup>4</sup> Meister Eckhart, (Ed. by Franz Pfeiffer, Tr.

by C. de B. Evans, John M. Watkins Co., London, 1956), Vol. I, p. 24

## LETTERS OF A SAINT

Kasi  
13.2.1920

Dear S—,

I am glad to receive yours of 18th Dec. last. My health is not very good; but somehow it is going on. It has not been possible to understand your question very clearly. I am however trying to answer according to my understanding as far as I have been able to grasp your question.

Vedānta is expounded in these three ways—Dvaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita, and Advaita: dualist, qualified non-dualist, and non-dualist. In the Dvaita and Viśiṣṭādvaita systems, this world is not considered unreal; in fact it is said to be real. That is to say, nature, soul and God—these three are eternal and real. But then nature and soul sometimes remain manifested, at other times unmanifested; yet they never become completely unreal. In these systems of thought salvation by union (*sāyujya*) and other types of deliverance are accepted [as facts of spiritual fulfilment]. There is no *nirvāṇa*<sup>1</sup>-type of liberation according to them. Instead of saying there is no *nirvāṇa*-type liberation at all, it may be more appropriate to say that the followers of these schools do not aspire for liberation as *nirvāṇa*. Though they admit this earthly life is full of miseries, yet they say that through the grace of God misery will be dispelled and life made full of joy. But those who know this world as unqualified misery strive to gain *nirvāṇa* for deliverance from misery. For this end they cut off all connections with the world and live adopting solely the wisdom of Advaita [as their guiding light]. After their bodies fall they become one with Brahman and go out of the pale of transmigratory existence forever. In their opinion this world is unreal. With respect to these [liberated ones] only, the Upaniṣad says, 'He does not any more return here.'<sup>2</sup> Once our Master (Sri Ramakrishna) also

<sup>1</sup> Final absorption in Brahman or the all-pervading Reality, by the annihilation of the individual ego.

<sup>2</sup> न स पुनरावर्तते । *vide Chāndogya-upaniṣad*, VIII. xv. 1



gave such instruction to Swami Abhedananda about attaining non-dualistic knowledge.

He who has declared Himself in the *Gītā*<sup>3</sup> as, 'It is I alone who am to be known through all the Vedas; I am indeed the Author of Vedānta and the Knower of the Vedas', He Himself has instructed Uddhava in this regard in the *Bhāgavatam*. If we deliberate on that here, then our theme will become clear. With this idea I am quoting it here. He (Śrī Kṛṣṇa) has said :

'With a view to effecting the liberation of men, I have inculcated three yogas or methods, namely, those of knowledge, work, and devotion. There is no other means anywhere.'<sup>4</sup>

Then he speaks about which yoga is suitable to whom:

'Of these the path of knowledge is for those who have become disgusted with work and have renounced it; for those who have not been disgusted with it and who desire its fruits, there is the path of work.'<sup>5</sup>

Thereafter:

'But for the man who somehow has got a veneration for stories about Me and such other things, and who is neither disgusted with nor grossly attached to work, the path of devotion confers success.'<sup>6</sup>

From this we understand that *jñāna-yoga*—whose result is cessation of worldly life, non-return or attainment of *nirvāṇa*—is for those whose mind has completely been withdrawn from sense-objects. In their opinion it cannot but be that 'Brahman alone is real and the world is unreal'. But how can they who have more or less attachment to this world say that the world is unreal? Knowing that the world is a glory of the Lord, they do not call it unreal. They only discard its component of nescience (*avidyā*) and accept the component of knowledge (*vidyā*); they do not strive for attaining *nirvāṇa*. This is the general rule.

But there are special rules also. That is to say, though by the acquisition of Knowledge some become eligible for *nirvāṇa*, they may not accept it; on the contrary resorting to motiveless devotion, they accept embodiment. It is they who have been described in the *Bhāgavatam* as 'The sages whose only pleasure is in the Self, and from whom all fetters have fallen off, even they love the Supreme Lord with motiveless devotion....'<sup>7</sup> They do not have any desire for worldly life. These are the companions of the Lord in His *līlā* (divine sport in the world). Swamiji [ Vivekananda ] has mentioned in his lectures many times this type of *jīvanmukti* (liberation-in-life), and declared his own eagerness to be born again and again for the good of the world, looking on personal liberation as a trifle. Our Master has hinted in many ways at the attainment of this state, in such utterances as: 'Touching the granny'<sup>8</sup>; 'Whirling round while

<sup>3</sup> XV . 15

<sup>4</sup> to <sup>6</sup> *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, XI. xx. 6-8

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, I. vii. 10

<sup>8</sup> The Indian game of hide-and-seek, in which the leader, known as the 'granny', bandages the eyes of the players and hides herself. The players are supposed to find her. If any player can touch her, the bandage is removed from his eyes and he is released from the game. Here such release is compared with 'nirvāṇa', after one realizes Brahman or the Ultimate Reality.

holding onto a pillar'<sup>9</sup>; 'Becoming gold after touching the philosophers' stone'; 'Extracting butter from milk and keeping it in water', etc. Only after attaining this state did the devotee fervently pray :

'O Kṛṣṇa, even though I be born among insects, vegetation, reptiles, demons, or ghouls or in whatsoever body, still through Your grace may I have unshakeable and unwavering devotion to You.'<sup>10</sup>

So we have seen that all will have to give up *avidyā*. This worldly life which is built on *avidyā* cannot last long for anyone. Moreover, ignorance, false perception, etc., which you have mentioned in your letter—all these inhere in one's nature and are experienced by all; and this, to be sure, is called *avidyā*. As long as these persist in a person, neither knowledge nor devotion can grow. Therefore, how can the awareness that the world is a manifestation of Brahman dawn all of a sudden? If you want to realize the truth that 'All this is verily Brahman',<sup>11</sup> you must renounce even the idea of a changeful world. Neither knowledge nor devotion can arise without renunciation. By first attaining wisdom or pure devotion through renunciation, one can afterwards do whatever suits one's taste—either take embodiment or attain to *nirvāṇa*. Even so, better than the attainment of *nirvāṇa* is to become embodied as a playmate of the Lord, 'for the welfare of the many'. There is no doubt that this is the teaching of our Master and Swamiji....

The other view is that you have not to renounce anything in the world, but can enjoy everything according to your desire and yet see Brahman everywhere—attain the Knowledge of Brahman effortlessly. Though such talk is sweet to hear and very tempting, it cannot be entertained or accepted as it is contradictory to the scriptures, reason, and the experience of the great ones.

Once I heard a person arguing before our Master that this world is real. After hearing everything, he [the Master] had said: 'Ram, why don't you say in simple words that even now you have the desire to enjoy the sour dish of hog-plum [the worthless pleasures of the world]? What is the need of all this vain argument?' What answer could be more forceful and irrefutable? The truth is that if there is attachment within oneself, one is afraid to renounce the world. But to hide such an attitude and imagine that one can realize God without giving up attachment for the world, only indicates one's natural inner weakness.

Regarding this tree of worldly existence with its firm deep roots—'Having cut down this firm-rooted Asvattha [tree] with the strong axe of detachment, that Goal has to be sought...'<sup>12</sup>—this teaching of the Lord can never be con-

<sup>9</sup> Reference to a pastime of village children in India in which one holds a post firmly with one hand and swings round it swiftly. Though this causes giddiness and there is the danger of falling to the ground, the child actually does not fall because of its firm grip on the post [i.e., God in the allusion.].

<sup>10</sup> कीटेषु वृक्षेषु सरीसृपेषु, रक्षःपिशाचेष्वपि यत्र तत्र ।

जातस्य मे भवतु केशव त्वत्प्रसादात्, त्वय्येव भक्तिरचलाऽव्यभिचारिणी च ॥

Drupada's words in *Prapanna-gītā*.

<sup>11</sup> सर्वं खल्विदं ब्रह्म । *Chāndogya-upaniṣad*, III. xiv. 1

tradicted. It is needless to add that those who, disregarding hundreds of scriptural teachings rooted in renunciation, accept because of their attachments, this worldly life as the essence of existence, and declare renunciation which is the final conclusion of the unerring body of Vedas, to be unnecessary—their behaviour, though of rare daring, is wrong. If in future I can do so, I shall try to discuss the subject again. Today this far only.

Ever your well-wisher,  
SRI TURIYANANDA

<sup>12</sup> अश्वत्थमेनं सुविरूढमूलं असङ्गशस्त्रेण दृढेन छित्त्वा ॥

ततः पदं तत्परिमार्गितव्यं ... । *Bhagavad-gītā*, XV. 3-4

## WHAT MAKES A MAN?

SWAMI ASHOKANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue)

### II

Before I go into detail it is desirable that we understand a principle of parallelism between the individual and the universal which seems to be essential to the philosophical statements Vedāntins make regarding the origin of man. We can see that there are, as it were, an infinite number of autonomies within this cosmos. Here you have this infinite world of matter and in that world you find there are little islands of matter which seem to be autonomous—not completely autonomous, it is true, because, as I have already indicated, and as all of you know, my autonomy is dependent upon certain prevalent conditions outside me, such as heat and cold, air, and light. Still the fact that there are an infinite number of small autonomies within this universal economy of matter cannot be denied. I might say the same thing is true of the life principle. My life has an autonomy of its own; it is functioning for my individual purpose, and although it is not

completely independent of other phases of life and fragments of life, it seems to stand apart from them, sometimes it even conflicts with them. Similarly about the mind; and you might say almost the same thing about the soul. Our philosophers have said the whole creative process contains within itself this parallelism between the individual and the universal.

Our natural tendency is to explain everything objectively, that is to say, as one process and not as two parallel processes. It makes things very easy. If you want to put it in a mythological or theological way, you say that God created the universe; He breathed into it; He made life, He made mind, He made consciousness, He made souls, and so on and so forth—finished. Or if you are a scientist you will explain me as a product of all these larger processes that are going on; you will virtually deny this autonomy that I enjoy and that cannot be proved by an objective approach. So I say that in modern thinking this

parallelism is not given as much recognition as it should be if we are to have a true understanding of the facts of our existence. Since this parallelism goes to the very root of things, since it is not merely a fact in our present state of existence but exists also in deeper and deeper states, a purely objective approach to the problem of man fails of the truth. I confess that for the sake of clarity even Vedāntic philosophers have sometimes contented themselves with an objective approach, but in vital things they have always clearly stated the parallelism in the cosmic process, or the process of creation.

Now let us see how, according to Vedāntic philosophers, this universe evolves. As I have told you, they start from the standpoint of consciousness or Spirit; so they have to assume the existence of infinite Spirit, which they call Brahman. *Brahman* literally means the Infinite, the Vast. Nothing can be said about Brahman because It is Absolute; whatever could be said would be untrue of It, for our thought and our language are relative and limiting. Thus the Absolute can be spoken of only negatively: It is 'not this, not this'; that is all. Of course, then there is no creation, there is no individual; there is no man to be explained or anything of the kind. You cannot assume anything other than infinite Spirit; if you do, then you begin with a part of creation itself.

Creation is the next step. Somehow a sort of division takes place—as it were. Vedāntists say that from the standpoint of Its cosmic aspect this infinite Spirit is called Īśvara. That is, if you think of Him collectively, as a total being, He is called Īśvara, which literally means the Lord, the Ruler. Oddly enough, that name may not seem to us justifiable, because there is not much manifest He is ruling over at that time. Although creation has begun, there have not yet come these diverse numbers

of individual existences, living and non-living, which the Divine Lord is considered as administering—creating, maintaining, dissolving, and so on.

And yet this, too, is not altogether true: the beautiful thing to notice in this unfolding story of the creation of man is that while, collectively speaking, Īśvara is one Being undivided, the same Īśvara is, as it were, made up of an infinite number of effulgent souls. If the name Īśvara, or the Lord, is given to the collective Being here, the individual spirit is given the name *prājña*, which means 'completely enlightened'; there is no darkness then in the individual souls.

Now, before I proceed any further, I would like to put one thought before you, and I would like you to remember it always. When you go to see a play, in the beginning, of course, you know it is a play, but if it is well produced you very soon become absorbed in it and forget that it is only play-acting. However, in the back of your mind you have the consciousness that actually you are only seeing a play on the stage, and not reality. There is that background thought. Similarly, in understanding this whole theory of creation as presented by our philosophers, you should always remember that it is not actuality, it is a sort of seeming thing, an appearance.

You may say, 'Well, now, that is a very funny thing to tell us! Here we are, and you are trying to explain us, and then you say, "Oh, it is just an appearance; it is not an actuality!"' But are you sure that it is all real for you even here? I have told you that if we think about the three principles which we consider have made up our own existence, we come across certain paradoxes. For instance, you say you are made up of the mind and the body. How do you know that mind and body can be brought together? Our philosophers maintain that as long as you are identified with the body

it seems to you that your mind and your soul are related to the body. But suppose you go beyond the sphere of the body and become more mind than body. Oddly enough, you then feel that the body has nothing to do with you.

There is a realm of experience where you actually feel that everything is mind. Just as in our present experience we naturally think that everything is made up of matter, so there is a phase of experience in which we naturally see and feel that everything is made up of thought. Here, then, is a contradiction of your previous standpoint. You started with the idea that you are made up of three things. Already you find that you are made up of only two things—mind and soul. And when you reach a little farther up, you are not identified even with the mind. You are surprised to find you are the pure Spirit; there has not been any mix-up at all. So you see, I have a right to say this is all an appearance.

Our philosophers always want us to remember this; and I shall apply it to what I was telling you—that Īśvara has become divided into an infinite number of fragments. He has become divided only *as it were*; if He were actually broken into fragments then nothing would remain of Him. Moreover, how can the infinite be broken up? If it is divisible, then it is dead. Only dead things can be divided; truly living things cannot be divided. So please remember this; the whole thing is an appearance. Even science is teaching us that. As scientists probe into the nature of things, what they find is quite different from what we think things to be; it has nothing to do with our ordinary perception.

Now, let us return to Īśvara. In the primal state nothing but Īśvara exists—except for one other thing. The very fact that Brahman has become Īśvara, that there has been a sort of seeming, means that there has crept in a certain principle,

the principle of *māyā* or *avidyā*.

This is what Vedāntins say: when we look around us, we find there is the subject and there is the object; there is the conscious principle which knows, and there are many things which are known by this conscious principle. Now, they say that the knower, the conscious principle, is derived from this apparent fragmentation of God, and that these knowers, these individual spirits or souls, are infinite in number. Wherefrom does the knowable come, of which this vast, impassive world of matter is the present representative? It is the degradation or, if you prefer, the transformation of the principle of *māyā*. *Māyā* provides these two things: it brings about an apparent fragmentation in the infinite, conscious being, God, and it itself becomes the opposite of this conscious principle. So this is what is happening: on one side there has been this fragmentation into infinite beings—they are still luminous, they have not become enshrouded in ignorance; on another side an evolution in *māyā* is taking place in the sense of objectivity. (You may say I am sounding dogmatic but if you proceed with these fundamental ideas, you will find you get a better explanation of even this present universe than you can otherwise.)

Five original principles are derived one after the other from the principle of *māyā*. First comes the principle of ether or *ākāśa*; from *ākāśa* comes the principle of air; from the principle of air comes the principle of fire; from the principle of fire comes the principle of water; from the principle of water comes the principle of earth. These elements are not at all as we perceive them here: earth, water, fire, and so on. Those ordinary concrete names are given to them for the sake of convenience, but they are very subtle principles. Now these five principles get mixed up together, and it is said that out of this mixture sev-

eral things come. Our intelligence, our mind, our ego, our life principle, our senses of perception—all these develop. On one side these original principles develop into our senses of perception and action, and on another side they become the objects of the senses. I know I am becoming awfully complex. But we human beings *are* awfully complex. If you oversimplify, there would be no explanation of you; there would be an explanation of something else.

Now, notice this: I am the Spirit, the knower, the conscious being; then there is this body, which, you might say, is an object just like any other thing that I know in the world, except that it is living. Then in between the body and the Spirit there is this mind. Partly it is allied with the knower and partly with the knowable; it is partly associated with the subject, and partly with the object. Isn't it true? Our own ego-sense, our intelligence, our mind, even our senses—all these things seem to be a part of ourselves. And yet, being other than the Spirit, other than consciousness, they are part of the objective world.

It is because these five original principles become identified, as they develop, partly with the objective world and partly with the subject that the world of objects lends itself to our knowing. You wonder sometimes how it happens that there is a sort of mutual adjustment between our perceptive powers and the objects we perceive. This is how it is explained: the objects and the senses with which we perceive these objects both come out of the same five principles. Even our thinking about them, even understanding them, organizing them, subsuming them under some general laws—all this is possible because intelligence and mind come from these original five principles, which themselves are derivatives of *māyā*, the cause of plurality, of division, distinction, and variety. When on one side these principles become the objective sen-

sory world and on the other side become allied with the subject—my intelligence, my ego, my mind, my senses, my life force, my body—then I am able to perceive things which have colour, which can produce sound, which have taste, and so on.

There is this parallelism of subject and object, and, as I said, this is really a better way of understanding creation than a purely objective way, which misses a great deal. Further, in this understanding, you do not have to have any knowledge of science. It is a different way of knowing reality, an entirely different way. You might ask a person, 'Are you hungry?' He says, 'Yes, I am just famished. I have had no food for two days.' Or you could bring all your instruments and tap him here and tap him there and make graphs of his reactions, and then come to the conclusion—this man lacks food. That would be one way of approaching the problem. But I think the first way is also quite good—I should even say better. You know what hunger is; it is not something alien to you. Similarly, creation is not alien to you; you are a part of it, you are mixed up with it; then why can you not proceed to know it through your own inner powers?

But to get back to the creative process. After *Īśvara* has come into being, there evolves what is called the world of mind, or the subtle world, the subtle level of existence. There the cosmic being or God, instead of being called *Īśvara*, is given another name—*Sūtrātman* or *Hiranyagarbha*. *Sūtrātman* means 'Thread Soul', and *Hiranyagarbha* means 'Golden-womb-ed'. Those are the cosmic names. The individual in this level is called *taijasa*, which means 'shining, fiery'. Why are these names given? Why *Sūtrātman*? Because you find this cosmic Being threads every individual mental image or form that has come into existence; It is in the heart of everything. You see, we always think that

God has two aspects. One is outside the form, controlling it from the outside; another is controlling it from within. In this subtle state of which I am speaking, God as it were enters into the infinite subtle forms and becomes the 'Thread Soul'. Just as in a pearl necklace a thread passes through every pearl and holds them all together, in the same way these subtle forms are held together in a cosmic whole, in a cosmic organization, and God, who is the inner being of every form, threads them, attaches every form to the other forms by His own being. That is why He is called Sūtrātman.

Why is He called Hiranyagarbha, 'Golden-wombed'? Because the universe has not yet taken concrete form. It has not yet been born, but is, so to speak, in the womb. And because it is fine, because it is not yet concrete, it has not lost its luminosity. The cosmos in its subtle aspect is a shining thing. That is why His womb is golden; for it contains this golden universe.

And why is the individual called *taijasa*? Here the soul is shining. His glory is not yet obscured by his physical being and by the enslavement of his mind to the body of this physical universe. If, for example, you become free of this physical universe and also, therefore, of your body-consciousness, you will become a luminous being. Even physically there will be a shining quality about you; you will have a luminosity about your face. And inwardly you will feel a great sense of effulgence. These are matters of experience. And so the soul, not yet obscured, is called *taijasa*, 'shining, fiery'. There are also other explanations for this term, but I need not go into them here.

Now, so far, this is what we find: In the first stage everything is in a cosmic form, unbroken into any differentiation. It is true that Īśvara has, *as it were*, become broken into an infinite number of individual souls; but there is such a tremendous bond of

unity between these souls and Īśvara that one can scarcely say that there is differentiation. As for objective creation, it has not yet taken place; objectivity is still undifferentiated.

As you come to the second stage, or the middle state, the souls become associated with intelligence, mind, vitality, and the beginning of the senses. As a result, their sense of separation becomes quite pronounced. Although they are still luminous, they have become independent individuals. And as regards their union with God, that also has suffered impairment; they no longer feel so close to Him. That is what has taken place, and simultaneously an infinite number of subtle objects have come out of the undifferentiated objectivity.

So in this process you find a degradation of the soul—the soul loses its original nature and identity with God. And at the same time you find a diminishing glory in God Himself; He becomes, as it were, contracted, He becomes more and more concrete. But mind this: in so becoming He does not lose His original nature. The Absolute is not gone; Īśvara is not gone. When He becomes Hiranyagarbha, Sūtrātman, there is still Īśvara and there is still the Absolute. But we find other aspects of divinity emerging, each of which is grosser than the preceding one. And further, we find the world of objectivity becoming more and more pronounced and demanding more and more attention from the soul, until we come to the next stage, which is our present state.

And what do we find here? Here the five original principles or elements have, as it were, become gross. A certain compounding and mixing up has taken place in them, and they have become the elements of this physical universe. As I said earlier, the five original elements are not elements from a chemical point of view. You might say, rather, that they are five *possibilities* of

sense perception. That is the Vedāntic approach: the universe is nothing but a compound of sensibilities; that is to say, an object is nothing but its capability of being perceived by the senses. That is all there is to the material universe; there is no other substance. These elements, or possibilities, become gross, and out of these five gross elements the vast universe that we see here has come into existence. According to our philosophers, even those worlds which are called heavens and in which angels and gods are supposed to be dwelling are all a part of the gross universe.

And what has happened to God? If we want to use a precise term for the God whom people think of as ruling this gross universe, we call Him Virāt, 'the Vast One'. According to us, that is the lowest conception of divinity. God has now become endowed, as it were, with a physical body of His own. This terrestrial universe that we see, the worlds that gods and angels see, and if there are devils, the worlds that they see—all those worlds form, as it were, the physical body of this cosmic being, Virāt.

In this state, the individual is called *viśva*. *Viśva* can be considered to mean 'the all' or 'the whole', or 'he who contains the all'. The reference is to the principle of macrocosm and microcosm: what is contained in the vast universe is contained in miniature in this small universe called the individual. Now, what has happened to this individual soul? Further degradation has taken place. His mind has become the servant of his body and of the material universe to such an extent that he doubts that his mind is anything but a by-product of his body. And as regards the soul, he thinks there probably is no soul. And of course, objectively, the subtle forms have become gross; he sees before him gross forms in infinite number. That is how we come to the present situation.

I shall again remind you that the whole

creative process is only apparent, not real. Apparently the universal has become an infinite number of individuals; apparently there has been *māyā*, apparently there has been an evolution in *māyā*; all these things are only apparent. Never forget it. But in this appearance there is a sort of method; there is method in this madness. Cosmic intelligence has come into existence in relation to the cosmic being; and in relation to the individual being, individual intelligence has come into being. Cosmic mind has come into existence, and so have individual minds. Cosmic *prāṇa* has developed, and individual lives have also developed—or I should say individual vitality, because *prāṇa*, or vital energy, does not have to be related to a physical body, but can exist in relation with only the senses and the mind. Thus the universe, cosmic and individual, comes into existence by this creative process, or evolution.

Now, in this scheme we know what our present position is in terms of these universes. Here I stand before you: if I do not have better sense than to think I am a body, then I think this gross universe is all there is. Still, within me there is my higher being, *taijasa*, the effulgent self; and also there is my still higher being, *prājña*—omniscient, eternally wise; and my highest Self, one with the Absolute. The Absolute is still there. But all these beings are unknown to me. If I become aware of them, if my sense of I-ness shifts and becomes identified with my effulgent self or my omniscient self, or if it becomes identified with the Absolute Self, then at once my whole universe will change.

Suppose at this moment I lose this body-consciousness: my mind will become at once free from the imposition of this body as well as from the physical forms of this objective universe. I shall at once feel that I am a part of the middle, or-subtle, universe; I shall feel closer to God; I shall



feel effulgent within—a sense of light will be always in my thought, in my being. Suppose there is a further development in me; then I shall feel at one with all beings. The material universe will disappear for me. I shall become aware of this infinite number of spirits, who have their individual distinctions and yet at the same time feel a close unity with one another and with God. And if I go still further, then all these distinctions will become lost in utter identity, and of that nothing can be said. All these states of being become possible just by shifting the ground of our 'I'-ness.

I explained to you that the same five principles, derived gradually from the original principle of māyā, make intelligence, mind, ego, senses, vitality; they also eventually make the objects to be perceived by the senses, to be thought over by the mind, to be organized by the intelligence, to be enjoyed by the ego. All these things are related; so when I become disidentified from the body or the senses, I become at the same time disidentified from the material universe corresponding to this functioning of my senses. There is no wonder, therefore, that if I reach the state of at-onement with Īśvara, I will no longer be aware of this universe of plurality. The material universe and the subtle, differentiated universe will disappear. A sense of otherness, a sense of māyā may remain, but that will be an awareness of unity with an infinite number of luminous spirits and with God.

You see how it is? It is all an appearance; it is all 'as it were'. If I could impress upon you the truth of what I am saying, you would say, 'Is that right? At this moment I am also this effulgent soul? At this moment I am this omniscient soul? At this moment I am this Infinite, Absolute Spirit? It is not something to be acquired by me, or to be developed by me? I am all these things—now? It is just a matter of suddenly hooking myself to this middle

state or to the first state, or even to the Absolute state, and it is done?' And if I had really succeeded in convincing you in this respect, you could not live the life you are now living, this moment would come liberation. This moment.

There was a great sage who used to come to a king, his disciple. One day the king was dressed to go hunting. He was a very enlightened king, but it was the duty of the kings to hunt harmful animals. He had just put one foot in his stirrup when the sage came, and he asked the sage, 'Sir, tell me about the true nature of the Self.' So the sage said, 'Well, O king, if I tell you now, you will at once realize it.' The king said, 'Please tell me!' And the teacher told the truth. So impressive was his teaching that then and there the king plunged into the consciousness of his true Self. He just went beyond this physical world, beyond this mental world into the world of undifferentiated objectivity, and beyond that into the Absolute. And there he stood—with one foot in the stirrup, holding the horse, lost to the outside world, plunged in the consciousness of the Absolute Truth and Divinity. Why should it not be so?

Many of our sages have said the means by which the highest truth is realized is the word. You have often been told of the method of realization given in some of the Upaniṣads: 'This Self should be perceived. This Self should be heard about, thought about, meditated upon.'<sup>1</sup> Many of these philosophers and teachers said that hearing is put first because that is the sovereign means. 'Wonderful is the teacher and very skilful the hearer; wonderful is the experiencer of the Self taught by a skilful,

<sup>1</sup> आत्मा वा अरे द्रष्टव्यः, श्रोतव्यो मन्तव्यो निदि-  
च्यासितव्यः ।

able preceptor.'<sup>2</sup> If a marvellous teacher should tell you that truth, at this moment you would realize it; for everything else is all an appearance. If it is as flimsy as an appearance, why should it not be broken easily?

Well, that explains the Vedāntists' position. You might say, 'You still don't answer how these three dissimilar things—body, mind, and soul—can be combined.' The answer is—in appearance all kinds of impossible things are possible. Your feeling that your body and mind and soul are mixed up together is like a dream where all impossible things seem possible, where unreal things seem to be real, where things which actually have not happened appear to have happened. The true answer is that actually there are not three principles and they have not become mixed together. Even in our present experience when we do not think them to be dreamlike we see how one opposes the other. But if you admit that this mixed state is not real, then the question how they can be mixed does not arise. This is the Vedāntic answer: It just has not happened. If you say, 'Well it seems to me...', it also seems to you that you are a confused being; so when you say 'it seems to me,' remember that you are confused, and in this state of ignorance and illusion and confusion all kinds of things seem to have become actual that are not actual. In your confusion what appears to be real is confused; therefore you should not make much of it. The Vedāntic teachers say that that kind of assertion, 'it seems to me' has not any meaning.

So this is the answer that is given: we don't have to explain our present state; we just have to remember the true state of things. Body, mind, and soul have not

been combined. Get rid of this confusion of your intelligence, and the answer is there: you are the Spirit; you are neither the mind nor the body. But if you are mixed up, even then you can find yourself to be part of this vast universe—physical universe, mental universe, intelligence universe.

### III

There remains one point to be answered: what about the history of a soul? Part of the history we see in the lifetime of a man. But where does he come from? And where does he go? We raise these two questions. From what I have said, I think it is quite evident that we cannot accept the view that the soul is created in the mother's womb. So if you ask where does the soul come from and where does it go, we come to the principle of reincarnation. But this is a big subject, and I shall dwell on it in another lecture.<sup>3</sup>

I think, however, that I should briefly mention the idea of evolution. You see, modern man wants to think of life and the individual against the background of evolution. For example, we think that in this infinite space somehow matter begins to appear, and then later we find a gaseous ball which gradually becomes congealed, and eventually we have the earth. After millions and millions of years the earth begins to cool down, and eventually life appears. And then gradually higher and higher beings evolve, until man has come. Some have thought that this process of evolution will produce still higher beings, and that man is just a by-product. I have a little hesitation in accepting this evolutionary theory *in toto*, but let us accept it; it does not alter the Vedāntic idea of cosmic evolution. It is like this: just because

<sup>2</sup> आश्चर्यो वक्ता कुशलोऽस्य लब्धा, आश्चर्यो ज्ञाता  
कुशलानुशिष्टः । 1 *Kaṭha-upaniṣad*, I. ii. 7

<sup>3</sup> See 'Why We Are What We Are' by the author in the *Prabuddha Bharata*, Sept.-Oct., 1973.—Ed.

the city of San Francisco has evolved does not mean that the people who have come to the city and who have gone away were part of that evolutionary process. During the summer tourists come from many parts of the country as well as from other countries. They live in this city; they use its hotels, its streets, and all the conveniences and entertainments that are the product of the evolution of the city. But do you mean to say that these people who come to visit are themselves essentially bound up with the history and the conditions of your city? They are not. As long as they were in this city, they suffered its limitations, took advantage of its facilities, enjoyed the excellences of its prevalent conditions. That is all.

In thinking of the position of the soul and of man and his history, you should remember there is a cosmic evolution. God *as it were* passes through these several stages until we have this material universe, which is *as it were* woven in time and in space. Change is taking place here, infinite patterns are being woven by what we would call natural laws, and in *this* there is evolution, not beyond this. You should not think of the chronology of the *cosmic* evolution I have described in terms of our time—that would be a mistake; time is itself a part of the gross universe, and therefore a product of this cosmic process of evolution—an evolution which is a part of the divine mystery. Our mind cannot conceive it.

Yes, evolution does take place in this material universe, but souls are beginningless. While this earth was coming into existence, the soul may have been somewhere else; but insofar as it comes into

this universe to be born, it subjects itself to the contemporary conditions and both suffers from them and enjoys them. If we hold ourselves to this gross universe, then we are part of this evolution, part of the conditions into which we are born, subject to them, ruled by their laws. That is the natural man; that is what we ordinarily think ourselves to be, and that is how we ordinarily try to explain ourselves.

But I shall remind you again, and I shall conclude with this reminder: there is no objective universe at all. All these things are related to our own condition. There is no pure objectivity in this universe at all. If you maintain a gross state of mind, if you want to remain part of this gross level, then you will have the gross universe with its suffering and so on. But these things are not obligatory, because even while you are behaving in this way you are still the subtle soul, still the finer soul at one with God, still this Absolute Spirit. It is given to you to choose which you want to be. If you want to be the Absolute Spirit and if your will is really undivided, at this moment you will find that all these bondages have been broken. There is nothing which will be able to hold you here; you will be just taken up. That is what has been called the grace of God—a peculiar power emanating from God by which the impossible becomes possible, by which things that would ordinarily take ages and ages to accomplish happen in a very short time. That is grace, and because we, the Spirit, are the same as God, the Spirit, that is also our own grace. If we would just affirm it, at this moment we would be free.

(Concluded)

## ON MAKING SPIRITUAL PROGRESS

SWAMI BUDHANANDA

### SIGNS OF SPIRITUAL PROGRESS AND FULFILMENT

We have already seen<sup>1</sup> that attainment of ethical qualifications is not necessarily a sign of spiritual progress, though no spiritual progress can be made unless one's life is squarely built on ethical foundations. In other words, truly ethical persons have the fairest chances of making spiritual progress.

This however is not to say that immoral persons never make any progress. The popular saying that every saint had a past and every sinner has a future, is very true. There are instances of sinners becoming saints, as notably in the cases of Aṅgulīmāla, St. Augustine, Jagāi-Mādhāi, and Girish Ghosh. A study of these cases will, however, show that they were recipients of special, supra-rational grace from Godmen—the Buddha, Christ, Śrī Caitanya, and Sri Ramakrishna respectively.

But this unreasoned grace is such a rare commodity and it depends so much on the sweet will of God, that we must never start sinning in the hope that this will be particularly helpful to making spiritual progress!

We have also made the point clear that true spiritual progress starts in an aspirant's life only after the awakening of the *kunda-linī*.<sup>2</sup> In that context we have shown, by citing the teachings of authentic masters, what experiences will mark our inner journey upward through the yoga-path of the *susumnā*.

Without much repeating—some repetition there will necessarily be—what we have al-

ready said,<sup>3</sup> we shall here dwell on other signs of spiritual progress.

While studying these signs it will be readily noticed that (1) these are all 'inner signs', not outer signboards on the roadsides; (2) there are no tapes for measuring or statistics-tables for interpreting these, yet they can be narrated with great clarity and precision; (3) though these signs are to be verified in personal experience, they are not private facts resisting objective analysis; and (4) these are mostly signs of lofty heights of spirituality, perhaps arousing more apprehension than encouragement.

But we must never forget that man is the master of his spiritual destiny also. Our scriptures and teachers tell us that only the pure, strong, fearless and persevering ones succeed in this life, though spiritual progress is not barred to anybody. We are also assured that within every human being is already given the potential for manifesting the highest spiritual excellence. Hence Swami Vivekananda taught: religion is the manifestation of divinity *already* in man. Therefore, for those who are sincere and single-minded, there is no ultimate cause for discouragement. Yet the truth remains that human beings have also frailties. One should know how to prevent these from coming in the way at crucial times. Therefore in one of his lectures Swami Vivekananda told this story:

<sup>1</sup> *Prabuddha Bharata*, August 1973, p. 347

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, July 1974

<sup>3</sup> For example: *ibid.*, November 1973, pp. 463-4 (signs of Grace of one's mind); April, 1974 p. 166, (environmental 'signs')

'I was once travelling in the Himalayas, and the long road stretched before us. We poor monks cannot get anyone to carry us, so we had to make all the way on foot. There was an old man with us. The way goes up and down for hundreds of miles, and when that old monk saw what was before him he said, "Oh, sir, how to cross it; I cannot walk any more; my chest will break." I said to him, "Look down at your feet." He did so, and I said, "The road that is under your feet is the road that you have passed over and is the same road that you see before you; it will soon be under your feet." The highest things are under your feet, because you are Divine Stars; all these things are under your feet. You can swallow the stars by the handful if you want; such is your real nature. Be strong, get beyond all superstitions, and be free.'<sup>4</sup>

The great peaks of spiritual progress which we are going to describe are all attainable, provided we are ready to pay the price, which means giving ourselves entirely to the quest. What can prevent us is only what we allow within us—lack of faith, courage, and purity of heart. The open invitation of the Divine has sounded down the ages: come, scale these peaks and dwell in abiding bliss and glory. So the peaks are there before us, for our taking.

Then, we may also note that what are signs of progress in those who have attained, can be looked upon as spiritual disciplines for attaining the same heights. Śrī Śaṅkarācārya, commenting on verse 54 in chapter II of the *Gītā*, in which Arjuna asks Kṛṣṇa about the signs of the man of steady wisdom, says:

'From verse 55 to the end of the discourse the characteristic attributes of a man of steady knowledge as well as the means of attaining that knowledge are

taught.... For everywhere in spiritual science, the very characteristic attributes of the successful yogin are taught as the means (of attaining that state) since they are to be attained by effort. The Lord now points out those characteristic attributes which, as attainable by effort, constitute the means as well.'

Here is the reason why no thinking and sincere person has to be discouraged by the narration of the peaks of spiritual progress, for all these are attainable by human beings through right and adequate efforts.

We need also to understand in all clarity that in spiritual life it is disastrous to settle down cosily with the standards of our known weakness and ignorance, and not dare to see and acknowledge anything beyond these. Swami Vivekananda teaches:

'The ideal may be far away beyond us. But never mind, keep to the ideal. Let us confess that it is our ideal, but we cannot approach it yet.'<sup>5</sup>

That is however not to say we shall never be able to attain it. The sooner one attains *citta-śuddhi*, purification of the mind, and the more energetic one is in rightly practising disciplines, the quicker is one's success.

The *Gītā*, which embodies all the anterior spiritual wisdom of the *Sanātana-dharma* or Eternal Religion, is one of the most authentic guides to the discerning of spiritual progress, without any need of reference to mysterious or occult phenomena. In the *Gītā* we notice that Śrī Kṛṣṇa specially singles out these—the *sthita-prajñā* (man of steady wisdom), the *samadarsin* (same-sighted person), the *gunātīta* (one who has passed beyond the three *guṇas*) and the *yogārūḍha* (one who has attained the state of yoga)—as persons who have made spiritual progress such as the Lord delights in.

In chapter II of the *Gītā*, He narrates the traits of the man of steady wisdom; in chapter V, He describes the same-sighted

<sup>4</sup>The Complete Works (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Dt. Pithoragarh, U.P.), Vol. VIII (1963), pp. 186-7

<sup>5</sup>op. cit., Vol. IV (1955), p. 145

person; in chapter XIV, the one who has passed beyond the three *guṇas*—*tamas*, *rajas* and *sattva*; and in chapter VI the state of the *yogārūḍha*. It may well be urged that those who have manifested fully in their character the signs of the *sthita-prajña*, *samadarsin*, *gunāfīta*, and *yogārūḍha* have not only made spiritual progress but attained spiritual perfection.

This is how Śrī Kṛṣṇa describes the state of the man of steady wisdom:

‘When a man completely casts off all the desires of the mind, his Self finding satisfaction in Itself alone, then he is called a man of steady wisdom.

He who is not perturbed by adversity, who does not long for happiness, who is free from attachment, fear, and wrath, is called a sage of steady wisdom.

He who is not attached to anything, who neither rejoices nor is vexed when he obtains good or evil—his wisdom is firmly fixed....

The objects of the senses fall away from a man practising abstinence, but not the taste for them. But even the taste falls away when the supreme is seen.

The turbulent senses violently carry off the mind even of a wise man striving for perfection. The yogi restrains them all and remains intent on Me. His wisdom is steady whose senses are under control....

The man of self-control, moving among objects with his senses under restraint and free from attachment and hate, attains serenity of mind. In that serenity there is an end of all sorrow; for the intelligence of the man of serene mind soon becomes steady....

Not the desirer of desires attains peace, but he into whom all desires enter as the waters enter into the ocean, which is full to the brim and grounded in stillness.

That man who lives completely free from desires, without longing, devoid of the sense of ‘I’ and “mine”, attains peace.

This is the Brahmic state...., attaining which one is no longer deluded. Being established therein even in the hour of

death, one attains final liberation in Brahman.’<sup>6</sup>

The state of *samadarsana*, same-sightedness, is another one of the highest marks of attained spiritual excellence. He alone can be a *samadarsin* who sees God in everything—or has himself realized that ‘all this is verily Brahman’. Śrī Kṛṣṇa describes in the *Gītā* the traits of such a person and also how he attains this supreme state:

...for those in whom this ignorance (which veils the awareness of the supreme Spirit) is destroyed by the Knowledge of the Self, that Knowledge, like the sun, reveals the Supreme.

Fixing their minds in Him, at one with Him, abiding in Him, realizing Him alone as the Supreme Goal, they reach a state from which there is no return, their sins having been destroyed by their Knowledge.

The wise see the same in all—whether it be a brahmin endowed with learning and humility, or a cow or an elephant or a dog or an outcaste.

Those whose minds are thus set on sameness have even here overcome birth. Brahman is untainted and is the same in all; therefore in Brahman they rest....

His heart being unattached to outer objects, he finds the joy that is in the Self; his heart being devoted to the contemplation of Brahman, he enjoys undying bliss....

The yogī who is happy within, who rejoices within, and who is illumined within attains freedom in Brahman, himself becoming one with Brahman.

With sins destroyed, doubts dispelled, senses controlled, and devoting themselves to the welfare of all beings, the sages attain freedom in Brahman....

Shutting out all external objects; fixing the gaze of his eyes between his brows; equalizing the outward and inward breaths moving in his nostrils; controlling his senses, mind, and understanding; being ever bent on liberation; rid-

<sup>6</sup> *Bhagavad-gītā*, II. 55-7, 59-60, 64, 70-2

ding himself of desire, fear and anger—such a man of contemplation is indeed always free.

And having known Me, who am the Dispenser of all sacrifices and austerities, the great Lord of all worlds, the Friend of all beings, he attains Peace.<sup>7</sup>

It is to be noted that the same-sighted person who has attained a high state of being, is not an inert or a-social person. He is devoted to the welfare of all beings. Thus his attainment of spiritual excellence necessarily leads him to active participation in that universal friendship of God for all, through acts of humble service.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa's ideal man of attained spirituality, is devoted to doing good to all creatures (*sarva-bhūta-hita-ratāh*).

The Lord portrays the man who has passed beyond the *guṇas* (*guṇātīta*) in these words:

'He who hates not light, activity, and delusion when they are present, nor longs for them...when they are absent; he who sitting like one unconcerned, is unmoved by the *guṇas*, who remains firm and never wavers, knowing that the *guṇas* alone are active; he who dwells in the Self and regards alike pleasure and pain, who looks on a clod, a stone, and a piece of gold as of equal worth, who remains the same amidst agreeable and disagreeable things, who is a man of wisdom, and who sees no difference between praise and blame; he who is the same in honour and dishonour, the same to friend and foe, and who has renounced all undertakings—such a man is said to have risen above the *guṇas*.

And he who worships Me with the yoga of undeviating love rises above the *guṇas* and becomes fit to be one with Brahman.<sup>8</sup>

A little reflection will reveal that the aspirant who has realized God or experientially known his identity with the Ātman will manifest the qualities detailed above, of

one gone beyond the three *guṇas*. Manifestation of these traits appears in him spontaneously and not through any conscious effort.

Elsewhere in the *Gītā* Śrī Kṛṣṇa especially asks Arjuna to become a yogī. In explaining the reason why He does so, He says:

'The yogī is regarded as superior to men of austerities, also to men who have attained knowledge (through scriptures), superior to men of action (enjoined in the Vedas). Therefore, be a yogī, O Arjuna.'<sup>9</sup>

The person who has attained excellence in yoga, Śrī Kṛṣṇa calls a *yogārūḍha* and for good spiritual reasons accords him a high place in his estimation. He describes the *yogārūḍha* as follows:

'When a man has no attachment to the objects of the senses or to works, and when he has wholly renounced his *saṅkalpas* (motivated resolutions), he is said to have attained yoga....

He who has conquered himself and is serene in mind is constantly absorbed in the Supreme Self, alike in heat and cold, pleasure and pain, and honour and dishonour.

He is said to be a steadfast yogī whose heart, through knowledge and realization, is filled with satisfaction, who, having conquered his senses, never vacillates, and to whom a clod, a stone, and gold are the same.

He who has equal regard for well-wishers, friends and foes; for those who are related or indifferent to him; for the impartial and the malicious; and even for the righteous and the sinful—he stands supreme.'<sup>10</sup>

The *yogārūḍha* may not look very different from other human beings. He may be going about in the usual way of man. But inwardly he is a completely transformed person, totally unlike others. In describing his inner transformation, how he attained

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, V. 16-19, 21, 24-5, 27-9

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, XIV. 22-6

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, VI. 46

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*, VI. 4, 7-9

it and how to stay confirmed in it, Śrī Kṛṣṇa hints at signs of progress:

‘That in which the mind, restrained by the practice of concentration, rests quiescent; that in which, seeing the Self through the self, one rejoices in one’s own Self; that in which one knows the boundless joy beyond the reach of the senses and grasped only by the (purified) intellect; that in which being established, one never departs from Reality; that on gaining which one thinks there is no greater gain, and wherein established one is not moved even by the heaviest of sorrows—let that be known as yoga, which is severance from the contact of pain. It is to be practised with perseverance, undisturbed by depression of heart.’<sup>11</sup>

It is only while the aspirant is practising the disciplines for attaining the state of the *yogārūḍha*, that he has to keep depression of heart at bay. After he is established in yoga, his inner perspective is so changed due to direct experience of reality from which he has no separate existence, that no longer can he have any fear, or want, or sorrow. Says Śrī Kṛṣṇa:

‘With the heart concentrated by yoga, viewing all things with equal regard, he beholds the Self in all beings and all beings in the Self.

He who sees Me everywhere and sees everything in Me, he never becomes separated from Me nor do I become separated from him.

He who, having been established in oneness, worships Me dwelling in all beings—that yogī, in whatever way he leads his life, lives in Me.’<sup>12</sup>

This is the secret of the *yogārūḍha*’s wonderful poise in perpetual bliss.

When one is established in yoga, there are other sure signs to it. Śrī Kṛṣṇa teaches:

‘Supreme Bliss comes to the yogī whose mind is completely tranquil and whose passions are quieted, who is free from

stain and who has become one with Brahman.

Thus making his self ever steadfast, the yogī, freed from sins, easily enjoys the touch of Brahman, which is exceeding bliss.’<sup>13</sup>

Finally it is highly instructive to notice whom among the yogīs Śrī Kṛṣṇa considers the highest:

‘Him I hold to be the supreme yogī, O Arjuna, who looks on the pleasure and pain of all beings as he looks on them in himself.’<sup>14</sup>

A divine inconsistency on the part of the Lord, if we may say so, reveals other signs of spiritual progress. In another place about the middle of the *Gītā*, we find Śrī Kṛṣṇa teaching with supreme detachment: ‘I am the same towards all beings; to Me there is none hateful or dear. But those who worship Me with devotion—they are in Me, and I too am in them.’<sup>15</sup>

But by the time we come to the twelfth chapter, we find His detachment wearing off to a considerable extent. In as many as eight verses He specifically declares who is dear to Him. This declaration is not only a great consolation to striving souls, who can feel on the basis of it that after all the Lord also has a heart. It also provides us another dependable standard for ascertaining spiritual progress. We may be sure that those whom Śrī Kṛṣṇa declares to be dear to Him, have made spiritual progress! About their distinctive qualitative features and inner accomplishments Śrī Kṛṣṇa says:

‘He who never hates any being and is friendly and compassionate to all, who is free from the feelings of “I” and “mine” and even-minded in pain and pleasure, who is forbearing, ever content, and steady in contemplation, who is self-controlled and possessed of firm

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*, VI. 20-3

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.*, VI. 29-31

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*, VI. 27-8

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*, VI. 32

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*, IX. 29



conviction, and who has consecrated his mind and understanding to Me—dear to Me is the one who is thus devoted to Me.

He by whom the world is not afflicted and whom the world cannot afflict, he who is free from joy and anger, fear and anxiety—he is dear to Me.

He who is free from dependence, who is pure and prompt, unconcerned and untroubled, and who has renounced all undertakings—dear to Me is the man who is thus devoted to Me.

He who rejoices not and hates not, who grieves not and desires not, who has renounced both good and evil and is full of devotion—he is dear to Me.

He who is alike to foe and friend, unaltered in honour and dishonour; who is the same in cold and heat, in pleasure and pain; who is free from attachment, who is unchanged by praise and blame; who is silent, content with whatever he has, homeless, firm of mind, and full of devotion—that man is dear to Me.<sup>16</sup>

Then proceeding further, putting a great deal of warmth into His words, the Lord goes out of His way to declare, 'Exceedingly dear to Me are they who regard Me as the Supreme Goal and, endowed with faith and devotion, follow this Immortal Dharma.'<sup>17</sup>

These words of Śrī Kṛṣṇa are so crystal clear that we are left with no doubt about the true meaning of 'spiritual progress'. Earlier in the same chapter, moreover, He has provided by implication another criterion for judging degrees of spiritual progress. He declares:

'...those who consecrate all their actions to Me, regarding Me as the Supreme Goal, and who worship Me, meditating on Me with single-minded concentration—to them whose minds are thus absorbed in Me, verily I become ere long...the Saviour from the death-fraught ocean of the world.'<sup>18</sup>

In other words, aspirants who have thus

advanced spiritually attain liberation by God's grace.

Then in the next four verses in a descending order He indicates how an aspirant with lesser spiritual endowment should strive for making spiritual progress. His imperatives reveal the compassionate heart of the Lord, who feels for all aspirants without exception and is ready to go down Himself to lift them up step by step from where they may be standing. This is a message of great hope, for if only a person is sincere, the Lord goes out to reach him wherever he stands. He teaches:

'Fix your mind on Me alone, rest your thought on Me alone, and in Me alone you will live hereafter. Of this there is no doubt.

If you are unable to fix your mind steadily on Me...then seek to reach Me by the yoga of constant practice.

If you are incapable of constant practice, then devote yourself to My service. For even by rendering service to Me you will attain perfection.

If you are unable to do even this, then be self-controlled, surrender the fruit of all action, and take refuge in Me.'

After all, man's spiritual progress is God's concern. Therefore Śrī Kṛṣṇa is so anxious to provide a way of making spiritual progress for aspirants of all categories.

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In the span of many centuries which connects the time of Śrī Kṛṣṇa with that of Sri Ramakrishna, there appeared on the world-scene a number of God-men and saints from whose recorded teachings we may trace many signs of spiritual progress. But if without stopping to discuss these teachings we go directly to those of Sri Ramakrishna, it is because here we find in the words of one God-man a detailed discussion of the many-faceted signs of spiritual progress.

As pointed out by Rabindranath Tagore,<sup>19</sup>

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*, XII. 13-19

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*, XII. 20

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*, XII. 7

<sup>19</sup> *Prabuddha Bharata*, February 1936, p. 53.

in Sri Ramakrishna 'diverse courses of worship from varied springs of fulfilment have mingled....' He had not only practised the various spiritual disciplines known in Hinduism but he also had had the spiritual experiences attainable through the practice of Islam and Christianity. In this respect his life was truly unique. Here therefore in this God-man's teachings we find a variety of descriptions of the signs of spiritual progress hardly available anywhere else. As we proceed we shall be struck by the immensity of the domain covered by his description of his experiences in relation to signs of spiritual progress.

According to Sri Ramakrishna, since God is infinite one cannot really put a limit to spiritual experiences. But there are stages by which the aspirant advances, and at every stage one can discern distinctive signs which go with it. He teaches:

'According to a certain school of thought there are four classes of devotees: the pravartaka, the sadhaka, the siddha, and the siddha of the siddha. He who has just begun religious life is a pravartaka. Such a man puts his denominational marks on his body and forehead, wears a rosary around his neck, and scrupulously follows other outer conventions. The sadhaka has advanced farther. His desire for outer show has become less. He longs for the realization of God and prays to Him sincerely. He repeats the name of God and calls on Him with a guileless heart. Now, whom should we call the siddha? He who has the absolute conviction that God exists and is the sole Doer; he who has seen God. And who is the siddha of the siddha? He who has not merely seen God, but has intimately talked with Him as Father, Son, or Beloved.

'It is one thing to believe beyond a doubt that fire exists in wood, but it is quite another to get the fire from the wood, cook rice with its help, appease one's hunger, and so be satisfied. These are two entirely different things.

'No one can put a limit to spiritual ex-

perience. If you refer to one experience, there is another beyond that, and still another, and so on.'<sup>20</sup>

The spiritual domain is like a realm of ever unfolding new horizons. So Sri Ramakrishna's message to the aspirant is a dynamic call for onward movement:

'Therefore I say again that work is only the first step. It can never be the goal of life. Devote yourself to spiritual practice and go forward. Through practice you will advance more and more in the path of God. At last you will come to know that God alone is real and all else is illusory, and that the goal of life is the attainment of God.'<sup>21</sup>

Then he told his story of the wood-cutter and the *brahmacārī*:

'Go forward. A wood-cutter once entered a forest to gather wood. A brahmachari said to him, "Go forward." He obeyed the injunction and discovered some sandal-wood trees. After a few days he reflected, "The holy man asked me to go forward. He didn't tell me to stop here." So he went forward and found a silver-mine. After a few days he went still farther and discovered a goldmine, and next, mines of diamonds and precious stones. With these he became immensely rich.'<sup>22</sup>

Now from this story he drew one of the fundamental lessons by which all seekers should be guided:

'Therefore I say that, whatever you may do, you will find better and better things if only you go forward. You may feel a little ecstasy as the result of japa, but don't conclude from this that you have achieved everything in spiritual life. Work is by no means the goal of life. Go forward, and then you will be able to perform unselfish work. But again I say that it is most difficult to perform unselfish work. Therefore with

<sup>20</sup> 'M': *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Tr. by Swami Nikhilananda, Pub. by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras 600004, 1964), p. 590

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*, p. 407

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*, p. 35

love and longing in your heart pray to God: "O God, grant me devotion at Thy Lotus Feet and reduce my worldly duties. Please grant me the boon that the few duties I must do may be done in a detached spirit." If you go still farther you will realize God. You will see Him. In time you will converse with Him.'<sup>23</sup>

About other signs of making progress spiritually and of being confirmed in illumination, we have many authentic teachings strewn through the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* to go by. Here we shall discuss only a few of them.

Trailokya, a devotee, asked: 'What are the signs of a householder's having attained knowledge?'

Sri Ramakrishna said:

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

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

'The sign of a man's having realized God is that he has become like a dry coconut. He has become utterly free from the consciousness that he is the

body. He does not feel happy or unhappy with the happiness or unhappiness of the body. He does not seek the comforts of the body. He roams about in the world as a jivanmukta, one liberated in life.

'When you find that the very mention of God's name brings tears to your eyes and makes your hair stand on end, then you will know that you have freed yourself from attachment to "woman" and "gold" and attained God. If the matches are dry, you get a spark by striking only one of them. But if they are damp, you don't get a spark even if you strike fifty. You only waste matches. Similarly, if your mind is soaked in the pleasure of worldly things, in "woman" and "gold", then God-Consciousness will not be kindled in you. You may try a thousand times, but all your efforts will be futile. But no sooner does attachment to worldly pleasures dry up than the spark of God flashes forth.'<sup>24</sup>

Elsewhere Sri Ramakrishna teaches:

'There are certain signs by which you can know a true devotee of God. His mind becomes quiet as he listens to his teacher's instruction, just as the poisonous snake is quieted by the music of the charmer. I don't mean the cobra. There is another sign. A real devotee develops the power of assimilating instruction. An image cannot be impressed on bare glass, but only on glass stained with a black solution, as in photography. The black solution is devotion to God. There is a third sign of a true devotee. The true devotee has controlled his senses. He has subdued his lust. The gopis were free from lust.'<sup>25</sup>

'As you go nearer to God you see less and less of His upadhis, His attributes. A devotee at first may see the Deity as the ten-armed Divine Mother; when he goes nearer he sees Her possessed of six arms; still nearer, he sees the Deity as the two-armed Gopala. The nearer he comes to the Deity, the fewer attributes he sees. At last, when he comes

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 407-8

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 595-6

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*, p. 182

into the presence of the Deity, he sees only light without any attributes.'<sup>26</sup>

'There are signs by which you can know whether a man has truly seen God. One of these is joy; there is no hesitancy in him. He is like the ocean: the waves and sounds are on the surface; below are profound depths. The man who has seen God behaves sometimes like a madman; sometimes like a ghoul, without any feeling of purity or impurity; sometimes like an inert thing, remaining speechless because he sees God within and without; sometimes like a child, without any attachment, wandering about unconcernedly with his cloth under his arm. Again, in the mood of a child, he acts in different ways: sometimes like a boy, indulging in frivolity; sometimes like a young man, working and teaching with the strength of a lion.'<sup>27</sup>

Explaining further the signs of a knower of God, Sri Ramakrishna said that he is 'guileless, generous, without vanity, unattached to anything, not under the control of any of the gunas, always blissful'. (*Gospel*, p. 205) 'Further, he is firmly convinced that he is the machine and God is its Operator, that God alone is the Doer and all others are His instruments.' (p. 183) 'When a man has true knowledge he feels that everything is filled with consciousness.' (p. 529)

'Reasoning and discrimination vanish after the attainment of God and communion with Him in samadhi. How long does a man reason and discriminate? As long as he is conscious of the manifold, as long as he is aware of the universe, of embodied beings, of "I" and "you". He becomes silent when he is truly aware of Unity.' (p. 110)

'All such things as attachment to the world and enthusiasm for "woman" and "gold" disappear after the attainment of the Knowledge of Brahman. Then comes the cessation of all passions. But when the burning is over and only ash

remains, then no more noise is heard. Thirst disappears with the destruction of attachment. Finally comes peace.

'The nearer you come to God, the more you feel peace. Peace, peace, peace—supreme peace!' (pp. 110-1)

'I notice that when my mind is united with God the suffering of the body is left aside.' (p. 965)

'The farther you advance, the more you will realize that God alone has become everything. He alone does everything. He alone is the Guru and He alone is the Ishta. He alone gives us knowledge and devotion.

'The farther you advance, the more you will see that there are other things even beyond the sandal-wood forest—mines of silver and gold and precious gems. Therefore go forward.' (p. 829)

Now we may certainly be curious to know what finally happens to the aspirant who continues to go forward. Does he actually enter into realms of the spirit from whose bourne no traveller returns with any glad tidings? Is he lost to us out there, consumed by the very light he has been pursuing? We really are in need of some authentic report, which again comes to us from Sri Ramakrishna himself.

'M', the writer of the *Gospel*, one day asked the Master: 'Sir, what is the Spirit-form of God like?'

Sri Ramakrishna reflected a moment and said softly: 'Shall I tell you what it is like? It is like water.... One understands all this through spiritual discipline.

'Believe in the form of God. It is only after attaining Brahmajnana that one sees non-duality, the oneness of Brahman and Its Sakti. Brahman and Sakti are identical, like fire and its power to burn....

'But there is a stage beyond even Brahmajnana. After jnana comes vijnana. He who is aware of knowledge is also aware of ignorance. The sage Vasishtha was stricken with grief at the death of his hundred sons. Asked by Lakshmana why a man of knowledge should grieve

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*, p. 840

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*, p. 649

for such a reason, Rama said, "Brother, go beyond both knowledge and ignorance." He who has knowledge has ignorance also. If a thorn has entered your foot, get another thorn and with its help take out the first; then throw away the second also.'

M: 'Should one throw away both knowledge and ignorance?'

Master: 'Yes. That is why one should acquire *vijnana*. You see, he who is aware of light is also aware of darkness. He who is aware of happiness is also aware of suffering. He who is aware of virtue is also aware of vice. He who is aware of good is also aware of evil. He who is aware of holiness is also aware of unholiness. He who is aware of "I" is also aware of "you".'

'What is *vijnana*? It is knowing God in a special way. The awareness and conviction that fire exists in wood is *jnana*, knowledge. But to cook rice on that fire, eat the rice, and get nourishment from it is *vijnana*. To know by one's inner experience that God exists is *jnana*. But to talk to Him, to enjoy Him as Child, as Friend, as Master, as Beloved, is *vijnana*. The realization that God alone has become the universe and all living beings is *vijnana*.'<sup>28</sup>

This is what awaits the daring soul who keeps on going forward without stopping on the way. Elsewhere, further explaining his wonderful intimations of the illumination of the *vijnani*, Sri Ramakrishna teaches:

'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 Knowl-

edge, 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.'

'What will you gain by merely being intuitively aware of God's existence? 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.'<sup>29</sup>

We have quoted extensively from the teachings of two most authentic and comprehensive Masters of spiritual life—Sri Krishna and Sri Ramakrishna—in order to hold before ourselves the true criteria of making spiritual progress, from various standpoints. Spiritual aspirants who are not clear-sighted and stout-hearted are apt to succumb to delusions or despondencies, both of which are insidious forms of temptation. Therefore it is important to learn

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 228-9

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 984-5

from authentic Masters about how to make headway in spiritual life, and what to expect when a seeker advances on his path. A sincere aspirant who has outgrown false self-esteem and the common delusions, can dispassionately compare notes and judge for himself how far from or near he is to the fulfilment of spiritual life, which always remains an open invitation and challenge to every human being.

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In conclusion we may re-emphasize that overly keen progress-mindedness can be a subtle form of spiritual obstruction. What is needed is more absorption in God, and not deeper fixation in a sanctimonious calculation. If we stop every now and then to measure our spiritual growth, that will be an expression of a pious sort of egotism.

What we have really to be anxious for is not how far we have progressed spiritually but how earnestly we are practising spiritual disciplines. If we have practised well and progressively better, and as best we can, and have whole-heartedly offered the fruits thereof to the Lord, we have just not to worry about spiritual progress at all, for it happens as a matter of course, as dawn follows the night.

So we have only to bend our energies, physical and mental, with all our might to the correct and sustained practice of prescribed disciplines. God, says a Christian mystic, is more loyal to the devotee than the devotee to God. Hence there is no reason for worry.

The one thing we should be concerned about is to live the spiritual life here and now, and not keep it aside for then and there. In this regard we should constantly remember the urgent words of the Holy Mother:

‘Austerities, worship, pilgrimage, the earning of money—one should do all these in the days of youth.... My child, austerities or worship, practise all these things right now. Will these things be possible later on? Whatever you want to achieve, achieve it now; this is the right time!’<sup>30</sup>

For anyone who sincerely longs for God, ‘this is the right time!’ If we follow this teaching of the Holy Mother in right earnest, great will be the fulfilment and immeasurable the joy that awaits every one of us.

(Concluded)

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<sup>30</sup> Sri Sarada Devi, *The Holy Mother* (Madras Math, 1949), p. 488

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‘...Our real and ultimate commerce is not with each other but with Him who is the supreme giver and supreme taker.... If I had only known... that my real bargain was with Him, that in living and loving I was carrying out my deal with Him, that I was living His life and loving His world, how much pain I should have spared myself.’

—Annapurna in Tagore’s *Chokher Bali* (Eng. tr.: *Binodini*)

# AT THE FEET OF SWAMI AKHANDANANDA—V

BY 'A DEVOTEE'

May 1936

Swami Akhandananda was speaking to a *sevak* (attendant):

Perhaps you are thinking that you are spending your days in vain. I am telling you the truth: whatever you are doing is a great deal of service to me, and through that you are progressing. With the responsibility upon you, I haven't to worry about it. Everybody is busy about himself. Nobody looks to me. Merely serving the physical body is not enough. Serving the mind is also a service.

The brother of a devoted attendant had been initiated in the morning. In the evening Bābā<sup>1</sup> called the two brothers, and asked them to sit by him on either side, and rub an ointment on his rheumatic arms. While they were doing this with great joy, Bābā was silently reclining on the chair. After some time he spoke:

Till now you have been 'blood brothers'; from today you become spiritual brothers. There is no separation in spiritual relations. I am also feeling great joy. This is very nice.

One hot evening Bābā was resting outside on a camp-cot in the open verandah to the south. A devotee from Malda was singing a Baul song with great emotion:

'Just by a look the "man of your heart"  
can be known;

The river of his desires has dried up,  
And the river of his love is full to the brim.  
It is not at all difficult to recognize the  
"man",

But it is very difficult to find out one.'

The song went on for a long time and Bābā was greatly pleased. At the end he

commented: Do you know what a man who cannot sing is called? A donkey. Swamiji [Vivekananda] would not call him a complete man. One of the characteristics of man is his power to sing, because it comes from the heart.

In the dim light of a candle in the hall Bābā was sitting silently on his reclining chair, one or two devoted disciples squatting at his feet. After some time he began to speak:

How long will you keep turning the rosary beads? Call on Him with intense longing. Gradually everything will come to a standstill: the rosary beads will stop, the fingers will not move, even the lips will not open to utter His name. All bonds will fall off—even that of clothes.

While repeating the name of the Lord, you will see His form—effulgent and smiling. You will also smile and then weep, and say, 'Why did You not appear before? Why have You come so late?'

Be earnest, be impatient. Not that you have to repeat His name so many hundreds of times, or that you have to do so much penance. But you have to cry aloud earnestly and piteously, 'Appear before me, appear You must! To so many devotees You have appeared; why not to me? You have declared that whoever shall weep for You, to him You will surely come. Then why are You not coming to me? Show Yourself to me.' Cry to Him with a heart full of yearning. The Master would ask us, 'Did you call on Him with tears today?' If we answered 'Yes', he would be very glad. Again he would ask, 'From which corner—outer or inner—of the eyes did the tears trickle down?' And then he would proceed to explain that tears coming from the corners near the nose are tears of repentance, and those from the outer corners are tears of love.

<sup>1</sup>The name by which Swami Akhandananda was called by most of his devotees.

Every one of those who came to the Master experienced these spiritual ecstasies to a greater or lesser degree. They would experience some of the eight spiritual modifications<sup>2</sup> resulting in laughter, weeping, dancing and singing. Then in ecstasy they would laugh and weep and dance and sing. Swamiji no doubt experienced all these; but as he was strong enough to control his emotions, there was little outward expression. And our Master? Ecstasy was his very nature.

Just start here and now. Pray to Him with tears; just speak to him, 'Why have I no such experience? Why do I not see You? Why am I not eager to see You? Why do I not develop an earnest desire to see You?'

Another evening Bābā retired to bed early. His secretary came to take down notes of his 'Reminiscences'<sup>3</sup> but went away on seeing Bābā in bed. He came back after a while and found Bābā sitting up on his bed ready to dictate. He said to the secretary: 'Why did you not call me? You thought I was sleeping, didn't you? Oh no, no. These boys were repeating the name of Śiva. Oh Śiva, Śiva. Thinking of Śiva, the Infinite, one becomes the Infinite. A part of the Infinite is also infinite: the sky, stars, universe—all disappear in deep meditation. Hearing the scriptural instruction from the guru, the disciple merges in deep meditation and realizing this state, exclaims in wonder: "Where is the universe gone? It was here: who has removed it and whither?"'<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The *sāttvika* changes that shake the body and mind. They are eight; namely, motionlessness, perspiration, horripilation, indistinctness of speech, tremor, paleness, tears, and loss of consciousness. Arranged in five grades, as they give greater and greater enjoyment, their nomenclature is derived from fire, viz., smoking, smouldering, flaming, glowing, and incandescing.

<sup>3</sup> *Smṛtikathā*—in Bengali—a publication of the Udbodhan Office, Calcutta-700003.

<sup>4</sup> Śaṅkarācārya: *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, 483.

About eight o'clock one evening, Bābā was lying on his cot. The inmates and devotees came to pay their respects to him. He got up and began to speak in an inspired mood:

You have got to cultivate all the three—hands, head, and heart. The word 'hands' stands for physical labour; the 'head', for intellect; and by 'heart' is meant love. Swamiji wrote to me: 'It is the heart that conquers. Everyone can understand the language of the heart.' In Swamiji there was a harmonious development of all the three; we have to start with the first. We may not be as spiritual as Swamiji, we may not have a head or heart like his, but we can follow him at least on the plane of physical labour. At the Math he once cleansed the big utensils of the kitchen. Can we not cleanse at least a single cup? Do you know, he once cleansed the latrine at Belur Math? One day he found it unclean. He was carrying two full buckets of water for cleaning. When other inmates saw it from a distance, they came running and said, 'Swamiji, you?' Smilingly Swamiji returned the question, 'And now, [i.e. only so late?] "Swamiji, you?"'

One morning Bābā's secretary was writing in a reply to a letter, for him: 'Now I have become old, etc.' At once Bābā straightened his spine and, disapproving the statement, said, 'I have become old?—Impossible!—Cut it out. I am still young, young in spirit!'

Clenching his fist tightly he repeated: 'I am younger than all of you here. My body may not move about as it did before, but my spirit is as active as a child's and wants to do something always. Don't you see?'

'Just see. I was a bit tired and was lying down still desirous of doing something. I thought of getting some letters written by you, and you are writing, "I have become old...!"'

The postman came with a money order. The attendant received it and later showed the coupon to Bābā. At once he asked: 'Where is the address of the sender? You



don't know? That's no excuse. You had no desire to know. You didn't bother to know. You could have written down the address from the money order. You could have asked for it. You could find it in the "address Register".

'In such ordinary matters you act like

this, and you are aspiring after the knowledge of Brahman! Is that so easy to attain? How keen must be the desire and what a long period of struggle! Then only can you "know". Do you understand [this secret]? First the desire to know, then the struggle, and then the success.'

## NOTES AND COMMENTS

### IN THIS NUMBER

Reminiscences are taken from: 'M': *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 600004, 1947. References: No. 1, p. 275; No. 2, p. 322; No. 3, p. 175; No. 4, p. 815; No. 5, p. 797; No. 6, p. 276; No. 7, p. 45; No. 8, p. 330; No. 9, p. 494.

The words quoted in 'Onward For Ever!' are from *The Complete Works*, Vol. II (1963), pp. 355-6.

According to Hindu scriptures and teaching, God incarnates as man again and again, whenever it becomes necessary to guide and illumine humanity. And Hinduism counts many such divine incarnations, of whom Buddha and Christ are two of the greatest. But Christians believe that Christ is the 'only begotten Son' of God and there cannot be any more such manifestations. Whatever the other implications of that belief, it becomes all the more necessary for Christians to keep the Christ-ideal alive and burning before them. Christmastide is an occasion for this renewal of the Christ-inspiration. The *Editorial* of the month offers a few thoughts about making the birth of Christ an inward spiritual event which can bring about a profound transformation.

This is the second and concluding part of 'What Makes A Man?' by Swami Ashokananda. The first part was published in our November issue. We remind our readers that the article is the edited version of a lecture, the first of a series by the Swami on the 'Origin and Destiny of Man', delivered at the Old Temple in San Francisco on Wednesday, 4 March 1953. We are grateful to the Vedanta Society of Northern California for making it available to us for publication.

The subject of spiritual progress and its signs can be approached and discussed in more than one way. One way is to map out the 'inner topography' and point out the mile-stones on the way, then to say finally, 'Here is the goal.' As, for instance, the great yoga-teacher Patanjali has done in India, and the exalted mystic St. John of the Cross has done in the West. Students of the *Yoga-sūtras* and *Dark Night of the Soul* as well as *Ascent of Mount Carmel* know this fact very well. But the safest way—though perhaps the most discouraging to most of us—is to present the profiles of perfected souls and to ask the seekers to gradually approximate themselves to those ideals. It is somewhat similar to providing

moulds for beautiful images and asking young sculptors to cast molten metals into them. And then the thing is done—no chiselling, cutting, or hammering as in the case of stone or wood sculpturing. This is what Śrī Kṛṣṇa has mainly done in the *Bhagavad-gītā*. Swami Budhananda's 'Essay on Applied Religion' this month follows

this method and points out with copious appropriate quotations, the similarity of approach between Śrī Kṛṣṇa's and that of Sri Ramakrishna's in describing 'Signs of Spiritual Progress and Fulfilment' (which is the last of the current series 'On Making Spiritual Progress').

## REVIEWS AND NOTICES

**LIGHT TO SUPERLIGHT (UNPUBLISHED LETTERS OF SRI AUROBINDO):** with Explanatory Notes by ARUN CHANDRA DUTT, Prabartak Publishers, 61 Bepin Behari Ganguli St., Calcutta-12, 1972, pp. ix+231, Price Rs. 15/-.

No great religious organization ever came into existence suddenly as if by magic. Its edifice slowly comes to be built on the foundation of the sufferings and sacrifices of its founder-prophet and his loyal disciples. The story of the birth of the now internationally famous Sri Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry is not an exception to this general rule.

The book under review contains twenty-six letters written by Sri Aurobindo to Sri Motilal Roy, a patriot and revolutionary of Chandernagore, during the years 1910-20, when Sri Aurobindo was trying to train a band of earnest aspirants who had gathered around him at his retreat in Pondicherry. The main difficulty that Sri Aurobindo faced at this critical period was financial. Lodged as he was in French territory away from his friends and helpers in British India, he badly needed money for the bare physical needs of the inmates of the Ashrama. The first ten letters in the book therefore are mainly appeals to his friend and supporter Motilal, for funds. How tight the financial position of the Ashrama was in those early days can be gathered from the following quotations:

'Our position here now is at its worst since all efforts to get some help from here have been temporarily fruitless and we have to depend on your Rs. 50/- which is insufficient. We have to pay Rs. 15/- for rent, other expenses come to not less, and the remaining Rs. 20/- cannot suffice for the food expenses of five people. Even any delay in your money arriving makes our manager "see darkness"! That is why he had telegraphed.' (p. 14)

'Please get us some clothes sent from Calcutta, as they are very urgently needed, specially as I may now have to go out from time to time breaking my old rule of seclusion. I am also in need of a pair of shoes, as Bharati has bagged the pair I had.' (p. 25).

It was financial stringency that made Sri Aurobindo undertake the translation of *Sagar Sangeet* (Bengali), the famous poetical work of C. R. Das, in return for Rs. 1000/- from the author.

The next few letters deal mainly with the anti-British revolutionary activity in Bengal with which Sri Aurobindo had associated himself for some time, before his extraordinary spiritual transformation in Alipore jail in 1908. Even after his going to Pondicherry he kept himself in touch with the political uprising in India, but he was now convinced that India's salvation lay in the revitalizing of her spirituality. In the meantime the British government had come down with a heavy hand on the extremists, and the terrorist movement was petering out. Sri Aurobindo wanted to control and guide the ebbing energies of the revolutionaries along spiritual channels. Using the term 'Tantric Yoga' as a code word for armed revolution, in order to hoodwink his possible interceptors, Sri Aurobindo wrote:

'As to your Tantric yoga, the reasons of your failures are so obvious that I am surprised you should attribute it all to the Goddess and not to the unpardonable blunder we have all been making in your yogic kriya.... The root of the whole evil is that we have been attempting an extension of the Tantric Kriya without any sufficient Vedantic basis....'

The remaining letters contain private instructions to Motilal regarding his work in Chandernagore, clarifications of various points in Sri Aurobindo's yoga, and bits of information about the starting of the journal *Arya*, the coming of the Richards, and

the political scenes in India and Pondicherry of that period.

The letters have been introduced with explanatory comments by Sri Arun Chandra Dutt. These elaborate notes (of which there are 111 pages) provide the backdrop necessary to understand the political and other issues discussed in the letters. But the lengthy quotations from letters make the actual full texts, which immediately follow the explanatory comments, almost superfluous. Perhaps it would have been better if the letters had been reproduced in full in the beginning, with the explanatory comments given as footnotes.

The fact that all these twenty-six letters have been published here for the first time makes it an important source-book for the followers and admirers of Sri Aurobindo and also for students of India's freedom struggle. The usefulness of the book is enhanced by the inclusion of a letter of Sri Aurobindo to Desabandhu C. R. Das, and five other appendices. The last of these is on the *Sapta Catushtaya*. This is a curious but very interesting document containing the notes which Sri Aurobindo jotted down during his incarceration in Alipore jail. According to Sri Arun Chandra Dutt, Sri Aurobindo's celebrated work, *Synthesis of Yoga*, is an expanded version of the *Sapta Catushtaya*. Incidentally, it is this last appendix that to some extent justifies the otherwise misleading title of the book.

The language of the explanatory notes, and especially of the Foreword, leaves much to be desired. It needs a thorough editing at the hands of a more competent person.

The printing and get-up of the book, however, are excellent.

S. B.

**WHITEHEAD'S FOUR PRINCIPLES—FROM WEST-EAST PERSPECTIVES: BY DR. ANIL KUMAR SARKAR, Published by Bharati Bhawan, Patna, 800004, 1974, pp. viii+166, Price Rs. 22/-.**

Whitehead explored a variety of fields, like mathematics, the foundations of science, religion, art, and metaphysics. He does not rise to the heights of Bradley, but he is definitely superior to Pierce, Bergson, and Santayana in the field of philosophy. Though he collaborated with Russell, he did not change colours so frequently as he. Still, compared to Russell, he is a less skilful prose-writer.

There are many works on Whitehead, and among his distinguished followers is Susan Langer. The various studies have examined the thought of Whitehead from a purely western standpoint. Dr.

Sarkar breaks new ground in the present text when he examines the ideas of Whitehead in relation to Indian, Chinese, and Japanese systems of thought. Whitehead's philosophy, he argues, is to be interpreted in terms of his four principles, namely spatio-temporal process, eternal objects, God, and creativity. The first principle is said to be both perishing and abiding—an equivalent of the Buddhist concept of flux or *kshamika*. Creativity is an abiding function. There is a dialectical play involving these four principles.

Dr. Sarkar argues in the first chapter that Whitehead is not a naturalist. The second chapter shows that space-time is one of the aspects of the changing universe. Even here we miss the promised Asian perspective. The chapter on eternal objects does not tell us anything about Whitehead's indebtedness to Plato. Though the author objects to Prof. Raju's equation of the eternal objects with pure possibles, in a footnote he follows the same line (p. 42). Whitehead's eternal objects show a mixture of idealism, mysticism, and theology. The fourth chapter, on God, is extremely controversial, and the author does not succeed in putting across his view. The fifth chapter, on creativity, is the best.

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**SPIRITUAL PRACTICES: BY SWAMI AKHILANANDA, Published by Claude Stark, Inc., 5, South Union St., Lawrence, MA 01843, 1974, pp. 225, Price (casebound) \$8.50.**

Interspersed with anecdotes from the lives of the great and also of the common men, argued with persuasion and convincing logic these talks of Swami Akhilananda in the United States during his ministry there cover a wide and most practical range of spiritual life. While admitting the great role of divine grace in *sadhana*, he emphasizes the need of earnest effort on the part of the seeker. He surveys the contributions of the various religious traditions and counsels a synthesizing approach embracing the whole personality of man. Spiritual life is looked upon as co-existent with day-to-day life; and the test of spiritual progress is seen in the effect one has on the world around, in spreading love, light, and peace. The author's analysis of the different ways of realization, namely, Karma-yoga, Jnana-yoga, Bhakti-yoga, and Raja-yoga, and the way he recommends for integrating them, is noteworthy. Similarly his exposition of mysticism, personal and impersonal, the stages through which duality comes to be overpassed and Oneness realized, and his defence of this soul-experience against un-

thinking attacks from the learnedly ignorant, are remarkably poised and elevating.

The section on Reminiscences of the Swami by a number of prominent friends and admirers is informative and throws a good deal of light on his personality.

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**BHAJA GOVINDAM OF SRI SANKARACARYA :**  
TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY BY SWAMI GURUDAS-  
ANANDA, Published by Sri Janaky Matha Ashrama,  
15 Ganapathy Nagar, Thanjavur 1, 1974, pp. 107,  
Rs. 3/-.

Sri Sankara's 'Bhaja-Govinda' hymn is a small compendium of Advaita in 31 memorable verses. From one point of view, these verses may have been sung in honour of his own Guru, Sri Govinda Bhagavatpada, who was one of the realized souls. Such an interpretation may not be acceptable to the traditionalist, but there is nothing in the text to contradict it. From another point of view the great Master was hymning the greatness of Govinda, here identified with the Supreme Brahman.

The great masters of the past knew the art of teaching profound truths in the shortest possible manner. This is an art which the moderns have yet to learn. The present text is also known as 'Mohamudgara' (Mace for destroying delusion), for it teaches us how to control the passions. Some of the verses actually condense sentences from Sri Sankara's own great commentaries. The verses are extremely musical. Swami Gurndasananda presents the text in Nagari script, a transliteration in the Roman script, a literal rendering, and a valuable commentary. The first thirteen verses are believed to have been composed by Sri Sankara; fourteen others are attributed to his fourteen disciples. Luckily three other verses have escaped such an attribution. The present text is a beautiful introduction to Advaita Vedanta.

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**GOD OF ALL—SRI RAMAKRISHNA'S AP-  
PROACH TO RELIGIOUS PLURALITY:** BY  
CLAUDE ALAN STARK, Published by Claude Stark,  
Inc., 5 South Union St., Lawrence, MA, 01843, 1974,  
pp. xvii+236, Price (Casebound edit.) \$ 12.00.

Those deeply interested in the life and message of Sri Ramakrishna must already be familiar with the illuminating works on the subject by such western savants as Max Muller, Romain Rolland,

and Christopher Isherwood—to mention the most notable of them. The volume under review is a welcome addition to the literature on the subject. It is indeed gratifying to note that there is a growing interest in and appreciation of Sri Ramakrishna in the western world. Arnold Toynbee has paid a fitting tribute to the greatness of Sri Ramakrishna in writing these lines quoted by the author from the Foreword to Swami Ghanananda's *Sri Ramakrishna And His Unique Message* :

'Religion is not just a matter for study; it is something that has to be experienced and to be lived, and this is the field in which Sri Ramakrishna manifested his uniqueness....His religious activity and experience were, in fact, comprehensive to a degree that had perhaps never before been attained by any other religious genius, in India or elsewhere.'

In this book, our author—an ordained Christian minister and a disciple of Swami Akhilananda whose living contact influenced him profoundly—describes in particular Sri Ramakrishna's approach to the problem or the 'Dilemma' as he calls it, of religious plurality. His treatment of the subject is thorough and methodical as well as amply documented. In successive chapters the author describes Sri Ramakrishna's 'Verification of God' in Hinduism, in Buddhism, in Islam, and in Christianity. The charge is often brought against those who preach equality and harmony of religions that they overlook the fact that there are fundamental differences among them. Yes, there are differences in doctrines and dogmas, beliefs, rituals and ceremonials; there is no differenceless sameness. But deeper down they are all united in a common endeavour to realize a common goal through the practice of common ethico-spiritual disciplines. Sri Ramakrishna was not himself unaware of such differences. The author has rightly observed :

'It must be stressed that Sri Ramakrishna did not overlook or negate the important differences among religions traditions, even within Hinduism. His experiments in the field of religion led him to declare not that all religions are the same, but that, if followed, they lead to the same one God. Sri Ramakrishna therefore cannot be legitimately challenged as a *syncretist* or an *eclectic*, for he neither sought to establish a new religion taking elements from each, nor attempted a *syncretic mélange* of diverse religious traditions. He was a true *hermeneutician* in his practice of religious discipline—upholding the value and sanctity of each tradition that he tried both within and outside Hinduism.' (p. 6)

The book has twelve chapters, a Conclusion, a section of 'Afterwords' to which five writers have

contributed; an exhaustive Bibliography, and an Index. In the eleventh chapter, 'Sri Ramakrishna as a Spiritual Teacher', we have among other data, interesting reminiscences of Sri Ramakrishna by his disciples, Swamis Brahmananda, Turiyananda, Vijnanananda, and Sivananda. Chapter Ten is devoted exclusively to Vivekananda, and chapter Twelve to Swami Akhilananda. The concise 'Conclusion' discusses with admirable balance certain problems or 'Limitations' which westerners often stumble upon in trying to understand Sri Ramakrishna. No summary of the entire contents is possible here. I shall close with a few comments on an article in the 'Afterwords' section, one entitled 'Sri Ramakrishna from a Christian Perspective', by Per Hassing.

Hassing poses a question. Let me quote his own words:

'In the foregoing pages [of the book] the claim is made that Ramakrishna experienced God as a Hindu, a Muslim, and a Christian, that he was truly a Muslim and a Christian, and that in each stage the personality went through a complete transformation. The question which at once comes to mind is if he in fact went through a Christian experience.' (p. 200)

The question is asked in a definitely doubtful vein, for the writer tells us that it is not possible for anyone to bleach away completely the impressions of the particular religion in which he is born and transplant himself completely into the atmosphere of another. 'Is it really possible to claim', he asks, 'that Ramakrishna in a very short period underwent three complete personality changes?' (p. 202) But what Hindu impressions were left in the mind of a man, a brahmana by birth, who during the period of his practice of Islam was even prepared to eat beef? Can we doubt the complete transplantation into the Christian atmosphere of the man who after seeing the picture of the Madonna and the Divine Child was so filled with the ideas of Mary and Christ and the Christian Churches and modes of worship that he realized that his Hindu ideas were pushed into a corner by the onrush of these new ideas? He even forgot to visit the Divine Mother in the temple!

Hassing is doubtful about Ramakrishna's having had a Christian experience because Christianity according to him cannot be defined simply in terms of subjective or personal experience, but it is participating in a whole range of formalities or ceremonials beginning with the baptism, participation in the eucharistic communion meal, public instruction, etc. If these be the essence of Christianity, then certainly Ramakrishna's claim to Christian experi-

ence can be denied. But if the communion of the living Christ be the essential core of the Christian religious experience, then few Christians on earth have been as blessed as Sri Ramakrishna was.

The book deserves to be widely read and the author deserves our warmest congratulations.

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### BOOKS RECEIVED

MYSTIC APPROACH TO THE VEDA AND THE UPANISHAD: BY M. P. PANDIT, Published by Ganesh & Co., Madras 17, (3rd. Edition) 1974 pp. 130, Price Rs. 4/-.

WISDOM OF THE VEDAS: BY SATYAKAM VIDYALANKAR, Published by Hind Pocket Books (P) Ltd., G. T. Road, Delhi, 110032, 1974, pp. 130, Price Rs. 4/-.

TEN PRINCIPAL UPANISHADS: BY N. A. NIKAM, Published by Somaiya Publishers (P) Ltd., 172 Mumbai Marathi Grantha Sangrahalaya Marg, Dadar, Bombay 400-014, 1974, pp. 179, Price Rs. 30/-.

ESSENTIALS OF VEDANTA: BY DR. G. SRINIVASAN, Published by Bangalore Printing & Publishing Co., Ltd., Mysore Rd., Bangalore 560018, 1974, pp. 68, Price Rs. 6/-.

MIND (PROCEEDINGS OF A SEMINAR ... AUSPICES OF SRI VENKATESWARA UNIVERSITY ...) EDITED BY DR. SARASVATI CHENNAKESAVAN, Published by Sri Venkateswara University, Tirupati, pp. ix+94, Price?

SRI MA-DARSHAN [BENGALI]: VOL. XIV: BY SWAMI NITYATMANANDA, Published by Sri Ramakrishna-Sri-Ma Prakashan Trust, 579 Sector 18-B, Chandigarh, (Bengali Year) 1381, pp. 295, Price Rs. 12/-.

SRIMAD BHAGAVAD-GITA: TRANSLATED BY SWAMI VIRESWARANANDA, Published by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 600004, 1974, pp. xii+369, Price Rs. 2.50.

FACETS OF HINDUISM: BY N. D. MEHTA, Published by Uttarapatha Ashrama Trust, 38, Noble Chambers, Parsi Bazar St., Bombay-1, (P 1972), pp. xxxix+144, Price Rs. 18/-.

GAYATRI MANTRAKOSHAH: Published by Sri Vaishnavi Trust, Madras 600-062, 1974, pp. xiv+103, Price Rs. 3.75.

SOME CONCEPTS OF INDIAN CULTURE: BY N. A. NIKAM, Published by Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla-171005, (2nd Edition) 1973, pp. xiv+74, Price Rs. 18/-.

PERSPECTIVISM IN ART: BY JERRY I

JACOBSON, D.D.S., Published by Philosophical Library, 15 E 40th St., New York, N. Y., 10016, 1973, pp. 177, Price \$ 8.75.

A THEORY OF CONSCIOUSNESS: BY ARNOLD SCHULTZ, Published by Philosophical Library, 1973, pp. 527, Price \$ 12.50.

## NEWS AND REPORTS

### THE GENERAL REPORT OF THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION AND RAMAKRISHNA MATH FOR APRIL, 1972—MARCH, 1973 (With some later information)

[We are presenting here a brief summary of the latest report of the Ramakrishna Mission and Ramakrishna Math, which will give our readers some information about the activities of these twin organizations. The report was issued by the General Secretary in September 1974 from the Headquarters at Belur Math, P.O., District Howrah, West Bengal 711-202, India.—Ed.]

#### *The Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission*

Though the Ramakrishna Mission and the Ramakrishna Math, with their respective branches, are distinct legal entities they are closely related, inasmuch as the Governing Body of the Mission is made up of the Trustees of the Math; the administrative work of the Mission is mostly in the hands of the monks of the Ramakrishna Math; and both have their Headquarters at the Belur Math. The Math organization is constituted under a Trust with well-defined rules of procedure. The Mission is a registered society. Though both the organizations take up charitable and philanthropic activities, the former lays emphasis on religion and preaching, while the latter is wedded mainly to social betterment. This distinction should be borne in mind, though the 'Ramakrishna Mission' is loosely associated by people with Math activities also. It is necessary, moreover, to point out that the appropriation of the name of Sri Ramakrishna or Swami Vivekananda by any institution does not necessarily imply that it is controlled by the central organization at Belur.

The Math and the Mission own separate funds and keep separate accounts of them. Though both the Math and the Mission receive grants from the Central and State Governments and public bodies for their social activities, the other activities of the Math are financed from offerings, publications, etc., and the Mission is supported by fees from students, public donations, etc. Both the Math and the Mission funds are annually audited by qualified auditors.

#### *Summary of Activities*

After the stress and strain of the previous years the year 1972-73 was comparatively peaceful for the consolidation of our work both in India and outside.

The new construction during the year under review comprised the new Prayer Hall at Kankhal Sevashrama, a Study Hall of the Boys' Hostel at Mambalam in Madras and a new wing of the school building at Along. Moreover, the hostel building at Narottamnagar was nearing completion and the seven storey block of the Seva Pratishthan, Calcutta, was formally dedicated and new wards opened.

A new building to house the Ashrama and the Students' Home (Orphanage) at Batticaloa, Sri Lanka, came into existence whereas foundation of a Library-cum-Auditorium was laid at the Dacca centre in Bangladesh.

The effort to purchase a portion of Swamiji's ancestral home is still continuing; but as this entails prolonged litigation, the Mission has approached the West Bengal Government for the compulsory acquisition of a few plots, including the one where Swamiji was born, as also the two plots involved in private negotiation.

The centres restarted in the independent Bangladesh were conducting relief and rehabilitation activities on a vast scale.

The Ramakrishna Mission Society, Rangoon, our only Centre in Burma, was managed as before by some local friends, constituted into a Managing Committee by the Headquarters.

#### *Centres*

Excluding the Headquarters at Belur, there were in March, 1973, 118 branch centres in all, of which

54 were Mission centres, 20 combined Math and Mission centres, and 44 Math centres. These were regionally distributed as follows: two Mission centres, five combined Math and Mission centres and three Math centres in Bangladesh; one Mission centre each in Burma, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Fiji, Mauritius and France; one Math centre each in Switzerland, England and Argentina; 12 Math centres in the United States of America; and the remaining 46 Mission centres, 15 combined Math and Mission centres and 26 Math centres (87 in all) in India. The Indian Centres were distributed as follows: 29 in West Bengal, 11 in Uttar Pradesh, 12 in Tamil Nadu, seven in Bihar, five in Kerala, four in Mysore, three each in Orissa and Assam, two each in Maharashtra, Meghalaya, Andhra and Arunachal Pradesh, and one each in Gujarat, Rajasthan, Delhi, Madhya Pradesh and Chandigarh. Moreover, attached to the branch centres there were over twenty sub-centres where monastic workers resided more or less permanently.

Since November, 1973, a new branch of Ramakrishna Math has been started at Secunderabad in Andhra Pradesh.

#### *Types of Work*

**Medical Service:** The Math and Mission institutions under this head served the public in general, irrespective of creed, colour or nationality. Typical of these are the indoor hospitals in Calcutta, Varanasi, Vrindaban, Kankhal, Trivandrum and Ranchi. In 1972-73 there were altogether 13 Indoor Hospitals with 1,578 beds which accommodated 35,039 patients and 64 Outdoor Dispensaries which treated 41,12,515 cases including the old ones. Besides, some centres had provision for emergency or observation indoor wards attached to their dispensaries. The Veterinary section of the Shyamala Tal Sevashrama treated 279 cases. The Sanatorium at Ranchi and the Clinic at New Delhi treated T.B. cases alone, while large sections of Seva Pratishthan, Calcutta, and the hospital at Trivandrum were devoted to maternity and child-welfare work. The last mentioned had also a department of Psychiatry.

**Educational Work:** The twin organizations ran, during the period, five Degree Colleges of general education at Madras, Rahara (24 Parganas), Belur (Howrah), Coimbatore, and Narendrapur (24 Parganas) with 4,346 students on their rolls. The last three were residential. In addition, there were two B.T. Colleges at Belur and Coimbatore with 250 students, two Basic Training Schools at Coimbatore and Madras with 114 students, one Post-graduate Basic Training College at Rahara with 96 students, four Junior Basic Training Colleges at

Rahara, Sarisha, Sargachhi with 287 students, a College for Physical Education, another for Rural Higher Education and a School of Agriculture with 119, 104 and 162 students respectively at Coimbatore, one Gram Sevak Training Centre at Narendrapur with 47 trainees, four Engineering Schools at Belur, Belgharia, Madras and Coimbatore with 953 students, 13 Junior Technical or Industrial Schools with 920 boys and 32 girls, 87 Students' Homes or Hostels, including some orphanages with 8,300 boys and 547 girls, 15 Multi-purpose Higher Secondary Schools with 6,473 boys and 437 girls, 24 High, Secondary and Higher Secondary Schools with 11,738 boys and 5,953 girls, 25 Senior Basic and M.E. Schools with 4,867 boys and 3,901 girls, 48 Junior Basic, U.P., and Elementary Schools with 6,869 boys and 4,137 girls, and 135 L.P. and other grades of Schools with 23,764 boys and 1,796 girls. The Seva Pratishthan, Calcutta, and the Math Hospital at Trivandrum trained nurses and midwives, the number of trainees being 240. Besides these, the Institute of Culture in Calcutta conducted a School of Languages for teaching different Indian and foreign languages with 1,077 students. The Ashrama at Narendrapur conducted a Blind Boys' Academy with 95 blind students, and the Centres in Raipur and Ranchi (Morabadi) ran a Panchayat Raj Training Centre, and a training centre in farming (Divyayan) respectively. The Centre at Rahara conducted a Rural Librarianship Training Centre (residential) with 24 students. Thus there were altogether 70,285 boys and 17,723 girls in all the educational institutions run by the Math and the Mission in India, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Fiji, and Mauritius.

**Recreational Activities:** Some of the Math and Mission centres have been providing scope for recreational, cultural and spiritual activities to youngsters at stated periods outside their school hours. The *Vivekananda Balaka Sangha* of the Bangalore Ashrama has a fine building of its own. At the Mysore Ashrama also a number of boys take advantage of the various kinds of facilities provided for them, and the Youth Section of the *Janashiksha Mandir*, Belur, is engaged in similar activities.

**Work for Women:** The organization has ever been conscious of its duties to the women of India. Typical of the work done for them are the Maternity Sections of the Seva Pratishthan, Calcutta and the Hospital at Trivandrum; the Domiciliary and Maternity Clinics at Jalpaiguri and Khetri; the women's sections of the Hospitals at Varanasi and Vrindaban; the attached Invalid Women's Home at Varanasi; the Sarada Vidyalaya at Madras; the Girls' High Schools at Jamshedpur; the Sarada

Mandir at Sarisha (24 Pargs.) and the two Training Schools for nurses in Trivandrum and Calcutta. Moreover, there are special arrangements for women in other hospitals, dispensaries and schools, and some institutions are conducted especially for them. The Madras Math also conducts a High School and a Primary School for girls.

*Rural Uplift and Work among the Labouring and Backward Classes:* The twin organisations have all along tried their best to serve the unfortunate countrymen who have fallen back culturally or otherwise. In addition to the more prominent village Ashramas like those at Cherrapunji, Sarisha, Ramharipur, Manasadwip, Jayrambati, Kamar-pukur, Sargachhi, Along and Narottam Nagar (Arunachal Pradesh), Coimbatore, Kalady, Trichur and Nattarampalli, a number of rural subcentres—both permanent and semi-permanent—are run under the branch centres at Belur, Rahara, Sarisha, Tiruvalla, Kankurgachhi (Calcutta), Malda, Ranchi, Narendrapur and Cherrapunji. Of these, special mention may be made of the numerous village sub-centres started for educating the hill tribes in Meghalaya and a youth training centre at Ranchi, meant for local Adivasis. Welfare work of various kinds was done among the Kukis and Mizos by the Silchar Ashrama. Our educational and cultural activities in the Arunachal region are also proving very useful and popular. During the year, the organization ran in the rural and backward areas eight Multi-purpose Higher Secondary Schools, two High Schools, 39 Senior Basic, M.E. and U.P. Schools, 38 Primary Schools, 62 night Schools for adults, seven Vocational Training Centres and a Rural Librarianship Training Centre—with a total of 11,713 students. The organization also conducted 13 Outdoor Dispensaries with a total of 2,12,563 patients, besides running two Mobile Dispensaries and 103 Milk-distribution centres—all located in the rural and backward areas. In addition to such varied activities, preaching and educative tours with magic lanterns, movie-films and such other means were also undertaken frequently. For the labouring classes in the industrial areas, the Mission conducted several night schools, community centres, etc.

*Mass Contact:* From the foregoing account it will be evident that the organization's activities are not concentrated in urban areas alone; they are spread over other fields as well. It will be wrong again to suppose that the organization has no real contact with the masses. As a matter of fact, the message of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda is steadily spreading in all parts of India, which is evident

from the participation of innumerable people during the annual celebrations. The Ashramas and temples also draw thousands of people throughout the year. Over and above these, there are a number of medical institutions where millions get free medicines, and thousands are treated in the indoor departments. In the educational institutions also, a considerable number of poor students get free education, board or lodging. The organization is also running a good number of free libraries in the rural areas. The publication centres sometimes sell booklets at nominal price, to suit the pocket of the masses.

*Spiritual and Cultural Work:* Both the Math and the Mission centres laid emphasis on the dissemination of the spiritual and cultural ideals of India, and through various types of activity tried to give a practical shape to the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna that all religions are true. The Centres established real points of contact between people of different faiths through public celebrations, meetings, classes, publications, etc. They also conducted Libraries and Reading Rooms. Two Sanskrit Chatuspathis, too, were run. At least ten Centres published books on religious subjects and nine journals in different languages. The Math Centres at Mayavati, Baghbazar (Calcutta), Madras, Nagpur, Mysore, Rajkot, Trichur and Bhubaneswar, in particular, have to their credit a considerable number of useful publications. Some of our foreign centres too are publishing valuable books. Special mention should be made of the Institute of Culture, Calcutta, which has been trying to bring together eminent men and women of India and other lands in cultural fellowship. It may not be out of place to tell here of the continuous preaching of Vedanta through classes and lectures for quite a few years now, being carried on by Swami Nihshreyasananda in South Africa (Rhodesia) and East Africa, with Salisbury (35, Rhodes Avenue) as his centre.

*Relief and Rehabilitation Work:* As usual the Mission undertook relief and rehabilitation work either directly through the Headquarters or in conjunction with some branch centres. Some works were also conducted by the branch centres themselves. Under the first head may be mentioned the Bangladesh Relief and rehabilitation through the branch centres at Dacca, Narayanganj, Bagerhat, Dinajpur, Barisal, Faridpur and Sylhet. An independent centre directly under the Headquarters conducted work at Kumarkhali in Khulna district.

The following relief works were conducted by some of the Indian centres:

*Flood Relief:* Bombay and Rajkot Ashramas in



Gujarat, Madras Math and Salem Ashrama in Coimbatore, Malda Ashrama in West Bengal and Silchar Ashrama in Cachar; *Drought Relief*: Bombay Ashrama in Maharashtra Bangalore Ashrama in Karnataka, Narendrapur Ashrama in Bankura, Purulia Vidyapith in Purulia, Rajkot Ashrama in Ranchi; *Fire Relief* by Madras Math; *Assam Refugee Relief* by Silchar Ashrama; and *Adivasi Mobile Medical Relief* by Bombay Ashrama.

*Annual Celebrations*: Most of the Math and Mission Centres ceremonially observe the days sanctified by the advent of great saints and prophets. The general features of the celebrations of the birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi (the Holy Mother) and Swami Vivekananda are: Special worship, *Homa* (making offerings in the sacred fire), chanting of scriptural texts, *Bhajan* and *Sankirtan* (often in chorus), distribution of *Prasad* (sacramental food) to the devotees, feeding of the poor in large numbers, and lectures by eminent speakers, including the Swamis of the Order. Thus the message of Sri Ramakrishna and his direct associates is steadily spreading, and many young and ardent souls are coming into closer touch with the ideals of the Math and Mission. In co-operation with the local public, some Centres celebrate the more popular Hindu festivals, accounts for these being maintained separately.

### THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION TUBERCULOSIS SANATORIUM—RANCHI

REPORT: APRIL 1972—MARCH 1973

From its very beginning, in 1951, this Sanatorium has evoked keen interest from the public, and its growth was rapid, till by now it is one of the best-known of such institutions in a large area. It presently has 280 beds, with all facilities needed for the modern diagnosis and treatment of tuberculosis, including major chest surgery. An After-care Colony helps rehabilitate recovering patients for their return to society. It is situated on a 279-acre plot of land, 640 metres above sea-level, in pleasant rural surroundings. Climate is very healthful, and a large reservoir ensures ample water-supply. Of the 280 beds, 270 are in general wards—the rest in cabins or cottages.

*Specialized facilities* include: Air-conditioned operation-theatre and Recovery Room; four X-ray machines, one with provision for Tomography; Pathological Laboratory, including such important details as bacterial sensitivity tests; and Medical Library, oriented specially towards chest diseases. And for the *patients*: Recreation Hall with stage and auditorium seating 300, where dramas and

motion pictures are presented; radio relays to wards; Library, with books and periodicals in four major languages; indoor-game equipment; and separate library for staff-members.

During the year under review, 808 patients were treated, of whom 185 were already in-patients at the start. Of the 501 discharged during the year, 94 had their diseases 'arrested' (presumably on their way to permanent 'cure'), 59 'quiescent', 278 improved, 42 stationary, and only 4 were 'worse'. Meanwhile 33 patients had died—30 of these from tuberculosis. Of the 29 surgical operations, one was pneumonectomy, two were lobectomies, and 24 thoracoplasties—all very extensive procedures. Meanwhile 4,369 X-ray pictures were taken, of which 1042 were Tomograms. In the Out-patient Department, 736 tuberculosis patients and 3151 with other diseases were treated. Minor surgical procedures (either In-patient or Out-patient) included 1,226 Pneumoperitoneums and 74 Pneumothoraxes.

*Free Patients*: 75 poor patients (in Hospital) were treated free of charge, and 12 were granted concessions on charges. Moreover, 226 of the beds were reserved by various bodies, which paid maintenance charges of their nominees. Most of the outpatients, and all (68) who were admitted to Emergency Ward, received free care.

*After-care Colony and Rehabilitation Centre*: 27 ex-patients were accommodated in this Colony, most of them doing useful work in various branches of the Hospital, while developing skills for future occupations. Five of these received work-training in Nursing; another who is a qualified Homoeopath, was in charge of the Homoeopathic Dispensary.

*Free Homoeopathic Dispensary* treated during this year 5,109 new, and 7,951 old cases.

*Recreation Club*: for the inmates of the Sanatorium, conducts the Patients' Library plus the recreational and educational activities outlined above.

*Agriculture and Dairy*: In a sustained program aiming at self-support in foodstuffs, nearly two-thirds of the cereals as well as of the milk needed for the institution, were produced by the Farm and Dairy respectively. Production of vegetables and fruits was also encouraging.

*Finances*: In the year under review, income was Rs. 9,56,224.89, and expenditure, Rs. 9,96,648.84.

*Needs: Free beds*: As seen above, less than 10% of total patients could be treated free this year; and costs of care are constantly rising. *After-care*: less than 6% of patients discharged could be helped in this Centre—help urgently

needed by many more before they become 'employable'. Thus, help in both these spheres is obviously needed. *Office Buildings*: Office work is presently done in a temporary building, which can hardly be efficient. *Dairy*: As indicated above, it has quite a way to go before meeting Institution needs. *Compound Wall* around the hospital area for its security.

*Estimated Costs* of these needs: Endowments: per free bed—Rs. 30,000; per ordinary bed—Rs. 6,000/-. *Office Building*: Rs. 50,000/-; *Dairy development*: Rs. 50,000/-; *Compound Wall*: Rs. 100,000/-.

### VIVEKANANDA VEDANTA SOCIETY, CHICAGO, U.S.A.

#### ANNUAL SPRING FESTIVAL AT GANGES MONASTERY, AND DEDICATION OF NEW SHRINE ROOM AND CHAPEL, CHICAGO

The first of these functions, at Ganges Town Monastery and Retreat, was on June 22 and 23; the second at the Chicago Temple on June 29 and 30. Both were very successful and attended by many devotees. The Society was most fortunate that Revered Swamis Asehananda, Head of the Vedanta Society of Portland, and Hiranmayananda, Head of the Ramakrishna Mission and Ashrama, Bombay, could attend all the activities and give their inspiring talks and insights for the benefit of the devotees and monastics alike.

The ceremonies started at Ganges at 11:00 A.M. on the 22nd with the blowing of the conch, followed by chanting from the Upanishads; then a brief ritualistic worship by Swami Asehananda. Pictures of Sri Ramakrishna, the Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi, Swamiji, and Maharaj were worshipped; then in procession and installed in the new Brahma-nanda Dham, the first building to be completed in the projected monastery complex. This building was constructed from start to finish entirely by the brahmacharins of this centre, and their work has proved to be of high 'professional' quality. Next a short play by the children of the Sunday School

on the life of Sri Ramakrishna was presented. After this, lunch was served to all, the number of devotees in attendance being about four hundred, despite the 125 mile distance from Chicago. At four o'clock the two guest swamis spoke to the congregation on the subject of meditation. This was followed by vesper service at 5:30 P.M. A newly acquired full-length Bengali sound film on the life of the Holy Mother was shown, at seven o'clock. Provisions had been made on various parts of the Retreat land for the overnight accommodations of all who chose to stay here: two large tents for use by men and two for women.

At 6-30 the next morning the devotees assembled for morning *arati* and meditation. At 11:00 the two guest swamis spoke at the Sunday service—held here at the monastery instead of the Chicago temple this day—on the subject, 'Our Experiences with the Direct Disciples of Sri Ramakrishna'. After the service, lunch was again served to all, thus completing the two-day function. These days were marked by the devotees' reflective attitude and marked interest in spiritual pursuits.

The following week-end's program at the Chicago Temple began at 10:00 A.M. on the 29th with an elaborate ritualistic worship of Sri Ramakrishna, with *homa* fire, conducted by Swami Asehananda. This event marked the official dedication of the new shrine room and Chapel, recently completed. Following the ceremony, *prasada* was served to all. In order to provide opportunity for the devotees to approach the guest swamis on a more personal level, a question-and-answer session was held at four o'clock. This was followed by vesper service at 5:30. At seven o'clock another Bengali film was shown, this time on the life of Sri Ramakrishna.

Next morning at the Sunday service, the guest swamis spoke on 'The Message of the *Bhagavad-gita*'. This was followed by lunch for the congregation, concluding the program.

The success of these events was largely due to the great efforts and cooperation of many devotees, who cheerfully undertook responsibilities in providing the complex arrangements that were required of so extensive an undertaking.

### HOLY MOTHER'S BIRTHDAY

The birthday of Sri Sarada Devi, the Holy Mother, falls on Saturday, 4 January 1975.