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VOL. LXXIX

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No. 4

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

SRI RAMAKRISHNA ANSWERS

Question (posed by himself): 'Ah! What a burning pain is there on earth which can compare with the grief at the death of a son?'

Sri Ramakrishna: 'A son is born of this sheath (body), isn't he? So his relation with the body persists as long as it lasts. Akshay¹ died. I felt nothing at the time. I was standing and was witnessing how man dies. I saw there was, as it were, a sword in a sheath and the sword was brought out of it. The sword was not at all affected. It remained as it was and the sheath lay there. I felt great joy to see it. I laughed and sang and danced. They burnt the body and returned. The next day I was standing there (pointing to the verandah to the east of the room and near the courtyard of the Kali temple), and do you know what I felt? I felt as if my heart was being wrung in the way a wet towel is wrung. My heart was feeling for Akshay like that. I thought, "Mother, this (his body) has no relation with even the cloth it wears; ah, how great was then the relation with the nephew. When it is so even here (with himself), how agonizing the pain must be to the householders! You are showing that, aren't you?"

'But do you know? Those who take refuge in Him do not go down to the bottom even on account of this unbearable grief. They regain their balance, but after a few tossings. Persons of small capacity, like small vessels, lose their control, their balance, altogether and go down. Haven't you noticed the plight of the small fishing boats when steamers pass through the Ganga? It looks as if they are lost and are gone. Some are capsized altogether. The bigger vessels, carrying tons of load regain their balance after a few tossings. But a toss or two must be felt by all....

'How few are the days during which the relationship exists among all these (sons, parents, etc.) in this world. Desiring happiness, a man enters the world; he marries, begets a son; the son grows; he marries his son; thus a few days pass pleasantly. Then one gets ill, another dies, still another goes astray, and the man is beside himself with worries and anxieties. The more the frustration, the louder the lamentation! Haven't you noticed how the wet fuel burns in a sweetmaker's oven? It burns well at first. Then

as it is burning, the sap begins to ooze out through its rear end and assumes the form of froth which bubbles and bursts and produces various kinds of hissing sounds. It is just like that.'

Question (posed by himself) : 'Of what avail will it be if one hears and understands this (i.e., that Brahman is real and the universe unreal), but does not try to give up what is unreal?'

Sri Ramakrishna : 'It is like the knowledge of the worldly people. One cannot attain the Reality by means of this knowledge. Conviction is necessary, renunciation is imperative. It is then alone that one can succeed. Otherwise you may repeat, "There is no thorn, no pricking", but the moment you touch the thorn you feel the prick and cry out in pain. You say in words, "There is no universe, it is unreal; it is Brahman alone that exists", and so on, but as soon as the objects of the world—sights, tastes, etc.—come before you, they are taken to be real and you get entangled. There came a holy man to the Panchavati. He used to speak incessantly on the Vedanta to the people. Then one day I heard that he had contracted an illicit connection with a woman. I went in that direction in order to ease myself, when I saw him sitting there. I said, "You talk so much about Vedanta, what is this talk about you then?" He replied, "What does it matter? I can make it clear to you that there is no harm in that. When it is a fact that the world is unreal in the past, present and future, will that alone be real? That is also unreal." I was annoyed when I heard this and said, "Fie on your knowledge of Vedanta." That is the kind of knowledge which the worldly people have of Vedanta. That knowledge is no knowledge at all.'

Question (asked by some disciples) : 'Sir, although you never learnt even reading and writing whence did you know all these (i.e., the Veda, the Vedanta, and the science of Yoga)?'

Sri Ramakrishna : 'Ah, it is true that I did not study them myself but I have heard much. I remember all that. I have heard the Vedas, the Vedanta, the *Darsanas* (philosophical schools) and the *Puranas* (mythology) from good and reliable scholars. After hearing them and knowing what they contained, I made a garland of them all (the books) by means of a string and put it round my neck, offered it at the lotus feet of the Mother, saying, "Here are all Your scriptures, *Puranas* and the like. Please grant me pure devotion."'

Question (posed by himself) : 'Should one think of the chosen Ideal at the time of meditation only and then forget Him at other times?'

Sri Ramakrishna : 'You should always keep a part of the mind attached to Him. You must surely have noticed that a sacrificial lamp has to be lighted at the time of the worship of Durga. That light should always be kept burning near the deity, it should not be allowed to go out. If it goes out, it augurs ill for the householder. Even so, after the chosen Ideal is brought and seated on the lotus of the heart, the sacrificial lamp of meditation on Him should always be kept burning. While one is engaged in worldly duties, one should watch at intervals whether that lamp is burning within or not.'

ONWARD FOR EVER!

Principles exist; we do not create them, we only discover them. . . . Religion consists solely in realisation. Doctrines are methods, not religion. All the different religions are but applications of the one religion adapted to suit the requirements of different nations. Theories only lead to fighting; thus the name of God that ought to bring peace has been the cause of half the bloodshed of the world. Go to the direct source. Ask God what He is. Unless He answers, He is not; but every religion teaches that He does answer.

Have something to say for yourself, else how can you have any idea of what others have said? Do not cling to old superstitions; be ever ready for new truths. 'Fools are they who would drink brackish water from a well that their forefathers have digged and would not drink pure water from a well that others have digged.' Until we realise God for ourselves we can know nothing about Him. Each man is perfect by his nature; prophets have manifested this perfection, but it is potential in us. How can we understand that Moses saw God unless we too see Him? If God ever came to anyone He will come to me. I will go to God direct; let Him talk to me. I cannot take belief as a basis; that is atheism and blasphemy. If God spake to a man in the deserts of Arabia two thousand years ago, He can also speak to me today, else how can I know that He has not died?

Wickham

INTELLECT AND INTUITION

EDITORIAL

I

Rightly has the modern age been called the Age of Reason. Reason being the first-born of the human intellect, the modern age can also be called the 'Age of Intellect'. Never before has humanity witnessed such spawning, development, and explosion of sciences, inventions, and information. If man has today acquired unheard-of control over nature and his environment, it has been made possible almost entirely through the faculty of human intelligence. Science and technology—the theoretical and practical aspects of our knowledge—are the direct results of the adventures of human intelligence in the physical cosmos. The modern intellectual has long ceased to burn incense at the altar of a divine being who controls every phenomenon in the physical universe. He has undoubtedly given up all idolatry. Instead he has turned to 'cerebrolatry', the worship of the human intellect.

Very early in his developmental history, man discovered the truth that knowledge is power. Yoking that discovery to an irrepressible curiosity, man has travelled a long way from flint-fire and wheel to nuclear power, jet-planes, and space-travel. At the root of all the power and control that man has acquired over nature and his surroundings lies his intellect. It is this faculty that distinguishes and demarcates *Homo sapiens* from the rest of creation.

Intellect, as most of us know, is that power or faculty of mind by which man studies, understands, and reacts to the external world. In psychology, intelligence is variously described as the general ability of the organism acting as a whole to utilize understanding gained in past experience in dealing with a similar or new situation, to adjust or adapt quickly and readily to the environment, to learn without difficulty, or to form new behaviour patterns to meet a new situation

by the modification or readjustment of those already acquired'.¹

If we take the case of man and apply this test of intelligence, we find that he eminently answers to it. For the last many thousands of years, he has not only utilized his experiences in successfully adapting to the changing environment but also dominated and greatly mastered it. In developing and exploiting his intelligence, man has outstripped the other primates. The unusual size, structure, and weight of the human brain speak volumes for the efforts of our early ancestors in developing this precious faculty of intelligence.

Before the theory of evolution was propounded by Darwin, some western philosophers—for instance John Locke—believed that man was born with a *tabula rasa*, a clean, blank mind, and all his knowledge was post-natally acquired. But when philosophers and thinkers understood the soundness of the theory of evolution, they came to see that man has a long biological past going back to unicellular organisms. Simultaneously they had to admit an equally long psychological past and a vast instinctual inheritance. Had man been born with a *tabula rasa*, he would have ended his life also with a somewhat similar 'clean slate'. Without having possessed any fund of previously acquired knowledge, he would not at all have had any frame of reference to interpret and know the environmental stimuli. Learning anything new would have been an utter psychological impossibility.

Man's intelligence is undoubtedly a unique accomplishment of the evolutionary process. Modern man's astounding achievements, especially in the fields of science and technology, are standing witnesses to his intellec-

tual supremacy. But intelligence, we should remember, is only the crust of the human psyche. If human psyche can be compared to a soaring mountain chain, the profound unconscious mind is like its roots going down into the bowels of the earth, and the conscious mind—of which intelligence is only one aspect—is like the low foothills. Besides the unconscious and the conscious, the psyche has another aspect—grander and vaster, soaring like the peaks into the very vault of the sky—which remains unnoticed, unscaled and unexplored in the great majority of mankind. That is what is called the superconscious or intuition.

Truth or Reality has a triune nature, namely, existence, consciousness, and bliss. In the inert and inorganic matter, only the existential aspect is perceived. The other two aspects remain concealed and involved. In the course of evolution, the aspect of consciousness slowly, hesitantly, and blunderingly begins to show itself in the plant and animal kingdom. In man this very consciousness manifests at the unconscious level as instinct and at the conscious level as intelligence and reason. But this is only a stage on the evolutionary journey. If the plant or animal has, in the course of its evolutionary march, arrived at the stage of the intelligent man, the march will have to be completed by man by attaining the superconsciousness or intuition. This is the message of all godmen, saints, and prophets.

On the contrary, if man obstinately clings to his present stage of evolution, namely his intelligence, and refuses to complete the journey, he may have to pay heavily for his myopic obstinacy and arrogance. One of these frightening possibilities is a nuclear holocaust involving the entire earth and its biosphere including man himself.

Let us not, however, conceive man's future in such pessimistic terms. In fact, a trail has been blazed for humanity towards the goal of intuition. What else can be the

¹ *The Columbia Encyclopedia* (Ed. by William Bridgwater and Elizabeth J. Sherwood, Pub. by Columbia University Press, Morningside Heights, New York, 2nd Edn.), p. 964.

message of Buddhas, Christs, and Ramakrishnas; of all the hundreds and thousands of saintly men and women who have responded to the calls of prophets and incarnations? By their lives of overflowing joy and unselfish love, they are all beckoning the rest of humanity from the mud puddle of sense-cum-intelligence life to the nectarous ocean of boundless consciousness-bliss.

II

By devotedly worshipping at the altar of the intellect, modern man has professed and propagated the cults of scientific materialism and atheism. He has, moreover, cultivated the intellect to the exclusion of feelings and emotions, or the 'heart'. This has led him unwittingly into a trackless desert of discursive knowledge void of all life-giving, spiritual waters. This spiritual aridity is noticeable in the technologically advanced western societies as the wave of counter culture and as the revulsion against all scientific knowledge and technological advancement. The neglected 'heart', the emotional and instinctual aspect of man, has struck back at modern man by a widespread revival of interest, especially among the youth, in all types of irrational beliefs and practices including demonolatry. Intellect and reason have a very narrow domain. They have self-frustrating limitations. How can these weak instruments, the products of space-time phenomenon, know Reality which is transcendental? Trying to determine the truth of the transcendental Reality or God with the instrument of the intellect is as impossible and ridiculous as trying to measure the depth of the Pacific with a metre-length rod.

To overcome the spiritual sterility confronting him, modern man should learn to cultivate his heart along with the head. By heart we do not mean the unregenerate, brutal emotions in man. But the higher and nobler emotion of universal love, towards all

creation—man and animal alike. Swami Vivekananda, an illumined teacher of modern India—who was a great rationalist no less—, has the following enlightening observations to make about the theme of intellect *versus* heart:

'It is one of the evils of your Western civilization that you are after intellectual education alone, and take no care of the heart. It only makes men ten times more selfish, and that will be your destruction. When there is conflict between the heart and the brain, let the heart be followed, because intellect has only one state, reason, and within that, intellect works, and cannot get beyond. . . . The knowledge of man, his powers of perception, of reasoning and intellect and heart, all are busy churning this milk of the world. Out of long churning comes butter, and this butter is God. Men of heart get the "butter", and the "buttermilk" is left for the intellectual.'²

'Intellect has been cultured with the result that hundreds of sciences have been discovered, and their effect has been that the few have made slaves of the many—that is all the good that has been done. Artificial wants have been created; and every poor man, whether he has money or not, desires to have those wants satisfied, and when he cannot, he struggles, and dies in the struggle. This is the result. Through the intellect is not the way to solve the problem of misery, but through the heart. If all this vast amount of effort had been spent in making man purer, gentler, more forbearing, this world would have a thousandfold more happiness than it has today. Always cultivate the heart; through the heart the Lord speaks, and through the intellect you yourself speak.'³

Not that intellect and reason should be renounced altogether. That would be making an equally fatal mistake. Giving up the intellect would lead us into errors and

² *The Complete Works* (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Pithoragarh, U.P.), Vol. I (1962), pp. 412-3.

³ *ibid.*, 414-5.

superstitions, would deliver us into the hands of charlatans, magicians, and demonologists. Great teachers like Vivekananda never taught us to abjure reason. On the other hand, they asked us to hold on to reason as a sure guide into the higher altitudes of intuition. If it is consciousness that is unfolding as instinct and intellect, it is the same consciousness that finally flowers as intuition in the pure and unselfish man. Since reason is the earlier stage of intuition, says Swami Vivekananda, the former cannot and should not be antagonistic to the latter. He is unanimous with the sages of the Upaniṣads in advocating the retraction, purification and concentration of the intellect for attaining to the highest intuitive levels.

The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-upaniṣad* very clearly states that the spiritual Reality in man is to be realized 'through the mind alone'.⁴ The *Kātha-upaniṣad* declares with great insight that the Self, hidden in all beings, does not shine forth; but It is seen by subtle seers through their one-pointed and subtle intellects.⁵ The same Upaniṣad makes the purified intellect which has the power of discrimination between the real and unreal, the permanent and the transitory, as the sure guide—lit., the charioteer—to reach the highest truth.⁶

III

Intuition is the direct apprehension of truth, fact, etc., independent of sense-perception or the reasoning process. However, people, as Rudolf Steiner somewhere says, talk of intuition as if they mean some notion, dimly felt to be true, but lacking any clear and exact knowledge. They imagine it to be a preliminary step towards cognition rather than as cognition itself.

But in the Vedāntic sense, intuition is

immensely subtle and goes beyond the ken of the ordinary mind. When, through perfect purification and repeated focusing of the mind on the spiritual essence within, the threefold division of knower, knowledge, and the known fuses into a unity, then is real intuition attained. Śaṅkara calls it *aparokṣānubhūti* or immediate apprehension or experience of truth.

There are stirring descriptions of this ineffable experience strewn in the Vedāntic literature. But the books themselves say that the actual content of the experience is beyond words and mind. Just as it is a state of shadowless illumination, it is also a state of supreme bliss. Attaining that intuition, a man is liberated from the bonds of ego and body-consciousness, from the thralldom of all action and even of death itself. Space and time, which frustrate and govern the ordinary mind, hold no secrets for the man of intuition. The senses, mind, the logical processes become utterly otiose. Intuition of this genuine type is beneficial to humanity and to the whole world. It is, as the great Buddha said of his *dharma*, 'auspicious in the beginning, auspicious in the middle, auspicious in the end'.

But it is better to be warned against the spurious intuition and to be briefed about the genuine type. In the uncompromising words of Swami Vivekananda:

'Therefore you must always bear in mind that the great danger lies in mistaking the lower form of instrument to be the higher. Many times instinct is presented before the world as inspiration, and then come all the spurious claims for the gift of prophecy. A fool or a semi-lunatic thinks that the confusion going on in his brain is inspiration, and he wants men to follow him. The most contradictory irrational nonsense that has been preached in the world is simply the instinctive jargon of confused lunatic brains trying to pass for the language of inspiration.'⁷

⁴ IV. 4. 19.

⁵ I. 3. 12.

⁶ Cf. I. 3. 10.

⁷ *The Complete Works*, Vol. II (1963), p. 390.

'Compare the great teachers of religion with the great philosophers. The philosophers scarcely influenced anybody's inner man, and yet they wrote most marvellous books. The religious teachers, on the other hand, moved countries in their lifetime. The difference was made by personality. In the philosopher it is a faint personality that influences; in the great prophets it is tremendous. In the former we touch the intellect, in the latter

we touch life. In the one case, it is simply a chemical process, putting chemical ingredients together which may gradually combine and under proper circumstances bring out a flash of light or may fail. In the other, it is like a torch that goes round quickly, lighting others.'⁸

⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 15-16.

LETTERS OF A SAINT

THE LORD MY REFUGE

Almora
27.7.1916

Dear B— Babu,

For the last few days your thoughts kept very much recurring in my mind. Hardly had I decided to write to you and here arrives your letter. I have felt great joy at this. And what a letter! It contains all essential thoughts. What if the ideas are disjointed? In regard to one matter, you are all right; and if you are right there, the fundamental matter remains sound. What all beautiful ideas have you expressed! Excellent! The association with the holy is the sovereign means of attaining God. Ah me! Is there anything to be said more on this? Verily God Himself is *Sat-cit-ānanda* (Existence-consciousness-bliss). If one associates with the holy, one actually associates with Him only. And what a fine opinion have you formed about Latu Maharaj [Swami Adbhutananda] and Sri Sri Maharaj [Swami Brahmananda]! If one can form a firm conviction about this, one can attain the greatest good. You have, moreover, said that the proof of God is God Himself. How true it is!

'You alone know Yourself through Yourself.'¹ 'Neither the hosts of gods nor the great sages know My origin.'² Why? 'For, in all respects, I am the source of the gods and the sages.'³

Who can know Him? If He, out of mercy, lets one know, then only it is possible. The Master [Sri Ramakrishna] one day had made me shed streams of tears by singing this song:

'O Kuśa and Lava, why are you so proud?

If I had not let myself get caught, could you have caught me?'

¹ स्वयमेवात्मनात्मानं वेत्थ त्वं पुरुषोत्तम । *Bhagavad-gītā*, X. 15.

² न मे विदुः सुरगणाः प्रभवं न महर्षयः । *ibid.*, X. 2

³ अहमादिहि देवानां महर्षीणां च सर्वशः । *loc. cit.*

By this I had become overwhelmed with deep feeling. That day itself he had created in me a firm conviction that, by performing *sādhana* (spiritual practice) and through one's efforts, it is not possible to attain Him. If He reveals Himself, then only is it possible to attain Him.

His nature:

'... is swifter than the mind. The *devas* (the senses) cannot, reach It.'⁴

'It is attained by Him alone whom It chooses.'⁵

I am overjoyed to see the attitude of reliance on God shining in every line of your letter. The Lord will hear your prayers; He will take you by the hand and lead you on—this is my belief. Accept my love etc.

Ever your well-wisher
SRI TURIYANANDA

⁴ मनसो जवीयो नैनहेवा आप्नुवन् पूर्वमर्षत् । *Īsā-upaniṣad*, 4.

⁵ यमेवेष वृणुते तेन लभ्यः । *Kaṭha-Upaniṣad*, I. ii. 23.

AT THE FEET OF SWAMI AKHANDANANDA (II)

BY A 'DEVOTEE'

8 March 1935

The birthday celebration of Sri Ramakrishna was over. The Devotee thought of going from Calcutta to Swami Akhandananda at Sargachi, to spend the weekend with him. So with some presents and offerings he reached Sargachi by the 8 P.M. train, to find Bābā¹ waiting for him. Very affectionately he asked, 'What have you brought for me?' The Devotee at once produced from his bag the sweets and fruits which he had brought with him. Bābā was very glad. The Devotee then distributed some sweets and rubber balls to the orphan boys of the Ashrama (monastic Centre). Then Bābā said, 'Just see, I have coloured the *coddar* (cotton wrapper) given by you and put it on today, because you were coming.'

¹ That was the name by which Swami Akhandananda was called in the Ashrama.

The Devotee sat very close to the feet of Bābā, and the latter began to speak:

Don't think I will be writing long letters full of instructions such as they (meaning Swami Vivekananda and other brother disciples) have already done. I can't. You see, I have so much to do; moreover, look at my age and then make your demands.

It is not my job to become a 'guru', but you see, when real devotees come and want Him, I can't deny the help they need. I take them to the Master and say, 'O Lord, Your devotees have come, please accept them.' I offer them to Him and He will do whatever is to be done.

Learn to love Him, call on him earnestly with the love of a lover. You have none other. Just think, He alone exists, He has become all. If you want to see Him, just pray: 'O Lord, bless me, reveal Yourself to me. You have declared that whoever will

come "here", You will bless them, You will appear before them. Now You are promise-bound.'

Certainly He will come to you. Only one thing is needed: your yearning, your earnest longing. He has not spoken of anything else, He wants nothing else. You have to call on Him with earnestness.

Pray: 'O Lord, give unto me this yearning, make me mad for You.' Let people say, so-and-so has become mad for God. People may become mad for so many things. Why not you for God? In a sense everyone is mad in this world of *māyā*. Brahman alone is Real and the world unreal.

9 March 1935

After evening *ārati* (waving of lights to the Deity in the shrine) and prayers, Bābā was sitting silently and alone in his reclining chair. With folded hands he was praying:

'Thou art Strength: give unto me strength. Thou art spiritual Power: give unto me spiritual power. . . .'²

Next he seemed to be talking to himself:

Ascertaining the real nature of Brahman? It is like the smile of a man having naturally exposed teeth. He seems to be smiling always—even when not really smiling. Brahman is always self-evident: It does not wait for anyone to ascertain It. Like the sun It is shining. Why is It not seen then? Because your eyes are blindfolded; because there is the cloud of *māyā* before you. Your mind is dirty. Wash it, cleanse it—this is *sādhana* (spiritual struggle and practice). Faith and conviction of mind will grow according to your surroundings. That is why the company of holy men (*sādhusaṅga*) is necessary. They always feel: Brahman alone is real and all else unreal.

On hearing this, the Devotee was musing

² बलमसि बलं मयि घेहि । ओजोऽसि ओजो मयि घेहि । . . .
Sukla-yajurveda-saṁhitā, XIX. 9

within, 'Who is a holy man, a real *sādhu*?' At once Bābā took up, as it were, the unuttered question and answered:

And who is a *sādhu*? He is a *sādhu* who is thinking of God always, depending on Him under all circumstances, and is without ego and selfishness. 'Not I, not I, but Thou, but Thou.' Are we doing anything? Can we do anything? Seated here (showing the heart), He is doing and getting done everything. I am speaking the truth to you: at every step of life I have felt this. Without His will and grace nobody has any power to do anything. 'O Lord, not I, not I, but Thou, but Thou.' These are the words uttered by the Master. These are like the great aphoristic dicta (*mahā-vākyas*) revealing the supreme truth. You can attain perfection by repeating them: '*Nāham, nāham; tuhu, tuhu.*' 'Not I, not I; but Thou, but Thou.'

10 March 1935

After his bath, Bābā put on a blue silken robe (*ālkhāllā*) sent by a tailor-disciple, of Calcutta, and was very happy. Further he tied his long hair with a handkerchief of the same blue silk, and looked like a Muslim fakir. At times he was uttering:

'Oh my mind, take the name of Allah
And make the Prophet your guide.
With the help of Allah you shall
Cross the river of life.'

He was smiling and telling stories of devout Muslims, and of the Islamic *sādhana* of Sri Ramakrishna. About a local mystic-poet he said:

Lalan Fakir's follower sang some mystical songs of his composition describing the body as the vehicle of the soul. I asked him, 'Where did you get these ideas? These are ours.' He retorted, 'What is "ours" and "yours" in spiritual life?' I took down many of those 'body-mystery' (*deha-tattva*) songs which are still with me.

What devotion to spiritual rules the Muslims have! The Amir of Afghanistan

was seeing the exhibition as state guest with the Governor General of India. There in the exhibition ground he sat down for *namāj* just at the stated time.

Hafiz, the Persian poet, would write his lines on broken pieces of earthen pots. Every evening he would go to light a lamp at the grave of a dear one. One day a girl made a tryst with him for the evening. Hafiz was waiting at the appointed time and place. Suddenly he remembered that he was to visit the grave of his beloved. He at once left everything and hurried to the spot. Devotion to a routine saved him.

A young man had come to the Sargachi Ashrama for initiation—a simple man from a village. During the day he had approached Bābā twice for the purpose, and now in the evening as he approached him again, the young man was mildly scolded: 'What kind of aspirant are you? First see, hear, and then select your guru.' With a smile on his lips he said, 'You are seeing me all the day taking the name of Allah; you are not yet sure whether I am a Hindu or a Mussulman. Are you ready to repeat the name of Allah? First understand that our Master believed in all religions, then think of initiation.' Later he met him alone and asked him with a smile, 'Do you believe in all these?' He was, however, initiated the next day.

Next morning in the hall, Bābā was reclining on his chair and the Devotee was seated close by. Small boys of the Ashrama orphanage were preparing their lessons at the far end of the hall. Bābā was speaking to the Devotee:

For God you must renounce lust and gold, then finer desires—desire for name and fame—finer and finer, by degrees. As renunciation has no limits, so bliss is also without any limit. Bliss comes out of renunciation. The more the renunciation, the more the bliss.

Men need an ideal—an ideal of renuncia-

tion. So He comes to show the ideal according to the need of the time and place. Renunciation is true manhood; greater than godhood. Even the gods have to depend upon the renunciation of man; see for example the laying down of the body by Dadhīci.³

The Incarnation of God is a complete and perfect ideal. As much of it as you can comprehend is yours. The expansive ocean is fathomless, but a small receptacle can hold only a little of its water. If the receptacle be lost in the ocean? Let it be so. Renunciation is essential. To get something good, you have to renounce its opposite, the bad thing; and if you renounce the good thing, you will have the bad thing.

If you have a desire for sense-enjoyment, then there can be no spiritual attainment. If you are really after spiritual life, then bid farewell to desires. Discriminate: there is no real happiness in life as it is; misery follows happiness; life after life this rise and fall are succeeding each other. No more of this. Now start on the search for unalloyed happiness. Seek that happiness which is not adulterated. People are so accustomed to adulterated food that they have forgotten the taste of real good food! Further they have lost the power to digest it. Nowadays, if someone gets adulterated food at a cheap price, he will not want pure food.

Evening *ārati* was over. After a long silence Bābā was singing to himself:

O Mother, I hide myself in Thy loving
bosom;
I gaze at Thy face and cry out, 'Mother!
Mother!' ⁴

³ Requested by Indra, King of the gods, Dadhīci, a sage, voluntarily laid down his life, so that out of his bones could be forged *vajra* (thunderbolt) and other weapons enabling Indra to kill the demon Vṛtra who had routed the gods.

⁴ *vide* Swami Nikhilananda: *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras-4, 1947), p. 343: entire song is given in translation.

Just think : Here's a little child on the lap of its mother. It looks at the mother. It is full of joy : sometimes it desires to be merged in the mother so that nobody may see it. 'Only my mother and I, and nothing else.' It looks at the mother ; goes on looking at her, and when overjoyed and unable to suppress its joy, it burbles, 'Mā, mā, mā'.

The child is with the mother, on her very lap ; there is no need to call her, but this is a needless call, out of a causeless joy.

Then in this song there are other mystifying lines, but we used to sing only those two lines for hours together at Dakshineswar. The Master would be smiling sweetly and would join us in the chorus :

O Mother, I hide myself in Thy loving bosom ;

I gaze at Thy face and cry out, 'Mother! Mother!'

Next morning seated in his room, wrapped in a rough silken *caddar*, Bābā was reciting a Sanskrit hymn with folded hands. The Devotee stood outside and heard the recitation. It was Pramadadas Mitra's 'Hymn to Sri Ramakrishna' beginning with *Viśuddha-vijñānam*....⁵

At the end of every stanza he bent and touched with his forehead his folded hands in salutation to the Master. The tone was sonorous and the pronunciation distinct, long and short vowels having their due measure. The devotee had never heard such Sanskrit recitation : so musical, so devotional.

⁵ vide *Altar Flowers* (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Pithoragarh, U.P., 1968), p. 171.

THE SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE WE NEED

SWAMI YATISWARANANDA

It is the ear of the ear, the mind of the mind, the speech of the speech, the Cosmic Power at the back of vital energy.

What none can express through speech, but by which speech is expressed, know That alone to be the Supreme Being.

What none can comprehend with the mind, but by which the mind is comprehended, know That alone to be the Supreme....

What none can breathe with the breath, but by which breath is directed, know That alone to be the Supreme Being.

—KENA-UPANISAD

Why do we need any spiritual experience? When we look deeply within, we are surprised to find that we are greatly dissatisfied with ourselves, with the world we live in, and the persons we associate with. This dissatisfaction creates conflict and tension which seem to be increasing in our contemporary world. Abnormal conflict and tension make mind and body ill.

A noted authority once said: 'More than

half the hospital beds in this country [U.S.A.] are filled with persons mentally ill.' And another: 'One out of every twenty goes to a mental hospital sooner or later through life.' And what of those who though ill have no chance of getting a hospital bed? This is a very pertinent question. Many of us who are still at large should be inside an asylum!

When Dr. Johnson, the English lexicogra-

pher, told Mrs. Porter whom he later married, 'I have no money and one of my uncles was hanged', the good lady replied that she had no more money than himself, and though she had no relatives hanged she had fifty who deserved hanging. If many of us are not bad enough to be sent to a mental hospital, we still suffer from nervous troubles and divided lives. Let us learn how to take care of ourselves before it is too late.

Concerning the causes of nervous disorders, Dr. C. G. Jung remarked: 'About a third of my cases are suffering from no clinically definable neurosis, but from the thoughtlessness and emptiness of their lives.' 'Treat yourself to a fresh start', a doctor used to tell his patients; 'your job is your disease'; or perhaps it was the lack of satisfying work. Whatever its nature, dissatisfaction with the pattern of one's outer life produces conflict and tension and consequent illness of mind and body. As soon as our lives are seen to be useless, without a goal, we feel dissatisfied and create restlessness instead of peace in others. What can we do about it?

We may have the right work but perhaps we are bringing the wrong spirit to bear upon it. In that case we should develop a new attitude toward the job. Or perhaps we are doing something that fails to use our particular talents. Then we feel frustrated, and frustration causes strange and often harmful behaviour. Perhaps we lean too much on others. Or we may imagine hostility around us and waste our energies fighting imaginary enemies. Or perhaps we isolate ourselves from others, build up an idealized image of ourselves, and live in a fool's paradise.

The worst symptom of mental illness comes when we begin to hate ourselves; and then life becomes doubly miserable. What is the remedy? The wise psychologist tells us that before we can find an ideal for which to live effectively, we must have

a deep understanding of our own nature; by changing our opinion of ourselves we can change ourselves; and this new attitude necessarily precedes the finding of a new outlet. We must learn to separate the idea of the body, with its mind and senses, from the supreme Spirit within.

Is it ever possible to change ourselves to any extent? You know the classification of human types into extraverts and introverts. The introvert is given to brooding and self-criticism, lives largely in a subjective world within his own mind. The extravert is outgoing, busies himself with the outside world of affairs; his reality is the objective world of action.

These types are not mutually exclusive. We can find them both in ourselves. In Vedānta we speak of *karma-yoga*, and of the *bhakta* and *jñānī* (devotional and intellectual) types; but these are not like watertight compartments. We must try to bring about harmony between the different tendencies. Through training we can combine and even transcend various tendencies within our natures until spiritual liberation is attained. Thus we can work with enthusiasm, integrate our energies in the service of a worthy goal.

In a book called *Release From Nervous Tension*, the author gives positive suggestions for the practice of relaxation. First, he says, learn to relax head and neck, then knees and legs, chest, arms, eyelids, and so on throughout the body. Such piecemeal release of tension, if properly practised, has certainly a beneficial effect, but our teachers tell us that through self-analysis in meditation we can learn to get control of our entire undivided self. This is a far more effective and lasting means of removing tensions than the effort to release our members one at a time.

Why should we liberate ourselves painfully limb by limb, when by proper training we can take hold of the mind first and

attain the spiritual experience that will release us all at once? Whatever theologians may say about saving a man limb by limb, real spiritual teachers have a more effective means of salvation. We should think of those we try to teach as students with great potentialities, rather than as patients. We must appeal to the whole being, the undivided self.

The type given to *karma-yoga* learns to look upon activity in the outer world as a form of worship. The inward-looking emotional type follows *bhakti-yoga*, the path of loving service of the Supreme Spirit. There is also the *rāja-yogī*, who exerts a strong will. He wants to control his senses and desires, and so move toward the supreme goal. There is again the *jñāna-yogī*, the intellectual type, who thinks that in knowledge lies the answer: he gives himself over to concentrated self-analysis. But something more than any of these alone is needed to achieve lasting spiritual power.

What is this power? A monk asked a master of Zen Buddhism: 'I understand that when a lion seizes his prey, whether a hare or an elephant, he puts forth all his powers in one concentrated effort. What is the nature of this power?'

The Master replied: 'The spirit of complete sincerity. The power of not deceiving.'

'Not deceiving' means putting forth one's whole being. This is known as 'The whole being in action'—nothing kept in reserve or expressed under a disguise, nothing going to waste. When a man lives like this, he is said to be a golden-maned lion, the symbol of virility, sincerity, wholeheartedness. That is what is needed in spiritual life: sincerity of purpose, humility, reverence. In short, *śraddhā*—faith in oneself, in the basic spiritual teachings, in supersensuous Truth. Also faith in one's capacity to realize the true self of man.

What is the true nature of man? The majority of western psychologists have given

up the idea that mind is an epiphenomenon, a by-product of the organized brain that secretes thought as the liver secretes bile. To most of them the mind is as real as the body. 'The individual', they say, 'is not a mind plus body or body plus mind, but an integrated body-mind.' There are thinkers prepared to go farther, who hold that the mind is something non-material which cannot be seen, touched, measured or weighed. It is something spiritual, if you will. A man of spirit is very real. In our thought of him we emphasize this side of his personality rather than his physique. The spirit is the vital motive power of action. His personality is the sum total of his behaviour with reference to mental factors, but one needs a body for the manifestation of the mental powers.

The Hindu view goes deeper. Human personality is a complex. Man in his essential nature is a self-conscious spiritual entity clothed both in a subtle mental body and in a gross physical body, but the *jīvātman* is different from both. The subtle body is more lasting than the physical body. Individual consciousness identified with the subtle body comes to be associated with the gross body at birth. Death is the separation of the subtle body from the gross.

Orpheus sang, 'Man is a child of earth and the starry heavens', and in the Judeo-Christian Bible we are told that man is an image of God stored for a time within the temple of the body. In Sanskrit we say: God the spirit dwells in the temple of the body. The *Bhagavad-gītā* says: 'Even as the embodied self passes in this body through the stages of childhood, youth and old age, so does it pass into another body.' 'As a person casts off worn-out clothes and puts on others that are new, so the embodied self casts off the worn-out body and enters into another that is new.'

Sri Ramakrishna, watching the passing away of his nephew, declared after the event:

'The subtle body like a sword was drawn from the scabbard of the physical self.' Sri Ramakrishna sometimes saw his own soul leaving his physical body; and devotees often saw him, even during his earthly life, when his body was elsewhere. His divine consort saw that her soul left her body and was at first reluctant to return to it. Later the subtle self passed in and out at will.

We can actually experience the separation of the self not only from the body but also from the mind. As one practises the moral and spiritual disciplines of Yoga, one comes to have a sharp awareness of the indwelling spirit as an individual soul which cannot be divided, dwelling within a specific human body. What is divided is not the *jīvātman* but the individual mind. What we think of as separateness is due to a cleavage in the mind. Moral culture and spiritual practice awaken a new sense, a form of intuition that reveals to us that we are neither the body nor the mind. We can be witnesses of our own thoughts and emotions. As the Upaniṣad has it: 'The soul expresses itself through the senses; the senses are instruments of the soul.' There is great joy in this realization that the soul can be separated from the body, that we are really not bound by the limitations of human life.

Western psychology stops half way when it leaves man as a psychological being, a complex of mind and emotions, ignoring the fact that the *jīvātman* is a luminous being, a self-conscious entity separate from the subtle and gross bodies of men or women.

When Descartes, the French philosopher, said, '*Cogito, ergo sum*', was he thinking of mind only? Śaṅkara said: 'Everyone is conscious of his own self.' No one thinks: 'I am not'; that would be absurd. No one can doubt his own existence, however far his mental delusions may separate him from his fellows and cause them to seem different from himself.

Every human soul is an eternal portion of the Supreme Spirit. Śrī Kṛṣṇa says in the *Gītā*: 'That eternal portion of Myself, the Supreme Spirit, having become a living soul in the world of life, draws to itself the senses and the mind. When the individual being obtains a body or leaves it, it is as though a wind were taking fragrance from a flower.' So long as there is ignorance, so long as there is desire, a man must pass through repeated births and deaths. This cycle comes to an end as soon as the individual soul becomes united with the Over-soul, *jīvātman* with *Paramātman*.

The goal of all the yogas is the attainment of consciousness of this unity, not intellectually but through a realization of identity. Then only can the highest spiritual experience become the reality of supreme truth. It is the ignorance inherent in all human life that identifies the soul with the ego, with the mind and senses. Even if the individual realizes that his true nature is different from his mind and body, he finds it hard to get rid of his ego. Swami Vivekananda used to say: 'Man remains hypnotized with a false idea of his ego. When the illusion is dispelled the One Self is found in everything from the wise man to the blade of grass.'

There is no use ignoring the human ego which is so earnestly fostered by our human society. As Ramakrishna quaintly put it: 'The ego is not to be got rid of easily; so let the rascal stay as the servant of God, the Supreme Spirit.'

The false idea of the ego, and consequent hypnosis, must be purified and spiritualized. In all the paths of yoga this is the paramount aim. *Karma-yoga* teaches us to offer the fruits of work to the Supreme Spirit, and tries through service to bring the individual will into tune with the Cosmic Will. In the same spirit *Rāja-yoga* invests all its disciplines with a sense of transcendence and dedication, with constant em-

phasis on strengthening the inner sublime awareness through meditation and *japa*. *Jñāna-yoga* aims through knowledge and concentration upon the *Tat tvam asi*—‘That thou art’—to maintain the awareness of the identity of the human soul and the Supreme Spirit. *Bhakti-yoga* inculcates the attitude of loving devotion and service as an instrument of God.

There is no harm in thinking of God at first as Father or Friend ; but it is only when the sense of separate personality is lost in the perception of the Absolute that we begin to know the bliss of the undivided self.

The individual is inseparable from the universal. This is the truth revealed by that higher intuition that follows spiritual purification. In all paths of yoga spiritual practices must stem from love, and the sense of unity with the Supreme Spirit leads inevitably to the realization of unity with all humanity. With the repetition of the divine name and constant remembrance of the divine spirit dwelling in the hearts of all, the devotee sweetens his life and learns to merge his ego with the divine consciousness. His individual consciousness becomes merged with the universal as the wave with the ocean. ‘In my essential nature I am Brahman. I am none other than the Su-

preme Spirit.’ This is the source of the joy that we find in every truly illumined man.

When the young Vivekananda—then called Narendranath Datta—was spending all his energy on studying to be a lawyer, he was assailed with a tremendous yearning that he did not understand. ‘I wish I could forget everything I have learned and concentrate on the service of God’, he told Ramakrishna. The Master taught him to appease his spiritual hunger. It is by a special grace of God that an individual human being is enabled to come in contact with an illumined soul as Vivekananda found the Master at the time he most needed him.

As a man comes to realize his unity with eternal existence, as the soul becomes united with the blissful spirit, it realizes this oneness with all mankind. Everyone can get at least a glimpse of the peace and love that is reflected in all hearts. Dissatisfaction with life gives place to a sense of peace that makes a heaven on earth.

The spiritual path may begin with misery but as the unity of the spirit is experienced as actual reality, we may be able to bring light to those who sit in darkness. To realize the Supreme Spirit in all our fellow human beings is the highest goal of life.

ON MAKING SPIRITUAL PROGRESS

SWAMI BUDHANANDA

FAVOURABLE ENVIRONMENT NECESSARY

For attaining success in any worthwhile undertaking, we need to work in a proper environment helpful to it. You cannot possibly attain mastery in classical music if you live on the first floor of a building on the ground floor of which there is a flourishing blacksmith's workshop, operating in shifts and using the most unmusical hammers all day long.

Sri Ramakrishna teaches :

'To attain God a man must have certain favourable conditions : the company of holy men, discrimination, and the blessings of a real teacher. Perhaps his elder brother takes the responsibility for the family ; perhaps his wife has spiritual qualities and is very virtuous ; perhaps he is not married at all or entangled in worldly life. He succeeds when conditions like these are fulfilled.'¹

If such things happen to an aspirant by a stroke of good luck, that is helpful indeed. But what does he do when he faces as it were an unsympathetic hostile world ? If he has entered the spiritual life after due deliberation, he will calmly count his blessings and not exaggerate his difficulties. With faith in himself and God he will enter the battlefield. He must also know that for the steadfast pilgrim on the path, every unfavourable situation has good chances of turning favourable, if only he is prepared to struggle to the last. To the truly devoted seeker, who has taught himself the

utter futility of questioning the wisdom of God, the value of 'hostile circumstances' will be revealed in due time. But he must have literally infinite patience. And there is good reason for having it. His goal is not one day's freak, but the realization of the eternal God for eternity. Is it either fair or practical to give way to impatience within a few years ?

The environment which counts in such a far-reaching manner in a person's spiritual life does not only include the circumstances that surround him, but also the thought-waves of his own mind. Therefore, in that environment, he is not only a passive spectator but also a maker of it. He can, if he so wishes, gradually mould even an inimical environment into a helpful one, provided he is determined to have infinite patience, ready to suffer thankfully, as long as needed.

Sri Ramakrishna teaches, 'A man cannot see God unless he gives his whole mind to Him.'² From this teaching it follows that to the extent a person is able to give his mind to God, to that extent only will he have made spiritual progress. This explains why we stand where we do.

After receiving instruction from the guru, when the aspirant tries to take forward steps from where he is, he may discover to his dismay that it is not easy to give even a fraction of his mind to God. What comes in his way is the outer-inner environment, the two aspects of which cannot

¹ M. : *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Tr. by Swami Nikhilananda, Pub. by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras-4, 1947), p. 616.

² *ibid.*, p. 379.

even be properly distinguished from each other.

In the outer environment he may discover active forces which are opposed to his spiritual aspirations. And the environment may be singularly devoid of spiritual atmosphere. In the inner environment he may discover that his own senses are more opposed to his spiritual aspirations than even the hostile outer environment.

Under these circumstances what should he do? In the first place he should never lose heart, but quietly and prayerfully set himself to spiritual work. He should sort out facts as they are and not romanticize them. If he carefully studies the opposition in the outer environment, he may find that he himself has contributed not a little to strengthen it. When he ceases to make these contributions, the opposition will begin to lose strength, and eventually it may become even helpful.

What should he do in order to bring about such a change in the environment?

The home in which he lives comes first in making the environment. It is the people to whom he is intimately related who make the home. They can be without much difficulty won over, if he follows certain methods in his thoughts and conduct :

1. Let him make no demands on his family in behalf of his spiritual aspirations. Let him assume a sacrificial and sacramental attitude to life.

2. Let him be respectful to everyone, and actively concerned for their true welfare.

3. Let him cultivate truthfulness and good speech, and not deliberately hurt anyone's feelings.

4. Let him not see the faults of others or speak ill of anyone behind his back.

5. Let his services be available to all. Let him place everybody else's interest above his own.

6. Let him every day pray for every

member's physical, mental, and spiritual welfare.

If he regulates his thought and conduct thus, the seeker will gradually see that the opposition in the family to his aspirations is waning. Eventually it may even become psychologically favourable and develop unspoken respect for his spiritual aspirations.

Still this may not cure the noisiness of the family environment. The aspirant may have no control over the radio in the house. Children may be screaming at the top of their voices when he would like to practise spiritual disciplines! He should not be jittery about this, but be with a smile thankful that every day there is not a marriage ceremony or some festival in the neighbouring house. He should also be thankful for the family's favourable attitude, and follow what Sri Ramakrishna advises in the conversation given here:

Sri Ramakrishna: 'It is extremely difficult to practise spiritual discipline and at the same time lead a householder's life. There are many handicaps: disease, grief, poverty, misunderstanding with one's wife, and disobedient, stupid, and stubborn children. I don't have to give you a list of them.

'But still there is a way out. One should pray to God, going now and then into solitude, and make efforts to realize Him.'
Neighbour: 'Must one leave home then?'

Sri Ramakrishna: 'No, not altogether. Whenever you have leisure, go into solitude for a day or two. At that time don't have any relations with the outside world and don't hold any conversation with worldly people on worldly affairs. You must live either in solitude or in the company of holy men.'

Neighbour: 'Must one always live in solitude?'

Sri Ramakrishna: 'Haven't you seen the trees on the foot-path along a street? They are fenced around as long as they are very young; otherwise cattle destroy them. But there is no longer any need of fences when their trunks grow thick

and strong. Then they won't break even if an elephant is tied to them. Just so, there will be no need for you to worry and fear if you make your mind as strong as a thick tree-trunk....'³

When a person goes into solitude to intensely practise spiritual disciplines, his first discovery may not be the nearness of God but the fact that, more than his outer environment, his inner environment is opposed to genuine spiritual work. He may find that, even when there are no outer distractions around, he cannot fix his mind on God. And in this self-encounter he may discover that his own turbulent senses continue to make a hell of a noise inside. What should he then do?

He should not be overly disturbed by the discovery, and run away with the idea that solitude has created special inner problems for him which he had not before. The fact is that, by grace of God, in solitude through self-confrontation he has discovered facts which had long existed. It was only that he had not been aware of the actual situation before.

The only way of quieting the disturbed mental condition while in solitude is to try to fix the mind on God instead of cogitating on the bad state of the mind. Now, how may we fix our mind on God? This very question was asked by 'M', the disciple who wrote the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, to the Master. He replied:

'Repeat God's name and sing His glories, and keep holy company; and now and then visit God's devotees and holy men. The mind cannot dwell on God if it is immersed day and night in worldliness, in worldly duties and responsibilities; it is most necessary to go into solitude now and then and think of God. To fix the mind on God is very difficult, in the beginning, unless one practises meditation in solitude. When a tree is young it

should be fenced all around; otherwise it may be destroyed by cattle.'⁴

Time and again in his precepts, Sri Ramakrishna laid special emphasis on spiritual practice in solitude: He taught:

'... By meditating on God in solitude the mind acquires knowledge, dispassion, and devotion. But the very same mind goes downward if it dwells in the world.'⁵

'One doesn't really need to study the different scriptures. If one has no discrimination, one doesn't achieve anything through mere scholarship, even though one studies all the six systems of philosophy. Call on God, crying to Him secretly in solitude. He will give all that you need.'⁶

When we have learnt dispassionately to examine ourselves we are likely to discover certain other obstacles in our inner environment. We may find that our ego is very strong or that we are suffering from some ingrained guilt-consciousness generated by past sins, or that our senses are too strong to permit us steadily to practise spiritual discipline. All these inner environmental problems can be solved by following some very clear and simple teachings of Sri Ramakrishna.

Ego impedes spiritual progress undoubtedly. And at the same time ego dies hard. What may we do in this situation? Sri Ramakrishna teaches:

'It is true that one or two can get rid of of the "I" through samadhi; but these cases are very rare. You may indulge in thousands of reasonings, but still the "I" comes back. You may cut the peepal-tree to the very root today, but you will notice a sprout springing up tomorrow. Therefore if the "I" must remain, let the rascal remain as the "servant I". As long as you live, you should say, "O God, Thou art the

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 5.

⁵ *ibid.*, p. 6.

⁶ *ibid.*, p. 234.

³ *ibid.*, pp. 270-1.

Master and I am Thy servant." The "I" that feels, "I am the servant of God, I am His devotee" does not injure one. Sweet things cause acidity of the stomach, no doubt, but sugar candy is an exception.⁷

Guilt or sin-consciousness may effectively impede Godward movement of the mind. In Christian theology—as distinct from Jesus' teachings—there are the doctrines of original sin and eternal damnation. Earnest aspirants belonging to that religion have no doubt made creative use of these doctrines for mastering their ego-sense, but it is doubtful whether or not these teachings have been helpful for the great majority. As distinct from these two Christian doctrines, Vedānta firmly holds the view that in place of original sin, man has original divinity, and in place of eternal damnation inevitable salvation. Wherever this message of Vedānta has been preached by competent teachers, to Christians, the open-minded and thoughtful among them have joyfully and enthusiastically responded.

Sri Ramakrishna forcefully teaches aspirants to get rid of sin-consciousness entirely. His simple method for doing this can be easily practised by every earnest seeker. He teaches:

'If a man repeats the name of God, his body, mind, and everything become pure. Why should one talk only about sin and hell, and such things? Say but once, "O Lord, I have undoubtedly done things, but I won't repeat them." And have faith in His name.'⁸

There is the practice of confession among Christians. Sincere aspirants are likely to be helped by this, provided they are resolute in eschewing the sin for which they have confessed. But when confession becomes a sop to the conscience, clearing the way to

performance of the same sin again, the whole process becomes an exercise in fatal delusion and hypocrisy. What is important is to get rid of the sinful tendency through the earnest exercise of self-purifying methods.

It may be found that even after getting rid of sin-consciousness we have not been able to bring under control the turbulent passions, which may again involve us in sinful acts, much against the decision of the good part of our mind. What do we do then?

In a Hindu scripture there is this teaching:

'Lust, anger, fear, affection, amity and friendship—those who always cherish any of these feelings towards God, assuredly attain to concentration on Him.'⁹

Beautifully expounding this idea, Sri Ramakrishna says:

'Since you cannot get rid of your passions—your lust, your anger, and so on—give them a new direction. Instead of desiring worldly pleasures, desire God. Have intercourse with Brahman. If you cannot get rid of anger, then change its direction. Assume the tamasic attitude of bhakti, and say: "What? I have repeated the hallowed name of Durga, and shall I not be liberated? How can I be a sinner any more? How can I be bound any more?" If you cannot get rid of temptation, direct it toward God. Be infatuated with God's beauty. If you cannot get rid of pride, then be proud to say that you are the servant of God, you are the child of God. Thus turn the six passions toward God.'¹⁰

The aspirant who wants to practise this method must have already attained a degree of inner purity, and inflexible sincerity of purpose. Otherwise, for well-known psychological reasons there are chances of his forging new fetters for himself.

Once in course of conversation, Sri Ramakrishna told a devotee:

'... The world is like a thorny bushy: you

⁷ *ibid.*, p. 102.

⁸ *ibid.*, p. 67.

⁹ *Srīmad Bhāgavatam*, X. 29.15.

¹⁰ *Gospel*, p. 848

have hardly freed yourself from one set of thorns before you find yourself entangled in another. Once you enter a labyrinth you find it very difficult to get out. Living in the world, a man becomes seared, as it were.'

Devotee: 'Then what is the way sir?'

Sri Ramakrishna: 'Prayer and the company of holy men. You cannot get rid of an ailment without the help of a physician. But it is not enough to be in the company of religious people only for a day. You should constantly seek it, for the disease has become chronic. . . .'

Devotee: 'What is the good of holy company?'

Sri Ramakrishna: 'It begets yearning for God. It begets love of God. Nothing whatsoever is achieved in spiritual life without yearning. By constantly living in the company of holy men, the soul becomes restless for God. . . .'

'There is another benefit from holy company. It helps one cultivate discrimination between the Real and the unreal. God alone is the Real, that is to say, the Eternal Substance, and the world is unreal, that is to say, transitory. As soon as a man finds his mind wandering away to the unreal, he should apply discrimination. . . .'¹¹

'There is another way: earnestly praying to God. God is our very own. We should say to Him: "O God, what is Thy nature? Reveal Thyself to me. Thou must show Thyself to me; for why else hast Thou created me?"'¹²

In another context Sri Ramakrishna taught how to transform the environment of a householder's life to his spiritual benefit:

'... Suppose you are a householder. It rather helps in the practice of spiritual discipline. It is like fighting from inside a fort. The Tantriks sometimes use a corpse in their religious rites. Now and then the dead body frightens them by opening its mouth. That is why they keep fried rice and grams near them, and

from time to time they throw some of the grains into the corpse's mouth. Thus pacifying the corpse, they repeat the name of the Deity without any worry. Likewise, the householder should pacify his wife and the other members of his family. He should provide them with food and other necessities. Thus he removes the obstacles to his practice of spiritual discipline.'¹³

The aspirant who has been able to renounce the world is considered to be in a better position for making spiritual progress.

But his obligation to that aspect of the world which sustains him physically and spiritually, say the monastery, does not cease. The renouncer aspiring for a progressive spiritual life must fulfil his environmental duties, before he can hope to practise high spiritual disciplines. In fact those who think lightly of these humble duties cannot make much headway in spiritual life, because behind this attitude there is only the inflated ego, which impedes all spiritual progress. Whereas those who take to the performance of these humble duties in a worshipful attitude, rise to heights of spiritual realization.

Brother Lawrence, who worked in a monastery kitchen for fifteen years, spoke of his spiritual realization in these simple words:

'The time of business does not with me differ from the time of prayer; and in the noise and clatter of my kitchen, while several persons are at the same time calling for different things, I possess God in as great tranquillity as if I were upon my knees at the blessed sacrament.'¹⁴

Those renouncers who neglect the performance of the outer duties which have devolved on them, in due course are sure to develop inner problems. In fact, the neglect

¹³ *ibid.*, p. 182.

¹⁴ *The Practice of the Presence of God* (Fleming H. Revell Co., Westwood, N. J., 1958), pp. 30-1.

¹¹ *ibid.*, pp. 21-2.

¹² *ibid.*, p. 21.

of outer duties is only one expression of existing inner problems.

There is a story in the Holy Mother's life, of a naughty little girl, which may well give some lessons for creating a spiritually helpful environment both at home and within ourselves:

"There was a child in Calcutta who gave a great deal of trouble to her family and always demanded attention. She used to visit Holy Mother with her own mother. Whenever she entered the Mother's room she clung to her. The Mother always gave her plenty of sweets to eat. Once Holy Mother was about to leave for Jayrambati and said to the little girl: "Darling, you have been visiting me a long time. Do you love me?"

"Yes, I love you very much."

"How much?"

The girl stretched her arms as wide as she could and said: "That much." The Mother asked: "Will you still love me when I am away at Jayrambati?"

"Yes, I will love you just the same. I shall not forget you."

"How shall I know it?"

"What should I do to make you know?"

"I shall be sure of your love for me if you can love everyone at home."

"All right, I will love all of them. I will not be naughty any more."

"That's very good. But how shall I know that you will love all equally, and not some more and some less?"

"What should I do to love all equally?"

"Let me tell you how to love all equally. Do not demand anything of those you love. If you make demands, some will give you more and some less. In that case you will love more those who give you more and less those who give you less. Thus your love will not be the same for all. You will not be able to love all impartially." The little girl promised to love all without demanding any return. And, indeed, it was reported that from that time her behaviour in the family was exemplary.¹⁵

There can be no doubt that any aspirant practising the precepts given by the Holy Mother to this little girl will find himself in a better world of his own making. What an earnest seeker should aim at in this congenial atmosphere is to convert his spiritual practices into a blazing fire of yearning for God. It will be no use to practise high-sounding *sādhana* before a proper inner and outer environment has been created. Sri Ramakrishna especially warns the aspirant about the futility of making religious noise before one is ready to cleanse himself and his environment.

The word 'before' in the two previous sentences may give the impression that an exclusive preparatory period has to be gone through before actual spiritual practices begin. That however is not the trend of the inner life as taught by illumined souls. All efforts towards self-purification are spiritual practices. But, as we have seen, one has to proceed step by step. No attempt should be made to take the fifth or even the second step before taking even the first one.

While discussing 'favourable environment' we need also take note of the fact that as a person grows inwardly, his concept of what is 'favourable environment' will itself change. The point will be made clear in what Swami Saradananda said in answer to a disciple's question:

Disciple: 'Formerly I was eager to give up service and devote myself wholly to spiritual practices. Now I do not feel such hankering. There is no desire for change of environment. But then I find that the mind is more and more attracted towards *japa* and meditation and the reading of the scriptures. How is it that I do not have nowadays that former longing for solitude?'

Swami: 'What of that? The scriptures say that if one can attain knowledge through spiritual practices even when he is engaged in work then one need not give up work. Have you not

¹⁵ Swami Nikhilananda: *Holy Mother* (George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., London, 1963), pp. 128-9.

heard of Dharma-Vyādha? Even the work of a butcher he did not think to be bad after he had attained knowledge. If the mind is drawn towards Him then where is the need for change of environment? When nothing is possible without His will, then what is the use of planning? It is better to depend on Him and do as He makes us do. Moreover, if you change your environment it will require an effort to get yourself adjusted to the new conditions. Therefore let the environment remain as it is. In these circumstances go on calling on Him. When, through His will, the environment will change, then accept it.¹⁶

What Sri Ramakrishna said (in another context) about the differing needs of other types of aspirants as they gradually grow in strength, may be aptly quoted here :

‘Even if one lives in the world, one must go into solitude now and then. It will be of great help to a man if he goes away from his family, lives alone, and weeps for God even for three days. Even if he thinks of God for one day in solitude, when he has the leisure, that too will do him good. People shed a whole jug of tears for wife and children. But who cries for the Lord? Now and then one must go into solitude and practise spiritual discipline to realize God. Living in the world and entangled in many of its duties, the aspirant, during the first stage of spiritual life, finds many obstacles in the path of concentration. While the trees on the footpath are young, they must be fenced around; otherwise they will be destroyed by cattle.’¹⁷

The social forces we create around our-

selves by our conduct have far-reaching favourable or unfavourable influences on our spiritual life. We can generate favourable influences only by properly discharging our duties and obligations to our family, society and fellow human beings. Right, restrained, fearless, sympathetic, charitable conduct holds the secret of the goodwill we require. ‘The quality of forbearance is of the highest importance to every man. He alone is not destroyed, who possesses this quality. In the Bengali alphabet no other letter occurs in three different forms except *śa*. The three forms—*śa*, *ṣa* and *sa* : all mean the same, viz., forbear.’¹⁸

For the aspirant who is married, his first helper or opponent in spiritual life is the wife or husband. It is highly important that they have mutual understanding and respect for each other’s aspirations. Holy Mother teaches, ‘Spiritual progress becomes easier if husband and wife agree in their views regarding spiritual practices.’¹⁹ When this accord is not there, what is to be done? The husband and wife should then mutually respect each other’s right to having a different spiritual view, and also be helpful to each other in following their different paths steadfastly. By doing so, sincerely, they will eventually realize that what mattered in spiritual life was love of God. Their difference was always on non-essentials. Then they will come to look upon themselves as two helpful co-pilgrims proceeding to the same destination.

¹⁸ *Words of the Master* (Compiled by Swami Brahmananda, Udbodhan Office, 1, Udbodhan Lane, Calcutta, 1962), p. 66.

¹⁹ *Sri Sarada Devi The Holy Mother, Her Life and Conversations* (Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras, 1949), p. 324.

¹⁶ *Spiritual Talks* (By the First Disciples of Sri Ramakrishna), (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, 1936), pp. 363-4.

¹⁷ *Gospel*, p. 68.

MEDITATION IN POETRY

DR. S. C. BHATTACHARYA

When Shelley said in his *Defence of Poetry* that 'Poetry redeems from decay the visitations of the divinity in man', he hit upon a truth more than he meant. He did not proceed to elaborate what he exactly understood by 'the visitations of divinity in man', though he wrote in the same book: 'Poetry is the record of the best and happiest moments of the happiest and best minds. It is as it were the interpenetration of a diviner nature through our own. . . .' Yet he did not explain when a 'diviner nature' interpenetrates through us. The answer is to be found in the understanding of the relation between meditation and poetry. Hence, Shelley's following lyric is devoted to the poet, who

'Will watch from dawn to gloom
The lake-reflected sun illumine
The yellow bees in the ivy-bloom,
Nor heed nor see, what things they be;
But from these create he can
Forms more real than living man,
Nurslings of immortality.'

(*Prometheus Unbound*)

And it is only through meditation that Shelley could realize that:

'The One remains, the many change and
pass;
Heaven's light for ever shines, Earth's
shadows fly;
Life, like a dome of many-coloured
glass,
Stains the white radiance of Eternity,
Until Death tramples it to fragments.'

(*Adonais*)

Or, Shelley proceeds to his sombre vision of the human race by means of meditation only:

'Methought I sate beside a public way
Thick strewn with summer dust, and a
great stream
Of people there was hurrying to and fro,
Numerous as gnats upon the evening
gleam,

All hastening onward; yet none seemed
to know
Whither he went, or whence he came, or
why
He made one of the multitude.'

(*The Triumph of Life*)

Wordsworth was very near to meditation when he defined poetry as that 'which takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity'. Mark the word 'tranquillity' which is very important in this context. The next vital word is 'contemplated' in his definition which further states that 'the emotion is contemplated till, by a species of reaction, the tranquillity disappears and an emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind'. Thus, he could give us the following famous lines:

'—that serene and blessed mood,
In which the affections gently lead us
on,—
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
And even the motion of our human blood
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul:
While with an eye made quiet by the
power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things.'

(*Lines composed a few miles above
Tintern Abbey*)

Or, others as given below:

'Nor less I deem that there are Powers
Which of themselves our minds impress;
That we can feed this mind of ours
In a wise passiveness.'

(*Expostulation and Reply*)

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the word 'meditation' was often used loosely and interchangeably with the term 'contemplation'. Thus, we find Luis de Granada writing in his *Of Prayer and Meditation*: ... both meditation and contemplation, and every other good thought

may be called a prayer'. But, as the sixteenth century progressed, the term 'meditation' gradually took on a more sharply delimited significance. By the beginning of the seventeenth century, 'meditation' was not simply diligent thinking, but thinking deliberately directed toward the development of certain specific emotions. St. Francois de Sales in his *Treatise on the Love of God* (1616) wrote: '... meditation is an attentive thought iterated, or voluntarily entertained in the mind, to excitate the will to holy affections and resolutions'.

Meditation, then, cultivates the basic levels of the spiritual life; it is not, properly speaking, a mystical activity, but a part of the duties of every man in daily life. Meditation, thus, comes to be regarded, during the present period, as an exercise essential for the ordinary conduct of the good life and almost indispensable as preparation for the achievement of the highest mystical experience. Intense, imaginative meditation brings together the senses, the emotions, and the intellectual faculties of man—brings them together in a moment of dramatic, creative experience.

According to the *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. IV, meditation or active contemplation is 'a long process of internal quietude, of abstraction from sense, and of absorption in reason', by which the human soul is attuned to the Divine; and the soul exercised thereby has, among other spiritual possessions, 'the power of seeing into eternity'. By this interior process of meditation the whole personality is raised to a higher level, for the act of contemplation sounds 'the abysmal deeps of personality', and releases mysterious spiritual forces otherwise hidden and unknown. One example of the results obtainable is Francis Thompson's creation of *The Hound of Heaven* wherein one reads:

'Halts by me that footfall:
Is my gloom, after all,

Shade of His hand, outstretched cares-
singly?

Ah, fondest, blindest, weakest,
I am He whom thou seekest.
Thou dravest love from thee, who
dravest Me.'
(*The Hound of Heaven*)

Or,

'Yea, in the night, my soul, my daughter,
Cry,—clinging Heaven by the hems;
And lo, Christ walking on the water
Not of Gennesareth, but Thames.'
(*In No Strange Land*)

Or,

'When thy seeing blindeth thee
To what thy fellow-mortals see;
When their sight to thee is sightless;
Their living, death; their light, most
lightless;
Search no more—
Pass the gates of Luthany, tread the re-
gion Elenore.'
(*The Mistress of Vision*)

According to Helen Gardner, John Donne has used the tradition of meditation in his own way; and it suits his genius as a poet far better than do the formal ways of prayer he drew upon in *La Corona* and *A Litany*. The meditation as used by Donne in his poetry, specially the *Holy Sonnets*, is a very old religious exercise. Its essence is 'an attempt to stimulate devotion by the use of imagination' and this method of meditation was systematized by St. Ignatius Loyola whose *Exercitia Spiritualia* was printed in 1548. A meditation on the Ignatian pattern, employing the 'three powers of the Soul' consists of a brief preparatory prayer, two 'preludes', a varying number of points, and a colloquy. 'Donne, with his Jesuit uncles', in the words of Helen Gardner, 'his pious mother, and his tutors who were of her faith, must have been familiar as a boy and young man with systematic meditation.' The influence of the formal meditation lies behind the *Holy Sonnets* which he also calls *Divine Meditations*, and we read:

'Oh make thy self with holy mourning
 black,
And red with blushing, as thou art with
 sin;
Or wash thee in Christ's blood, which
 hath this might
That being red, it dyes red souls to
 white.'
 (Holy Sonnets)

Or,

'One short sleep past, we wake eternally,
And death shall be no more; death,
 thou shalt die.'
 (ibid.)

Or,

'Take me to you, imprison me, for I
Except you enthrall me, never shall be
 free,
Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me.'
 (ibid.)

The same tenor prevails in George
Herbert or Henry Vaughan. From the for-
mer we get :

'With thee
Let me combine
And feel this day thy victory:
For, if I imp my wing on thine,
Affliction shall advance the flight in me.'
 (Easter Wings)

Or,

'I envy no man's nightingale or spring;
Nor let them punish me with loss of
 time,
Who plainly say, My God, My King.'
 (Jordan-I)

And from the latter we hear:

'Leave then thy foolish ranges;
For none can thee secure,
But one, who never changes,
Thy God, thy life, thy Cure.'
 (Peace)

Or,

'O for that night, where I in him
Might live invisible and dim.'
 (The Night)

Or,

'Thou art a toilsome Mole, or less
 A moving mist
But life is, what none can express,

A quickness, which my God hath kist.'
 (Quickness)

Edward Taylor, the American metaphy-
sical poet, who composed 217 poems called
Preparatory Meditations between 1682 and
1725, was not known till 1937 when his
manuscripts came to light. In the opinion
of Prof. Louis L. Martz, Taylor's medita-
tive poems, like Donne's or Herbert's,
preserved in miniature the whole process
of a meditation in Richard Baxter's mean-
ing of the term. In the fourth part of
Richard Baxter's famous work *The Saints'
Everlasting Rest* (1650) we find him making
clear every aspect of the art of meditation
as he wished his people to practise it. It
consists of three essential acts, correspond-
ing to the old divisions of the faculties or
'powers' of the soul into memory, under-
standing, and will. This meditation, he
explains, is 'set and solemn' because it is
performed 'when a Christian observing it
as a standing duty, doth resolutely practise
it in a constant course'. Taylor's *Medita-
tion 29* of the First Series is an example of
the above-mentioned form of practice and
we can read:

'But, Lord, as burnish't Sun Beams
 forth out fly
Let Angell-Shine forth in my Life out
 flame.
That I may grace thy graceful family
And not to thy Relations be a Shame.
Make me thy Graft, be thou my Golden
 Stock.
Thy Glory then I'll make my fruits and
 Crop.'
 (1:29)

Thus, Taylor himself indicates how medi-
tation and poetry converge. If we are
searching for the nature of Love, Taylor
reveals it:

'O ! what a thing is Love ? Who can
 refine
Or lineament it out ? It's strange to
 tell.
A Spark of Spirit empearled pill-like
 and fine

In't shugard pargings, crusted, and doth
 Within the heart, where thron'd, with-
 out Control
 It ruleth all the Inmates of the Soul.'
 (2:66)

When we come to Rabindranath Tagore and Sri Aurobindo, we find that meditation in their case has an oriental approach. It has been shown that in active contemplation there is a datum to contemplate. Contemplation is, thus, a relationship between the contemplating subject and the contemplated object. The application of meditation to poetry, so far discussed, was not very much different from contemplation. But meditation, in the oriental sense, is different from contemplation, because, here, meditation guides one beyond this subject-object relationship to that ultimate ground of being from which all differences emerge. 'Meditation in its full fruition is the total-self's existential understanding of the total reality.'

A similar exalted conception of meditation is to be found in the non-dualistic world-view of Vedānta, especially of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, according to which the individual self is not a self-contained, isolated entity or principle. It is a dynamic component of the Cosmic Whole. So, in the East, the essence of meditation lies in attaining that illumined self-hood or self-integration in which wisdom, love, peace and action become one. Thus, there are two aspects of meditation. First, meditation is the technique of achieving union with the eternal. Secondly, meditation is the technique of participation in life and world movement in tune with the eternal. The first may be called 'meditation in silence'. The second may be called 'meditation in action'.

A great poet usually starts with sensory-imaginative meditation. His concentration on an object like a flower or a mountain assumes the form of an unbroken flow of

sense impressions and images relating to their object. The poet, in the end, experiences an intimate oneness with it (object). Thus, a master-poet may feel that his own ego is a cipher in his poetic outpouring. 'Meditation in its mature form is indeed the formless vision of the universal truth. Such truth-vision alone can generate the true spirit of universal love.' Through such reflection one discovers the non-temporal dimension of existence in which the individual and the universal are fused into one. The eternal provides a glimpse of the one-ness of the universe. In the words of Hansulrich Ricker: 'And those who have elevated themselves above the mass begin to recognize the nature of the human heart and soul—just as a landscape is seen from the top of a mountain' (*The Secret of Meditation*). Or, in the words of Bradford Smith:

'Meditation calls upon resources we too often leave undeveloped—the power to be quiet, to empty the mind of its fantasies; to concentrate upon one thing and see into the heart of it, and through that one thing to find a mirror of the whole world and its unity, so that all becomes one, self merges with universe —“this is that”'

(*Meditation: the Inward Art*)

Hence, we find Rabindranath Tagore singing: 'Now, when the play-time is over what is this sudden sight that is come upon me? The world with eyes bent upon thy feet stands in awe with all its silent stars' (*Gitanjali*, No. 97). What the poet here means is that when he has passed the initial stages and enters into deep meditation, he realizes the oneness of the creation. Or, 'Pride can never approach to where thou walkest in the clothes of the humble among the poorest, and lowliest, and lost' (*Gitanjali* No. 10). The implication of the poem is, as has already been pointed out, 'the master-poet feels that his own ego is a cipher'. But this comes only to an ele-

vated mind through meditation of the eastern type. Finally, the poet is ever enamoured of deep meditation, to be always in touch with the divinity, and so he sings:

'Day after day, O lord of my life, shall
I stand before thee face to face.

With folded hands, O lord of all worlds,
shall I stand before thee face to face.
Under thy great sky in solitude and
silence, with humble heart shall I
stand before thee face to face.

In this laborious world of thine, tumultuous
with toil and with struggle,
among hurrying crowds shall I stand
before thee face to face.'

(*Gitanjali*, No. 76.)

When we come to Sri Aurobindo, we hear him saying: '... the day is not so far off as we imagine when the rending of the veil that obscures the vision of present Mind will be accomplished at last and the new poet will hymn his songs in the voice of the inmost spirit and truth of things; when he will achieve the beginningless, eternal, ineffable rhythms of the spirit—poetic recordations charged with the triune glories of the Beautiful, the Good and the True, but wholly free from the blemish of personality or mortality.' In other words, future poetry will be inspired by the type of meditation just discussed. As a proof, we read from his famous poem:

'Not sound, nor silence, neither world
nor void,
But the unthinkable, absolute, unalloyed

One, multitudinous, nameless, yet a
Name,
Innumerable other, yet the same.
Immeasurable ecstasy where Time
And Space have fainted in a swoon
sublime.'

(*The Meditations of Mandavya*)

Or,

'He glimpses eternity, touches the in-
finite,
He meets the gods in great and sudden
hours,
He feels the universe as his larger self,
Makes space and time his opportunity
To join the heights and depths of being
in light,
In the heart's cave speaks secretly with
God.'

(*Savitri X*)

Or,

With all the characteristics of a meditation:

'My mind is awake in a stirless trance,
Hushes my heart, a burden of delight;
Dispelled is the senses' flicker-dance,
Mute the body aureate with light.'

(*Trance*)

And

'I am drunken with the glory of the
Lord,
I am vanquished by the beauty of the
unborn;
I have looked, alive, upon the Eternal's
face.
My mind is cloven by His radiant sword,
My heart by His beatific touch is torn;
My life is a meteor-dust of His flaming
Grace.'

(*The Bliss of Brahman*)

NOTES AND COMMENTS

IN THIS NUMBER

Questions and answers are from : Swami Saradananda : *Sri Ramakrishna The Great Master*, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 1956. References : Question 1, pp. 340-1 ; Question 2, pp. 367-8 ; Question 3, p. 366 ; Question 4, p. 374.

The words quoted in 'Onward For Ever!' are from *The Complete Works*, Vol. VII (1958), pp. 96-7.

'The process of evolution', observes Dr. Radhakrishnan, 'has been at work from the inorganic to the organic, from the organic to the sentient, from the sentient to the rational. A new phase is ahead of us, a life as far above the purely rational as the rational is above the sentient.' That supra-rational phase is the intuitional where man's eternal quest finds fulfilment. But the modern man, dazzled by the breathtaking intellectual achievements, wants to dwell permanently in the evolutionary inn, namely, the intellect. The *Editorial* of the month makes an attempt to analyse the different psychological aspects of instinct, intellect, and intuition and to draw the attention of modern man to the sublime intuitional empyrean that is to be scaled.

No amount of argumentation, scripture-reading, or intellectual exploration will ever give anyone the vision of the transcendental truth. That vision, for which a true yearning is a precondition, can only be got by a systematic effort at subjugating the mind and internal nature. All the yogas, severally or in a happy synthesis, lead gradationally

to the supreme spiritual experience of perfect union with the Reality. And such an exalted experience—as also to some extent its precursor—can assuage our inner discontent and destroy the bondage of ignorance.

In 'The Spiritual Experience We Need', Swami Yatiswarananda makes a psychological approach to the theme of spiritual search and realization, as described by the ancient Hindu teachers. The Swami, who passed away in 1966, hardly needs any introduction to the readers of this Journal. The present article is the edited transcript of one of his class talks given in Philadelphia, U.S.A.

The Poets' faculties of perception of beauty, rhythm, harmony, etc. in the environing cosmos open up vistas of an unseen world. This is most apparent in the nature-poets and those of a mystical tendency. These poetic perceptions are similar to perceptions in the deep stages of meditation and ecstasy of the saints. But unless the poets make purity of conduct and utter unselfishness the cornerstone of their lives, these perceptions will remain occasional and fleeting glimpses of a higher order of reality.

In 'Meditation in Poetry', Dr. S. C. Bhattacharya, Reader in English, North Bengal University, cites many poets whose experiences are greatly similar to those of the meditatives and contemplatives. This article was originally presented as a paper to the twenty-third session of the All-India English Teachers' Conference held at Ahmedabad, India, in December 1972.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

THE COMMON PHILOSOPHY: By FORREST H. PETERSON, Published by Philosophical Library, Inc., 15 E. 40th St., N.Y., N.Y., 10016, 1972, pp. 194, Price \$ 8.50.

The title of this excellent book gives us a slightly wrong orientation. It is not 'Common' (or in the Latin sense, 'vulgar') philosophy which the author discusses in his learned brochure. He is not concerned with the philosophy of the market-place nor that of the man-in-the-street. What he means by the title is that true philosophy should become the absorbing passion of common men—in fact of all men. This is a noble but unrealizable ideal—at least in the present industrially infected, space-mad age, revelling in polluting not only the environment but also the inner core of man's nature.

The author seems to have been touched by the magic wand of ancient Indian wisdom, and so feels extremely restless. He has had a glimpse of the Divine hidden deep in man and is, perhaps subconsciously, striving after Self-realization, which he terms 'self-identification' (vide the Preface). Yet he cannot free himself from the rigid 'scientific' heritage of the West. So, he opens his discourse with a critical exposition of philosophic Naturalism (Chapters 1 and 2). From these pages one gets the impression that the author is keen on emphasizing ontology to the exclusion of epistemology. From naturalism he passes on to Existentialism (Ch. 3) in the hope that here, at last, one may get glimpses of ultimate Truth or Reality. This hope is blasted. But strangely enough the author turns to an unusual type of philosophic atomism moulded by De Chardin. One keeps on reading, to see what this new type of atomism is going to reveal. It reveals *nothing*. So then we come to 'Common Philosophy' (Ch. 5) which is an excellent critical survey of some outstanding trends in European thought, Jewish theology, and Christian faith. Thereafter the author turns in his last chapter, to 'The Uncommon'. It is certainly uncommon for a western thinker writing on western philosophy, to conclude with a confession of faith which is Vedantic—at least as near so as any western student of philosophy could get. The terms used may not sound Vedantic, but the spirit and teaching are Vedantic.

This is not a book for the *common* man, not even for the *common* student of Philosophy in the universities. It is for that *uncommon* student who, while feeling completely at home in the conceptual

framework of modern European thought, could yet think through to the Vedantic goal to which all serious philosophy should lead. Such an uncommon student will find *The Common Philosophy* to be of absorbing interest.

—PROF. P. S. NAIDU

MANU AND THIRUVALLUVAR: By K. R. R. SASTRY, Published by Sangam Publishers, 11, Sunkurama Chetty St., Madras-600001, 1971, pp. 63, Price Rs. 10/-.

The chief aim of this small book is to show that the culture of this land is the same whether we observe it in the extreme north or the extreme South. 'Vyasa and Manu who thrived in north India have been brilliantly understood and sung in sweet Tamil by sage Thiruvalluvar' (p. 60).

To substantiate this statement the author picks up nineteen *kural*s from the first part of Thiruvalluvar's *Kural* and forty from the second, and cites against them exact parallels from *Manu-smriti* and the *Mahabharata* and Kautilya's *Arthashastra*. In each case the parallelism is not only in respect of the idea but also of the structure of the sentences.

The seven constituents of the State—the king, the ministers, country, defence, wealth, arms, and alliances—mentioned in the *Arthashastra* are found in the same order in the second part of the *Kural*. '...The agreement of the three investigators—the use of four kinds of tests to ensure the loyalty of servants—these can be explained only on the hypothesis of "clear and definite knowledge" from Sanskrit sources' (p. 23).

After a sifting of evidence the author assigns *Manu-smriti* to the fifth century B.C. and the *Kural* to the first century B.C. The interval of four centuries is considered sufficient time for the thought of Manu to percolate to the deep south and take root in the minds of thinkers.

The book consists of nine brief chapters dealing with the date of Thiruvalluvar, the plan of his work, the tributes paid him by the Sangam poets, the commentaries on the work, how it compares with *Manu-smriti* and the *Mahabharata*, and its hold on the minds of foreigners.

The author has taken much pains in writing this book. Its publication is quite timely, as it effectively disproves the fantastic claim made by some Tamil enthusiasts that the *Kural* is an independent work owing nothing to Sanskrit sources.

—SRI M. K. VENKATARAMA IYER

VEDANTA-SARA-SANGRAHA (QUINTESENCE OF VEDANTA): BY ANANTENDRA-YATI, TRANSLATED BY T. M. P. MAHADEVAN, Published by Ganesh and Co., Madras-17, 1973, pp. xx+63, Price Rs. 3/-.

This small book gives the essentials of Advaita Vedanta in the form of a dialogue between a student and a teacher. To the student's questions the teacher answers in the form of short statements—the total of such questions and answers is 224. The questions are typical of those of all students who are eager to free themselves from the shackles of empirical existence. The answers though brief are to the point. There is not much of argumentation, but the answers are convincing, coming as they do from felt experience.

We must however take exception to the answers given to certain questions bearing on the concept of Maya. In statement number 78, Maya is said to be both a superimposition on Brahman and a power of Brahman. The disciple is puzzled and asks (verse 88) how the destruction of Maya (mentioned in verse 83) could take place without destruction of its possessor, viz., Brahman. The teacher replies '... By the inquiry into the Self and the not-self, and by the grace of the preceptor, if Brahman-knowledge, in its entirety, arises for someone, then maya leaves him.' This is hardly convincing, especially since, to the student's further doubt, the teacher replies 'Power is not separate from the possessor of the power ...' If Maya is the power of Brahman and there is non-difference between power and its possessor, then no amount of knowledge can deprive Brahman of Its power. Knowledge will dispel Maya only if the latter is treated as a superimposition on Brahman and not as Its own power.

In a closely reasoned introduction Dr. T. M. P. Mahadevan has given a cogent and succinct account of the contents of the book.

Towards the close of the book, forty-four stanzas from the *Vivekacudamani* of Sri Sankara are given, with English rendering. The selection is made with a view to throw additional light on the points made out in the book.

SRI M. K. VENKATARAMA IYER

BENGALI

SRI SRI MA O JAYRAMBATI: BY SWAMI PARAMESWARANANDA, Published by Swami Gouriswarananda, Sri Sri Matrimandir, Jayrambati, Bankura, West Bengal, 1972, pp. 142, Price Rs. 4/-.

A senior member of the Ramakrishna Order, the author, who lived closely with Sri Sarada Devi the Holy Mother, at Jayrambati, has presented in lucid

language anecdotes, some of them hitherto unknown, to reveal the artless simplicity, purity and piety of the Mother's character. The author had prepared the manuscript long ago but it was unfortunately lost. Nevertheless repeated requests from different quarters prompted him to re-write his reminiscences. Describing first how he himself came under the benign influence of the Holy Mother, he finally closes the volume by narrating how after the Mother's *mahasamadhi* there sprang up at Jayrambati a temple in her memory, with a monastery attached to it. Though the Holy Mother enjoyed the free and simple life among the villagers at Jayrambati, her native place, she had to shoulder the responsibility of her relatives and to look after the comforts of the many disciples and devotees who visited her there. The rare combination in her, of spiritual ministry with strenuous domestic life, has been painted through a series of anecdotes arranged systematically and chronologically.

The book may be regarded as a companion volume to the author's Bengali life and teachings of Holy Mother, and we are grateful to him for presenting it to us.

SWAMI PRABHANANDA

EK MRITYU ANANTA JIVAN (One Death, Life Eternal): BY NACHIKETA BHARADWAJ, Published by Bengal Christian Literature Centre, 65A, Mahatma Gandhi Road, Calcutta 9; 1973, pp. 200, Price Rs. 10/-.

This is an anthology of 119 select poems on Jesus Christ by as many as eighty renowned poets of the world. The selection from a galaxy of celebrities like Milton, Boccaccio, Goethe, Whitman, Emerson, Claudel, Pushkin, Pasternak, Longfellow, Eliot, Unamuno and Mistral, is arranged in a masterly way under fifteen chapters, such as Prelude, Nativity, Childhood, Youth, Imprisonment and Trial, Crucified, Cross, Death, Resurrection—so as to present systematically the life and teachings of the God-man. The last piece, 'One Salutation', by the author himself—the only entry from India—is a beautiful finishing touch. Here the poet describes the birth of Christ in millions of human hearts, which shall usher in the new Kingdom of God. The anthology aims at unfolding the different facets of the universal character of Christ's life and mission. It marks a renewed emphasis in the philosophy of man, from a grim despondency to an aggressive optimism. This message has special significance today, when young generations tend more than ever to reject the voice of the heart in favour of the dictates of the head. Never before

did the Bengali literature acquire such an inspiring collection of poems by so many great poets of other lands, particularly on Christ.

Himself a serious and sensitive poet, Nachiketa Bharadwaj has not only exhibited his proficiency in the principles of translation, but succeeded to a remarkable degree in recreating the feeling and tone of the original poems. The imagery and subject matter of the poems, mostly universal in character, have been presented in lucid language and they can easily be appreciated by readers. The poet's heart seems to beat in unison with the subject matter of each poem, and thus there results a flood of that powerful feeling in the form of measured verse. And when the translator completely merges himself in the experience of the poet, translation outstrips its usual limitations and approximates to a delightful substitute for the original. The translator has remarkably succeeded in this respect.

The anthology is a valuable contribution to the Bengali literature and we congratulate the author on his remarkable success.

SWAMI PRABHANANDA

HINDI

SWAMI VIJNANANANDA—JIVAN AUR SANDESH: BY SWAMI VISHVASHRAYANANDA, Published by The President, Ramakrishna Math, Bigyanananda Road, Allahabad, 3, 1972, pp. 6+76, Price Rs. 2/-.

This is a Hindi version of the original Bengali work, serialized in the *Udbodhan* monthly soon after the centenary of Swami Vijnanananda. Brahmachari Devendra is the translator. The book contains a brief but significant account of Swami Vijnanananda's life and work. The Swami was one of the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. It was with the whole-hearted approval of Swami Vivekananda, his brother-disciple and leader, that he took the monastic vows. Although he headed the entire Ramakrishna Order toward the end of his life, the greater part of his monastic life was spent as President, Ramakrishna Math in Allahabad, in U.P.

A biography of Swami Vijnanananda in Hindi was therefore long overdue. The publisher has done a service to the Hindi-speaking populace by preparing and presenting this translation. This is an appropriate tribute to the memory of the illustrious Saint. The translator has well preserved the original spirit of the work through his simple diction and idiomatic language. A short anthology of the Swami's religious teachings, touching upon many

baffling but very common questions, adds to the usefulness of the book. The same fluency and simplicity of style persists throughout this enlightening section also, for which the translator deserves special credit.

This compendium of the Saint's life and teachings will, we hope prove a valuable possession for Hindi-knowing spiritual aspirants.

SRI DHARMENDRA DEV

BOOKS RECEIVED

AESTHETIC: BY BENEDETTO CROCE (Tr. DOUGLAS AINSLIE), Published by D. Mehra, Rupa & Co., 15 Bankim Chatterji Street, Calcutta-12, pp. 503, Price Rs. 45/-.

LILAYANA: BY NISHIKANTA, Published by Nirmalendu S. Bagchi, 7G Meghdoot, 12 Rolland Road, Calcutta-20, 1972, pp. 80, Price Rs. 12/-.

FOUNDATIONS OF INDIAN HISTORY—Volume I: BY PROF. KAPILA CHATTERJI, Published by Vivekananda Press, Brooklands, Shillong-793003, 1973, pp. 43, Rs. 1.5.

THE VEDAPARAYANA IN SRI RAMANASRAMAM: (Translation and publication by) SRI RAMANASRAMAM, Tiruvannamalai, 1973, pp. 75, Price Rs. 1.50.

YOGA VASISHTA SARA: Published by Sri Ramanasramam, 1973, pp. 29, Price Rs. 0.75.

SRI RAMANA GITA (DIALOGUES OF RAMANA MAHARSHI): Tr. BY SRI VISWANATHA SWAMI AND PROF. K. SWAMINATHAN, Published by Sri Ramanasramam, 1973, pp. 117, Price Rs. 2/-.

BHAGAVAD GITA: TRANSLATED BY ARTHUR OSBORNE AND PROF. G. V. KULKARNI, Published by Sri Ramanasramam, 1973, pp. 127, Price Rs. 2/-.

LETTERS FROM SRI RAMANASRAMAM (Vol. I & II): BY SURI NAGAMA, Tr. by D. S. Sastri, Published by Sri Ramanasramam, (2nd Combined Edition) 1973, pp. 474, Price Rs. 10/-.

INDIA'S EMPIRE OF MIND: BY SUDHANSU B. MOOKHERJI, Published by Lakshmi Narain Agarwala, Agra, 3, 1973, pp. 167, Price Rs. 15/-.

CHILDREN'S PICTURE-STORY BOOKS: (1) PADMINI, (2) JATAKA TALES, (3) VALMIKI, (4) GURU NANAK, Published by India Book House, Bombay-26, pp. 32 each, Price Rs. 1.50 each.

DIVYAYAN (Aurobindo Birth Centenary Commemoration: Bengali & English): CHIEF EDITOR, SRI MANOMOHAN DATTA, Published by Sri Aurobindo Smaraka Grantha Prakashan Upasamiti, Midnapore, 1973, pp. approx. 305, Price Rs. 7/-.

NEWS AND REPORTS

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION ASHRAM,
CHHATTRIBARI, GAUHATI (ASSAM)

REPORT FROM APRIL 1972 TO MARCH 1973

Begun as a result of the enthusiasm for Sri Ramakrishna's Centenary, as informal *Kathamrita*-readings, the Sri Ramakrishna Seva Samity of Gauhati from 1939 grew steadily, with much effective service to evacuees during Second World War, refugees from East Pakistan from 1947, and major natural calamities. Finally in December 1968, the Samity's property and activities were legally handed over to the Ramakrishna Mission, and the Ashram began functioning. Among its present activities are the following:

Spiritual and Cultural: Daily worship and prayer in the Temple (constructed in 1971); fitting celebration of birth-anniversaries of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother, Swami Vivekananda, Buddha, Krishna, Christ, Sankaracharya, Chaitanya, as well as annual Durga Puja, Kali Puja and Saraswati Puja. Sunday classes on religious topics, Ramanama-kirtans on Ekadasi Days, as well as other classes and lectures in the Ashram and outside. The monastic head was available for interviews with earnest seekers.

Educational: An M. E. School and a Students' Home for school boys. The former receives aid from Government; average enrolment in the last three years was a little over 100. Success of its students in the M. E. Examinations in that period varied between 77 and 95 per cent. The Students' Home accommodates 20 boys; presently nine are full free and one is half free. Still many meritorious and needy applicants have to be refused for want of funds; and expenses of all types are soaring. In

addition, the Ashrama has a free Reading Room, serving the locality with books in various languages mainly on religion, philosophy, history, ethics, literature, etc.

Philanthropic: Continuing in the above-mentioned tradition the Centre responds to many natural and man-made calamities of the area. It gives help in relief works conducted by the Belur Math headquarters, as well as the affiliated centres of the region, to the extent of its limited human and material resources.

Current Needs: (1) The *Temple cum Prayer Hall* was constructed to meet the pressing need of Students' Home boys and devotees, from 1969, despite lack of funds, which was for the time covered by a generous interest-free loan of Rs. 32,948/-. Thus at least Rs. 40,000/- is urgently needed to repay this and to meet other minor needs of the Temple. Further at least Rs. 5000/- is required to maintain the Prayer Hall for regular scriptural classes and occasional discourses. (2) *Students' Home:* its two-storied R. C. Building had to be opened for full-time occupancy (the need being intense) as soon as the main structure was complete, without essential appendages. Till now, funds have not come to complete the latter, with resulting great inconvenience, as well as serious damage to the main structure. For proper completion, an estimated sum of at least Rs. 30,000/- is necessary. Further, the present dining hall is already inadequate in size—some of the students having to take meals outside—and to remodel it, with suitable kitchen arrangements will cost at least Rs. 20,000/- more. (3) *Library* is still very limited, and in need of standard books for serious readers. For its modest improvement at least Rs. 5,000/- is necessary.