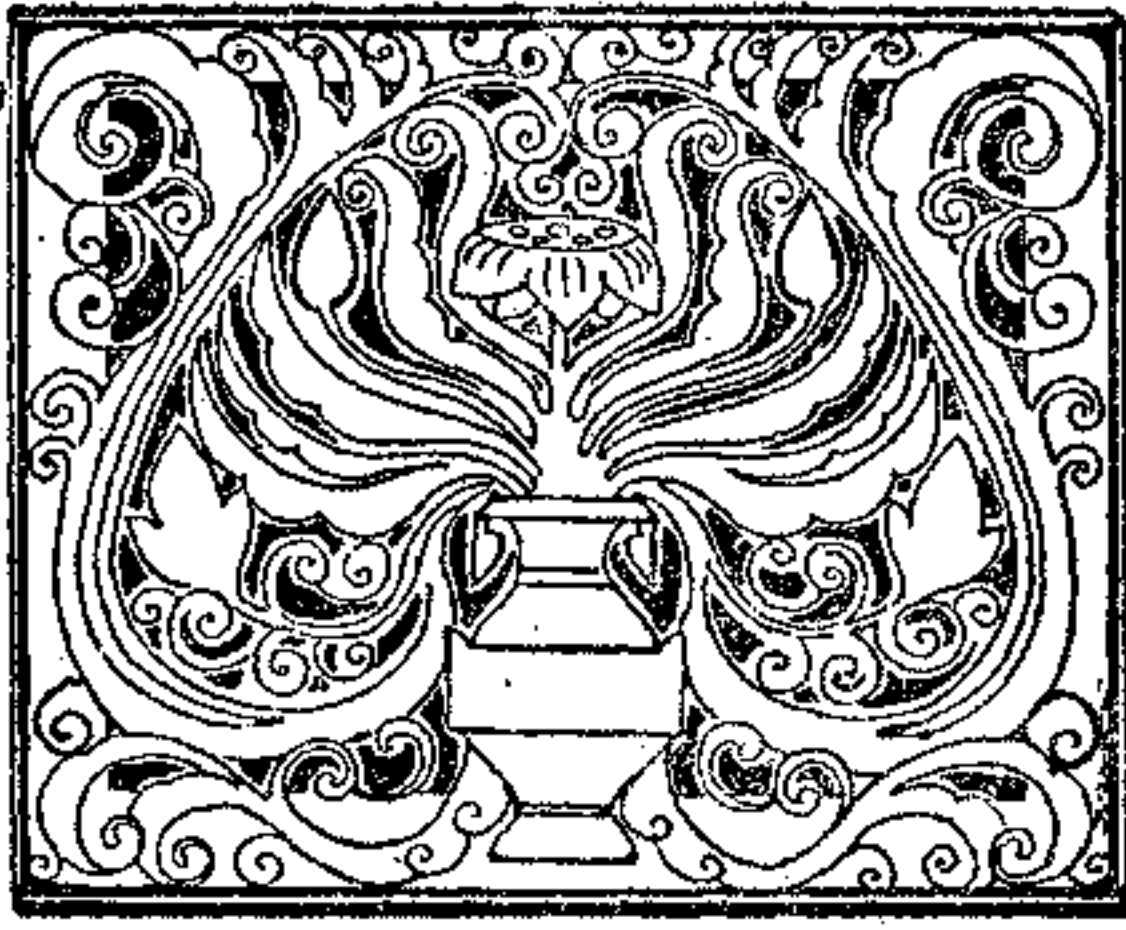


VOL. LXXIX  
JANUARY 1974

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



ADVAITA ASHRAMA, MAYAVATI  
HIMALAYAS



# Prabuddha Bharata

Started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896

A MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE  
RAMAKRISHNA ORDER

JANUARY 1974

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# Prabuddha Bharata

VOL. LXXIX

JANUARY 1974

No. 1

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

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## SRI RAMAKRISHNA ANSWERS

Question (asked by Shyam Basu): 'Sir, if God alone does everything, how is it that man is punished for his sins?'

Sri Ramakrishna: 'How like a goldsmith you talk!'

Narendra: 'In other words, Shyam Babu has a calculating mind, like a goldsmith who weighs things with his delicate balance.'

Sri Ramakrishna: 'I say: O my foolish boy, eat the mangoes and be happy. What is the use of your calculating how many hundreds of trees, how many thousands of branches, and how many millions of leaves there are in the orchard? You have come to the orchard to eat mangoes. Eat them and be contented.'

(To Shyam) 'You have been born in this world as a human being to worship God; therefore try to acquire love for His Lotus Feet. Why do you trouble yourself to know a hundred other things? What will you gain by discussing "philosophy"? Look here, one ounce of liquor is enough to intoxicate you. What is the use of your trying to find out how many gallons of liquor there are in the tavern?'

Doctor Sarkar: 'Quite so. And what is more, the Wine in God's Tavern is beyond all measure. There is no limit to it.'

Sri Ramakrishna (to Shyam): 'Why don't you give your power of attorney to God? Rest all your responsibilities on Him. If you entrust an honest man with your responsibilities, will he misuse his power over you? God alone knows whether or not He will punish you for your sins.'

Question (asked by Shyam): 'We hear a great deal about the subtle body. Can anyone show it to us. Can anyone demonstrate that the subtle body, when a man dies, leaves the gross body and goes away?'

Sri Ramakrishna: 'True devotees don't care a rap about showing you these things. What do they care whether some fool of a big man respects them or not? The desire to have a big man under their control never enters their minds.'

Question (asked by Shyam): 'What is the distinction between the gross body and the subtle body?'

Sri Ramakrishna: 'The body consisting of the five gross elements is called the gross body. The subtle body is made up of the mind, the ego, the discriminating faculty, and the mind-stuff. There is also a causal body, by means of which one enjoys the Bliss of God and holds communion with Him. The Tantra calls it the Bhagavati Tanu, the Divine Body. Beyond all these is the Mahakarana, the Great Cause. That cannot be expressed by words.'

'What is the use of merely listening to words? Do something! What will you achieve by merely repeating the word "siddhi"? Will that intoxicate you? You will not be intoxicated even if you make a paste of siddhi and rub it all over your body. You must eat some of it. How can a man recognize yarns of different counts, such as number forty and number forty-one, unless he is in the trade? Those who trade in yarn do not find it at all difficult to describe a thread of a particular count. Therefore I say, practise a little spiritual discipline; then you will know all these—the gross, the subtle, the causal, and the Great Cause. While praying to God, ask only for love for his Lotus Feet.'

'When Rama redeemed Ahalya from the curse, He said to her, "Ask a boon of Me." Ahalya said, "O Rama, if You deign to grant me a boon, then please fulfil my desire that I may always meditate on Your Lotus Feet, even though I may be born in a pig's body."

'I prayed to the Divine Mother only for love. I offered flowers at Her Lotus Feet and said with folded hands: "O Mother, here is Thy ignorance and here is Thy knowledge; take them both and give me only pure love for Thee. Here is Thy holiness and here is Thy unholiness; take them both and give me only pure love for Thee. Here is Thy virtue and here is Thy sin; here is Thy good and here is Thy evil; take them all and give me only pure love for Thee. Here is Thy dharma and here is Thy adharma; take them both and give me only pure love for Thee."

'Dharma means good actions, like giving in charity. If you accept dharma, you have to accept adharma too. If you accept virtue, you have to accept sin. If you accept knowledge, you have to accept ignorance. If you accept holiness, you have to accept unholiness. It is like a man's being aware of light, in which case he is aware of darkness too. If a man is aware of one, he is aware of many too. If he is aware of good, he is aware of evil too.'

'Blessed is the man who retains his love for the Lotus Feet of God, even though he eats pork. But if a man is attached to the world, even though he lives only on boiled vegetables, then he is a wretch.'

## ONWARD FOR EVER!

*This Maya is everywhere. It is terrible. Yet we have to work through it. The man who says that he will work when the world has become all good and then he will enjoy bliss is as likely to succeed as the man who sits beside the Ganga and says, 'I will ford the river when all the water has run into the ocean.' The way is not with Maya, but against it. This is another fact to learn. We are not born as helpers of nature, but competitors with nature. We are its bond-masters, but we bind ourselves down. Why is this house here? Nature did not build it. Nature says, go and live in the forest. Man says, I will build a house and fight with nature, and he does so. The whole history of humanity is a continuous fight against the so-called laws of nature, and man gains in the end. Coming to the internal world, there too the same fight is going on, this fight between the animal man and the spiritual man, between light and darkness; and here too man becomes victorious. He, as it were, cuts his way out of nature to freedom.*



## WE CAN OVERCOME ALL CRISES

EDITORIAL

I

We need no prophet of doom or philosopher of despair to tell us that mankind, particularly in India, has been passing through trying times. It is also clear that our difficulties are not going to vanish one of these fine mornings. More problematical times may well be ahead of us.

Difficulties, problems, crises—about which we are compelled to hear so much—are not in themselves synonymous with misfortunes. But when we begin to think, as we now seem to do, that nothing can be done to halt this deterministic drift to disaster, that we have simply failed or are foredoomed to failure, that some Saviour dropping from the skies could alone rescue us—then we are being worsted by difficulties.

A crisis in the history of a nation is not evil *per se*: it may even prove a mine of good, of hidden wealth, and a harbinger of great glory, provided we know what to do with ourselves. A crisis, though manifesting through outer events, is fundamentally a challenge to the people to show their mettle and forge their character. And this challenge is no imposition from without, but born of people's own karma. The hidden message of the challenge is: 'Continue to grow and you will outgrow the challenge. If you do not, come, get crushed.'

We must never forget that no challenge is greater than man, for, as Swami Vivekananda teaches, 'in you is all power'. In any critical situation ultimate conquest is certain if only we know how to keep growing. Developing difficulties, crises, can never be creatively handled by decadent and debilitated men. But developing and dynamic men can clasp the very thunderbolt of destiny and transmute it into a garland and offer it back to destiny.

II

We hear all kinds of analyses of the na-

tional crisis in India which has filled the country with groans of deep despair and debasing self-disrespect. Those who wield political power and who promised if not an El Dorado, at least a decent pace of national progress, hold historical and natural 'causes' responsible for their non-success. Not that there is no element of truth in what they say. What they generally have not the boldness or honesty to own, is the part of the responsibility which issues directly from their character.

Those who are not in power, in effect tell us: 'Those who rule the country are responsible for all its ills. If they were thrown out and we installed, we all would soon be in the promised land.' Neither restraint nor reasonableness is found in what they say. And when the chance is given them to throw out those in power, they skulk away.

Then there are the firebrands who preach that unless the whole country is riven by a bloody revolution, the 'haves' wiped out, the foundations of all 'bourgeois' establishments—including of course, religion—torn up, and the proletariat's rule established, the country will never see the dawn of its true history. They point out what has been achieved in other countries through violent revolutions. If we find solutions to our problems without wading through blood, they hold, these are no solutions at all, for they are not revolutionary! But since they cannot yet have their way, the country must be helped to rot and rot, to get confused and confounded, until people rise in spontaneous revolt; and then comes the Red-letter day!

There are others who pinned all their hopes on the brave new generation in a rather romantic way. But when they come to see that mere proximity to power can develop in youth all the vices of their elders, and that in a more specialized manner, they honestly begin to feel it foolish not to be cynical regarding the nation, crisis, and all that.

### III

Amidst all this medley of analyses we have heard only one impartial voice, and that is of Sri V. V. Giri, President of India:

India was today facing a crisis of character. The widespread corruption, nepotism, and favouritism that they saw all around them were undermining the very basis of their existence as a strong and viable nation. 'The gap between what we say and what we do is appalling. The greed for power and self is the antithesis of the spiritual and cultural heritage that we have inherited.' India through the ages had stood for the primacy of moral and ethical values. India's sages had proclaimed, 'Protect Dharma and Dharma will protect you.' 'Dharma was what bound society together. Let us promote this spirit and make our country strong and united.'<sup>1</sup>

We are in general agreement with President Giri's analysis of the root cause of the Indian crisis, as being the crisis of character. And we also firmly believe that: 'Dharma, when protected, protects.' (*dharmo rakṣati rakṣitah*). But we are also aware that all this talk may well sound like irresponsible platitude if in these two key concepts 'dharma' and 'character' we fail to discover the genius of providing for our people's basic needs and fulfilling their rising aspirations.

If this is a crisis of character we are facing, obviously we can overcome it by developing sound characters. But what is character? Character is dharma actualized in life.

'Well, we would say that dharma, or your so-called religion, "actualized in life" is this very crisis,' will be the quick but somewhat worn retort, we know, from some quarters.

But we must not forget that the serious business we have on hand does not permit

<sup>1</sup> *vide* The President's speech, 23 Sept. 1973, at a foundation-stone-laying ceremony at Hyderabad, as reported in *The Hindu* for 24 Sept. 1973.

us to be touchy about words. What we need is a scientific approach to the meaning of words and a brass-tacks view of our problems. We may be using ancient words, yet they may be wonderfully responsive to modern situations and demands. Take the word 'dharma'—a *bête noire* of modern revolutionary theoreticians. Neither blind adoption nor dogmatic rejection of concepts is a sign of enlightened thinking. In fact, neither can dharma be thrown out nor is there any need to throw it out, for dharma is a greater revolutionary than all others put together. By translating into action one or two strands of dharma, leaders make their revolutions succeed. The constructive part of Lenin's revolution was fundamentally a revolution of sympathy for the poor, the deprived, the dispossessed, the exploited. This 'sympathy' is basically a spiritual emotion. We must not forget that. Who of us has ever ventured to put all the concepts of dharma into action, so as to be able to comprehend its explosive possibilities?

By the word dharma, people mean many different or even opposite things. Hence as the basis of this discussion we accept the most rational and comprehensive interpretation of dharma—still clearly understandable to modern man—given by Bhīṣma in the *Mahābhārata*:

Dharma was declared for the advancement and growth of all creatures. Therefore what brings on advancement and growth is dharma.

Dharma is also so called because it maintains all creatures. In fact all creatures are kept up by dharma. Therefore, dharma is what is capable of upholding all creatures.

Dharma was declared for preserving creatures from injuring one another. Therefore dharma is that which prevents injury to creatures.

Some say that dharma is the injunction of the *Śrutis* (Vedas). Others do not agree to this. I would not blame them

that say so. For, everything has not been described in the *Śrutis*.<sup>2</sup>

The most important thing to be noted here is that the concern of dharma is *always for all*. It views human society as an organic whole composed of inseparably connected parts. Its wisdom provides guidance for the advancement of all. Its economy is in the totality-concept of the fulfilment of all. It does not exclude any individual or group from its scheme. And no matter how an individual or group has behaved in the past, it has the right to self-fulfilment like all others.

No soulless socio-economic materialistic dispensation can approach this comprehensiveness of perspective and empathy.

Now it is not as if man lived in the air. How do we bring this idea of dharma into the highly complicated modern stream of life? That can be done mainly by building our character. In attempting to order society purposively through channels sanctioned by the most progressive thinking, we must always begin with ourselves. Things do not move of themselves. It is thoughts that move them. Our character is what our thoughts have made us. Again, our thoughts are as our character has developed.

In a crisis we 'normally' think we must hurry to order affairs and not waste time on ordering ourselves. And the result is that critical affairs not only become more critical but eventually begin to dominate men. Men thus become creatures of affairs. Such a determinism is introduced into human affairs that it seems nothing remains in man's hands, while man is very much in the hands of things and affairs: weather conditions, crop failures or abundance, political parties, depressions, inflations, wars, etc. Man has become a puppet of any-

<sup>2</sup> *Mahābhārata* (Southern recension), 'Śānti-parvan', c. 10, 14-16.

thing which wants to play with or control him. And he must move or frisk, rise or sink, as affairs make him.

But things can be very different if by upbringing, education and social milieu he is taught never to forget what to do with himself as well as with things and affairs. These two efforts, hand in hand, give us a very different sort of grip on affairs; they can then never get out of control. Instead, what we tend to do in a crisis is to store our characters in deep-freeze—nowhere near us at all—and rush madly after runaway affairs, mending-tools in hand. The result almost surely is that the crisis itself advances faster, while men—characters forgotten—become lesser and lesser men.

This seems to be the situation in India today.

#### IV

It may seem surprising; but in one of the great national crises of India, on the battlefield of Kurukṣetra, Śrī Kṛṣṇa did not teach Arjuna one word on how to handle weapons, men, or affairs; all His teachings were concentrated on how Arjuna was to handle and operate himself, his thoughts, emotions and actions in the light of the perennial philosophy and religion. On the eve of the battle, while thinking only of how he was to handle others, Arjuna had a nervous breakdown. All his valour and vast knowledge of weaponry were of no use. He began to sigh and sob, sitting on his chariot, having thrown away his weapons: pathetic in the extreme. But, taught by Śrī Kṛṣṇa, when he regained his memory and understood how to handle himself, the result was victory, though sanguinary indeed.

Now if we take a close look at what we have been doing in India in the way of solving our national crisis, it amounts to the exact converse of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's approach; and the result is the disheartening view of

more and more decaying human beings and frightening posture of crisis. Given the method, the result could not have been otherwise.

But the bold, reassuring message of the *Prabuddha Bharata* (*Awakened India*) is simply this: There are plenty of reasons for hope, though 'facts' shout to the contrary, provided we are ready to shed our 'taint of delusion' (*moha-kalila*) described in the *Gītā*.<sup>3</sup> The foundation of that hope is in human beings—every man, every woman—particularly in *you*. This truth can measure up to any test or challenge.

Maybe we have fumbled and made a mess of things—what's of that? A nation that never fumbled or made messes is not to be found in the history of the human race. Here we play, get wounded, are thrown on the ground, smeared with dust; but still we get up, shake off the dust, and start playing again. In India we have been doing this down the millennia. Therefore we refuse to take it from any leader or scholar that we have simply failed and that is the finale. As long as one Indian is alive with one drop of Indian blood in his veins, in that one drop is the wisdom of all the great men and sages of this land. That wisdom has the power to enlighten the whole world, and will it not enlighten India?

Yes, go and learn—if anything more needs learning—from anyone, anywhere in the world, with all humility and grace. But before you seek to be his disciple, test his gospel with this single test: is it for the protection, maintenance, growth, advancement, self-fulfilment of each and all?

On the other hand, do not act as if you had already reached saintliness, disowning all personal and party responsibilities for the present crisis, as if you never contributed to it. If so, where is your right to live

<sup>3</sup> II. 52.



in this country, breathe its air or share its food? You being here and the country in this state, why did you not change it? So, have some honesty and some humility. As long as you are an Indian, you have some personal responsibility in whatever is happening, or not, here—good or evil.

So all criticism of others—this shameful and petty craning of necks to discover scapegoats—must stop. If you need a sacrifice, become one: that will be a glorious achievement. But criticize none. Imagine the wastage of national energy thus daily overspent in India! This is the time all Indians must respond to the call of the Holy Mother, in a hushed voice from her death-bed: 'If you want peace of mind, do not find fault with others. Rather see your own faults. Learn to make the whole world your own. No one is a stranger, my child; this whole world is your own.'<sup>4</sup>

At least we must learn to make all Indians our own, instead of dividing them through religion, or politics, right, left, or middle. If we can cut out this fault-finding, we can save such power for the nation that it can energize the work of raising everyone everywhere to higher levels of being and higher standards of living.

So Swami Vivekananda's call went forth:

'Stand up, be bold, be strong. Take the whole responsibility on your own shoulders and know that you are the creator of your own destiny.'<sup>5</sup>

Even if all the wealth of the world is heaped on India, even if national plans are piled high as a skyscraper, little will happen to the wretched condition of our masses unless we understand the ultimate economics in the above saying of Vivekananda.

## V

You know of the frightening problems

<sup>4</sup> *Sri Sarada Devi The Holy Mother* (Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras-4, 1949), p. 269.

<sup>5</sup> *The Complete Works* (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati), Vol. II (1963) p. 225.

that beset us. The basic thing to do about a fearful problem is to cut out from within the bondage of fear. Then you can see the magic of fearlessness: the apparent venomous cobra before your very eyes turns into a worm. Then you have only the fear of trampling it to death!

That is why Swamiji taught: 'Fearlessness unto desperation!' Allow this electrifying mantra to penetrate you through and through: then you will see how power comes to you for doing great things.

But how does one go beyond fear? This brings us back to our basic imperative: to learn how to handle ourselves, to order ourselves.

First, along with what we have to *do* in our daily life—in the process of that—we need also attend to what is conducive to our self-development. We may not have done well. But we can do well. We may have done well, but we can do better. We may have been weak, but we can shed all weakness and become as strong as strength itself. We may have failed, but we can really succeed, if we care to work for it. And if we choose to travel further, we can also go beyond success and failure.

Here is the key-idea: daily qualitative improvement and transformation of man, of oneself. If we do not attend to this in and through what we daily think and do as duty, our problems cannot help mounting and we cannot help becoming problems to ourselves. But if we *do* this, we can also make people and things better around us by the sheer force of our personality. This was why Swami Vivekananda gave this mantra to Indians: "Be and make". Let this be our motto.'<sup>6</sup> The entire secret of Mahatma Gandhi's power was in his devoted and unremitting practice of this principle.

By applying this one simple teaching of

<sup>6</sup> *The Complete Works*, Vol. IV (1962) p. 351.

Swamiji in our personal and collective life, we can solve not only our present crisis but any crisis.

Unless we daily attend to the requirement of our personal self-development we cannot understand Swamiji's message, much less put it into practice. And yet in his message there is the solution of our problems. What we referred to as the 'taint of delusion' has to be gotten rid of for understanding this message and acquiring the disposition to follow him.

How can we do this ?

Those who feel that Swamiji's mantra "Be and make." Let this be our motto', should become operational dharma for the regeneration of India, must remember that this cannot be done sporadically, to span a chasm in national life. It has to be a basic work of irrevocable dedication, not imposed from outside but stemming from our own personal conviction.

The first and most important material for fashioning life in Swamiji's mould is *truth*. To those who seek to do so, truth must be the very breath of life. They must take their stand on truth and never forsake it out of fear or temptation. They must be ready to suffer for holding to truth under all circumstances. Truth will be their armour and weapon; they will unquestioningly go wherever it leads. They will never renounce truth. As Swamiji taught: Everything can be sacrificed for truth but truth cannot be sacrificed for anything in the world.

Truth is immortality. Truth alone triumphs. Victory for those who stand by truth is inevitable, though patience may be necessary to see it.

We do not say that trials and tribulations, woes and sufferings will not visit those who hold to truth. More than likely, they will have more than others. They will have to go through fire. But those who endure for the sake of truth will grow a power beyond all others.

Truthfulness is the foundation of all strength. Falsehood is the root of all weakness. Those who seek to mould their life by Swamiji's ideals must cultivate strength. In his language, they need to have 'muscles of iron and nerves of steel'; also an invincible will power.

Remember, the weak will never see the end of their miseries until they shed their weaknesses. The weak alone are the sinners, the oppressors and also the oppressed—the problems of society. Their only salvation is in strength. Hence let them acquire strength: physical, mental, spiritual. The physical should be guided and controlled by mental strength, the mental by the spiritual; so that strength may not become an unguided missile.

Life's crises will become more and more complicated with passage of time. Those who do not develop strength will not be able to carry their high idealism into the depths of human life. Great voltage of energy born of assiduous cultivation of truth and strength will be needed for anything worthwhile in India or the world.

Again, neither truth nor strength can be cultivated without moral purity. An immoral man, or an amoral man, is already broken from within. None need give him a blow to topple him.

Along with these qualities, Swamiji repeatedly stressed (as already pointed out) fearlessness. And to those who cultivate truth, strength and moral purity, fearlessness comes as a matter of course. They alone—the truthful, strong and pure-hearted—can be fearless under all conditions of life and death.

The person who has developed these qualities will find it easy to cultivate that disposition called *śraddhā*. *Śraddhā* enables him to receive, with humility, creative wisdom from whatever source. As the *Gītā* teaches: "The person endowed with

*śraddhā* attains knowledge.’<sup>7</sup> Nay the *Gītā* goes further, to say: the quality of the man is the measure of his *śraddhā*.<sup>8</sup> He who thus acquires knowledge easily develops the power of discrimination between right and wrong, as well as a scientific approach to life and affairs. Such a person can easily keep himself free from superstitions, ancient and modern, and also cultivate a proper sense of values.

Again, one endowed with this disposition and these powers, will spontaneously develop that most important requisite for building life according to Swamiji’s ideal—will power. And lastly, this will power will enable him to manifest a threefold creative faith: faith in himself, in fellow human beings, and in God.

The foundation of this threefold faith is in the unity of existence. This is the main plank on which Swamiji’s philosophy of life stands: this is the ultimate teaching of Vedānta.

But it is no use if high philosophies remain in heavy books or in the brains of learned professors. What is important is to know that we can irrigate the field of our lives with this knowledge and reap a golden harvest. Swamiji has taught us two basic methods for this task: renunciation and service. Very common words, some may even say trite words; but in them Swamiji has summarized his redemptive gospel which, if understood and applied, can not only solve India’s problems but eventually transform human society. This is a bare statement of fact.

*Renunciation*, according to Swamiji, is constant movement towards one’s potential divinity, deliberately discarding *on* the way what comes *in* the way. Renunciation is thus the inner dynamism of man for attaining highest self-fulfilment. But such re-

nunciation can be sanctimonious selfishness unless one seeks that attainment in a manner simultaneously helpful to others to move towards their self-fulfilment. This comprehensive other-regard is *service* according to Swamiji’s teachings.

When we study in depth Swamiji’s teachings on ‘renunciation and service’ we shall find that in them is the corrective both for world-negating religion and God-negating socio-political systems, everywhere. Those who seek to build their lives according to Swamiji’s ideals must take the twin streams of renunciation and service deep into their inner and far into their outer occupations.

For doing this, one needs that wonderful thing about which all speak volubly but only a few really know: *Prema*, Love.

What is love?

The yearning of the running river for reaching the ocean, is love. On the one hand a man’s love will embrace mankind; on the other, God. Commonly we live our small selfish derivative lives. But when through our spiritual evolution we reach the unitive life, its spontaneous outcome is unreasoned love for all, based on same-sightedness. The motive power, or rather, unmotivated power behind all acts of self-giving in the service of the greater ‘me and mine’—the transmuted ‘others’—is this love.

Those who will ‘handle themselves’—build their lives—in this manner will gain control of their inner and outer nature as a matter of course. And in due time they will become emancipated and enlightened.

“Be and make.” Let this be our motto.’ ‘To be’ in Swamiji’s meaning, is to build one’s character in the way we have outlined. This ‘being’ has to become one with ‘making’, which is reverential service to fellow human beings.

That kind of good-doing which has not become one’s spiritual *sadhana* cannot result in much basic good to society. Thus Swamiji taught that true service is worship.

<sup>7</sup> *vide* IV. 39.

<sup>8</sup> *vide* XVII. 3.

## VI

Yes, now we shall answer your unasked question: what is the practical bearing of this idealism on the solution of the critical problems of our day?

Remember: when the darkness is thickest you need the strongest light! That is being practical. The idealism we have outlined is just brass-tacks realism. For the solution of all our problems of existence is in understanding and carrying into action the implications of the unity of existence.

The solution of all the problems of man is in becoming better men.

If you look around you, you will see what an amount of self-deception and self-desecration is being practised by people who doubtless want to improve their lot. One who does not do his allotted work conscientiously, in the best manner he knows, desecrates himself. Until and unless this desecration stops, man cannot really be helped by Government, society, law, constitution, or even Plans. Only by *being* can you truly *make*.

Those who have not begun to build their own characters but rushed to 'make' others, can only ruin the foolish ones who follow their leadership. Whereas if we develop all our physical, mental and spiritual powers harmoniously and direct them towards the supreme goal of life, then we will have done something—will *be* something—the value of which can never be judged by common standards of profit and loss. As Śrī Kṛṣṇa teaches in the *Gītā*: By worshipping Him through one's own work, man attains perfection.<sup>9</sup>

Whatever system we may adopt, it cannot help giving rise to new problems. It really does not matter—rather it may even help our growth—if we are surrounded by

many problems. Those who have been trained in handling themselves (that is, in 'being') are also incidentally trained in creatively handling problems and crises (that is, in 'making'). There is no cause for fear on this score.

If there is darkness around man, he himself has to become the torch. He himself must become the light. This was perhaps why Buddha's last advice to his dear disciple was: 'Ānanda, be a light unto yourself.'

It is no use breaking old prison houses and building new ones in their place. Man must become emancipated from many shackles of his own making. How will it help if we only make clever enunciations of our problems, pinning the responsibility on others? We need become such men that before our inner might problems can never attain unreal dimensions. Then solving them becomes possible.

No political or economic system is rationally linked with the inevitability of anyone's salvation. What makes any system work for the welfare of each and all depends on what we do with ourselves, even while trying to handle others and affairs. In this sense we do not care what system is adopted. But we insist that man should not be sacrificed on the altar of any system. All systems can, if necessary, be sacrificed on the altar of man. Any system must adequately provide for the maintenance, protection, growth, and self-fulfilment of each individual on levels physical, mental, and spiritual.

Let us work for this end through handling ourselves purposefully in the light of the perennial philosophy and essential religion, and of the most comprehensive, dynamic, progressive socio-economic ideas available. Thus we will have solved the national crisis of India today and laid the groundwork for solving those ahead.

<sup>9</sup> XVIII. 46.

# LETTERS OF A SAINT

SRI RAMAKRISHNA MY REFUGE

Almora

18.6.1916

Dear D——,

You have asked me about eating fish and meat [that is, non-vegetarian food]. Many indeed are the differences of opinion about this. To be sure, in different countries a variety of manners and customs does prevail. Besides this, one has also to accept the fact that there are differences in human nature from person to person—for some natures meat is helpful, while in the case of some others it is the opposite. If you are considering it as diet for a patient, then it becomes an independent issue. Its details are given in medical science. But it is not that there is no prohibition. Thus in varying situations different prescriptions are made. To sum up, that is the best food by eating which body and mind remain healthy and no malady of any kind arises.

What may be *sāttvika* in the case of one person may be found to be non-*sāttvika* in the case of another—this is seen very clearly. Milk is such an excellent food, by taking which almost all obtain nourishment, glow, etc.; but if it becomes the food of a snake, it increases its poison! ‘After drinking milk the snake brings out very virulent poison.’<sup>1</sup>

What the Master [Sri Ramakrishna] has taught is the essential teaching : that by eating which the mind remains steadily set towards God is the best food. This is the means for ascertaining whether a food is *sāttvika* or non-*sāttvika*. For the culmination of the *sāttvika* nature is the mind’s going towards God. Swamiji [Vivekananda] has also specially discussed this question in his *Bhakti-yoga*. You should take such food as keeps your body and mind healthy. The mind should remain in God—that is the supreme goal. Rules and regulations about food are meant for those who want to better their bodies with a view to enjoying sense-objects. But for those whose goal is contemplation of God, it seems that the fruitfulness or futility of these rules and regulations does not exist. For the only aim of their life is the contemplation and worship of God. If the body remains healthy, adoration of God is possible. Therefore taking that food is right by which the body remains healthy and worship of God becomes possible.

My best wishes and love.

Your well-wisher,  
SRI TURIYANANDA

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<sup>1</sup> फणी पीत्वा क्षीरं वमति गरलं दुःसहतरम् ।

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# AT THE FEET OF SWAMI AKHANDANANDA

BY 'A DEVOTEE'

[Swami Akhandananda was one of the youngest monastic disciples of Sri Ramakrishna and a beloved brother-disciple of Swami Vivekananda. He had a broad, motherly heart—full of love and compassion for all, especially the suffering and the downtrodden. He was one of the first to accept with alacrity Swami Vivekananda's programme of 'service of God in man' and organize famine-relief works. The orphanage he started at Sargachi in 1897 is the oldest Ashrama of the Ramakrishna Mission and has developed into an important educational centre. In Swami Akhandananda contemplation and dedicated activity formed a superb blending. Thus he has become a shining exemplar of the teaching, 'Work is worship.' He later became the third President of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission.

'At The Feet of Swami Akhandananda' is a new serial which will bring our readers the reminiscences and teachings of this great monastic disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. These started appearing, under the caption '*Bhakter Diary*', in the Mission's Bengali organ the *Udbodhan*, over two years ago, and appealed to many of us by their earnestness, valuable recollections of old days, and inspiring spiritual precepts. On our request the 'Devotee', who is an initiated disciple of Swami Akhandananda and a monk of the Ramakrishna Order, has translated them for the *Prabuddha Bharata*. We hope our readers will appreciate this new feature and derive great inspiration from the teaching contained therein, being fully aware that they are the living words of a man of God. —Ed.]

28 January 1935

After evening prayer the 'Devotee' was sitting at the feet of Swami Akhandananda at the Sargachi Ashrama. Some of the Brahmachārins (novices), after finishing their evening duties in the Shrine, came and sat near 'Bābā'—for that was how the Swami was called in the Ashrama.

With folded hands Bābā began to recite in a prayerful tone: *Asato mā sadgamaya* . . . —'Lead me from the unreal to the Real, from darkness to Light, from death to Immortality.'

Silence prevailed for some time and then Bābā began to speak:

It is said in the *Īśā-upaniṣad*, 'Those that do not struggle after self-realization destroy themselves.' It is better for one to die in an attempt to know the Self.

What is the Self? First, the Self has to be heard, then It has to be thought upon and lastly, It has to be meditated upon,

Yājñavalkya is explaining this to Maitreyī, his wife: 'The Self is the dearest of all. Everything is dear because of the Self. The husband is not dear because of the husband, but because of the Self. The wife is not dear because of the wife, but because of the Self.' And so on.

This Self alone *is*. Nothing else exists. Everything is for the Self, comes out of the Self, and goes back to the Self. The divine soul is sleeping in everyone. It is to be roused. Everyone is always trying to express that Self—this struggling is *sādhanā*.

Whatever you are doing is *sādhanā*—only sometimes it is done consciously, at other times unconsciously. When that Self is realized, you will feel Its presence everywhere. This is *siddhi* (perfection). The goal is to reach this state. Everybody must get back this realization, because that is our real nature. Never think, 'I cannot do this, I am weak.' Whenever you are in

dejection always remember what the Lord has declared in the *Gītā*:

'Do not be under the spell of unmanliness; it does not befit you. Shake off this mean faint-heartedness and get up, O Hero.'<sup>1</sup>

Arjuna thought, 'Better die than inflict injury on these near and dear ones.' The Lord is his Charioteer, his Guide and Guru, his Friend—he has forgotten all this. He is bewildered by the illusions of *māyā*. So the Lord is encouraging him to realize the Self. That is what He has been doing all through the ages.

Is it so easy to realize the Self? Incarnations (Avatārs) of God are God Himself, yet they themselves have to struggle so much, not to speak of others.

There is no other way: call upon God with all your heart; go on telling Him, 'Show Thyself to me. I do not want anything else; I do not want the happiness of Heaven; I want you. O Lord, bring my desires to an end.' Self-evolution is impossible in a narrow atmosphere of selfishness. Even with an iota of desire for sense-enjoyment, this is impossible.

O Lord, how shall I ask You for a happy life? Whenever You have incarnated, never have You tasted a happy life. You have lived a life of the greatest suffering.

As Rāma, the Prince of Ayodhyā, You spent years in exile in the forest, and again You lost Sītā, who was recovered only after much trouble.

As Kṛṣṇa, too, though a royal child, You were born in a prison, deprived of Your own mother's milk and brought up among cowherds. Your entire life was spent in war and in punishing the wicked. With

no time for rest in Your personal life You strove to establish peace on earth. Yet everyone holds You responsible for the Kurukṣetra war, and You welcomed all the blame and curse. You never sat on a throne. You saw your kith and kin die before You, and at last embraced death as a result of a hunter's arrow shot by chance.

As Buddha and Christ also, You have suffered much, with no place to lay Your head.

Then again, in Your latest manifestation [as Sri Ramakrishna], how much You suffered—only to show the world that none of Your previous manifestations is wrong, that spiritual life is not a day-dream. An example of humility, You came to teach humility to arrogant humanity. You had no outward indication that You were an Incarnation of God. Someone mistook You for a gardener, and at his bidding You at once plucked a flower for him. Someone took you to be a servant: You served him tobacco. You cleaned the place where beggars used to eat. Lastly, You swept the latrine of the sweeper!

We have no other way but to repeat *His* name and meditate on *Him*, and—to purify the mind—do some selfless work of service.

Caitanyadeva came specially to preach the glory of God's name, and he says:

'You have so many names, and each one of Your names is filled with power. There is no prescribed time and place to repeat and remember Your name. You are so kind; yet, oh Lord, I am so unfortunate that I have no love for any of Your names.'<sup>2</sup>

If Caitanyadeva himself talks in this strain, what to speak of others? But the Divine Incarnations express the ideas of

1 क्लेशं मा स्म गमः पार्थ नैतत्त्वय्युपपद्यते ।

क्षुद्रं हृदयदौर्बल्यं त्यक्त्वोत्तिष्ठ परन्तप ॥

*Bhagavad-gītā*, II. 3.

2 नाम्नामकारि बहुधा निजमर्वशक्तिः

तत्रापिता नियमितः स्मरणे न कालः ।

एतादृशी तव कृपा भगवन् ममापि

दुर्देवमीदृशमिहाजनि नानुरागः ॥ *Sikṣāstakam*, 2.

worldly people, by imposing their limitations upon themselves.

The present religion is the harmony of all previous religions—of the paths of knowledge, devotion, and work. We want knowledge, we want devotion, we want work. One will not suffice, we want all of these. Our Master [Sri Ramakrishna] and Swamiji [Vivekananda] make a complete ideal. You are to advance with these ideals before you. What more? Look at their renunciation and spiritual practices. Again look at their feeling for the sufferings of the people and their attempts to ameliorate them. This is life. This is the goal and the purpose of *your life*.

You have read science and allied subjects. All right, read more about them, but know all these to be within *māyā*; on this side of *māyā*—and we have to go beyond *māyā*, to the other side of *māyā*. *Māyā* is like magic, and we have to see the magician. But then the path beyond *māyā* is through *māyā*.

Meet the Bābu [a rich man] first: he will tell you how many gardens and houses he has. Which is greater—the owner or his gardens?

Some people think initiation is enough, what to speak of initiation from a disciple of Ramakrishna Paramahansa. Don't think that way. Always keep before your mind how much spiritual practice he underwent, and his disciples also. They are the ideals to follow.

What is spiritual practice (*sādhanā*)? Whatever you do is your *sādhanā*. When you go to some place, think you are on the way to get to Him. When you eat? Yes, think you eat to live and live to get Him.

All work is *sādhanā*. If ever you think

that this work will not lead to Him, leave it at once. *Sādhanā* is our attempt to get to Him through every action.

Always be cheerful, have a smiling face. What fear? Why worry? Don't unnecessarily put on a grave face. Let not others think, 'Oh, he is thinking very seriously on something.' Our Master used to tell us, 'I am pained when I see you with your chin resting on your palm.' He could not bear this sight.

I have said enough. Now set to work with that great ideal before you. This is life. What is life worth without Him? Happiness? Where is happiness? Everywhere it is misery and suffering. With closed eyes they cry, 'Oh, it is happiness, happiness.' With eyes open you can see, it is all agony, want, and protest. None is satisfied, none happy.

There is no happiness here, no peace. How can there be? This is not our place—this narrowness, selfishness. We want freedom from all these. That is real happiness, that is real satisfaction. That is peace and bliss.

Live in the world as long as it is essentially necessary, but with Him. Call on Him. Take His name and go on. Feel in everything His touch; see in everything His infinite manifestation.

Have faith, and realize that everything is He and He is everything. There is nothing without Him. He has created everything out of Himself.

Have faith that we have to regain our lost Self, and 'stop not till the goal is reached'. Remember these words of Swamiji: 'Do not forget the ideal—do not cut it down. Let this body perish, still do not lower the ideal. Pray for strength. Pray always.'



# AN EASY METHOD OF SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

SWAMI PAVITRANANDA

Why do people do spiritual practice? To realize God, to get the knowledge of the ultimate Reality or Brahman. Brahman is all-pervading, ever present. Then why do we not see it? If God is all-pervading, who has blinded us and why?

God is all-pervading but we do not like to believe that. We believe we are everything. We say, 'My will is everything.' Our 'I' becomes very prominent. If this 'I' could be eliminated, we could at once see Brahman or God, because It is our real nature. It is our reality, but by a veil It has been covered and we do not see. Therefore Ramakrishna would say very often, '*Nāham, nāham; Tuhu, Tuhu*'—'Not I, not I; but Thou, Thou art all that is.' Not I and mine, but Thou and Thine. In the Upaniṣad the same thing is said in a different way: Thou art That (*Tat-tvam-asi*). Thou art the ultimate Reality. But we do not see that because there is this I-ness.

People do various forms of spiritual practice. Some perform rituals. Some try to cultivate devotion through prayer and worship. Some try to get the knowledge of Brahman through discrimination. Some try to realize the Self by concentration and meditation. But all these methods have hard conditions to fulfil.

People do ritual practice but usually there is some worldly motive behind it. They think that by performing rituals they will go to heaven or they will get enjoyment in this life. It is not an unqualifiedly religious pursuit.

Then for *bhakti*, devotion, you have to fulfil certain conditions. You must not hate anybody. You must be kindly, compassionate to all. You must not have any 'I' feeling. You must be alike in happiness and unhappiness, thinking that everything

happens by the will of the Lord.

To pursue the path of knowledge (*jñāna*) is still more difficult. First, you must always consider what is real, what is unreal, what is good and what is bad. Not only that, you must practise this discrimination. That is the difficult thing. And you must not have any worldly motive for anything in this life or in the life to come. You must not think, 'By doing spiritual practice here I shall get joy in heaven.' Then there are certain ethical virtues you have to cultivate: control of mind, control of body, endurance, and so on. And, most difficult of all, you must have yearning to realize the truth. Real yearning. Half-hearted interest won't do.

You can also realize God through concentration (*rāja-yoga*). That too is a very difficult path, with many conditions to fulfil. You must have love for one and all, you must be thoroughly truthful, you must not covet the property of others, nor should you hanker after worldly enjoyment. And there are many other requirements. It is very difficult.

From that standpoint, work is easy. Work is easy for this simple reason: we have to work, willy-nilly. Everybody has to work. Not for a single moment can one be without any activity. Your nature will force you to work.

To be practical, you should work always. To do work is much better than to remain idle and indolent. Idleness will create great trouble for the body and for the mind. You may even become a psychological case if you are kept without work.

Therefore one punishment is solitary imprisonment. What a terrible thing—to remain alone, without even a book. Some persons go out of their mind. Some

commit suicide. But some persons who have spiritual background, spiritual interest, can stand it.

I read the autobiography of a great revolutionary in the early days of the Indian independence movement. He was put in solitary imprisonment in Burma. There was no definite charge against him. He was a very saintly person. What did he do? He would repeat the name of the Lord in his room, and he had some outer place where he could walk. Sometimes he would be walking, sometimes he would go to his room and repeat the name of the Lord. Just see what a blessed thing it was.

Another revolutionary of saintly character was Aswini Kumar Datta, who met Sri Ramakrishna. He was sent to the Punjab—away from Bengal so that he might not have any influence there. At once he found something to occupy himself with. He learned Gurumukhī (the language of the Sikhs) and read Guru Nānak's hymns and prayers.

Thus we cannot be without work. And work is very natural with us. It is the natural thing for us to do. But how do we give it a higher turn? How can we work in such a way that we get the greatest benefit? Ordinary work will not do. People usually work, and work hard, for worldly benefits. We must forget that, and begin to work for others, not for ourselves; because I-ness and my-ness are the cause of all trouble.

How can we get rid of this 'I'-idea? The easiest way is to work for others. Make it a point to try to do all work for others. Here also bring that idea: not I but Thou. Whomever you meet, in whatever circumstances you are, think of the happiness of others. People suffer because they think in terms of their own happiness. Those with psychological insight say: if you want to be happy, think of the happiness of others. It is so true. It has been proved by many saints.

Even without belief in it, if one tries it, one will get the result. One may get the result immediately. Or, even if one finds it difficult to do, within a short time, within a month, one will get happiness.

Some will say, 'Why should we do this? This is also a selfish motive. We want happiness and are simply making others our tools. We serve them but our real motive is to get our own happiness, our own satisfaction.' But this is not true. In the beginning it might seem so. But gradually you will begin to see the value of it. When you think of the welfare of others your ego becomes less and less.

And when your ego becomes less and less you are bound to think of God. At least, ideas of God will come into your mind. It is logical that they will come when you do not think of yourself, because God is within you. Your 'I'-ness has clouded Him, has veiled Him. When the veil is penetrated, spiritual benefit begins to come. And once you begin to get the spiritual benefit you want to do it more and more. You have got the taste of it. The taste is bound to come, even if you do it mechanically. You may try for a single day; you may try just now, if you make the resolve: 'Always I shall try to serve others.' Sometimes you will get the result immediately.

But why does it happen like that? It is a spiritual process; you are not aware of it. You are getting a joy of a superior kind, a spiritual joy. It is refined joy, not ordinary joy. Once you have got the taste of it, you try more and more. Then, according to your temperament you develop. If you are of devotional nature, then *bhakti* will come. If you are of rational nature, then *jñāna* will come. And when you make it a point always to serve others, the ego becomes less and concentration becomes easier.

Why can't we get concentration? What happens when we sit for meditation? All sorts of selfish thoughts begin to come, subtle

and gross. We have no control over our minds because of our selfishness, our 'I'-ness. When 'I'-ness goes, concentration will at once come. Those who have no 'I'-ness can easily get concentration, can easily get control of their minds.

Swami Vivekananda once said, 'My mind has become like a clod of earth. Whenever I put it, it remains.' He had such perfect control over his mind. Once he made an experiment. He simply concentrated on a black spot. There is nothing spiritual about a black spot. But because he had concentration, spiritual experiences began to come. So, when our 'I' becomes less and less, everything will come—*bhakti*, *jñāna*, *yoga*.

When you think in terms of the welfare of others, you become unselfish. 'Unselfishness is God; selfishness is the world,' said Swami Vivekananda. Work gives us an opportunity to become unselfish by going in such a natural way. Our natural tendency is to work. When we give it a proper direction we grow in unselfishness. 'Unselfishness is God; selfishness is the world.' Selfishness is the greatest sin because it takes us away from God.

Before he left for America, Swami Vivekananda said to two of his brother disciples: I do not know what you have got through your spiritual practice. My conclusion is, when you think of yourself, that is irreligion; when you think of others, that is religion. This is what I have realized through my experiences.

In his poem, 'To a Friend', which is like a snatch of autobiography, he wrote to this effect it: 'What is the world? It is a conflict of selfish interests. What have I done with my life? Half the life I have spent in studying books. What did I get? And several years I have spent in hard spiritual practice. What did I get? And there is no way out of this world. You do not get anything substantial from the world, but

there is no way of getting out of it. We are in such a position, in such a dilemma. That is life. Only this I have found out: there is a great ocean of love within you.' Ocean of love, because God Himself is within you and God is love. 'Distribute to others, give to others. Don't expect anything in return. Be perfectly unselfish. Don't expect anything and you will get everything.' And he ended the poem with these famous lines:

'These are His living forms before thee;  
Rejecting them, where seekest thou for  
God?  
Who loves all beings without distinction,  
He indeed is worshipping best his God.'<sup>1</sup>

He did not believe in the word 'help'. He would say 'worship'. When you say 'help', there is a great deal of ego. Thinking God cannot take care of this world, you go out and help people. There is a great deal of ego in it. So you will often find much pride in those persons who do so-called unselfish work. Swami Vivekananda said, 'I have not seen any person who does some public work and does not mention it the moment he utters one single word.' He will be always thinking, always talking of his good deeds.

Therefore Swamiji said, 'Serve *jīva* as *Śiva*.' (*Jīva* is man; *Śiva* is God.) He got it from Sri Ramakrishna. Once Ramakrishna was repeating the Vaiṣṇavic ideas: you must have love for God's name, reverence for those persons who are religious-minded, and compassion for all people. As he uttered these words, all of a sudden, unexpectedly, he went into *samādhi*. He remained in that condition for some time. When his mind was coming down to the lower plane, he said, 'How foolish! Who is man to bestow compassion on others? Just try to serve *Śiva* in *jīva*.' Swami Vivekananda was present there, along with other

<sup>1</sup> *The Complete Works* (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Dt. Pithoragarh, Himalayas), Vol. IV (1962) p. 496.

disciples. He said, 'Today I have learned a precious truth. If the Lord gives me the opportunity, I shall put that precept into practical deeds.'

In one of his early lectures in India he said:

'He who sees Siva in the poor, in the weak, and in the diseased, really worships Siva. . . . He who has served and helped one poor man seeing Siva in him, without thinking of his caste, or creed, or race, or anything, with him Siva is more pleased than with the man who sees Him only in temples . . . talking about His beautiful eyes and nose and other features. . . . He who wants to serve Siva must serve His children. . . .'<sup>2</sup>

Afterwards Swamiji started this method of work—worshipping God by serving His living forms.

It is easy, because it is our nature to work. If you simply give your work a spiritual turn, you will get everything that can be got in religion. It is easy in the beginning. It is easy in the middle, because you begin to get joy. And it is easy in the end: easily you realize the ultimate Reality. The *Gītā* says in one verse on *karma-yoga*: 'If you begin it you will never fail. Even if you do a small amount you will get a great result.'<sup>3</sup> There is no chance of making a serious error, because you begin with the idea of getting rid of your ego by serving others. Errors may come, but at once you will catch them. To err is human. Everyone will make mistakes. But not to try to correct your errors is wrong. Because you are trying to cultivate unselfishness, you will find out your mistakes at once, and you will be able to correct them. And if you do even a little, it will give you a great result, because you are sincere. You want to be perfectly

unselfish, and the result will be great. You will get the greatest result.

Considering all these things, it is clear that this path is so easy. It is really an easy path, even for getting the Highest.

Swami Turiyananda, a disciple of Ramakrishna, once got a letter from a monk who was doing relief work in some famine-stricken area. Knowing that Swami Turiyananda spent much time in meditation, the monk thought he would get support from him. So he wrote to Swami Turiyananda, 'Here there is a great deal of distraction. I want to leave this work and go for *tapasyā* (prayer and austerity) in some quiet place in the Himalayas.' Swami Turiyananda gave him a severe scolding. 'What do you say? Swami Vivekananda has found out such an easy path for you and you just ignore it.' Swami Vivekananda himself once told Swami Turiyananda; I have found out a new path. By serving others as manifestations of God, people will get the highest realization.

In his last years, Swami Turiyananda was very sick. He was staying in one of our monastic centres. One monk was working in the hospital run by the ashrama. He came to Swami Turiyananda and told him that he found the work very distracting. Always, when work is difficult we say we shall go for meditation. And we find meditation difficult; then we do not know what to do. Swami Turiyananda said to the monk, 'If you serve a patient in the right spirit even for a single day, you will have the knowledge of Brahman. Leaving aside this easy path, where would you seek God?'

So if we can do our work in the right spirit, and if we can pursue our practice of it, the knowledge of Brahman will be easy for us, will be easy for anyone. Let us follow this way—easy in the beginning, easy in the middle—and the result is sure.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, Vol. III (1960) pp. 141-2.

<sup>3</sup> *Bhagavad-gītā*, II. 40.

# DAYS OF CHILDHOOD

BY ERIK JOHNS ; MUSIC BY JOHN SCHLENCK

'Wake up the note! The song that had its birth far off.'

[ We here offer our readers the first part of a three-part libretto on Swami Vivekananda. This being Swami Vivekananda's birth-month, the 'Days of Childhood' has a singular relevance. The text has been freely adapted from *The Life of Swami Vivekananda* by His Eastern and Western Disciples. The Trilogy is primarily a study of the 'man in the making', and hence proportionately little emphasis has been given to the fully mature Swamiji.

John Schlenck, who has written the music for the Trilogy, tells us in his covering letter: 'The work was in progress for more than five years. The three parts were performed, respectively, in 1968, 1970, and 1973, at the annual Vivekananda July 4th Festivals held by the Vedanta Society of New York (out of doors) at the country home of two of our members. The musical setting ... is for baritone solo, chorus, speaker, and instrumental ensemble consisting of violin, cello, flute, harpsichord, *tabla*, *tanpura*, chimes, bass drum, gong and cymbals.'

We hope that this libretto will inspire interested Indian readers to attempt presentations of the life of Swamiji in the various vernaculars through the medium of song and drama. We may here also remind our readers that a 'musical biography' of Swamiji by Alice Cook, Erik Johns, and John Schlenck was published in 1968 in our March number. The authors are members of the Vedanta Society of New York. —Ed.]

## I

Solo: Whosoever knows the longing of a mother for a son to be born to her enters into the world of Bhuvanewari Datta. She longed for a son who would carry forward the family name, a link between the future and the past, forged from love and suffering.

Chorus: As she went about her daily tasks, she prayed that her desire might be fulfilled, for she was with child.

Solo: Now, it was the custom for one desiring some special event to make offerings and prayers to Lord Śiva in the holy city of Benares. But because Bhuvanewari lived far from Benares, she wrote a letter to an old aunt living there. She asked her to make the prayers and offerings for her that she might be blessed with a son.

Chorus: When word came that this was being done, Bhuvanewari was content to wait in perfect trust that her prayers would be answered. She spent her days in fasting and meditation, her heart fixed in love on the Lord Śiva.

Speaker (Bhuvanewari):

My dear Aunt: Last night I had a dream. I had spent the day in the shrine, and, as evening deepened into night, I fell asleep. The household was hushed in silence, hushed in silence and rest. Then in the highest heavens the hour struck—the time had come to touch the feet of the Lord! And in my dream I saw Lord Śiva rouse Him-

self from the depth of meditation and take the form of a male child who was to be my son.

Musical Interlude: The Dance of Śiva:

There Śiva dances, striking both his cheeks; and they resound,  
*Ba-ba-bom! Dimi-dimi-dimi!* sounds His drum; a garland of skulls from His neck is hanging!

In His matted locks the Ganges hisses; fire shoots from His mighty trident!

Round His waist a serpent glitters, and on His brow the moon is shining!

Then I awoke. O Aunt, could that ocean of light in which I found myself be a dream? Śiva, Śiva! The prayers of Thy devotees are fulfilled in various ways. In my heart, dear Aunt, I know that our prayers have been answered: a son will be born to me.

Chorus: And so it happened that on Monday the twelfth of January, 1863, a son *was* born to Bhuvaneshwari. At just six minutes before the sunrise on the seventh day of the new moon in the Bengali month of *Pous*, he was born.

Solo: It was the day of *Makara-saṅkrānti*<sup>1</sup>, a great Hindu festival, and it seemed as though the celebrations of millions of men and women greeted the birth of Bhuvaneshwari's child. Yet who could know that he who was to usher in a new age of glory had on that day first seen the light?

Chorus: There was One who knew and He waited only a few miles to the north of Calcutta in the garden of Dakshineswar.

## II

Speaker: Narendra Nath was a naughty child. He would have fits of restlessness when no one could control him. He wore us out. We tried everything—bribes, threats, nothing was of any use. Finally, I found that if I poured cold water on his head and chanted the name of Śiva in his ear, he would quiet down; or else I would threaten, 'Śiva will not let you come to Kailāsa<sup>2</sup> if you don't behave!' Then he became a happy boy again. He could be such a sweet, loving child, but when he had an outburst, it took two nurses to take care of him. 'O Śiva, Śiva, I prayed to You for a son, and You sent me one of Your demons!'

Chorus: Alms, alms for a wandering monk. Alms, alms, I have wandered far . . . in mountain and valley, village and city . . . Alms, alms for a wandering monk . . .

Solo: Naren had a great fancy for wandering monks. One day a monk came and asked for alms, and Naren gave him his new cloth. Thereafter, when a monk came . . .

<sup>1</sup> The day on which the sun enters the constellation of *Makara*, or Capricornus.

<sup>2</sup> Śiva's immortal abode, believed by Hindus to be located in the Himalayas.

Chorus: . . . Naren was locked up in his room. But that boy would find something to offer, throw it out the window . . .

Solo: . . . and laugh at the excitement!

Speaker: 'Mother, mother, Naren is teasing us,' his sisters would come running to me. 'Well go find him and spank him,' I would say. 'We can't—he's in the open drain making faces at us, and he knows we won't go in there!'

Chorus: The family cow was one of his playmates, and a monkey, a goat, a peacock, pigeons and two or three guinea pigs.

Solo: The coachman was his special friend, magnificent in his uniform. And Naren wanted to grow up and become a groom . . .

Chorus: . . . a groom with a fine white turban and a black moustache, in a splendid carriage with a long black whip.

Speaker: He wasn't afraid of anybody. He'd go to anyone who would take him on his lap.

Chorus: And Bhuvanewari opened up for him the world of India's ancient tales—of Rāma and Sītā, and the terrible Rāvaṇa, of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā, and the questioning Arjuna. He went to the banana grove at night . . .

Solo: Hoping to get a peek at Hanumān . . .

Chorus: . . . a peek at Hanumān, the monkey chief. He bought an image of Śiva.

Solo: . . . and worshipped it with flowers and incense.

Chorus: The epic lore of gods and heroes unfolded before him, and Naren's imagination was kindled.

Solo: The centuries of gods and heroes awakened within him.

Speaker: Caste was a great mystery to the boy. Why couldn't a member of one caste eat with a member of another or smoke his pipe? What would happen if he did? His father kept tobacco pipes for his clients—a different pipe for each caste. Naren decided to find out if the roof would fall in. He took a puff from every pipe, and nothing happened. When we scolded him, he answered, 'I can't see what difference it makes.'

Solo: Those who are born to change the thought of the world and alter its destinies are from childhood conscious of their power. Narendra Nath, too, felt the spirit of greatness within him; he saw things to which others of his age were blind, and he felt already, in the uncertain, natural way of a child, the struggle which was to be his.

### III

Chorus: When Narendra was eight years old, he entered the Metropolitan School.

Speaker: Everyone immediately recognized his intelligence. He could easily hear the lessons at the same time that he amused his classmates. He was so active. They say he never really sat down at his desk at all.

Chorus: Marbles, jumping, running, boxing . . . he played furiously! If the class stopped to rest, Naren would be first to be up and playing again.

He made toy gas works and aerated waters; he played with toy railways, boats and machines. He organized a group of friends into a theatre company, and they performed plays. He organized them into a gymnasium and they learned to fence, to row, and to wrestle . . . He was the first to make them laugh, and if they were hurt, the first to console them.

Speaker: His friends followed him in everything. He was friendly with every family in the neighbourhood, high caste or low, rich or poor.

Solo: Though the boy was full of pranks, truthfulness was the backbone of his life. By day, he would devise new games, but at night he began to meditate alone in his room.

Chorus: As he grew older, a change took place in him.

Solo: His mind turned to books and study in the quest for knowledge.

Speaker: To his father he owed his ability to grasp the essentials of things and to see truth from the widest standpoint. When scholars visited, Naren would listen and sometimes join in. He had developed a power of argument that few could withstand. But if his ideas were not recognized he would fly into a rage. Naturally we scolded him, 'If you are in the right, Naren, what does it matter? Follow truth without caring for the result.'

Chorus: At the age of fourteen Naren went on a long journey to Raipur. The party had been travelling by bullock-cart on quiet roads for several days.

Solo: The weather was clear and perfect, and Naren could feel the freedom of life in the open air.

Chorus: He lay in the cart as it joggled along the road . . .

Solo: . . . and was charmed by the grace and wondrous beauty which adorned the rugged bosom of the earth. The lofty hills on either side of the road almost touched. The trees and vines were full with flowers, and the joyous songs of birds filled Naren's heart with bliss. Then his eyes fell on a large hive of bees in the cleft of a hill, and he was struck with wonder at the majesty and power of Divine Providence.

Chorus: Lost to all outward consciousness, he lay . . . how long he could not remember. For the first time he ascended to a realm of the Unknown, an oblivion of the outer world, where all was radiance . . .

Speaker: In 1879 Naren was sixteen. He passed the entrance examination and entered college. He had grown to manhood's stature, physically perfect and regal in bearing. Seeing him I could hardly believe he had been so full of games and mischief.

Solo: The play-time of childhood with its joys and sorrows was over for Narendra Nath, and a new life with a new vision dawned for him.



# MONASTIC SPIRITUALITY: CHRISTIAN AND HINDU

SWAMI RANGANATHANANDA

[When Swami Ranganathananda, of the Ramakrishna Order, India, was on a three-week lecture tour of the Netherlands and Belgium in 1972, he was a three-day guest at the Roman Catholic convent of the Carmelite Order at Amstelveen, Amsterdam. On 15th September he met the nuns of the convent in a question-answer session. Here we bring our readers an edited transcript of that session, and we hope they will benefit by the comparative perspective presented by the Swami's deep studies of Christian and Hindu religions and traditions. Prof. Jo Van Orshoven, from the University of Amsterdam, was the interpreter between the Swami and the group.]

The Swami in his introductory remarks recalled his earlier visit to the convent in 1971. Drawing on his first-hand study of Christians in Latin American countries, and comparing their emotional nature with the rather dry, unemotional nature of the Anglo-Saxons, the Dutch, and the Germans, the Swami laid stress on the need of cultivating *bhakti* or devotion to God by the European peoples. He pointed out that Catholicism had a great devotional heritage which at present was being neglected. He incidentally told the group of his own long and devoted study of the New Testament and the lives, teachings, and writings of Christian saints and mystics. According to his study, the Swami said, "The two great teachings of Jesus are: "Love thy God with all thy heart and with all thy mind and with all thy soul; and love thy neighbour as thyself." Jesus concluded this statement with the further utterance: "On these two hang all the law and all the prophets."—*Ed.*]

A Sister: That is what I want to ask you. You speak of two different teachings of Jesus, namely, love of God and love of man. But can we see man, can we see society, as a special extension of God?

Swami: Yes. That is the special teaching emphasized by the Hindu religion—that man is a spark of God. Then service of man becomes worship of God. This is possible *only* when we view man as what he really is, a spark of God, and not what he appears to our senses, as a finite, weak, often sinful, organic being. The New Testament also proclaims this truth: "The Kingdom of Heaven is within you."

Sister: That is not exactly what I meant. By putting it that way, the human being, in my opinion, does not get his full value;

the only value he has then is because of God, but he does not become a focus of value by himself.

Swami: In that case, you can love and serve man for the glory of God. According to the Vedānta, however, this contradiction between God and man does not arise because the God it preaches is not extra-cosmic but within man, within the cosmos. Man's true glory is not as just an organically conditioned being, but as the Ātman, the divine Self.

Sister: Is this Ātman the same as our deepest ego?

Swami: Yes, you can put it that way. God touches us at the deepest level of our self. That is what makes for the spiritual unity of man with man, which is the only

rational sanction for our ethical sense. In the New Testament also, we have such statements of Jesus as 'Are ye not the tabernacles of God?' and 'The Kingdom of Heaven is within you.'

Another Sister: You in India always salute each other with folded hands. Is it not painful for you to find that nobody in these countries salutes you in that way as you do in India?

Swami: No, it does not trouble us at all; every culture has its own ways of greeting. We respect the greeting modes of other cultures, like the shaking of hands in the West. Incidentally, this shaking of hands is not a stranger to India. Our tradition tells us that it is one of its very ancient forms of greeting. There are many references in the epic, the *Mahābhārata*, to this type of greeting, the *kara-sparśa*, touching the hand, as it is called in Sanskrit. There is the following beautiful verse in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, the great book of *bhakti* or love of God, which speaks of such a greeting between the universal indwelling God, Viṣṇu, and the first-born cosmic Person, Brahmā:

'The supreme indwelling Lord, who is very dear to Brahmā who was immersed in love and bliss on getting this sight of the Lord, was pleased to find that Brahmā was competent to be given the work of creating the world. *Touching Brahmā's hand with His own hand*, and with a radiant smile, Viṣṇu, the Lord, spoke unto him.'<sup>1</sup>

In India we usually salute each other by folding the two hands. It is a salutation given to God, and given to man also because in him is God. As far as I can make out,

1 तं प्रीयमाणं समुपस्थितं तदा  
प्रजाविसर्गे निजशापनार्हणम् ।  
बभाष ईषत्स्मितरोचिषा गिरा  
प्रियः प्रियं प्रीतमना करे स्पृशन् ॥

*Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, II. 9. 18.

this was the mode of greeting at the time of Jesus. Shaking hands was a later European development, like many other things: for example, changes in the dress, and the change of the unleavened bread broken at the Passover, into modern bread. Jesus and the people around him, as also those in Athens and Rome, wore clothes similar to what we still wear in India today—the upper cloth thrown over the left shoulder with the right hand free to gesticulate—just the way, as you see here I wear my upper cloth, the *caddar*. There were no spoons or forks: even Henry VIII of England is represented in a picture (I read somewhere) as eating with his own hands! The early western music, the Gregorian chants for example, is similar to Indian music of the past and the present. It is modern western music that has diverged from its own old forms and styles. Take, for example, this Vedic chanting of a verse from the Upaniṣads, which I now chant for you, and mark its affinity with those earlier western chants: *Om; Sahanāvavatu; sahanau bhunaktu; saha vīryam karavāvahai; tejasvināvadhītamastu; mā vidviśāvahai; Om śāntih, śāntih, śāntih*—'Om; may God protect us both, students and teacher; may He nourish us both; may we acquire energy as a result of this study; may we become illumined as a result of this study; may we not hate each other. Om; Peace, Peace, Peace!' This is a very ancient chant, maybe three or four thousand years old.

Another Sister: When you speak about God in man, I have the feeling that you neglect the value of man.

Swami: On the contrary, don't you think that his value is enhanced thereby? His value rises as we rise in our estimate of him from a mere organic system to a psychical system, then to a rational being, and finally to a spiritual being, to a spark of that divine that infills and sustains the universe. God lives in us. When this

truth was discovered, man revealed a new uniqueness in himself. After that discovery in the Upaniṣads, it was difficult to view him as a mere sinner, as something finite and trivial, as a mere helpless creature. Nature has endowed him, her finest evolutionary product, with the organic capacity to transcend himself, to realize the infinite possibilities hidden within him.

As we dwell in a house, God dwells in us. By this, we are not eliminated. We remain, but underwritten by something greater. When the infinite begins to stir in us, our value is heightened, not lowered. We install God in our heart, as we install a dear one in our heart, for example, a husband installing his wife in his heart, and vice versa. That enriches the personalities of both and draws them both to each other.

When God is conceived as outside man and the universe, as extra-cosmic, man becomes reduced to nothing. Man's littleness becomes the measure of God's majesty. Much of modern western thought is a protest against this view of man upheld in western theology and this view of an extra-cosmic God. Modern thought and modern man challenge the authority of such a God who is outside. We are living in an age of rebellion against all external authority. Kings and emperors, as much as such an extra-cosmic God, have not escaped rebellion from subjects or devotees. In a republic, sovereignty—which once centred in the king or emperor—becomes centred in the millions of men and women constituting the republic. When the authority or sanction comes from within, and not from without, there is no more rebellion. God outside the universe will always remain a target of attack by rationalists, scientists, and humanists. These are not unspiritual people, but are often more spiritual and godly than many professed theists.

Also, if God is far away, he cannot come within the purview of the experience of

man, but only of a *belief* in Him. The Catholic religion, like Hinduism, has produced many saints who have *experienced* God, not merely *believed* in Him; and Catholic monasticism, like Hindu and Buddhist monasticism, is based on a conviction that man can *experience* God, or the highest Truth, live in awareness of Him, or that Truth, and that religion does not end with a static piety, a church conformity, or subscription to a dogma. St. Augustine's experience of God, as described by him in his *Confessions*, is instructive in this connection. Says he, in a moving passage:

'I asked the earth, and it answered me, "I am not He." . . . I asked the sea and the deeps, and the living creeping things, and they answered, "We are not thy God, seek above us." I asked the moving air; and the whole air with his inhabitants answered, "Anaximenes was deceived; I am not God." I asked the heavens, sun, moon, stars—"Nor (say they) are we the God whom thou seekest." And I replied unto all the things which encompass the door of my flesh (the senses), "Ye have told me of my God, that ye are not He; tell me something of Him." And they cried out with a loud voice, "He made us." . . . For truth saith unto me, "Neither heaven, nor earth, nor any other body is thy God." . . . Now to thee I speak, O my soul, thou art my better part: for thou quickenest the mass of my body, giving it life, which no body can give to a body; but thy God is even unto thee the Life of thy life.'<sup>2</sup>

'The Life of thy life', *prāṇasya prāṇah*, as the Upaniṣads describe God.

Another Sister: Is this the same as our deepest ego?

Swami: Yes; as the Self of our self, the universal Self behind our separate individual selves. The Vedānta describes God as the *antaryāmin*, the inner controller. The

<sup>2</sup> St. Augustine: *Confessions*, Book X,

*Gītā* presents God as the *antarātman*, the inner self, in whom we are all one, like the thread that runs through all the pearls in a garland, making for the unity of the separate pearls: *mayi sarvamidam protam sūtre manigaṇā iva*.<sup>3</sup>

It is because God is our inner Self that man can experience Him, realize Him. In the New Testament, Jesus presents God in two aspects: one, as Our Father which art in Heaven—outside, far away—for those who spiritually are ordinarily gifted, and can grasp reality only outside, with the senses. Hence, this prayer is done with eyes open, looking up to the far-away sky, with the faith that God is there high up in the heavens. But to those who can grasp subtle spiritual truths, who are not under the tyranny of the senses, Jesus presents God as the Kingdom of Heaven within us, God as the Self of our selves, and presents the technique of His realization as inward prayer and meditation, with eyes closed, senses withdrawn, and mind composed. External rituals, sacrifices, and ceremonies constitute the worship in the former, while inner purity constitutes the one condition, in the latter, for spiritual realization. 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God'; not merely believe in God, but actually realize Him.

Both the approaches are valid, but the first must lead to the second; both together constitute a complete educational method, not for just believing in a doctrine about God, but in slowly progressing towards an awareness of Him and finally realizing Him, in this very life. And the monastic life is significant, precisely because in it, one's body and mind become a laboratory for this experiment and this experience of God. Here alone does religion become a science of God, a science of experience, a science giving out a truth which can be verified by

one and all competent to do so. Many of the saints of Christianity, as also of other religions, have shown this. They realized God and communicated that realization to other human beings in words and concepts taken from other levels of knowledge and experience. 'Out of the fullness of the heart the mouth speaketh', says the scripture; and 'the hand worketh too', adds Swami Vivekananda.

That is the difference between the work of a monk or a nun or a devotee, on the one hand, and the work of a merely worldly person, on the other. Their work proceeds, respectively, from a fullness of the heart and an emptiness of the heart. The worldly man works, and seeks pleasure outside, in order to fill his heart with some joy. The spiritual person pours out the joy of his heart in work and human association. The work of a nun-nurse in a hospital, for example, bears the impress of a dedication and a fullness of joy within, which is the product of her communion with God in prayer and meditation. This is the significance of the beautiful saying of Meister Eckhart: What we take in by contemplation, that we pour out in love. The work of a nun or a monk is not for filling the belly—God looks after it—but for proclaiming the glory of God.

Another Sister: How can God fill our bellies?

Swami: When we think least of ourselves, we are most cared for by God. He does it through the instrumentality of other persons who are also struggling to express the glory of God in their lives. When, in divine dedication, we think least of ourselves we become like little children, children of God, drawing down His care and protection.

Another Sister: Do people who see God outside, and those who see God inside, complement each other, complete each other?

Swami: Each of these is limited in approach, and to that extent is insufficient

<sup>3</sup> *Bhagavad-gītā*, VII. 7.

spiritually, and the insufficiency of each is made good by the other. But the Vedānta says that a comprehensive spirituality involves seeing God outside as well as inside, in work and human associations as much as in meditation and inward experience; for God is infinite and universal. This seeing God with eyes open as much as with eyes closed is the special message of Sri Ramakrishna to the modern age. Seeing God outside is possible only after seeing Him inside. It is spiritual growth within that enables one to see God outside and in one's work. Even a simple peasant or housewife can experience the divine in the midst of his or her work, if he or she has grown spiritually and become pure in heart. The only condition for the realization of God is purity of heart; and not adopting a particular profession or mode of life. These latter are mere individual preferences; but the former is universal.

Another Sister: I wish to ask something about prayer. How do we have to pray and what do we have to pray for?

Swami: Prayer belongs to various categories, depending on the level of spiritual growth of the individual. People pray for worldly blessings, for getting rid of physical and psychological ailments, for attainment of a better condition after death, for gaining ethical and spiritual values, for purity of heart for love of God, and for the vision of God. All these are prayer; but all spiritual teachers tell us that, the more one grows spiritually, the less will become the prayers for worldly things. Love of God will then become the one quest, and the virtues and graces that contribute to that love of God. Worldly goods can be had through human effort itself, co-operative human effort. That is the aim and scope of a modern welfare state. And thanks to modern science and technology, man has the capacity everywhere to provide for everyone the minimum needs of food, shelter,

clothing, and education. Many states have already achieved these for their populations. In several lectures in U.S.A., I referred to this and said: Why do you pray every day: 'O Lord, give us this day our daily bread'? By your diligent and co-operative labour, you have plenty of bread in your country. If you have to pray at all, I said jokingly, pray for what you feel the lack of; pray every morning, for example, before leaving home: 'O Lord, give us this day our parking places for our cars'!

Another Sister: When one has realized God, is it still possible for him or her to have problems concerning God?

Swami: No; there can be no problems then concerning God; but there can still be problems concerning his or her daily life. Realization of God will not mean an end to all problems, for example, physical illnesses. Saints can still be afflicted by diseases like cancer even; but these pertain to the body and the saint knows it and knows also how to bear them, beyond what cannot be cured by human ingenuity. Sri Rāmakrishna used to express this attitude through a line in a song: *Deha jāne duḥkha jāne, man tumi ānande thāko*—'The body and its aches and pains know each other; but O mind, be immersed in the bliss (of God)!' God gives the devotee the strength to bear these crosses. Whether it is personal pains and sufferings or burdens of public work and responsibility, the devotee bears them cheerfully in the love of God; and God gives him the requisite strength. Says St. Paul: 'We have taken up Thy cross, Thou hast laid it upon us, give us strength to bear it unto death.' I told your Sister Iona, who is now lying sick on the first floor, that her love of God will give her strength to bear her sickness and to recover from it. I told her an episode from the Autobiography of St. Teresa of Avila, which she enjoyed immensely: Teresa had become old; she was going on an inspection of one of her con-

vents ; she had to cross a stream ; when she was wading through it and had reached its middle, the water rose steadily, due to rains in the mountains the previous night, and she felt that she might be carried away. In a mood of spiritual pique, she asked God : Is this the way Thou treatest Thy devotee ? She heard God answering : Yes ; I sometimes test My devotees like this. At this, Teresa lovingly retorted : Ah, that is why Thou hast few lovers ! That was a beautiful and straight and intimate retort of a real lover of God. There is no distance between God and His devotee ; nothing to separate them. In this spirit of intimacy, Sri Ramakrishna assures us, we can complain to God, give retorts to Him, pray to Him—they all become the sport of love. This is the height of *bhakti*, where God's majesty disappears and He manifests as the very embodiment of love.

Another Sister : Can we then say : When

we consider God as a stranger, we also become strangers to ourselves and to each other ?

Swami : Quite so : all sense of strangeness is due to a sense of distance, a sense of separateness. Love of God eliminates this distance, this separateness ; and since God is the inner Self of all, intimacy with Him gives one the capacity to feel intimacy with all ; and distance from Him alienates one's ego even from one's own self. It is this inner alienation that makes for alienation from other human beings—wife or husband, parents or children, between citizen and citizen. God is no stranger to any one ; but we treat Him as a stranger. God is in all men, but all men are not in God, therefore man suffers—says Sri Ramakrishna. The ultimate reality of speculative philosophy becomes the intimate reality in religion.

(To be continued)

## FIRST MEETINGS WITH SRI RAMAKRISHNA : BHAIRAVI BRAHMANI

SWAMI PRABHANANDA

Sri Ramakrishna, then a young man of twenty-five, entered his room,<sup>1</sup> called his nephew Hridayram, and said, 'Go to the portico on the bathing ghat. You will find a Bhairavi<sup>2</sup> seated there. Bring her to this room.'

Hridayram hesitated. He said, 'Look here, she is a stranger. Why should she come at all ?' He was surprised to find his uncle

eager to meet a strange woman, for he had never seen him acting thus before.

Sri Ramakrishna still insisted, 'Please request her in my name and she will come readily.'

\* \* \*

It was in the year 1861, shortly after the death of Rani Rasmani on February 19 of that year. By this time Sri Ramakrishna had attained many spiritual realizations following the promptings of his heart, had gone to his birthplace Kamarpukur for a brief rest, had married a five-year-old girl, Saradamani,<sup>3</sup> and soon after his return to

<sup>1</sup> Sri Ramakrishna was then living in one room in the 'kuthi-bari', the old house originally built by Mr. Hastie and later renovated by Rani Rasmani. Sri Ramakrishna lived in this house till the death of Akshay in 1869 or 1870.

<sup>2</sup> A nun of the Tāntrika sect,

<sup>3</sup> As the readers of Sri Ramakrishna's biography know, this marriage was only a kind of betrothal.

Dakshineswar had plunged again headlong into arduous spiritual practices. Now, as Swami Saradananda says:

'The only idea that occupied the whole of his mind was how he could see the Divine Mother in all beings at all times. His chest became reddish again on account of continuous Japa, remembrance of God, and reflection and meditation on Him. The world and all talks thereof appeared to him as deadly poison; that terrible burning sensation came on him again; and sleep vanished as it were into air. . . . Gangaprasad, the reputed Ayurvedic physician of Calcutta, prescribed for the Master medicines. . . . But the disease was on the increase and showed no signs of abatement.<sup>4</sup>

One clear morning, as was his habit, Sri Ramakrishna was plucking flowers in the garden on the embankment of the Ganga and humming devotional songs. He noticed that a boat had touched at the Vakul-ghat.<sup>5</sup> A Bhairavi got off, climbed the stairs, and slowly proceeded southward to the portico on the main ghat. As soon as Sri Ramakrishna saw her he became excited as though he had been expecting her visit for a long time. He hurried back to his room.

It may well be that Sri Ramakrishna had some premonition about the Bhairavi's visit. Maybe he came to know of her importance in relation to his life with the help of his subtle yogic insight. Swami Saradananda writes, 'We cannot say how far the Master foresaw at first sight his close future relation with her. But it is true that he felt that great attraction towards her, which people feel when they see one whose life is bound up with their own.'<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> *Sri Ramakrishna, the Great Master* (Tr. by Swami Jagadananda, Pub. by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras-4, Second ed.), pp. 179-80.

<sup>5</sup> A bathing ghat for the use of women at the northern end of the embankment by the side of the Nahabat. There was a big *vakul* tree close to it, which accounts for its name.

<sup>6</sup> *The Great Master*, p. 185.

\* \* \*

Hriday knew his mad uncle rather well. There was nothing to do but to obey him. He went to the portico mentioned and found seated there a tall and beautiful woman. She was in her late thirties, but looked much younger. She was clad in the ochre robe of a Bhairavi, and her hair fell loosely about her shoulders. She wore a garland of *rudrāksa*-beads, and carried in one hand a basket of palm leaves containing a couple of saris and worship materials, and a bundle of books in the other.<sup>7</sup> Her demeanour suggested that she was a lady of a respectable family. Hriday told her, 'My uncle is a devotee of God. He wants you to see him.'

There was much in store for Hriday to be amazed at in the chain of events that followed. He was greatly surprised to see that the Bhairavi unhesitatingly agreed and followed him to Sri Ramakrishna's room.<sup>8</sup>

She was a *brāhmaṇī* of a noble family in the district of Jessore of the present Bangladesh. She was a devotee of Viṣṇu, an aspirant of a high order, and very learned in the Tāntrika and Vaiṣṇava scriptures. Her name was Yogesvari.<sup>9</sup> None at Dakshine-

<sup>7</sup> Baikunthanath Sanyal, *Śrī-Śrī-Rāmakṛṣṇa-Līlāmṛta*, p. 33.

<sup>8</sup> Romain Rolland's following remarks reveal the difficulty modern sceptics experience in appreciating such Providence-guided events:

'This encounter with the simple charm of a story from the Arabian Nights, has roused doubts in the minds of European historians. They are inclined to see in this episode, as does Max Muller, a symbol of the psychic evolution of Ramakrishna. But the personality of his instructress during the six years she remained with him contains too many individual traits (and not always to her credit) for there to be any doubt that she was a real woman, with all a woman's weaknesses' (Romain Rolland: *The Life of Ramakrishna*, Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Himalayas, 1947, p. 51).

<sup>9</sup> Śrī Rākhāl (Swami Brahmananda) used to refer to her simply as 'Bāmnī' (the Brahmin woman). She is sometimes referred to by biographers as the Bhairavi Brahmani, or simply Brahmani.

swar seemed to have known her family antecedents or under what circumstances she became a wandering nun. None of Sri Ramakrishna's acquaintances came to know 'in the least where she acquired so much learning nor where or when she made so much progress in Sadhana'.<sup>10</sup> The Bhairavi hardly spoke about herself.

As soon as she saw Sri Ramakrishna, she was overcome with joy and astonishment, and shed profuse tears. Her words explain why she was so deeply stirred. When she was able to control herself she said, 'Ah, my son, you are here! I knew you were living somewhere on the bank of the Ganga, and I have been searching for you ever so long; at long last I see you now.'

Sri Ramakrishna said, 'How could you know of me, Mother?'

The Bhairavi answered, 'I knew by the grace of the Divine Mother that I would have to meet three of you. I have already met two<sup>11</sup> in the eastern region and I see you here today.'

Sri Ramakrishna welcomed the visitor with much deference. It may be safely presumed that, as was his wont, he bowed low to the lady as an embodiment of the Divine Mother. Clearly, the Bhairavi, at the first sight, felt a strong attraction for Sri Ramakrishna.

She introduced herself briefly. She explained her mission which she had partly fulfilled by imparting necessary instruction to Girija and Chandra of Barisal. Now that she had found Sri Ramakrishna, she could complete her mission. It is obvious that her yogic insight helped her recognize im-

mediately the spiritual aspirant *par excellence* that Sri Ramakrishna was.<sup>12</sup>

She said further that she had already noticed that Sri Ramakrishna, when he moved about to pluck flowers, started off with his left foot. It seemed to her as if Śrī Rādhikā herself was moving about gathering flowers in a golden basket in Vṛndāvana.<sup>13</sup>

By this time Sri Ramakrishna had sat down by her side like a child and begun narrating in the most intimate detail his spiritual experiences and visions, his loss of consciousness of the external world, his continued insomnia, the burning sensation in his body, and so forth. He asked repeatedly, 'Mother, what are these things that keep happening to me? Have I really lost my head? Am I the victim of a serious illness on account of praying heart and soul to the Divine Mother?' At these revelations she was thrilled. Like a delighted and compassionate mother, she comforted him with maternal tenderness. She said, 'My son, who calls you a madman? These are not symptoms of madness. You are passing through the rare spiritual experience known *mahābhāva*, which explains your present state of body and mind. Is it given to ordinary people to comprehend this almost unknown spiritual experience? In their ignorance they call you crazy. The devotional scriptures have recorded two instances of such experience, namely, those of Śrī Rādhā and Śrī Caitanya. I shall read out from the books I have, just to prove that those who pray to God sincerely, experience these bodily symptoms.' Unable to make out why his uncle and the Bhairavi behaved with each other like close relations, Hriday became perplexed. He stood speechless to hear that his uncle was not a victim of

<sup>10</sup> *The Great Master*, p. 467.

<sup>11</sup> They were known as 'Chandra' and 'Girija'. Both of them belonged to the district of Barisal in the present Bangladesh. They made some spiritual progress but became ensnared in occult powers. They later met Sri Ramakrishna and were greatly benefited by his guidance.

<sup>12</sup> This paragraph is adapted from Gurudas Burman: *Śrī-Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa-Carit*, p. 54.

<sup>13</sup> Gurudas Burman, loc. cit. The source is Hridayram.



epilepsy but had earned the very rare spiritual experience of *mahābhāva*, in which are manifest the nineteen physical symptoms like the shedding of tears, tremor of the body, horripilation, perspiration, burning sensation, and the rest. The conversation continued in the same strain<sup>14</sup> for quite a long time till Sri Ramakrishna noticed that the day was far advanced. He felt greatly relieved to hear from the learned Bhairavi that his sufferings were simply a sign of progress in his spiritual pilgrimage.

Sri Ramakrishna gave her the *prasāda* (consecrated food) of the Divine Mother for her meal. Inspired by spiritual motherly love towards Sri Ramakrishna, the Bhairavi felt reluctant to eat anything without first feeding him. He partook of a little of the *prasāda* and then she, after paying her obeisance to the different temples, took her food.

True it is that very little is seen on the surface of the life of most spiritual men; much more true is this in case of a spiritual giant like Sri Ramakrishna. Dumbstruck to see what was happening before him, Hriday came to conclude that the Bhairavi must have been borne there by the providentially-guided stream of events. Now, at the behest of his uncle he procured from the temple-store some flour, rice, and other items to enable the Bhairavi to offer cooked food to the deity Raghuvīra, the stone symbol of whom used to hang round her neck.

She prepared food in the *pañcavaṭī* (the grove of five trees at Dakshineswar) and offered the dishes to Raghuvīra. As part of the ritual she sat down for her meditation on the Chosen Ideal and soon merged herself in Him. Deep in meditation she was

blessed with a wonderful vision. Tears of love flowed profusely down her cheeks and she completely lost consciousness of the external world. At that time Sri Ramakrishna felt irresistibly drawn towards the *pañcavaṭī*. He appeared there in a state of ecstasy and, as one possessed, fell to taking the food-offering from before the symbol of Raghuvīra. By the time he had eaten a good portion, the Brahmani had regained her consciousness. She opened her eyes and saw to her great delight that the scene before her corresponded closely to her vision. The immediate verification of her vision filled her with divine bliss—her hair standing on end. Soon afterwards Sri Ramakrishna returned to consciousness of his surroundings and, realizing what he had done in a state of ecstasy, felt remorseful. He was afraid that she might regard it as sacrilege. He said to her, 'Who knows why I lose control over myself and act in this way?' Like a loving mother the Bhairavi consoled him. She reassured him, 'Well done, my son. It is not you but the One within you that has done it. From what was revealed to me in my meditation today I am certain who has done it and also why he has done so. And now I know that I need not perform ritual worship any more. At long last my worship has attained its goal.'

The Bhairavi meant what she said. She reverently partook, as the *prasāda* of the Deity, what was left over of the dishes. Next, shedding tears of love, she consigned the stone symbol of Raghuvīra, which she had worshipped endearingly for many long years, to the holy waters of the Ganga. She felt that there was no need of worshipping the stone symbol any further, for she had been blessed with the vision of the living Raghuvīra in the person of Sri Ramakrishna. Hridayram, the only witness perhaps of all these extraordinary happenings, felt flabbergasted and could hardly make out what was going on.

<sup>14</sup> According to Gurudas Burman, op. cit., p. 55, the Bhairavi on this occasion quoted from *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* in support of her declaration that Sri Ramakrishna, like Śrī Caitanya, was an Incarnation of God.

A parent-son relationship was thus established between the Bhairavi and Sri Ramakrishna. She looked upon him as the Baby Kṛṣṇa and herself as Yaśodā, the foster mother of Kṛṣṇa. He regarded her as his mother who was also a spiritual guide. Thus she simultaneously became his devotee and trusted mentor.

Following the promptings of his heart Sri Ramakrishna had already attained a high state of realization, but he was not satisfied, since he had not become truly the master of it yet. Now help reached him through this learned woman whom he accepted as his guru, his spiritual guide. An adept in Tāntrika and Vaiṣṇava methods of worship, the Bhairavi guided this unique disciple through the traditional roads of religious exercises methodically for more than three years, and helped open new vistas of spiritual unfoldment to him.

Again the Bhairavi, being conversant with the scriptures, studied minutely the behaviour of Sri Ramakrishna and compared it with that recorded in the scriptures. This knowledge, fortified by her own visions, led her to proclaim that only an Incarnation of God was capable of such spiritual manifestations. In fact, she was the first to declare on the basis of full scriptural authority, that Sri Ramakrishna was, like Śrī Caitanya, an Incarnation of God.

During her stay with Sri Ramakrishna for twelve long years she on her part came to realize her shortcomings and was enlightened by the loving care and masterly guidance of her spiritual son, Sri Ramakrishna. Thus the meeting between Sri Ramakrishna and Bhairavi was not only an important landmark in the spiritual pilgrimage of both of them but gives us a vision of spiritual life in which all makes for fulfilment.

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## THE SODO (OR SOTO) SECT OF ZEN BUDDHISM

PROF. D. C. GUPTA

A great teacher came from India. In spite of the legends which have grown round the name of Bodhidharma in China, it seems impossible to doubt that he arrived at Canton and preached a doctrine which was called Buddhism, though in the form in which it is reported in Chinese literature it seems more like Vedāntism expressed in Buddhist terminology. Bodhidharma, the reputed founder of Zen in the Far East, seems to have been a native of the Dravidian provinces. He arrived in China about A.D. 520. He there became the first Chinese Patriarch but only in the sense of being the head of his special sect. His teaching is summed up in four well-known lines :

A special tradition outside the scriptures :

Not to depend on books or letters :

To point direct to the heart of man :

To see (one's own) nature and become Buddha.

Study of the scriptures, prayer, and even good works are all equally vain. All that man need do is to turn his gaze inward and see the Buddha in his own heart.

Zen in Japan has three divisions often reckoned as separate sects, the Rinzai, Soto, and Obaku. The Soto is the largest Buddhist denomination in the country. It was introduced from China some time after the beginning of the thirteenth century. There is, however, a slight difference of method and teaching between

the Soto and Rinzai. The former emphasizes the importance of moral training and gradual development for obtaining enlightenment; the latter insists that enlightenment is rather a sudden revelation which cannot be caused or accelerated by study. The former holds that a good life is alike the cause and result of enlightenment. The word 'enlightenment' is a rendering of *satori* in Japanese. It is a new view of life and the universe, which must be felt. It will prove satisfying and be 'the purifier and liberator of life', breaking down the prison walls in which the intellect is said to confine us. *Satori* is commonly described as a convulsion which upsets and destroys all one's old ideas.

In the teaching quoted above, Bodhidharma insists that religion means nothing but the vision of the Buddha-nature in one's own heart; and to those to whom it comes it gives light and deliverance. Now if we substitute *ātman* for Buddha-nature the doctrine closely resembles our well-known passages of the Upaniṣads. (There are notable verbal coincidences. Thus it is said that the Buddha-nature reveals itself in dreams; that it embraces the whole universe and yet is so small that a needle cannot prick it.) There is no doubt that the closest Indian analogy to Bodhidharma's doctrine is offered by some utterances of the Upaniṣads: 'To see into one's nature and become Buddha' is really the same idea as that Brahman, the eternal and universal Spirit, is identical with the indwelling self in every man. It is also true that there is a striking likeness between the thought of Zen and such passages as those which say: 'You cannot think of It with thought, hear It with the ear, see It with the sight,

breathe It with the breath, etc.'<sup>1</sup>

The Soto was not so influential in China—where it was known as Tsao-Tung—as was the Rinzai (Lin-chi); but it has had great success in Japan. It lays stress on the need for silent introspection as a preparation for enlightenment, and also on ethics. It regards the knowledge of the Buddha-nature (or Brahman) as an end in itself, all-satisfying, and all-engrossing. When once the eye of the spirit is opened to the divine vision, nothing more is said about worship or conduct or any human ideal. But the Lin-chi (i.e., Rinzai) school held that it is necessary to have Enlightenment after Enlightenment, that is to say, that the inner illumination must display itself in a good life. The Lin-chi (Rinzai) was introduced into Japan by Eisai (1215) and the Tsao-Tung (Soto) by Dogen (1253), both of whom studied in China. Dogen, often called Shoyodaishi, a posthumous title conferred on him in 1880, built the magnificent monastery of Eihei-ji near Fukui in Echizen.

I have gone through a little manual called 'The Buddhist Way of Practice according to the Soto Sect', which sums up its doctrine by saying that the most important things are to understand the nature of life and death and to realize that our own hearts are the Buddha himself. The Soto is also less open to any charge of extravagance and lays greater stress on the need of good conduct and morality in the spiritual life, whereas the Rinzai, without being in the least open to the charge of immorality, emphasizes the importance of sudden spiritual enlightenment without insisting strongly that a good life is the best training for such an enlightenment and the sure result of it.

<sup>1</sup> *Kena-upaniṣad*, I, 5-9.

### THE OX-TENDING: THE ETERNAL PURITY OF THE BUDDHA-NATURE (OR BRAHMAN)

Zen has a curious possession which may be called either literature or art, in the set

of Ox-tending pictures, each supplied with an explanation in prose and a quatrain of

verses. The pictures are said to have been drawn by Kakuan, a Chinese monk of the Rinzai school who lived about A.D. 1100.

The first picture is called Looking for the Ox, that is to say, for one's own soul. (The metaphor seems to be an old one in Zen. Hyakujo or Pai-Chang, a Chinese Zen philosopher, A.D. 720-814, is reported to have said that to seek for the Buddha is like seeking for an Ox while one is riding on it.) It represents a man exhausted and in despair, following an unending path and vainly searching while he hears nothing but the song of the evening cicadas.

In the second picture he is still searching but has discovered the tracks of the Ox. This is explained as meaning that he has begun to study philosophy and various doctrines. He cannot yet distinguish truth and falsehood or good and evil: still he has found some traces of what he seeks.

The third picture represents a great stride. The man sees the Ox: he begins to understand the uselessness of mere book-learning and to realize that the road to Enlightenment really lies through the trifles of everyday life. Something new is working harmoniously in all his senses and all his activities, unseen and inseparable, like the salt in sea water.

At last he catches the Ox, which in picture four is seen attached by a cord but not being led. The beast is still too unruly and refuses to be broken in, 'owing to the overwhelming pressure of the objective world'. The Ox rushes up to a plateau and sometimes seems lost in the mountain mists. Nevertheless he is gradually broken in.

In the next picture the Ox is seen following the man, who leads him by a nose cord. 'Things oppress us not because of an objective world but because of a self-deceiving mind. . . . Never let yourself be separated from the whip and tether.'

In the sixth picture, the struggle is over. The man is leisurely proceeding home rid-

ing on the Ox, playing as he goes simple ditties on a rustic flute. 'What need to tell that he is now one of those that know?'

The Ox now disappears and the man is left alone. In picture seven we see him sitting outside his house with his whip and the cord lying beside him as if he were asleep and the comment is: 'When you know that what you need is not the snare or net, but the hare or fish that they were meant to catch, it is like gold separated from the dross or like the moon rising out of the clouds.'

The eighth picture is something new, not only in this series of drawings but in Buddhist art. It is merely a blank: a circular frame enclosing nothing at all. The title is simply 'the Ox and the man both gone out of sight', and the following are extracts from the comments: 'All confusion is set aside and serenity alone prevails; even the idea of holiness does not obtain. He does not linger where the Buddha is, and where there is no Buddha he passes on. . . .

'Who has ever surveyed the vastness of  
heaven?  
Over the blazing furnace not a flake of  
snow can fall.'

The ninth picture, though not an absolute blank, shows only a few flowers and leaves of grass or some suggestion of a landscape. The comment runs thus: 'Pure from the very beginning, he receives no defilement. He watches the growth and decay of things with form and abides himself secure in Wu-wei. (This is a well-known Taoist phrase, meaning something like absence of self-assertion.) He does not identify himself with transformations: what has he to do with self-discipline? Water is blue and mountains green. He sits and watches how things change.' But this life of lonely contemplation is by no means held up as the last word.

The tenth picture is called 'Entering the  
(Continued on p. 36)



### SEEING 'NON'-GROWING APPLES ON THE TREE

This is no Zen Koan. But I shall tell you how it all came about.

On my way to nowhere I have been here—at 'Mayavati' Advaita Ashrama, where perhaps every writer for *Prabuddha Bharata* fancies being at least once in his lifetime.

But, strange!

What is strange?

What is not strange here?

The Sanskrit word 'Āśrama', I am told, means a place where one strives to attain spiritual perfection.

This Ashrama Swami Vivekananda especially dedicated to the practising and preaching of Advaita.

Now, what is Advaita? Learned people have told me that Advaita is the *last* word of all religion and philosophy, or you may say the *lost* word in trying to speak about religion and philosophy. I am told the Upaniṣads speak many things on how you cannot really speak of what Advaita is. But by going beyond Māyā, you can know!

That you can preach what you do not practise, cannot practise, do not mean to practise—I know well enough, because I have been doing this all my life. But how can Advaita be practised? How can what becomes an object of practice remain Advaita any more?

I was thus complacently getting amused

within myself: this was perhaps why Advaita Ashrama was situated at 'Mayavati'!

But this was not what I started to speak to you about. I wanted to tell you about the 'strange' thing that happened one morning at breakfast break-table.

Oh! Why do I say 'break-table'?

I had warned you that everything is strange at Mayavati. Here the dining table is not a real dining table as commonly known, but an unresumed break-journey on the way to being a table. It belongs neither to orthodox East nor to traditional West, but to where the twain have met. You do not sit on chairs at the table, but squat on boards near the table. Those of you who have been here know that I am not being romantic, but only factual. However this was not the strange thing I was about to say.

That thing happened one morning when an inmate—not in the American sense but in the Indian sense, a monastic member of the Ashrama—after one bite into the apple served on the plate, wondered, 'Are such luscious apples growing on trees now in mid-November?'

'Why not go to the orchard and see for yourself?' said the abbot at the head of the table.

Next morning, at the breakfast break-table again, the inmate said like a freshly

bruised apple just fallen from the tree, that he had not expected that of all persons the abbot would be joking!

The abbot smiled, firmly asserting without words that he was not joking, though joking would be perfectly in order within the Ramakrishna Order.

The astounding thing to me was that his smile at once carried conviction to me that the thing to do was to see the non-growing apples on the tree. Otherwise what would be the inspiration to anyone for doing anything in the world? Why would the monk in charge of farming take such great pains for manuring the trees in proper time and doing sundry other things? If you did not trust the enfolded, you could not worship the unfolded. Every act of trust is a visualization of reality. Besides, the growing of apples on trees is an unbroken process as long as they are capable of bearing fruit. Discerning ones see the whole process at one stretch.

Remember the conversion of Brother Lawrence? His conversion, at eighteen, was the result of the mere sight on a mid-winter day of a dry and leafless tree standing gaunt against snow; it stirred deep thoughts within him of the change coming

spring would bring. He really saw the non-blossoming flowers on the tree, by travelling up to spring in a brief moment. Otherwise his conversion could not have been so complete. It is said, 'From that moment on he grew and waxed strong in the knowledge and love and favour of God, endeavouring constantly, as he put it, "to walk as in His presence."' No wilderness of wanderings, no bitter winter seasons of soul or spirit, seemed to have intervened between the Red Sea and Jordan of his experience.'

Vivekananda, the bold seer, always saw growing and 'non'-growing apples together on the tree. He declared, 'Man always is perfect, or he never could become so; but he had to realize it.'

You now can see why he founded the Advaita Ashrama at 'Mayavati'.

Here there is no delayed departure of the past or premature arrival of the future. At Mayavati, in the heart of this moment is eternity.

Here the thing to do, even for a beginner like me, is to go to the orchard in winter and see the non-growing apples on the tree.

Advaita is Home, before the start and at the last.

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(Continued from p. 34)

city with bliss-bestowing hands', and represents a rotund, smiling personage carrying bags full of what are no doubt good things. The comment informs us that none knows his inner life but that he goes into the market-place and consorts with wine-bibbers and butchers: he and they all become Buddhas.

The text does not give any general summary of the meaning of the whole series of pictures, but it is usually briefly explained

by saying that the Ox is the Buddha nature in every one: you must find it but must not make too much of it. Goso (or Hoyen), a famous Chinese teacher of Zen who died in A.D. 1104, often indicated to his pupil that he had a slight fault but for some time could not be induced to give it a name. At least he said 'Well, the fact is you have too much Zen about you', and added, when pressed to explain what was the harm of that, 'It turns one's stomach.'

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## NOTES AND COMMENTS

### IN THIS NUMBER

Questions and answers are from: 'M': *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, translated by Swami Nikhilananda, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 1947. References: Question 1, p. 890; Questions 2 and 3, p. 891.

The words quoted in 'Onward For Ever!' are from *The Complete Works*, Vol. II (1963), p. 104.

An ancient country like India is no stranger to crises. In her age-long history, she has seen, faced and overcome more serious and critical situations than the one she faces today. She is today an independent republic and politically a unified nation. This was not so for the past many centuries. So her present crisis, on a vast national scale, seems overwhelming. But a national crisis is mostly the result of aggregated cowardice, selfishness, egotism and lack of character of her people. The drive, vision, and resources for grappling with the self-created crisis must come from within every man, woman and child. The *Editorial* of the month is a forward-looking plea to our countrymen to fortify inner bastions and mobilize outer forces to face and beat the crisis brought on mainly by ourselves.

An easy way of realizing God is what many of us seek. What can be an easier way than the one which turns our every movement, breath, heart-beat, and thought into adoration of God? Work done in the spirit of worship with a parallel effort at whittling down the ego-sense is the easiest of all modes of spiritual practices. In 'An Easy Method of Spiritual Practice', Swami Pavitrananda explains in simple language such that even a child can understand, the

method of serving God in man, a method 'easy in the beginning, easy in the middle—and the result is sure.'

Swami Pavitrananda, a very senior monk of the Ramakrishna Order, is the head of The Vedanta Society of New York. This article is the text of a Sunday talk given by the Swami at the Vedanta Society on February 4, 1973.

As those acquainted with Sri Ramakrishna's life are aware, the Bhairavi Brahmani was the first spiritual guide to appear in his life. Till then he had struggled unaided and unguided. 'He went', as Romain Rolland remarks, 'where his wild heart and his legs carried him. . . . Even this first meeting with the Bhairavi was attended with a strange and fascinating series of events. Swami Prabhananda, a monk of the Ramakrishna Order, bases the recounting of this 'First Meeting' on Swami Saradananda's celebrated biography of Sri Ramakrishna and on some other Bengali sources.

At the root of the introduction of Buddhism into China and from there its spread to Japan is the influence of Indian Buddhist missionaries. This among other facts, as well as the similarity of Zen Buddhism's teachings to Vedānta, are brought out clearly in Prof. D. C. Gupta's article, 'The Sodo (or Soto) Sect of Zen Buddhism'. Professor Gupta, from the Osaka University of Foreign Studies, is fairly familiar to our readers through his previous interesting contributions on Zen. About the inspiration behind the present article, he wrote recently in a letter: 'It came out in all prominent newspapers here

that the Sodo Sect of Buddhism is building a grand temple at Bodh-Gaya, and hence it inspired me to let my people know what is the Sodo Sect.' 'The Ox-Tending: The Eternal Purity of the Buddha-Nature (or Brahman)' may be familiar to readers of Zen books. But like all Zen stories and teachings, this too has a deep spiritual content which needs to be grasped by repeated reading and devoted pondering.

### TO OUR READERS

On the happy occasion of the *Prabuddha Bharata's* entering its seventy-ninth volume and the beginning of a new year, we offer our hearty greetings, and good wishes to all our subscribers and readers, writers and reviewers, advertisers, friends, and sympathizers.

More than ever before, man today needs the bold and ignorance-shattering message of the divinity of man and all beings, solidarity of man and the cosmos, in the light of Vedānta. Formidable problems, personal and interpersonal, national and international, are threateningly gesticulating at man. But how is he trying to face up to and fight them? Not by reminding himself of his spiritual immensity, but by trying to build a giant 'image' of his physical and intellectual self. In short, by inflating and grooming up his ego. The result as could be expected, is multiplication and magnification of problems and diminution of man. If all attention is given to image-projecting and none to strengthening and beautifying the subject—the real man—problems will take the upper hand and man will go down. There is an ancient and widespread belief—call it superstition if you will—that a comet brings in its wake plagues, wars, famines, and other such natural and man-made calamities. But rational men can easily see that when man sets the stage with his own hands for such calamities a comet is pulled onto our horizon by the 'gravitational force' of the preparations! The roots of all problems are found in man's own selfish, ego-centred consciousness. So to conquer problems man has to start con-

quering his lower self and realizing his higher self, which is so vast that he can swallow stars by the handful—not to speak of a trifling tenuous comet. Reminding man of his essential divinity and his oneness with the whole universe, in 'bold, steady, strong, blissful' tones is the function of the *Prabuddha Bharata*. We hope the Journal is still unobtrusively discharging this task entrusted to it by its founder.

At present there is quite an amount of diversity in the reading matter of the *Prabuddha Bharata*. Most of this will continue in the new volume, though it may not be always possible to represent all the features in each issue. We will however be starting one or two new serials like 'At the Feet of Swami Akhandananda', found elsewhere in this number. We hope that these new features will be as popular as their predecessors.

We are very much aware of the need of men and women all over the world for this message. Oftentimes the needy persons do not even know where to get it. It would be a great service to the cause of the magazine and of humanity, if our readers would introduce it to such of their friends. During the course of this year, *Prabuddha Bharata's* subscription rates, are likely to be increased slightly. But in this great cause of divinity-rousing and man-making, a little extra money should not assume much importance. We hope our subscribers, readers, writers, reviewers, and sympathizers will continue to extend their co-operation as in the past.



## REVIEWS AND NOTICES

INDIAN PHILOSOPHICAL ANNUAL: Vol. VII (for 1971): BY T. M. P. MAHADEVAN, Published by Centre For Advanced Study in Philosophy, University of Madras, 1973, pp. 286, Price Rs. 10/-.

The Madras University Department of Philosophy has more than justified its upgrading into the Centre For Advanced Study in Philosophy, by its original contributions. Among these, an Annual is brought out every year consisting of the papers presented at the Centre's Seminars by eminent scholars from all over India.

The present volume is the seventh of its kind. It consists of three parts. There are eleven papers in the first, all dealing with Advaita Vedanta in relation to western thought. In one of them there is an able defence of the advaitic notion that though all content may fall away, consciousness itself does not suffer extinction. The other papers call attention to other distinctive features of Advaita Vedanta and warn us against being carried away by superficial resemblances between Advaita and western systems of Monism.

Part II consists of sixteen papers. They deal with the concept of God from different points of view. The Indian concept of God is compared with the views held by Christian mystics like Anselm, Aquinas, Ignatius, and others. Such comparisons are very meaningful.

There are four special articles under Part III. Though all make interesting reading, special mention must be made of the article dealing with the distinctive features of Dvaita Vedanta.

The book as a whole brings much enlightenment even to lay readers. We heartily recommend its study to all who are athirst for the higher knowledge.

SRI M. K. VENKATARAMA IYER

ISAVASYOPANISHAD: TRANSLATED WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES BY SWAMI SATCHIDANANDENDRA SARASWATI, published by Adhyatma Prakasha Karyalaya, Holenarsipur, Mysore, 1972, Pages 8+58. Price Rs. 2/-.

*Isavasyopanishad* is the shortest of the principal Upanishads. The eighteen mantras of this Upanishad present a digest of the Upanishadic thought. Sankara's commentary on this text is very illuminating. Swami Gambhirananda, of the Ramakrishna Mission, translated the text along with Sankara's commentary in a very lucid manner. Now Swami Satchidanandendra Saraswati presents his translation of the text along with a summary of Sankara's commentary. The rendering is faithful to the original. Only in the fifteenth mantra *mukha* is wrongly rendered as 'mouth'. Yet the author has done a good job in giving the different interpretations found in the different commentaries of

Sankara. He prefers the 'Madhyandina' text to the 'Kanva' text on very flimsy grounds.

DR. P. S. SASTRI

MISSION OF MAN: BY AARON HILLET KATZ, Published by Philosophical Library Inc., 15 E. 40th St., New York, N. Y. 10016, 1970, pp. 105, Price \$ 5.00.

What is the mission of man? To us in India, the straightforward and simple answer to the question is: 'The mission is to realize man's inmost Self, the Divine hidden within him, and then to order one's life as the Divine directs.' But this answer is not acceptable to contemporary computerized space-age men, of whom the author seems to be one. To him, man 'is a cultural organism programmed to close an information gap' (pp. 3 and 7). We may not—in fact we do not—at all agree to this definition of man. But if for the sake of argument we should so agree then we would find that the seventeen chapters of the book constitute a well organized series of short discussions, in support of the author's hypothesis.

The entire volume is devoted to the exposition of the three concepts embodied in the above definition of man—namely, Culture, Information, and Programming. *Culture* is 'a set of solutions to certain biologically based problems which man faces by virtue of his existence and his genetic and social nature' (p. 14). The biological problems are summarized in Chapter 4, with some added references in Chapters 9, 12, 13. *Information* theory is discussed in Chapters 3 and 7, with ramifications in several others. And *Programming*, which is intimately tied up with 'Information theory', though not separately discussed as such, makes its presence felt repeatedly.

The author's special contribution lies in his endeavour to apply Freudian psychoanalysis to the science of man and his culture, and also to the creation of what the author calls the 'language ladder' (chapter 5). The languages, both popular and technical, are grouped under the well-known Freudian triad of Ego, Id, and Super-ego, and arranged in a hierarchy with the language of Philosophy at the top and that of the Jungian (racial) Unconscious at the bottom (p. 24). This hierarchy is then used to explain man's experience at various levels.

A surprise now awaits us. Man, it is claimed, can operate only in three modes: sensation, perception (including action), and cognition. These three exhaust the entire gamut of man's experience. This is surprising psychology. On the basis of this unusual 'Psychology' with a liberal amount of Freudianism thrown into it, the author sets up what he calls the theoretic-concrete-sensory continuum, which,

it is claimed, can explain all mystical and religious experiences. The fact is that these sacred and lofty experiences are only explained away.

This is an unusual book. The author has undoubtedly some message to convey to the world, but the medium used for communication is dense, as it is made up of such heterogeneous elements as modern Psychology, Freudian Psychoanalysis,

Cybernetics, Information Theory, Computerism, and recent anthropology. The author has penetrated only the outermost layer of man's real nature, at the core of which is the SELF of sublime spirituality. If one could saturate one's thinking with Vedanta, then one would see that man is certainly *not* merely what he is said to be at page three!

PROF. P. S. NAIDU

## NEWS AND REPORTS

### SRI RAMAKRISHNA MISSION STUDENTS' HOME: MYLAPORE, MADRAS REPORT FOR YEAR ENDING 31st MARCH, 1973

Founded in 1905 under the inspiration and guidance of Swami Ramakrishnananda, a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, this institution has grown to a large size while maintaining the ancient Gurukula model of training, yet with full scope for modern education. Perhaps the foremost charitable organization of the Ramakrishna Mission in South India, it consists of three sections: (1) High School, with 166 inmates; (2) Collegiate, with 55; (3) Technical, with 108. (All data are as of 31.3.73 unless otherwise noted.) Of the first, 164 students are in the Residential High School, in the main building of the Home; of the second, 18 study at the Vivekananda College Pre-University Class and 37 in its Degree classes; of the third, all study in the Technical Institute attached to the Home (which also has a few day-students from outside the Home).

*General Working:* The Home admits orphans and other poor boys, according to their performance in the annual or public examinations. Of the total, 127 belonged to Scheduled Castes and Backward Classes. Tutorial guidance out of school hours is provided, with a view to moulding their characters individually. The teachers act as ward-masters, supervising study-periods, etc.; over-all supervision is by the Warden, a monastic member of the Math. Each section has a small working-committee of the students (Seva Praveena Samithi). Group singing of Bhajan, etc., is encouraged, and the important religious festivals fittingly celebrated. The staff and students attended four such at the Ramakrishna Math, as well as its Platinum Jubilee, many participating by chanting of scriptures, de-

corations, distribution of prasada, etc. Further, the courses of moral and religious instruction stress the liberal, harmonizing teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother, Swamiji against the background of the Hindu scriptures and saints, both North and South.

*Library and Reading-Room* included 2560 books; many valuable periodicals were received and used.

*Scholarships:* 70 High School students received scholarships of varying amounts; of the Collegiate section, all the 18 P.U.C. students had fee-remission (Government) and 36 of the degree courses received scholarships of varying amounts; of the Technical Institute, 63 received fee-remission and 93 had scholarships (many in addition to the 'remission').

*Academic ratings:* Besides the winning of numerous scholarships and prizes, the following over-all results (spring of 1972) are noteworthy: (1) High School; S.S.L.C. Public Examination: 39 pupils appeared, all were declared eligible for college, 34 getting over 400 marks. (2) Collegiate: for B.A. and B.Sc. degree, 9 appeared, of whom 8 passed, 5 as First Class; for P.U.C.: 15 appeared, of whom all passed, 11 as First Class. (3) Technical: 102 appeared for the various Examinations, of whom 97 passed, 68 as First Class.

Two other Schools are also under control of the Managing Committee of the Home: (1) *Sri Ramakrishna Mission Centenary Primary School*, Mylapore, having standards I to V, with total of 237 boys and 206 girls. Of the 14 teachers, four are Secondary-trained. (2) *The Middle School at Malliankaranai*, with 158 boys, 29 girls, and eight teachers. Agriculture is taught as a pre-vocational subject. A hostel is attached, for pupils from Scheduled Castes and Backward Communities.

## A CORRECTION

*Prabuddha Bharata*, November 1973

Page 444, column 1, line 3 from bottom:

for tribute anything to man's material welfare,  
read burdensome, like deadwood on a tree. Yet