

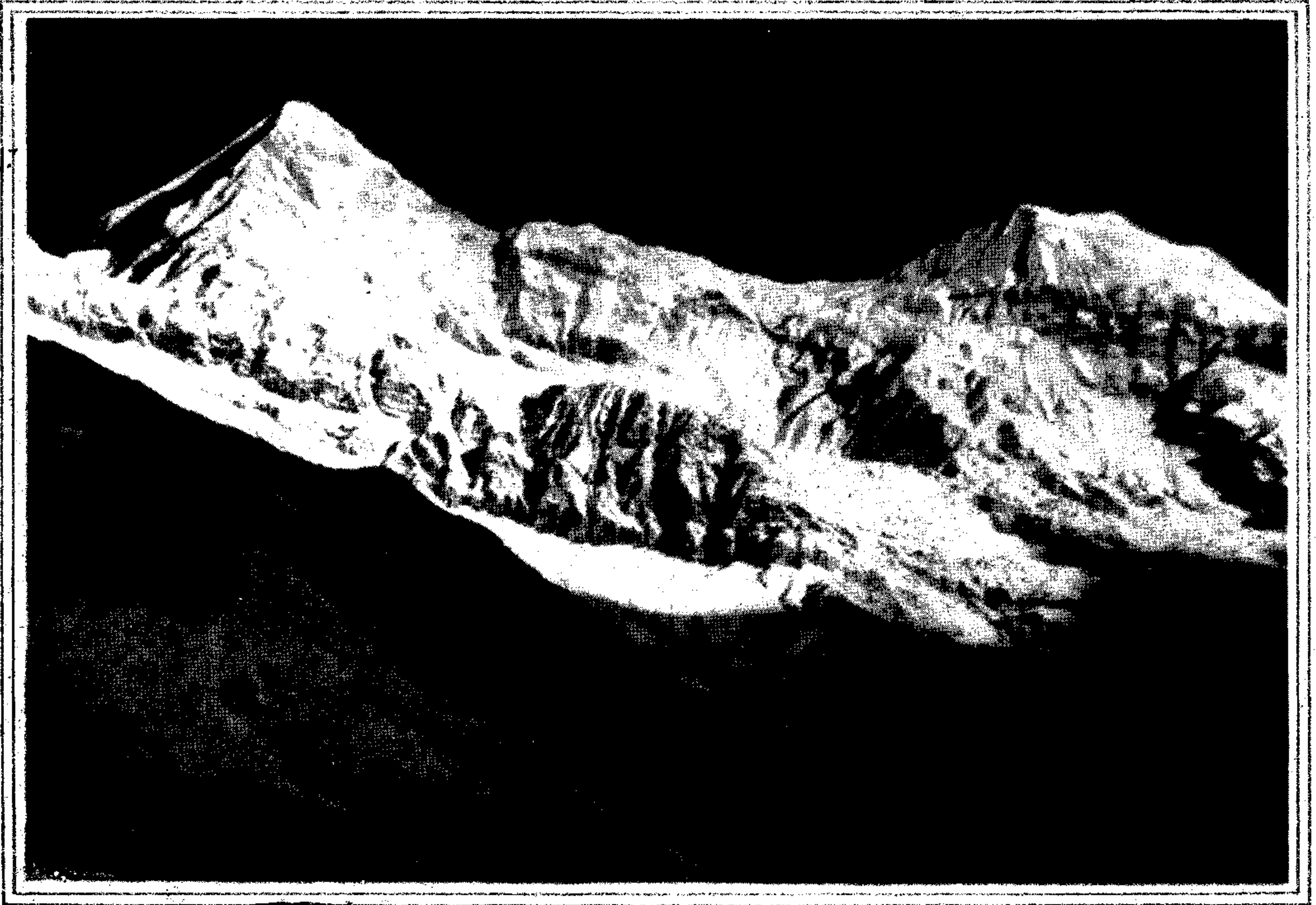
# Prabuddha Bharata

OR

## AWAKENED INDIA

VOL. LXXIX

AUGUST 1974



ADVAITA ASHRAMA, MAYAVATI  
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# Prabuddha Bharata

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AUGUST 1974

## CONTENTS

Sri Ramakrishna Reminisces .. .. .	281
Onward for Ever! . . . . .	283
Śrī Kṛṣṇa, a Spiritual Phenomenon— <i>Editorial</i>	283
Letters of a Saint .. .. .	288
On Making Spiritual Progress — <i>Swami Budhananda</i> .. .. .	290
Swami Vivekananda in Madras: 1892-93 — <i>Sri Sankari Prasad Basu</i> .. .. .	293
The Place of <i>Bhakti</i> in Advaita Vedānta — <i>Swami Smaranananda</i> .. .. .	300
Days of Manhood — <i>Erik Johns: Music by John Schlenk</i> ..	309
First Meetings with Sri Ramakrishna: Subodh Chandra Ghosh— <i>Swami Prabhananda</i> ..	313
Notes and Comments .. .. .	316
Reviews and Notices .. .. .	318
News and Reports .. .. .	319

*Cover:*

Morning Sun over Nandakhat, Central Himalayas

*Information for subscribers, contributors and  
publishers overleaf.*





# Prabuddha Bharata

VOL. LXXIX

AUGUST 1974

No. 8

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

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## SRI RAMAKRISHNA REMINISCES

'My parents knew who dwells inside this body. Father had a dream at Gaya. In that dream Raghuvir said to him, "I shall be born as your son."'

\*

'When my father walked along the lanes of the village wearing his wooden sandals, the shopkeepers would stand up out of respect and say, "There he comes!" When he bathed in the Haldarpukur, the villagers would not have the courage to get into the water. Before bathing they would inquire if he had finished his bath.

'When my father chanted the name of Raghuvir, his chest would turn crimson. This also happened to me.'

\*

'I experienced one of my first ecstasies when I was ten or eleven years old, as I was going through a meadow to the shrine of Visalakshi. What a vision! I became completely unconscious of the outer world.'

\*

'When I lived at Kamarpukur, Hriday's son, a child four or five years old, used to spend the whole day with me. He played with his toys and almost forgot everything else. But no sooner did evening come than he would say, "I want to go to my mother." I would try to cajole him in various ways and would say, "Here, I'll give you a pigeon." But he wouldn't be consoled with such things; he would weep and cry, "I want to go to my mother." He didn't enjoy playing any more. I myself wept to see his state.'

\*

'Oh, what moods I passed through! At Kamarpukur I said to Chine Sankhari and the other chums of my boyhood days, "Oh, I fall at your feet, and beg of you to utter the name of Hari." I was about to prostrate myself before them all. Thereupon Chine said, "This is the first outburst of your divine love; so you don't see any distinction between one man and another." When the

storm breaks and raises the dust, then mango and tamarind trees look the same. One cannot distinguish the one from the other.'

\*

'My sister, Hriday's mother, used to worship my feet with flowers and sandal-paste. One day I placed my foot on her head and said to her, "You will die in Benares."'

\*

'I felt extremely afflicted to think that I should have to take food from a Kaivarta.<sup>1</sup> Even many of the poor indigent people did not come to the Kali temple of Rasmani to take their food for that reason. As many people could not be procured to take the cooked food offered to the deity, cows were fed with it and the rest had to be thrown into the Ganga.'

\*

'Oh, what days of suffering I passed through! You can't imagine my agony at separation from Mother. That was only natural. Suppose there is a bag of gold in a room and a thief in the next with only a thin partition between. Can he sleep peacefully? Will he not run about and try to force the wall to get at the gold? Such was my state. I knew that the Mother, full of infinite bliss, compared with which all earthly possessions were as nothing, was there, quite close to me. How could I be satisfied with anything else? I had to seek Her. I became mad for Her.'

\*

'There was then an intolerable anguish in my heart because I could not have Her vision. Just as a man wrings a towel forcibly to squeeze out all the water from it, so I felt as if somebody caught hold of my heart and mind and was doing so with them. Greatly afflicted with the thought that I might never have Mother's vision, I was dying of despair. Agonized, I thought, there was then no use in living this life. My eyes suddenly fell upon the sword that was there in the Mother's temple. I made up my mind to put an end to my life with it that very moment. Like one mad, I ran and caught hold of it, when suddenly I had the wonderful vision of the Mother and fell down unconscious. I did not know what happened then in the external world—how that day and the next slipped away. But, in my heart of hearts, there was flowing a current of intense bliss, never experienced before, and I had the immediate knowledge of the light, that was Mother.'

[On another occasion, describing in detail this vision:] 'It was as if houses, doors, temples, and all other things vanished altogether; as if there was nothing anywhere! And what I saw was a boundless infinite conscious sea of light! However far and in whatever direction I looked, I found a continuous succession of effulgent waves coming forward, raging and storming from all sides with a great speed. Very soon they fell on me and made me sink to the unknown bottom. I panted, struggled, and fell unconscious.'

<sup>1</sup> *Kaivarta*: Fishermen, or the fisherman caste. Rani Rasmani, foundress of the Dakshineswar Temple, belonged to this caste. Sri Ramakrishna's distress at this source of his food, however, lasted for only the first two or three months of his stay at Dakshineswar.



## ONWARD FOR EVER!

*We must become thinkers. Every birth is painful. We must get out of materialism. My Mother would not let us get out of Her clutches; nevertheless we must try. This struggle is all the worship there is; all the rest is mere shadow. You are the Personal God. Just now I am worshipping you. This is the greatest prayer. Worship the whole world in that sense—by serving it. This standing on a high platform, I know, does not appear like worship. But if it is service, it is worship.*

*The infinite truth is never to be acquired. It is here all the time, undying and unborn. He, the Lord of the universe, is in every one. There is but one temple—the body. It is the only temple that ever existed. In this body, He resides, the Lord of souls and the King of kings. We do not see that, so we make stone images of Him and build temples over them. Vedanta has been in India always, but India is full of these temples.... "The fool, dwelling on the bank of the Ganga, digs a well for water!" Such are we! Living in the midst of God—we must go and make images. We project Him in the form of the image, while all the time He exists in the temple of our body. We are lunatics.... Worship everything as God—every form is His temple. All else is delusion. Always look within, never without. Such is the God that Vedanta preaches, and such is His worship.*

*Prickhauch*

## ŚRĪ KRṢṆA, A SPIRITUAL PHENOMENON

EDITORIAL

I

Literature on Śrī Kṛṣṇa's life and work is immense. It is not limited to the Sanskrit language alone. Almost all the vernaculars of India possess a great wealth of writings on Śrī Kṛṣṇa. With the bridging of cultural gaps between the East and the West, through the English conquest of India, Kṛṣṇa became a subject of study and research for western and eastern scholars alike. Thus there has come into being a vast body of Kṛṣṇa-literature in English and in some other European languages. Still the fascination of this subject is not exhausted. Strangely, too, with such an abundance of literature on Śrī Kṛṣṇa, he seems to become not more real and historical but more mythical and legendary.

Legends and myths, however, do not grow or gather in a void. They always need a strong nucleus of historical truth to orbit round and adhere to. Humanity in general has a tendency to single out for idolizing its outstanding specimens. This tendency is witnessed notably in the realm of religion. Śaṅkara, Christ, and Buddha—to mention a few prominent instances—have all been made victims of this human weakness not only for idolizing but also mythicizing. Kṛṣṇa antedates the oldest of these by at least five centuries. And he possibly reveals more shining aspects of personality than any of them. What wonder then that masses of myths and legends should have aggregated round him down these three or more millenniums of human history?

Cutting through these accretions, we can and do arrive at the nucleus of the historical Kṛṣṇa. There is also a possibility, as pointed out by scholars, that there lived more than one Kṛṣṇa, who were all telescoped and fused in later times into one mighty personality. Though Kṛṣṇa's name is mentioned in Vedic and Upaniṣadic liter-



ature,<sup>1</sup> it is in the great epic the *Mahābhārata* that we find him emerging in clear outlines and with a dominant influence. We can say without fear of contradiction that Kṛṣṇa's purposefulness pervades this epic. Scholars are agreed that the *Mahābhārata* contains nuggets of historical facts buried in masses of mythological clay. One such nugget is the historical Kṛṣṇa, the friend and guide of the Pāṇḍava brothers, the punisher of the wicked and the protector of the good, the statesman of unparalleled skill and influence, and finally, the teacher of the matchless 'Song Celestial', the *Gītā*. Later works like *Harivaṁśa* and *Viṣṇu-purāna* deal with the Kṛṣṇa-story in greater detail; and the story is given the most captivating and complete treatment by the *Bhāgavatam*.

Nevertheless, while studying phenomenal spiritual geniuses like Kṛṣṇa, we must guard against making historicity a fetish. Historical fanatics are incapable of appreciating the light and saving grace showered by these incarnations of God who come from the region of the timeless. They are so powerful that they take the historical process in their two hands and give it the right mould and course. Even men great only in thought and character influence history. That was why Thomas Carlyle said, 'History is the essence of innumerable biographies.' But incarnations of God like Śrī Kṛṣṇa are supermen each one of whom is a history-maker. They are masters of time and its processes, and history is their slave. 'Controlling my own *prakṛti* (nature),' says Kṛṣṇa in the *Gītā*, 'I come into being by my own *māyā*.' History is a child of *prakṛti*, a product of *māyā*, and so is completely under the power of God's incarnation.

In the *Bhāgavatam* we find the thrilling episode of Kṛṣṇa's subduing Kāliya, a highly venomous reptile with a hundred

heads.<sup>2</sup> Kāliya had occupied a deep pool in the river Yamunā and poisoned its waters. One day the thirsty cowherds unsuspectingly drank that water and immediately fell dead. Kṛṣṇa revived all of them by his nectar-like glances and then proceeded to expel the snake from the river. He dived into the pool from a tall tree and agitated the waters with his powerful strokes. Kāliya, enraged at this intrusion, rushed on Kṛṣṇa, held him in his powerful coils, and repeatedly bit him. But Kṛṣṇa was not affected by the poison or the crush of the coils. He freed himself easily, exhausted the snake with his elusive play, and finally danced on Kāliya's hundred hoods till he was completely submissive. The snake with his family was commanded to go and live in the ocean, with the assurance that Garuḍa, the mythical king of birds and enemy of snakes, would not attack him as Kāliya had the imprints of Kṛṣṇa's feet on his hoods.

This episode has philosophical and mystical implications. Some may take it to imply that a man who wants to realise God should control the hundred and one *nādis* or nerves (of the human nervous system) spoken of in the Upaniṣads; it may also symbolize Kṛṣṇa's putting an end to serpent-worship which was very prevalent at the time.<sup>3</sup> To us, however, it seems to allegorize the complete subjugation of the serpent of history—which is a product of time, *kāla*, and so *kāliya*—by the incarnation of God. And, again, his granting it validity—protection from harm in the episode—because it chronicles his divine deeds in the regenerating of religion, culture, and civilization.

From his birth onwards, Kṛṣṇa revealed himself as the master of events, situations, individuals and masses. He was from beginning to end conscious of his mission and

<sup>2</sup> *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, X. chs. xv, xvi

<sup>3</sup> Bhagavan Das: *Krishna* (Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, Madras, 1929) pp. 63-4

<sup>1</sup> *Rg-veda*, VIII. lxxxv. 3, 4; *Chāndogya-upaniṣad*, III. xvii. 6



was never in doubt about its fruition. He had the poise and self-assurance and the knowing smile of a master-tactician who is unerring in his calculations. Even in his boyhood Kṛṣṇa's least wish was law unto the whole community, his parents and elders not excepted. And events showed that he was invariably right. An incident that occurred at the end of the destructive, gruesome war of the *Mahābhārata* reveals Kṛṣṇa as the unattached history-maker that he was.

Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Gāndhārī, the parents of the Kauravas, were deeply grief-stricken at the death of all their one hundred sons. When the Pāṇḍava brothers with Śrī Kṛṣṇa approached them, Gāndhārī somehow checked her rage and spoke lovingly to her nephews. But then she turned to Kṛṣṇa, trembling with anger at her bereavement, and pronounced an imprecation:

'Kṛṣṇa, since the kinsmen, Kauravas and Pāṇḍavas, killing each other were neglected by you, you shall kill your own kinsmen; you also, in the thirty-sixth year from now, with your kinsmen, ministers, and sons killed, shall meet with death, wandering in the forests, unknown and helpless.'

Then Kṛṣṇa, appearing to smile a little, replied:

'You are failing still to let your soul be chastened by your sorrows. You are failing still to recognize that they have been brought on you by yourself. Why did you not throw all your weight on my side when I did all that was right to do to dissuade your son Duryodhana from his evil intent? To save yourself from further evil deeds and sorrow, I am utilizing your long-gathered force of penance now turned into rage. By my own wish you are uttering this malediction, and helping with your wrathful will, that which is the final scene in the drama planned out by myself. Yes, that scene will take place thirty-six years hence. None may destroy this body of mine against my wish. So I will bring it to a nameless end, for many reasons. None may destroy the Yādavas, my kith and kin in this life, but themselves. So they will

pass, also, as warriors should, by each other's hands, after having played their part and done their work on earth, for the further progress of the human race.'

Thus Kṛṣṇa dexterously planned, forestalled and fashioned history.

The main thesis that runs through Arnold Toynbee's multi-volume *Study of History* is that the well-being of a civilization depends upon its ability to respond successfully to its challenges, human and environmental. He repudiates any deterministic philosophy and posits the theory that the course of history is controlled and directed by psychic rather than by materialistic forces and factors. At the time of Kṛṣṇa's birth, Indian culture and civilization were facing such a challenge by materialistic and demoniacal forces. Kṛṣṇa was the response to the challenge and he met it not merely on the physical and psychical levels, but also on the spiritual level. The impact of that supremely potent response has rendered this country and its culture immortal and perennially youthful. A creature of history could not have responded in this manner, but a creator of history could. Śrī Kṛṣṇa was such a creator.

## II

Twofold is the purpose with which the timeless spirit appears in a human vesture on the stage of the space-time world. On the one hand, the incarnation meets an immediate temporal challenge, and on the other he provides an eternal inspiration for humanity to grow to its fullest stature. While the need of a society or civilization can be fulfilled periodically, the individuals' need for spiritual inspiration is perennial. The individual lives his life on different levels of body, mind, and spirit, and plays various roles in this worldly existence. And so he needs an ideal to inspire and guide him at all levels and in every role. Of all the incarnations of God Śrī Kṛṣṇa embodies the greatest number of ideals and demon-



strates their total harmony. He is an ideal child and student, ideal friend and comrade, ideal leader and follower, ideal master and servant, ideal householder and renouncer, ideal warrior and administrator. He was as great a thinker as a man of action, as great a philosopher as a mystic. As a devoted scholar-monk once wrote:

'But the greatest... is Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who according to Swami Vivekananda, is the first great teacher in the history of the world to discover and proclaim the grand truths of love for love's sake and duty for duty's sake. Born in a prison, brought up by cowherds, subjected to all kinds of tyranny by the most despotic monarchy of the day, and derided by the orthodox, Kṛṣṇa still rose to be the greatest saint, philosopher, and reformer of his age. All the greatest sages and the most immaculate saints of his time pay him divine honours; they consider him the best and most perfect among the spiritual men of the age, and with one voice acclaim him as divinity manifest on earth, looking up to him for light and guidance... In him we find the ideal householder and the ideal *sannyāsin*, the hero of a thousand battles who knew no defeat, the terror of despots, sycophants, hypocrites, sophists, and pretenders, the master statesman, the uncrowned monarch, the king-maker who had no ambition for himself. He was a friend of the poor, the weak, and the distressed, the champion of the rights of women and of the social and spiritual enfranchisement of the Śūdra and even of the untouchables, and the perfect ideal of detachment. In him, again, we find the perfect harmony of *jñāna*, *bhakti*, and *karma*—of head, heart, and hand.'<sup>4</sup>

Śrī Kṛṣṇa has been referred to by many names in the scriptures, of which 'Yogeśwara', 'the Master of yoga', is very significant. The yogas are the paths of union with the Godhead, and Kṛṣṇa, as the master-guide, has opened wide all of them to

humanity. His teachings on yoga come down to us mainly through the *Bhagavad-gītā* and the *Anu-gītā*—both forming parts of the *Mahābhārata*—and the *Uddhava-gītā* which is found in the eleventh book of the *Bhāgavatam*. Though all the three are profoundly instructive, the *Bhagavad-gītā* is the most widely read and followed. It is a rare gift to humanity from Śrī Kṛṣṇa's spiritual genius. Man has two vital and elemental forces in him: activity and love. The *Gītā*, though it teaches a harmony of all yogas, specially emphasizes the path of karma or work. The gospel of selfless work surely is a unique contribution of Kṛṣṇa to Hindu religious thought and it wonderfully supplements the contemplation-oriented influence of the Upaniṣads. Śrī Kṛṣṇa recognizes that activity is indispensable in the embodied state, and that it is also the cause of man's involvement in further worldly bondage and misery. He shows the way through work, out of work-born bondage and misery. That is, the selfless performance of one's duties, or dedicating their fruits to God. As he declares in the *Gītā*:

'By worshipping Him from whom all beings proceed and by whom the whole universe is pervaded—by worshipping Him through the performance of duty does a man attain perfection.'<sup>5</sup>

This is the gospel of work as worship, taught elaborately in the *Gītā* from start to finish.

Love, further, is a tremendous motive force. Śrī Kṛṣṇa saw its great potentiality for liberating man from all bondage by its being channelled back to God, to whom alone in fact all love belongs. We cannot imagine any human relationship, either individual or group, without love. But love given to limited personalities or centred on one's little self, soon brings bondage and heart-wrenches. On the contrary, love given to God find its fulfilment, just like the river

<sup>4</sup> *The Cultural Heritage of India* (The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Calcutta, 1953), Vol. III, p. 299

<sup>5</sup> *Gītā* XVIII. 46



reaching the sea. Kṛṣṇa in his life shows how God can enter intimately into one's life—as child, friend, parent, husband or wife. For all the Freudian miasma which is poisoning and slowly deadening the soul of humanity in many parts of the globe, Śrī Kṛṣṇa's gospel of love is the supreme life-giving remedy. This gospel is so vast and all-inclusive that even illicit love and rank hatred are not left out of its purview.<sup>6</sup>

### III

A phenomenon, according to the dictionary, is an observed or observable fact. It also means something that impresses the observer as extraordinary—a remarkable thing or person. A spiritual phenomenon is both these, and also has a time-defying freshness and objectivity about it. An avatar or incarnation of God is a spiritual phenomenon whose presence, power and influence know no waning or death. His personality, even while wearing the fleshly garb, will not be confined to any particular place or time. He can and does manifest his presence, physical or mystical, simultaneously in more places than one. For such phenomenal persons death is not synonymous with a near annihilation. For such, death is only ceasing to be perceivable to the ordinary senses. But their presence can be experienced by purified minds and senses.

To use a simile from astronomy: In this vast sidereal universe a star may come into existence, send out its light, and after some millions of years die out. But its light will continue to travel and reach observers in very distant corners of the universe. For such observers the star is real and existing. But only if they have their visual equipment unimpaired. Similar is the case with the observers of a spiritual phenomenon.

They need to have their inner 'instruments' in perfect order to perceive, hold, and commune with it. Again, a spiritual phenomenon itself assists in perfecting the instruments of perception. The observer on his part should be humble, devoted, and attuned to the phenomenon. The avatar is no doubt God's descent into man; but unless man ascends to God with the help and inspiration abundantly provided by the avatar, the latter's mission is only half accomplished.<sup>7</sup>

From such a point of view, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is not a myth; he is more than a historical reality. He is a spiritual fact, experienced by our saints and sages, capable of being experienced today and in future by men and women who are ready to pay the price. His *līlā* or divine sports have not ended. They are revealed to those eyes purified by the collyrium of Kṛṣṇa-love, in the heart which is made as holy as Brindavan. To a Caitanya and a Ramakrishna, Śrī Kṛṣṇa presents himself in his full divine glory and melts into their personalities; to a Mīrā, he becomes the spiritual spouse; to a Gopaler Ma, the divine child; to a Vilwamaṅgala he reveals fresh pranks of his. Pages of Indian hagiology sparkle with innumerable names of saints, both men and women, for whom the spiritual phenomenon of Śrī Kṛṣṇa was an ever-present fact of experience, contact and communion.

In conclusion let us remind ourselves of what Śuka, the narrator of the *Bhāgavatam*, says to Parīkṣit:

'O King, there is no reason other than His own māyā for the birth and actions of the Lord, who is the Supreme and who is the inner witness of everyone.'  
'For blessing the devotees yet to be born in the Kali-yuga (iron age), the Lord  
(Contd. on p. 289)

<sup>6</sup> *Bhāgavatam*, VII. 1. 29; X. xxix. 15

<sup>7</sup> *vide* Sri Aurobindo: *Essays on the Gita* (First Series, Pub. by Arya Publishing House, College Street, Calcutta, 1937), pp. 233-4

# LETTERS OF A SAINT

## THE LORD MY REFUGE

Almora  
24.9.1916

Dear——,

Knowing that you are doing the Lord's work, I remain free from anxiety. Why do you become so depressed? 'Whatever work I do, O Lord, all that is Your worship.'<sup>1</sup> He is in everything, He is everything—thinking thus one attains realisation. Imagination will become reality—that is how it happens. At first you have to exercise your imagination, then that itself becomes the truth.

SRI TURIYANANDA

## THE LORD MY REFUGE

Dear G——,

...On getting your letter dated the 26th October and coming to know that you are doing the work well, I felt very happy. If you can work with all your mind and heart, to the best of your capacity, you will have worked both for this world and the next. 'As is one's thought, so is one's gain'—try to keep this supreme saying of Sri Ramakrishna in mind always.

No one can understand the Lord's purpose. Even through great misfortune He creates good. Though from a superficial viewpoint this [process] would appear to be very harmful, still its purpose is surely beneficent. For He is all-good and the Ocean of compassion.

This year the angry look of nature on Bengal is very intense. Moreover, owing to drought, Bankura is facing famine. Further I am hearing that it will become necessary to start relief work in Orissa. Whatever the Lord has in mind will come to pass. If, through us all, our work is accomplished handsomely, we shall feel ourselves blessed and fulfilled.

SRI TURIYANANDA

## THE LORD MY REFUGE

Dear S——,

Received your letter. I am happy to know that you are in great peace. I wrote you the [last] letter in that way so that it would make you think. Unless a man thinks for himself, no idea whatsoever takes root in his heart. It is a matter of satisfaction that my intention has been fulfilled, that you have had to understand the implication of the letter by becoming thoughtful. I could have written that letter in a somewhat simple way, but intentionally—only to make you cultivate thoughtfulness—I made an effort; and that has done good. Now you will yourself try to find solutions of many questions before asking about them.

SRI TURIYANANDA

---

<sup>1</sup> यद्यत्कर्म करोमि तत्तदखिलं शंभो तवाराधनम् । *Siva-mānasa-pūjā-stotra*, 4, of Śrī Śankara



Dear—,

Do wholeheartedly as much of the works of service as you can ; it is not always possible to get all conveniences. Do not ever forget the Lord....

...The fact is that this body is gradually becoming wasted and shrivelled, and the going will be like this for some time yet. Is it any longer possible to be hale and hearty as in youth ? As things go according to the Lord's will, that verily is good—no regrets.

SRI TURIYANANDA

Dear—,

...Wherever you may be, keep the intellect pure and try to remain established in the Self.

Ever your well-wisher,  
SRI TURIYANANDA

### THE LORD MY REFUGE

Sasiniketana Puri  
28.7.17

Dear N—,

Yesterday I received your letter of the 23rd and have noted the news. We are extremely glad to know that at Mayavati you are keeping very well in body and mind, and that study of scriptures and spiritual practices are going on beautifully well. If there are sincerity and force of will, all conveniences follow of themselves. The Lord is the Inner Controller ; He sees within and accordingly makes all arrangements. You will see that sooner or later He will be certainly fulfilling whatever desire you prayerfully submit to Him from within. In a place like that, absorbing yourself in the thought of God and contemplating Him both within and without, make your life blessed—what other greater prayer than this can there be ? I am very pleased to note the intensity of your emotion, resolution, and faith, and I believe that the auspicious moment has dawned [for you]. May you have your cherished purpose soon fulfilled and thus become blessed—this is our sincere prayer to the Lord.

Ever your well-wisher,  
SRI TURIYANANDA

---

(Contd. from p. 287)

spread widely His glory and renown which destroy misery, sorrow, and darkness.'

'By singing, remembering, seeing, saluting, hearing, and worshipping

whom a man instantaneously shakes off all sin,—salutations again and again to Him of extremely auspicious glory.'<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> *Bhāgavatam*, IX, xxiv. 57, 61 ; II. iv. 15.

## ON MAKING SPIRITUAL PROGRESS

SWAMI BUDHANANDA

### EBB-TIDE AND FLOW-TIDE IN SPIRITUAL LIFE

There is such a thing as the flow-tide and ebb-tide in the affairs of spiritual life. It is important to know how an aspirant should function during these two different tides. When he feels exaltation, surge of spiritual moods within himself, spontaneous love for God—that is the time of the flow-tide. At this time he should take the help of the tide and forge ahead. When he feels dryness of heart and lack of devotion and enthusiasm, loss of faith in God—that is the ebb-tide. At this time he should be careful that he is not thrown back. A deeper study of this spiritual problem and its solution is necessary.

An earnest seeker who has made considerable headway and also tasted some exalted states of inner life, suddenly or at times gradually, swings back and is thrown into a pit of seemingly unqualified darkness. In Christian mysticism this state is called the 'dark night of the soul'. This state of inner darkness may take many forms—emotional, intellectual, or volitional—such as loss of the presence of God, extinction of the transcendental consciousness, acute sense of imperfection, loss of mystic feeling, intellectual impotence, or loss of will-power. In any case, being in this state is invariably extremely painful.

St. John of the Cross describes this state in these words:

'That which this anguished soul feels most deeply is the conviction that God has abandoned it, *of which it has no doubt*; that He has cast it away into darkness as an abominable thing...the

shadow of death and the pains and torments of hell are most acutely felt, and this comes from the sense of being abandoned by God, being chastised and cast out by His wrath and heavy displeasure. All this and even more the soul feels now, for a terrible apprehension has come upon it that thus it will be with it for ever. It has also the same sense of abandonment with respect to all creatures, and that it is an object of contempt to all, especially to its friends.'<sup>1</sup>

Further he says:

'This is one of the most bitter sufferings of this purgation. The soul is conscious of a profound emptiness in itself, a cruel destitution of the three kinds of goods, natural, temporal, and spiritual, which are ordained for its comfort. It sees itself in the midst of the opposite evils, miserable imperfections, dryness and emptiness of the understanding, and abandonment of the spirit in darkness.'<sup>2</sup>

Why has the sincere aspirant, truly devoted to his vocation, to go through such a pass? A devotee of God enters such a state in accordance with the will of God, so that he may be weaned away from spiritual babyhood and graduated to spiritual maturity. St. John of the Cross clearly sees God's smile and beneficent design behind all the sufferings of the dark night. He writes:

'Into this dark night souls begin to enter when God draws them forth from the state of beginners—which is the state of

<sup>1</sup> Evelyn Underhill in *Mysticism* (The World Publishing Co., Cleveland, 1967), pp. 389—90.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, p. 391.



those that meditate on the spiritual road—and begins to set them in the state of progressives—which is that of those who are already contemplatives—to the end that, after passing through it, they may arrive at the state of the perfect, which is that of the Divine union of the soul with God.’<sup>3</sup>

Until and unless the aspirant is forced by divine grace to pass in his inner life through a painful shearing process, he never sheds his subtle delusions, egocentricity, sanctimonious flabbiness, and subconscious collusion with sin—all ingrained in his past tendencies which die hard. So the infinite mercy of God descends upon him this hard and seemingly cruel way, and batters him as thoroughly as may be conducive to gaining the awareness of his own essential divinity.

Evelyn Underhill describes the process in mystical terms:

“The “mystic death” or Dark Night is therefore an aspect or incident of the transition from multiplicity to unity; of that mergence and union of the soul with the Absolute which is the whole object of the mystical evolution of man. It is the last painful break with the life of illusion, the tearing away of the self from that World of Becoming in which all its natural affections and desires are rooted, to which its intellect and senses correspond; and the thrusting of it into that World of Being where at first, weak and blinded, it can but find a wilderness, a “dark”. No transmutation without fire, say the alchemists: No cross, no crown, says the Christian. All the great experts of the spiritual life agree—whatever their creeds, their symbols, their explanations—in describing this stress, tribulation, and loneliness, as an essential part of the way from the Many to the One; bringing the self to the threshold of that completed life which is to be lived in intimate union with Reality.

It is the Entombment which precedes the Resurrection, say the Christian mystics, ever ready to describe their life-process in the language of their faith. Here as elsewhere—but nowhere else in so drastic a sense—the self must “lose to find and die to live”.<sup>4</sup>

The dark night may not appear in the life of a common aspirant with the same intensity as it usually does in the lives of the exalted mystics. Even then it becomes one of the most baffling problems of spiritual life and it is necessary for aspirants to know what they should do in such situations.

To be sure, the dark night of the soul or its lesser variants known as ‘obstacles’ to spiritual life, are products of māyā. They are in a manner of speaking, the last bites of māyā on a striving soul who is about to stride out of its clutches. So it is a concentrated attack, and many mortals do not know how to withstand it. But no one in such a situation need despair, because Śrī Kṛṣṇa very graciously taught in the *Gītā* what is to be done by an aspirant struggling under the fire-power of māyā.

The Lord said:

“Verily, this divine illusion of Mine, consisting of the guṇas, is difficult to cross over; (but) those who take refuge in Me alone, cross over this illusion.”<sup>5</sup>

In this verse we have the entire secret of tiding over the dark night of the soul: that secret is unquestioning absolute resignation to one’s Chosen Ideal. Holy Mother taught: ‘He who always thinks of his *Iṣṭa* (Chosen Ideal) whence will evil (*aniṣṭa*) come to him?’<sup>6</sup> We have here a comprehensive and broad hint. We need to learn from an illumined teacher how this is to be applied in the context of our life of inner struggles. We shall cite here one or two instances of how an illumined soul taught

<sup>4</sup> op. cit., pp. 401-2.

<sup>5</sup> VII. 14.

<sup>6</sup> Vide Swami Ishanananda: *Mātr-Sānniddhye* (Udbodhan Office, 1, Udbodhan Lane, Calcutta-3).

<sup>3</sup> St. John of the Cross: *Dark Night of the Soul* (Tr. E. Allison Peers, Image Books, Doubleday & Co., Garden City, New York, 1959), p. 37.



struggling aspirants to apply this great teaching in their lives.

One day a monk, unburdening his mind, said to Swami Sivananda (a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna and an illumined teacher):

‘Maharaj, though I have been practising meditation to the best of my ability I find hardly any joy in it. Most often I find I go through my practice as through a routine. That does not satisfy my heart nor does it give me any peace.’

Swami Sivananda said very quietly:

‘Look here, my boy, peace is not such an easy thing to attain. The way to peace is very difficult—full of thorns. “Sharp as the blade of a razor and hard to cross is the way to Self-knowledge—so the sages have described it.” These are the actual words of the illumined seers. The path is indeed extremely difficult, however easy it may seem to those who have not entered it. Great effort is required to make progress in the realm of the Spirit. But if one sincerely wants to realize God, it is certainly true that he will receive His grace. You must have read in the life of Sri Ramakrishna that even he had to go through tremendous spiritual discipline before gaining the vision of the Mother. ‘Spiritual efforts without sincere love for God are fruitless. Sincere love is what counts. The Master used to say that when the three attachments—that of a devoted wife for her husband, of a mother for her child and of a miser for his wealth—become one, then one realises God. If anyone feels the same intense longing as would result if these three attachments were united, only then does he have God-vision. Sincere love brings God-realization and in that alone is genuine peace and joy.

‘Of course, without the grace of God one cannot have such love overnight, and that is why regular practice is necessary. One should cry to God, laying bare the heart: “O Lord be merciful to me. I am an ordinary man. How can I hope to realize Thee unless Thou vouchsafest to appear before me? Have mercy on me, O Lord; have mercy on

this weak being!” Pray this way to Him every day. The more you cry to Him the more your mind will be cleansed. The Lord will reveal Himself to the pure transparent mind.

‘Pavhari Baba said to Swami Vivekananda: “Remain lying at the door of your *guru* like a dog.” Swamiji repeated this remark to us many times. As a dog never leaves his master’s home to go elsewhere, whether he is fed or not, whether his master beats him or is kind, in the same way one must be completely resigned to the Lord. He who can take refuge at His feet and stay resigned under all conditions and circumstances till the last, will indeed obtain divine grace. You have no reason to worry because you have taken refuge in him and found shelter in his Order. As the Master used to say: “The child whose hand is held by the father has no fear of falling.”’<sup>7</sup>

On another occasion in answer to a similar supplication, Swami Sivananda said with all sympathy and power of conviction:

‘May Mother bless you fully; may She remove all the disquiet from your mind. Wait steadfastly at Her door, my son; lie down at Her door. She will fulfil everything in due course. Never be dispirited. Call on God with all earnestness and pray: “Master, be kind to me. I am an ignorant person; I do not know how to pray to You. Be gracious to me. Grant me full love of and full faith in Your lotus feet; and grant me full knowledge. To whom else can I turn but you? Take pity on me, and reveal Yourself in my heart.”

‘Remain occupied with your own spiritual practices and duties. Why should you worry about what others do? Whoever struggles will surely succeed; for him is happiness in store. Thinking about God is very helpful in life. If one but takes to meditation and *japa* and prays to Him constantly, one’s mental

<sup>7</sup> For *Seekers of God* (Tr. by Swamis Vividishananda and Gambhirananda, Pub. by Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Dt. Pithoragarh, U.P., 1972), pp. 1, 2.



tendencies get the proper direction and one's senses come under control. Engage yourself in spiritual practices with all earnestness. Struggle, struggle my son; call on Him with all sincerity. His name has in it all the requisite powers in a latent form.'<sup>8</sup>

The secret of tiding over all spiritual problems is unfailing spiritual practice and constant vigilance. Sri Ramakrishna speaks of the hereditary cultivator who never gives up his work in the field whether it rains or it does not. The aspirant who seeks to reach the goal of spiritual life must be like

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, p. 243.

the hereditary cultivator. At every stage of spiritual life, the aspirant must be awake. The *Dhammapada*, the famous Buddhist scripture, says:

'A mendicant who delights in vigilance, who looks with fear on thoughtlessness, moves about like a fire consuming every bond, small or large.'<sup>9</sup>

Against the background of the above discussion we shall be in a better position to understand the uses of the obstacles to spiritual life and the methods of overcoming them.

<sup>9</sup> II. 31.

## SWAMI VIVEKANANDA IN MADRAS : 1892-93

### SOME NEW FINDINGS

SRI SANKARI PRASAD BASU

#### I

On 31 May 1893 Swami Vivekananda first started for America from Bombay. Prior to that he had travelled mostly incognito in different parts of India. What he wanted was to acquire 'power' and then he could 'burst on society like a bomb'. An early fame, he knew, would be a hindrance to the fulfilment of his mission. He changed his name frequently, and from that fact we can see the extent of his aversion to fame.

But it was not really possible for a Vivekananda to hide himself! People would surely recognize him, not necessarily by a particular name but from his dazzling presence. In subsequent years people writing their reminiscences of him in his *parivrājaka* [wandering-monk] days have inevitably given vent to feelings of awe and wonder at the brilliance emanating from the unknown Sannyasin. One such person was

no other than Lokamanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak, the eminent nationalist and distinguished scholar in oriental studies.

It can hardly be expected that contemporary newspapers would publish anything on Vivekananda who, during his wanderings, was so keen on hiding his identity. Journalism in India was not then sufficiently alert or inquisitive. Even so, we find an indirect and yet clear reference to him in a journal of those days. To be more accurate, we got it not from the journal itself but from a pamphlet—quoting the journal—belonging to Haramohan Mitra. Writing on Sri Ramakrishna in the September 1891 issue of *The Hindu Magazine* published from Calcutta, the Editor, Amritalal Ray, refers evidently to Swamiji (Vivekananda) at the end of his comments:

'He [Ramakrishna] was a man of highly developed Consciousness whose conversation bristled with truths that



would go home to the hearts of his hearers, among whom used to be some of the most intellectual men of his day, such as Babu Keshub Chunder Sen and Pratap Chunder Mazoomdar and others. Among the disciples of this mad man, who have given up every desire and hope in this world on the strength of his teachings, are some graduates and other educated men, *one of whom is known to the writer, is a person of remarkable learning in the philosophies of both the East and West.* (Italics author's)

About the writer Amritalal Ray, this much can be said that in those days he was well known in Bengal as an erudite and thoughtful writer whose journal *The Hope* earned him a good deal of reputation.

In the same pamphlet of Haramohan's we came across a bit of news about 'Sannyasin Sachchidananda' (one of Swamiji's names in the *parivrājaka* days) quoted from *The Theosophist* of Madras. This journal was the mouthpiece of the Theosophical Society. Naturally we were eager to see the news from the journal itself, particularly so because newspaper [or magazine] accounts of Swamiji during his wandering days in India were very scanty.

In October 1971 we started on an extensive research tour in India, sponsored by the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Calcutta, to collect news about Swamiji from contemporary newspapers and other sources. Fortunately we were able to obtain on this tour the much desired news item from *The Theosophist* which reported thus in its March 1893 issue.

Supplement to  
THE THEOSOPHIST  
March—1893  
Headquarters

'During the absence of the President-Founder and Mr. Edge, the monotony of routine work has been agreeably broken by several gatherings of Theosophists and friends upon various occa-

sions. The arrival of Sannyasi Sachchidananda Swami in Madras, and his subsequent visits to the Head-quarters of the T. S. has been the cause of much local interest. The Sannyasi is possessed of great versatility, a thorough knowledge of Pali, Sanskrit, English, French, and Hebrew being among his many accomplishments. He is also an M.A. of the Calcutta University. To these Nature has added a fine stalwart physique and dignified presence. He has travelled a great deal and, among other places, has visited Lhasa and other cities in Thibet. In his teaching he follows Sri Sankaracharya. But what sets him off from all others of his Holy Order, is the fact that he travels far and wide, mixing freely with the people, holding public meetings and discussions upon religious philosophy. The Sannyasi has had audiences from among the highest intellects in Madras, and has shown himself to be equally facile with arguments from Western philosophy and well versed in modern science.

'Sachchidananda expressed himself pleased with some experiments in "localization" and "impression-reading" conducted at Head-quarters....

W. R. Old'

Two factual errors occur in the above brief but fascinating report about Swamiji's personality and scholarship. Swamiji was not an M.A. but a B.A. of the Calcutta University and he did not go to Tibet. His two brother disciples, Swami Akhandananda and Swami Trigunatitananda went there.<sup>1</sup>

High praise and admiration for the Sannyasin Sachchidananda, which found expression in abundance in *The Theosophist*, shows clearly how much curiosity was roused about him among the authorities of the Theosophical Society. From the news

<sup>1</sup> Other factual errors may include: (a) Swamiji's acquaintance with Pali cannot at all be described as 'thorough'; and with French (in 1893) and Hebrew it was minimal. (b) The concluding paragraph seems to be an attempt by the reporter to get the stamp of Swamiji's approval for the spiritualistic preoccupations of Theosophy.—Ed.



quoted above it seems that he did not then meet the 'Founder-President' (i.e., Colonel Olcott). It is however known that they met some time afterwards. In his lecture *My Plan of Campaign* delivered in Madras in February 1897 (after his return from the West), Swamiji said that before starting for America he called on the leader of the Theosophical Society and wanted a letter of introduction from him, because the leader was an American and a lover of India; but Col. Olcott did not agree to give him the letter because Swamiji was not a member of the Theosophical Society.

## II

The discourses and lectures of Swamiji including the discoveries of Mrs. Marie Louise Burke, most of which we find in the current editions of *The Complete Works* [of Swami Vivekananda], are all of a period later than May 1893. Swamiji's first appearance 'on a public platform' was (as he himself said) at the Parliament of Religions doubtless; but that was not his first speech before an audience. Mrs. Burke has shown how, before appearing at the Parliament, he created enthusiasm by addressing many a privately organized meeting in America, and how the local newspapers published reports of his lectures with due prominence. *The Life of Swami Vivekananda* by his Eastern and Western Disciples further mentions at least two of his speeches delivered before he went to America. One was in his school career when on the occasion of a farewell accorded to a teacher, the boy Naren spoke so nicely for half an hour that he was highly praised by (Sir) Surendra Nath Banerjee, the great orator and political leader, who was presiding over the meeting. It is taken for granted that newspapers would not take any notice of a schoolboy's lecture; but it does seem strange that Swamiji's speech on 'My Mission to the West' delivered at the Maha-

boob College grounds in Hyderabad, 13 February 1893—in the presence of 'more than one thousand persons'—did not come out in newspapers or magazines. Nevertheless, if it did, we have not yet been able to trace it. Regarding this lecture *The Life* states, 'The Swami's command over the English language, his learning, his power of expression and his eloquence were a revelation to all.'

Even earlier—towards the end of 1892 in the Deccan Club of Poona—the Swami had given another speech, about which Lokamanya Tilak has stated in his reminiscences:

'That evening (at the Deccan Club) the late Kashinath Govind Nath made a fine speech on a philosophical subject. No one had to say anything. But the Swami rose and spoke in fluent English presenting the other aspect of the subject very lucidly. Everyone there was thus convinced of his high abilities.'

But obviously Swamiji had not considered this presentation in a limited circle to be a 'public speech'. Shortly after, when he was in Trivandrum, Prof. K. Sundarama Iyer requested him to deliver a 'public lecture'. At this 'the Swami said that he had never before spoken in public and would surely prove a lamentable failure'. The Professor then asked, if this were true how he could face the august assembly of the Parliament of Religions. The Professor had come to know from Swamiji, that the Maharaja of Mysore had requested him to join the Chicago Parliament of Religions. In reply Swamiji said that if it was the Will of the Supreme that he should be made His mouthpiece He surely would endow him with the gift and qualities needed for it. Swamiji's answer seemed then to the Professor 'decidedly evasive', but he admitted later, 'I had not so much of a practical realization of those verities as would enable me to perceive the truth underlying a statement like the one made by the Swami.'

We can take it for granted that Swamiji



was gradually becoming conscious at this time of his divine mission of 'revealing himself' on the world stage as a messenger of truth. After Trivandrum and his visit to Kanyakumari, he went to Madras; and it was there that he revealed himself, and this revelation culminated in his journey to the West. The speech at Hyderabad was delivered on a special visit to that city during his stay at Madras.

That Swamiji really revealed himself in full splendour in Madras is borne out by two reports published in contemporary journals—neither of them given in *The Life*. One is the account in *The Theosophist* quoted earlier. We were already aware of the existence of another and even more important account. While searching the files of the *Indian Social Reformer* from 1894-1902, we had found it stated in an article dated 13 July 1902 that news about Swamiji had appeared in that paper 'in late 1892' [?]. Unfortunately we could not get this item from the journal itself, as the files for 1892-3 were not available; but in the article of 13 July 1902 we found the following:

'We were among the small company which gathered at the Triplicane Literary Society ten years ago to meet Swami Vivekananda, then an obscure and unknown wanderer in Southern India. The incidents of the memorable evening will be found recorded in the pages of the *Reformer*.'

Readers will realize the importance of the said item in the *Social Reformer*. If it contains an account of Swamiji's conversation, then it will be the only original, contemporaneously published record of his views in his *parivrājaka* days, as we know of no other similar report of his ideas during this period. Yet fortunately we obtained a major portion of this news from another source. In Madura, during our research tour, we got access to the files of the *Madura Mail*, and in them we found the precious news! On 28 January 1893 the *Mail* quot-

ed extensively the views of 'A Bengali Sadhu' from the *Indian Social Reformer*.<sup>2</sup> Following is the news:

### A BENGALI SADHU ON HINDU RELIGION AND SOCIOLOGY

A young Bengalee Sanyashi of about thirty-two years of age, and a Master of Arts of the Calcutta University was last week interviewed at the Triplicane Literary Society by about a hundred educated Indians among whom was Dewan Bahadur Raghunatha Rao. A summary of what was stated by the *Sadhu* is published by the *Indian Social Reformer*, from which we make the following extracts:—

#### *The Vedic Religion*

The perfect religion is the Vedic religion. The Vedas have two parts, mandatory and optional. The mandatory injunctions are eternally binding on us. They constitute the Hindu religion. The optional ones are not so. These have been changing and been changed by Rishis to suit the times. The Brahmins at one time ate beef and married Sudras. [A] calf was killed to please a guest. Sudras cooked for Brahmins. The food cooked by a male Brahmin was regarded as polluted food. But we have changed our habits to suit the present *yug[a]*. Although our caste rules have so far changed from the time of Manu, still if he should come to us now, he would still call us Hindus. Caste is a social organization and not a religious one. It was the outcome of the natural evolution of our society. It was found necessary and convenient at one time. It has served its purpose. But for it, we would long ago have become Mahomedans. It is useless now. It may be dispensed with.

<sup>2</sup> Though this extract does not mention Vivekananda by name, and again refers to his non-existent 'M.A.', while suggesting an age 2 years beyond the actual—still there is indubitable internal evidence that the Bengali Sadhu was Swamiji. Further, the date coincides accurately with his stay in Madras and the back-reference by the same Journal ten years later is strong confirmation.—*Ed.*



Hindu religion no longer requires the prop of the caste system. A Brahmin may inter-dine with anybody, even a Pariah. He won't thereby lose his spirituality. A degree of spirituality that is destroyed by the touch of a Pariah, is a very poor quantity. It is almost at the zero point. Spirituality of a Brahmin must overflow, blaze and burn [so] as to warm into spiritual life not one Pariah but thousands of Pariahs who may touch him. The old Rishis observed no distinctions or restrictions as regards food. A man who feels that his own spirituality is so flimsy that the sight of a low caste man annihilates it need not approach a Pariah and must keep his precious little to himself.

### *The Hindu Ideal of Life*

The Hindu Ideal of life is 'Nivarti' [Nivritti]<sup>3</sup>. Nivarti means subjugation and conquest of evil passions, of *Tamasa* nature of lust, revenge and avarice. It does not mean conquest of all desire. It means only the annihilation of gross desires. Every man is bound to love and sympathize with his fellow-creatures. [A] Sanyasi is one who has vanquished all his selfish passions and vowed to devote his life for the good of others. He loves all. 'Pravirti' [Pravritti] means love of God and all his creatures. Sanyasis ought to be fed. They are not like the Christian bishops and Archbishops who must be paid to do their work with thousands of pounds per annum; all whose earnings are spent upon their own luxury—their wife and children. [The] Sanyasi wants only a morsel of food, and then he places all his knowledge and services at the disposal of the public. He is a wandering missionary. Individuals and society have to work themselves up from 'brute through man, into divine'. Even the lowest of the Hindus, the Pariah, has less of the brute

in him than a Briton in a similar social status. This is the result of an old and excellent religious civilization. This evolution to a higher spiritual state is possible only through discipline and education.

### *The Sradh<sup>4</sup> Ceremony*

Every institution, caste, early marriage etc., that stands in the way of education, ought at once to be knocked on the head. Even 'Sradh' may be given up, if the performance of it involves waste of time which might be better used for self-education. But 'Sradh' should not be given up. The meaning of the Mantras is very edifying. The Mantras depict the suffering and care undergone by our parents on our behalf. The performance of it is an honour paid to the memory of the sum total of the spirit of our forefathers, whose virtues we inherit. Sradh has nothing to do with one's salvation. Yet no Hindu who loves his religion, his country and his past great men should give up Sradh. The outward formalities and the feeding of the Brahmins are not essential. We have no Brahmins in these days worthy of being fed on Sradh days. The Brahmins fed ought not to be professional eaters, but Brahmins who feed disciples *gratis*, and teach them true Vedic doctrines. In these days, Sradh may be performed mentally.

### *Education of Women*

The jealous guardianship of our women shows that we Hindus have declined in our national virtues, that we reverted to the 'brutal state.' Every man must so discipline his mind as to bring himself to regard all women as his sisters or mothers. Women must have freedom to read, to receive as good an education as men. Individual development is impossible with ignorance and slavery.

### *Emancipation of the Hindus*

Through the slavery of a thousand years, Hindus have at present degenerated. They have forgotten their own self-respect. Every English boy is taught to feel his importance, he thinks that he is

<sup>3</sup> *Nivritti* and *pravritti* are key-concepts in Hindu philosophy, and Swami Vivekananda has frequently interpreted and elaborated on them (e.g., see his *Karma-yoga*, Ch. VI) in their traditional connotations. But the interpretation of the terms here ascribed to him by the *Indian Social Reformer's* reporter does not accord with what Swamiji has said elsewhere.—Ed.

<sup>4</sup> *Sradh* (or *srāddha*): A religious ceremony in which food and drink are offered to deceased relatives or ancestors.—Ed.



a member of a great race, the conquerors of the Earth. The Hindu feels from his boyhood just the reverse that he is born to slave. We can't become a great nation unless we love our religion and try to respect ourselves, and respect our country men and society. The Hindus of modern times are generally hypocrites. They must rise, and combine the faith in the true Vedic religion, with a knowledge of the political and scientific truths of the Europeans. The evils of caste seem to be more prevalent in the South than in Bengal. In Bengal a Brahmin uses the water touched by the Sudras, but here the Sudra is kept at a great distance by the Brahmin. There are no Brahmins in [the] Kali Yug[a]. The Pariahs, our fellow-beings, ought to be educated by the higher castes, must [.....] truths of Hindu religion and be [.....] Brahmins. The first duty of a Brahmin is to love all. There must first be an amaigamation of the Brahmins, then of all the Dwijas,<sup>5</sup> and then of the Dwijas and Sudras.

The importance of the above report is self-evident. Those who want to make a systematic study of Swamiji's social ideas will find many interesting points therein. We do not want here to proceed on that line but only to put forward some explanatory notes with regard to the above report.

### III

The Triplicane Literary Society, in which Swamiji spoke, was in those days a noted cultural organization, and we came upon its name frequently when going through contemporary Madras newspapers. In February 1897 when Swamiji came back to Madras from the West, this Society accorded him an address of welcome in which it was mentioned with satisfaction 'that prior to Swami Vivekananda's going to Europe and America, it was in the hall of that

Society he was invited to make the acquaintance of the public of Madras who recognised on that occasion the worth and greatness of the Swami'. (*Madras Times*, Feb. 11, 1897).

In *The Life* we find that Swamiji visited the Triplicane Literary Society several times. That may be true, but the news quoted in the *Madras Times* mentions his one visit only.

Dewan Bahadur Raghunath Rao, mentioned as among those present in the assembly of January 1893, was an eminent man of Madras who, it may be said, was a man of nation-wide celebrity. He was the author of many treatises including *Indian Penal Code, Hindu Law and Custom, Land Revenue System* etc., and was connected with progressive social movements. He lent his strong support to the *Age of Consent Bill* of 1889-90, when even a section of social reformers were hesitant and the conservatives were united against it. The readers of Vivekananda's *Life* are acquainted with Swamiji's strong feelings for the Bill and intense aversion towards those who opposed it. Dewan Bahadur Raghunath Rao was the General Secretary of the Hindu National Social Conference, and retained his position for many years.

About the journal the *Indian Social Reformer* it may be said that it was the mouth-piece of the social reform movement in Madras and Bombay. This weekly paper was started in 1890 'by the young men at the staff of the *Hindu*, whose sympathies for the Hindu reform were troubling the business interests of the *Hindu*'. Its life and soul was Kamakshi Natarajan, one of the most powerful journalist-writers of India.

The young social reformers were very much attracted by the intellect and progressive ideas of Swamiji even when he was an unknown wanderer. Hence, when Swamiji became famous and returned from the West

<sup>5</sup> Lit., 'twice-born'—applicable to the three higher castes in Hindu society by virtue of the investiture with the sacred thread, signifying spiritual second birth.—Ed.



to Madras, the reformers here offered felicitations to him—which, we may add, the reform organizations of Bengal could not think of doing. Steeped in sectarian bigotry they thought that the influence of Vivekananda might prove harmful to their interest. Further, it was surprising for any social reform society to accord a welcome to a Hindu monk; and for this they offered this explanation:

'As for the M.H.S.R. [Madras Hindu Social Reform] Association itself, there was no new departure from any of its principles in having joined in the welcome accorded to the *sanyasin*. The Association, we believe, is no enemy of Swamis. If no other Swami has yet received a similar token of honour and appreciation from the Association, it is because none other is known to have preached the same advanced and catholic views and set the same bold example as the Swami Vivekananda. Would that all our swamis had said as Vivekananda said to the interviewer of the *Madras Mail*, 'We do stand in need of Social Reform'.

'It is really a very promising sign that a Hindu *sanyasin* should, by his teachings and example enlist the appreciation of modern social reform associations.' (*Indian Social Reformer*, Feb. 14, 1897)

An extract of the 'appreciation' from the address of welcome may also be quoted:

'Working as the Association does for the ends represented by the social side of the Hindu revivalistic movement which you [Swami Vivekananda] so worthily lead, we heartily and thankfully appreciate the clearness and candour with which you have emphasised the necessity of removing whatever stands in the way of our nation regaining in [its?] virility of thought and freedom of action, and sincerely admire your own personal example which so faithfully and boldly illustrates your noble teachings.'

From the views of Swamiji published in the *Indian Social Reformer*, quoted earlier, we can very well understand why the social reformers took him as one of their own. Swamiji's utterances about Hindu society

were revolutionary in character, particularly as they were spoken in extremely conservative Madras and by a Hindu *sannyāsin*!

And yet let not anybody think that the Madras social reformers showered unmixed eulogies on him. When Swamiji in 1897 in Madras scolded them, they in their turn did not spare him. A large collection of their counter-attacks and criticisms is to be found in our book.<sup>6</sup>

Not only in 1897, but also in 1892-3, the 'unknown Bengali Sadhu' had pointed out many defects in the method followed by the social reformers. *The Life* says:

'The Swami held several conversations at the Literary Society of Triplicane...; many of its young members belonged to the social reform movement in Madras. But he saw that they were working from the wrong point of view, that of sweeping condemnation. In his repeated talks the Swami emphatically urged upon them the necessity of critically analysing foreign ideals... He said that they should invoke the aid of all that was great and glorious in the past, otherwise the very foundations of the national structure would be undermined. He told them that he was not an enemy of social reform; on the contrary he yearned for reforms, but they must come from within..., and must be constructive and not destructive.'

In spite of the fact that the reformers in Madras had a very high opinion of Swamiji, it was not possible for them to stomach all that he said about them in 1897, and they set up a hue and cry in protest. But at the same time Vivekananda brought about a deep-seated transformation in their angle of vision. This has been nicely dealt with by Charles H. Heimsath in his treatise on *Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reform* (1964), giving necessary facts and figures. Interested readers will do well to go through the book.

<sup>6</sup> S. P. Basu and Sunil Bihari Ghosh: *Vivekananda in Indian Newspapers, 1893-1902* (Basu, Bhattacharya & Co., Pvt. Ltd., 80/7 Grey St., Calcutta-6, 1969).



# THE PLACE OF *BHAKTI* IN ADVAITA VEDĀNTA

SWAMI SMARANANANDA

'Before the dawn of knowledge, duality is the cause of delusion; but, when true knowledge is awakened through intuition, duality is imagined for the sake of *bhakti* (devotion to God). This is even more beautiful than non-dualism.'<sup>1</sup>

—*Madhusūdana Sarasvatī*

## INTRODUCTION

There is a popular conception or rather misconception that Advaita Vedānta—the non-dualistic school of Vedānta—is opposed to *bhakti* or devotion, as a path to spiritual attainment. Nothing could be further from the truth, for Advaita is not essentially opposed to any spiritual path. As Gauḍapāda says:

'The dualists, firm believers in their own methods and conclusions, are at loggerheads with each other. But this (non-dual) view finds no conflict with them.'<sup>2</sup>

Many of the staunchest advaitins (followers of Advaita) including Śrī Śaṅkara, the greatest of them all, were great devotees too. They could follow the devotional path, because they could see no contradiction between it and the advaitic conclusion that 'Brahman alone is real, the world is unreal, and the jīva is no other than Brahman.'

Many are the ways leading to this supreme realization. Among them the path of devotion has been recognized by all religions, including the Advaita Vedānta, as a very efficacious method of achieving this goal.

The path of *bhakti* recognizes one of the essential traits of the human mind: that of attraction towards outer objects. Since his very birth man is attracted or repelled by things. The pleasant and the beautiful attract him. This attraction has its basis in an inner craving to fill up a void within, not

always felt clearly. We feel we can be perfectly happy if we attain this or that. This desire to attain is often concerned with purely material things. But then the natural attraction to other human beings is even stronger—that to wife, husband, children, friends, and so on.

The path of devotion tries to sublimate this attraction and give it a turn towards something 'impersonal', namely, God: yet not in an impersonal way, but by making the mind concentrate on some image, some personal God, who is endowed with all the great qualities the human mind can conceive of. For attraction to something impersonal is indeed very difficult. How can one love somebody or something which one cannot perceive through the senses? So the need for an image is felt. Even religions which are opposed to the medium of images, unconsciously employ some imagery or other in the prayers offered by their adherents.

Advaita Vedānta accepts this need of a medium through which the mind is to be coaxed gradually to withdraw within itself and perceive that divine Effulgence within and merge into It. Thus the path of devotion is not opposed to the path of knowledge, but complementary to it. *Bhakti* leads to *jñāna* and *jñāna* leads to *bhakti*; and ultimately the difference between *jñāna* and *bhakti* is eradicated, for in that ultimate realization, that which is Truth is Knowledge, and that which is Knowledge is Bliss Absolute—the goal of *bhakti*.

We shall here present a short study of how this sweet fusion of knowledge and

<sup>1</sup> द्वैतं मोहाय बोधात्प्राक् जाते बोधेमनीषया ।

भक्त्यथ कल्पितं द्वैतमद्वैतादपि सुन्दरम् ॥

<sup>2</sup> *Māṇḍūkya-kārikā*, III. 17



devotion has steadily gained ground in the history of Advaita Vedānta.

#### BHAKTI IN THE VEDAS AND UPANISADS

The vedic Aryans prayed to various deities such as Indra, Varuna, Vāyu, Agni, and so on, for fulfilling various desires or to be rid of various evils. These prayers later evolved into systematic offerings and sacrifices to propitiate these deities. But these were purely *sakāma* (desire-motivated) sacrifices. They were a far cry from the idea of supreme love of God, asking nothing, seeking nothing, as it was developed in the *bhāgavata* school and other dualistic traditions of later times. Nevertheless, we occasionally come across vedic hymns which sing the praises of God, asking for nothing in return. For instance:

‘Sing, sing your songs, Priyamedhas, sing! Let the children sing also. Sing of Him, who is a strong castle. Now let the *gargara* sound, let the *godha* send its tune, let the string send its notes around. Let our hymn rise to God.’<sup>3</sup>

‘Thoughts and feelings stir in my heart, love-yearnings proceed; they wing out to all directions. Besides them there is no other comforter. My longings are fixed only in the gods.’<sup>4</sup>

These sacrifices and hymns were soon replaced by various kinds of meditations on Saguna-brahman (Brahman with attributes), by which the meditator tried to attain identity with the object meditated upon. The *sūkta* literature in the Vedas, and also the Upaniṣads, embody the realizations of the ṛṣis. They are highly metaphysical and spiritual. In the principal Upaniṣads we find hardly any mention of the word *bhakti*, except in the *Svetāśvatara*:

‘He who has supreme devotion to God and an equal degree of devotion to the teacher—for him these truths shine forth

[as inner experiences]—then, indeed, they will shine forth.’<sup>5</sup>

In the *Mundaka-upaniṣad* we find the comparison of the *jīvātman* (individual soul) and the *Paramātman* (the Supreme Self) to two birds, one eating bitter and sweet fruits alternately, and the other eating nothing, immersed in its own glory. The bird on the lower branch constantly looks at the other bird and yearns to be freed from sorrow like It.<sup>6</sup> The purport is that *jīva* can attain identity with the Supreme Self by constant meditation on It. It should be remembered that *bhakti*, in its higher reaches, is more a matter of continuous remembrance of the Beloved than of various kinds of ceremonials. The *Bṛhadāranyaka-upaniṣad* explains this as the attraction of the *Ātman* to Itself, for It is all-pervading: ‘It is not for the sake of the husband, my dear, that he is loved, but for the sake of the Self that he is loved.’ And so on.<sup>7</sup>

Thus, though we find the sprout of *bhakti* in the Vedas and Upaniṣads, it has had to grow a great deal through the centuries to manifest its full glory as love of God for His own sake. Of course, later Upaniṣads, classified as Vaisnava, Śākta, or Śaiva Upaniṣads, contain much about *bhakti*, but it is doubtful whether these belong to the period of the major Upaniṣads.

#### BHAKTI IN THE ITIHASA-PURANAS

During the *paurāṇic* period (the age of *itihāsa-purāṇa* or history-cum-mythology), the idea of *bhakti* developed to fruition. It is not our intention here to trace its history, as it would fill volumes. We shall only delineate briefly how the idea of *bhakti*

<sup>5</sup> यस्य देवे परा भक्तिर्यथा देवे तथा गुरौ ।

तस्यैते कथिता ह्यर्थाः प्रकाशन्ते महात्मनः ॥

*Svetāśvatara-upaniṣad*, VI. 23

<sup>3</sup> *Rg-veda*, VIII. lxix. 8-9

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, X. lxiv. 2

<sup>6</sup> III. i. 1-2

<sup>7</sup> II. iv. 5



came to be closely harmonized with that of *jñāna* during this period.

The *paurāṇic* period brought in its wake the concept of the Avatāra: God (Īśvara) manifesting Himself in human form. Śrī Rāma and Śrī Kṛṣṇa were considered to be the supreme examples of the human manifestation of God. Whether this idea appeared in Hinduism, or rather Vedāntism, in the post-Buddhistic era or the pre-Buddhistic, is a moot question. The likelihood of its being pre-Buddhistic is much the stronger inasmuch as the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*, the two great epics, do not show any Buddhistic influence.

We find in these two epics a well-developed form of *bhakti* as a spiritual path, while yet harmonized with the *jñāna* of the Upaniṣads. This is particularly true of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, that supreme scripture of 700 verses, forming part of the *Mahābhārata*. It upholds the Upaniṣadic truth that the Ātman is the undying principle in man; and that the Ātman is no other than Brahman is indicated throughout. The Ātman as the *kṣetrajña* (Knower of the 'field'—of the body) is identified with Īśvara, whose embodiment Śrī Kṛṣṇa himself is. *Bhakti* is prescribed as the easiest means of attaining the supreme knowledge, the result of which is oneness with Brahman (*Brahma-bhūtaḥ*). To reach this state is the goal, but this can be attained through devotion as well.<sup>8</sup>

Even a casual reader of the *Gītā* cannot fail to detect how the disciplines of *jñāna* and *bhakti* are woven harmoniously into it. *Bhakti* is recommended because it is difficult for the aspirant to fix his mind on the unmanifest Brahman.<sup>9</sup> *Bhakti* is a natural method for the ordinary man, while the pursuit of the Formless is meant for more de-

veloped seekers. But both the *jñānī* and *bhakta* attain the same goal.

In the later *purāṇas*, though *bhakti* occupies a predominant place, the path of *jñāna* is not discouraged. However, the *Bhāgavatam*, although the supreme book of *bhakti*, is also a supreme work on *jñāna*. Sri Ramakrishna considered it to have been fried in the butter of *jñāna* and immersed in the syrup of *bhakti*.

In the 'Gopī-gītā' of the *Bhāgavatam*, the Gopīs declare, addressing Kṛṣṇa: 'You are not merely the son of the cowherd woman Yaśodā. You are the inner Witness of all embodied beings. You, O Friend, have incarnated yourself, entreated by Brahmā, to protect the worlds.'<sup>10</sup> Nārada seems to refer to this and many other such statements in the *Bhāgavatam*, in his *Bhakti-sūtras*: '[Though the Gopīs love Śrī Kṛṣṇa as their Beloved], the blame of forgetting His divine glory cannot be attributed to them, for without that knowledge their love for Śrī Kṛṣṇa would have been illicit, as it were.'<sup>11</sup> Elsewhere the *Bhāgavatam* says: 'Devotion, realization of the Supreme Lord, and extreme non-attachment to the world are attained simultaneously'<sup>12</sup> thereby indicating that supreme knowledge and *bhakti* are non-different.

Thus the *paurāṇic* period in Indian religious thought had established it that *jñāna* and *bhakti* are not contradictory to each other, but complementary. The *Gītā* is very clear on this subject when it points out that the attainment of supreme *jñāna* leads to supreme *bhakti* too: 'Brahman-become, tranquil-minded, he neither grieves nor desires; the same to all beings, he attains to supreme devotion unto Me.'<sup>13</sup>

<sup>8</sup> *Bhagavad-gītā*, XVIII. 55

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, XII. 5

<sup>10</sup> *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, X. xxxi. 4

<sup>11</sup> I. 22, 23

<sup>12</sup> XI. ii. 42

<sup>13</sup> *Gītā*, XVIII. 54



### BHAKTI IN SRI SANKARA AND LATER ADVAITINS

Śrī Śaṅkara (c. A.D. 690-722) is predominantly known as the systematizer of Advaita Vedānta, with all its ramifications. His commentaries on the principal Upaniṣads, on the *Bhagavad-gītā*, and on the *Brahma-sūtras* have established Advaita as the most distinctive system of philosophy ever developed in India. In India, philosophy has always been known as *darśana* (vision) and therefore it was not meant to be mere intellectual gymnastics. Truth was to be realized by the philosopher as his innermost spiritual essence. There is ample evidence to show that Śrī Śaṅkara established his philosophy only after having realized it in his own experience. In this same light, he had no hesitation in recommending *bhakti* as one of the main paths to the realization of the spiritual oneness, which is the goal of Advaita.

In his commentaries on the Upaniṣads, the scope for discussions on *bhakti* was not very great. Yet wherever occasion arose, he endorsed *bhakti* as leading to ultimate knowledge of the Divine. Further, in his commentary on the *Gītā*, he says that the *jñānī* (knower of Brahman) is devoted to the Lord exclusively, because he finds no one else to worship;<sup>14</sup> and he affirms that through the path of devotion one can realize the supreme Truth.<sup>15</sup>

However, it is in his *stotras* (hymns) that he is at his best on the theme of *bhakti*. Some scholars have no doubt rightly refused to agree that all the *stotras* attributed to him were written by him. But even those *stotras* which have been generally accepted as the compositions of Śaṅkara are sufficient evidence that the advaitic master was a great devotee. In his famous *Mohamudgara* ("The mace that destroys delusion"), the very

first line calls upon the ignorant: 'Worship Govinda, worship Govinda, worship Govinda, O deluded one!' In the same hymn, Śaṅkara says that we should 'meditate always upon the form of Hari', and 'He who studies a little of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, drinks a drop of Gaṅga water, or worships intensely the Lord but once, is released from the fear of death.'

In the *Annapūrṇā-stotra*, a hymn to the Divine Mother, which also has the genuine stamp of Śaṅkara, he says: 'My Mother is Pārvatī, my Father, Lord Śiva; all the devotees of Śiva are my relatives and the three worlds my homeland.' At the end of almost every stanza in this hymn he prays to the Divine Mother to give him the alms of *jñāna* (knowledge) and *vairāgya* (dispassion). Having spent a considerable part of his life in the holy city of Varanasi, it is not surprising that Śaṅkara was especially devoted to Lord Viśvanātha and Mother Annapūrṇā, who are the presiding Deities of the city. Many other *stotras*, exuding the nectar of true *bhakti*, are ascribed to Śaṅkara. But whether they were all written by him or not, one thing is clear: that Śrī Śaṅkara fully recognized the need of *bhakti* as a basic path of spiritual practice.

After Śaṅkara, the *advaitins* who followed in his footsteps do not seem to have shown much interest in the path of *bhakti* till Śrīdhara-svāmin, Appayya Dīkṣita, and Madhusūdana Sarasvatī appeared six or seven centuries later. Meanwhile all advaitins were apparently busy defending the faith against the virulent onslaughts mounted by various dualistic philosophers, prominent among them being Rāmānujācārya and Madhvācārya. The cult of *bhakti*, of course, gained prominence through the preachings of these Ācāryas, and, much later, of Śrī Caitanya. But theirs in practice were almost entirely cults of devotion, and thus very little influence of *jñāna* is found in them.

<sup>14</sup> Śaṅkara's commentary on the *Gītā* VII. 17

<sup>15</sup> Śaṅkara's commentary on *ibid.*, XVIII. 55



Nevertheless, with regard to Śrī Caitanya, it was said by Sri Ramakrishna that this great advocate of *bhakti* was well-established in advaitic knowledge within himself, though for the good of the world, he preached *bhakti*.<sup>16</sup> Meanwhile, in the *bhakti* movement in Maharashtra which produced such great mystics as Nāmdev, Tukārām, Eknāth and Jñāndev, the last—Jñāndev (c. A.D. 1275-1306)—stands out as a great harmonizer of *jñāna* and *bhakti*. His commentary on the *Gītā*, written in the Marathi language and entitled *Jñāneśvarī*, is famous for its sublimity of thought, depth of devotion, and the ennobling influence of *jñāna* on *bhakti*. It is a happy fusion of the two. For example, while explaining the 55th verse of the last chapter of the *Gītā*, he says:

‘While merging into Me the *karma-yogī* attains this *bhakti*. ...He attains oneness with My *svarūpa* (essence) which is beyond all means and ends, and attains the bliss of the Ātman. ...It is like the disappearance of one’s reflection the moment the mirror is removed. Then he enjoys bliss in his own self. I ask those who think that bliss is impossible if oneness is attained with anything: “How is sound pronounced through sound?” ...Even though there is no place for any action in *advaitic* Truth, there is place for *bhakti*. This can be experienced, but cannot be expressed in words!’

In the fourteenth century we again find this harmony of *jñāna* and *bhakti* reappearing in advaitic teachers such as Śrīdhara-svāmin—also from western India—who has endeared himself to devotees of all times through his gloss on the *Gītā* and his valuable terse commentary on the *Bhāgavatam*. In his writings he pours the light of *jñāna*

as well as the nectar of *bhakti* on many scriptural passages. For instance, he begins his gloss on the thirteenth chapter of the *Gītā* thus: ‘The Lord had stated that He redeems devotees from the ocean of *samsāra*. So as to prove that statement. He teaches the true knowledge (*tattva-jñāna*) in the thirteenth (chapter).’ Thus Śrīdhara indicates that true knowledge is the way to salvation, and that this can be obtained through selfless devotion to the Lord.

Madhusūdana (c. A.D. 1525-1632) was in his teens when Śrī Caitanya was spreading his gospel of love in Eastern India. Having been endowed with dispassion for worldly life even when barely twelve years old, Madhusūdana repaired to Navadvip in West Bengal, to be the disciple of Śrī Caitanya. Though Caitanya had by then left Navadvip, still Madhusūdana settled down there to learn Nyāya philosophy. After a few years he proceeded to Varanasi to learn Advaita Vedānta and became a famed scholar in both these disciplines. Ordered by his guru, he wrote his *magnum opus*, the *Advaita-siddhi*, in which he refuted all the objections raised against the philosophy of Advaita Vedānta since Śaṅkara’s time. This work has fortified the Advaita philosophy for all time.

But Madhusūdana was not a mere pandit. He had become a *sannyāsin* and combined intense spiritual practice with his scholarship. He was respected in the whole of northern India for his spiritual attainments. And it is in these attainments that we see the depth of his *bhakti*, in spite of his being an advocate of Advaita.

That he was a supreme devotee is also shown by various stanzas found in his writings and/or those attributed to him. As for instance, from his commentary on the *Gītā*:

‘I salute that Darling of Nanda (that is, Śrī Kṛṣṇa), the embodiment of supreme bliss, who is the object of worship of all *yogins* and without devotion to whom

<sup>16</sup> vide Swami Saradananda: *Sri Ramakrishna The Great Master* (Tr. by Swami Jagadananda, Pub. by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras 600004, 1956), pp. 225-6



liberation is well-nigh impossible.'<sup>17</sup>

'If some *yogins* perceive that attributeless, actionless Supreme Radiance through a mind concentrated by the practice of meditation, let them see It. But as for us, may that Blue Glory (that is, Kṛṣṇa) which sports on the banks of the Yamunā, entrance our eyes forever.'<sup>18</sup>

It is said that once the Vedāntic *sannyāsins* of Varanasi, who were uncompromising followers of the path of knowledge, felt surprised that Madhusūdāna should have been busy worshipping the Boy Kṛṣṇa. They went to him in a group and asked for an explanation. Madhusūdāna's reply was characteristically that of a devotee:

'It is true that we have ascended to the pinnacle of advaitic realization and we consider as straw even the glories of Indra; but I have been perforce made a handmaid to Himself by Someone who is the roguish Paramour of the Gopīs.'<sup>19</sup>

At the conclusion of his *Gītā* commentary, he says:

'I do not know any greater truth than Śrī Kṛṣṇa, with hands adorned by the flute, with the hue of a freshly water-laden cloud, wearing the *pītāmbara* (yellow apparel), with lips like the red *bimba* fruit, face beautiful like the full moon, and eyes that compare with lotus petals.'<sup>20</sup>

<sup>17</sup> यद्भक्तिं न विना मुक्तिर्यः सेव्यः सर्वयोगिनाम् ।

तं वन्दे परमानन्दघनं श्रीनन्दनन्दनम् ॥

—Invocation to commentary on Chap. VII

<sup>18</sup> ध्यानाभ्यासबशीकृतेन मनसा तन्निर्गुणं निष्क्रियं  
ज्योतिः किञ्चन योगिनो यदि परं पश्यन्ति पश्यन्तु ते ।

अस्माकं तु तदेव लोचनचमत्काराय भूयाच्चिरं

कालिन्दी पुलिनेषु यत्किमपि तन्नीलं महो धावति ॥

—Invocation to Commentary on Chap. XIII

<sup>19</sup> अद्वैतसाम्राज्यपयाधिरूढास्तृणीकृताखण्डलवैभवश्च ।

शठेन केनापि वयं हठेन दासीकृता गोपबधूचितेन ॥

<sup>20</sup> वंशीविभूषितकरान्नवनीरदाभात् पीताम्बरादरुण-

बिम्बफलाधरोष्ठात् ।

Finally—that *bhakti* is supremely enjoyable even when one has reached the heights of *jñāna*, is indicated in the stanza attributed to Madhusūdāna quoted at the beginning of this paper.

Madhusūdāna had for his contemporaries some of the greatest of *bhaktas* and greatest of *jñānis*. He had the highest regard for each and all of these. For instance, Tulasīdās, that paragon of Rāma-*bhakti*, lived at the same time at Varanasi, not far from Madhusūdāna's dwelling. Once some Sanskrit scholars went to him and asked why he wrote only in Hindi, the local dialect, and not in Sanskrit, the accepted language of scholars. Tulasīdās replied poetically:

'Let men of wisdom sing the glory of Hari or Hara (names of God) either in the language of the gods or that of the humans. Both are equally fruitful, just as rice cooked in an earthen pot or a golden one is equally tasty.'<sup>21</sup>

When this was reported to Madhusūdāna, his reply was one of admiration, this time in a Sanskrit stanza with an expressive comparison between the *tulasī* (holy basil) plant and the Saint:

'O this one is a leaf of bliss; and (Tulasīdās) is a mobile *tulasī* plant. Its flowers are poems, which have been kissed by the Bee called Rāma.'<sup>22</sup>

Appayya Dīkṣita was a contemporary of Madhusūdāna. He was also highly respected for his scholarship. Madhusūdāna has referred to him as *Sarva-tantra-svatantra-ācārya*—'a scholar who has complete mastery in all subjects'. Like Madhusūdāna in

पुर्णेन्दुसुन्दरमुखादरविन्दनेत्रात् कृष्णात्परं किमपि  
तत्त्वमहं न जाने ॥

<sup>21</sup> हरि हर यश सुर नर गिरा, वरनहि सन्त सुजान ।  
हण्डी हाटक चारुचौर, रान्धे स्वादु समान ॥

<sup>22</sup> परमानन्दपत्रोऽयं जङ्गमस्तुलसीतरुः ।

कवितामञ्जरी यस्य रामभ्रमरचुंबिता ॥



the North, Appayya Dīkṣita in the South established Advaita Vedānta on an unshakeable foundation, through his gloss entitled *Parimala on Kalpataru* (the commentary on the *Brahma-sūtras* by Amalānanda), and also through his *Siddhānta-leśa-saṅgraha*, an exposition of Śrī Śaṅkara's commentary on the *Brahma-sūtras*, bringing together all the later arguments and theories on Advaita Vedānta.

But Appayya again, was not a dry scholar. He was also a spiritual seeker of a high order, and in his *sādhana* he seems to have taken recourse to the path of *bhakti*, as some of his wonderful hymns (*stotras*) testify. He was not only a devotee of Lord Śiva but also of Nārāyaṇa in the form of Varadarāja at Kanchi, and of the Divine Mother. As examples of these aspects of his devotion, we have his *Ātmārpaṇa-stuti*, *Śrī Varadarāja-stava*, and *Durgā-candra-kalā-stuti*, respectively. All these hymns reveal the mind of a mystic, instinct with spontaneous *bhakti*. In his *Ātmārpaṇa-stuti* he tells his chosen Deity, Lord Śiva:

'I crave not for anything in these three worlds. Let happiness or suffering, as ordained by karma, be my lot—I don't worry about that. All that I pray for is only this: may my mind ever be devoted to Thy feet, which surpass in beauty even the inside of the blossomed lotus.'<sup>23</sup>

Further, the famous *Sivāparādha-kṣamā-pana-stotra* ('Hymn begging Śiva's pardon for transgressions'), which is commonly attributed to Śrī Śaṅkara, seems to have been written by Appayya Dīkṣita. The reasons in support of this inference are overwhelming. If it is correct, then this wonderful hymn is one more example of Appayya's *bhakti*.

In his 'Hymn to Varadarāja', Appayya says:

'O Lord, he who deposits his heart with You and attains liberation, never gets it back. This is not surprising. You steal

the hearts of women [i.e., of Gopīs in your Kṛṣṇa-incarnation] and hide Yourself on the mountain-top [in the form of beautiful Varadarāja].'<sup>24</sup>

Again, in the eighteenth century, we find in Tāyumānavar, the advaitic saint of Tamil Nadu, the sweet fusion of *bhakti* with the highest *jñāna*. For example:

'Like a sea that has burst its shores, tears of bliss streamed down from my eyes; and the heart melting with divine love, my whole being was thrilled by Him.'

And in the very same hymn, called 'A Revel of Bliss', he says:

'Can there be "there" or "here" after having beheld the infinite splendour of *Sat-cit-ānanda* pervading everything? Can it be said then that there is a "one" or a "two"?'

Thus the tradition of harmonization of *bhakti* and *jñāna* went on through the centuries in all parts of India.

#### FUSION OF BHAKTI AND JNANA IN SRI RAMAKRISHNA AND VIVEKANANDA

However, we find this synthesis reaching its acme in Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda in the last century.

As is well known, Sri Ramakrishna was a supreme *bhakta* and a supreme *jñānī* in one. He not only reached the goal of all *bhakti* cults, but practised the highest Advaita Vedānta under the guidance of Sri Totapuri. And to the utter surprise of his tutor he attained the experience of *nirvikalpa-samādhi* in three days. However, it should be remembered that Sri Ramakrishna's main object of worship was the Divine Mother in the form of Kālī. But his Kālī was *Brahma-mayī*, the 'Embodiment of Brahman'. As he used to say, Brahman and Brahma-śakti (the Power of Brahman) are non-different. Brahman, when active, is called Śakti and, when actionless, is cal-

<sup>23</sup> *Ātmārpaṇa-stuti*, 47

<sup>24</sup> *Varadarāja-stava*, 19



led Brahman. This position does not in any way contradict the fundamental tenets of Advaita Vedānta, as Śrī Śaṅkara himself has stated that *śakti* and *śaktimān* (power and its possessor) are non-different: 'That Divine Power by which Brahman acts for the sake of blessing the devotees, that power am 'I'—for *śakti* and *śaktimān* are non-different.<sup>25</sup> In fact, all the Tāntric practices of Sri Ramakrishna culminated in the vision of same-sightedness.<sup>28</sup> By dedicating himself body, mind and soul to the Divine Mother, Sri Ramakrishna had attained this oneness of vision.<sup>27</sup> Thus he showed that *bhakti* too leads to *jñāna*, just as the converse is also true.

That the Advaita knowledge results not only in the transcendental experience of *nirvikalpa-samādhi*, but in the constant perception of the immanence of the One, was fully proved in the life of Sri Ramakrishna. The advaitic experience, when brought to the plane of immanence, finds expression as infinite love. As Sri Ramakrishna always used to say, one should first rise to the *nitya* state (the Absolute) by negating the relative as 'not this, not this', and later return to the plane of *līlā* (the Relative). But when one who has reached the *nitya* returns to the plane of the Relative, he does not any more see differentiation here, but he sees that One manifesting Itself as the many, and this vision must result in selfless love for all that exists, for all are That. As Swami Vivekananda said :

'...faith is a wonderful insight and...it alone can save; but there is the danger in it of breeding fanaticism and barring further progress.

'Jnana is all right; but there is the danger of its becoming dry intellectualism. Love is great and noble; but it may

die away in meaningless sentimentalism. 'A harmony of all these is the thing required. Ramakrishna was such a harmony.'<sup>28</sup>

Swami Saradananda says regarding his Great Master :

'He came to feel in his heart of hearts that the realization of non-duality was the ultimate aim of all kinds of disciplines. For, having performed *sādhana*s according to the teachings of all the main religious denominations prevalent in India he had already been convinced that they all took the aspirants towards the non-dual plane.'<sup>29</sup>

In his teachings Sri Ramakrishna advised the generality of devotees to follow the path of *bhakti*, as that is the most suitable for this age. However when he found fit recipients for the advaitic knowledge, such as Swami Vivekananda, he taught them the highest Advaita.

Swami Vivekananda followed, of course, in the footsteps of his Master. But while the external emphasis of the Master was on *bhakti*, the disciple emphasized advaitic knowledge in his preaching. For the fields of their preaching activity were strikingly different. But on many occasions the Swami revealed his devotional nature and the intensity of love of God within his heart. He remarked once :

'He (Sri Ramakrishna) was all *bhakti* without, but within he was all *jñāna*; I am all *jñāna* without; but within my heart, it is all *bhakti*.'<sup>30</sup>

Thus in Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, the age-old apparent conflict between *jñāna* and *bhakti* has been resolved.

<sup>28</sup> *The Complete Works* (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Dt. Pithoragarh, U. P.), Vol. IV (1962), p. 356

<sup>29</sup> *The Great Master*, p. 258.

<sup>30</sup> His Eastern and Western Disciples: *The Life of Swami Vivekananda* (Advaita Ashrama, 1955), p. 115

<sup>25</sup> Śaṅkara in his commentary on the *Gītā*, XIV. 24

<sup>26</sup> *vide* Swami Saradananda: *op. cit.*, Part II, Ch. XI

<sup>27</sup> *vide* *ibid.*, p. 200



### BHAKTI IN SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI

In the twentieth century we find this 'conflict' has no prominent place in the religious affairs of India. The great *jñānī* of Arunachala, Sri Ramana Maharshi (1879-1950), has demonstrated for us that the highest *jñāna* can also result in profound *bhakti*. In his hymn entitled *Arunācala-akṣara-maṇa-mālā* (Marital Garland of Letters to Śiva) he says :

'I thought of You and was caught in Your grace; and like the spider in his net did You keep me captive to take me at Your hour.... Like the bee You stood face to face, uttering, "Ah, you are not yet in bloom."...' 'Take me into union—or I must perish with my body melted into water in the river of tears.'

In one of his utterances the Maharshi says :

'It [his own message] is the essence of *karma-yoga*, of *bhakti-yoga*, why, even of *jñana-yoga*, for even though the paths in the beginning may differ, they all eventually lead to this position.'<sup>31</sup>

### CAN WE COMBINE BHAKTI AND JNANA ?

The foregoing briefly shows that *bhakti* was never considered as opposed to *jñāna* by the greatest advaitins the world has known.

Now two questions may be raised: What are the advantages for us in combining these two? And, is it feasible for everyone? We shall try to answer these questions.

Once Swami Vivekananda was asked whether he was a non-dualist or a dualist. His reply was: 'I am a dualist when I am conscious of the body, but I am a non-dualist when I am not aware of it.' A seeker after Truth lives on different planes. It is not possible for man to be always devoid of body consciousness. Rather he is almost all the time conscious of it. And as

<sup>31</sup> 'K': *Sat-Darshana Bhashya and Talks With Maharshi* (Pub. by Sri Ramanasramam Tiruvannamalai, S. India, 1968), p. xxvi

long as the ego sense persists along with body consciousness, the mind is bound to be disturbed by attractions and aversions. It cannot reach the quiescent state of non-duality till it is freed from all modifications. Are we then to give up the quest of the Divine on such occasions? No. Unless the quest continues in and through all states of our day-to-day life, it is well-nigh impossible to reach the goal.

It is therefore that the path of *bhakti* is extremely useful in directing the attractions and aversions of the mind towards an object intensely loved by us. What else could be loved better than the Supreme, which is described as *Asti, Bhāti, Priyam*, or *Sat-cit-ānanda* (Existence, Effulgence, and Love, or Existence-knowledge-bliss)? A seeker of Truth and Knowledge is also a seeker of Love and Bliss. Love or bliss is not an experience of the senses but of the mind, which, if it perceives the Reality behind itself, will realize that *ānanda* is not something to be obtained from outside but from within.

*Bhakti* has the advantage of tuning the mind to this 'bliss'-aspect of the supreme Truth ever shining within us. Therefore a fusion of *bhakti* and *jñāna*, love and discrimination, makes it possible for the spiritual aspirant to keep himself spiritually engaged during all hours of the day.

Is it feasible? Yes, as the greatest of *sādhakas* have demonstrated in their lives. In fact, a fusion of *bhakti* and *jñāna* helps avoid the twin dangers of *jñāna's* deteriorating into dry intellectualism and *bhakti's* turning into mere sentimentalism. The faculties of both emotion and reason can find scope for full play in a *sādhaka* who takes recourse to *bhakti* and *jñāna*.

How it is to be practised has been beautifully expressed in a famous saying attributed to Hanumān, the foremost servant of Śrī Rāma :

'When I feel I am the body, I am Your



servant ; when I feel I am the jīva (soul), I am a part of Yourself ; and when I feel I am Ātman (the Self), I am Yourself only. This is my firm understanding.'<sup>32</sup>

Thus to place ourselves in different relations to the Divine, according to our prevalent mood, is the way to bend all our energies to the realization of the spiritual goal.

### CONCLUSION

In this way the path of *bhakti* can be built upon the foundation of Advaita Vedānta. When it is so done, the occasional conflicts with reason which may disturb the aspirant in his practice of *bhakti*,

<sup>32</sup> देहबुद्ध्या तु दासोऽहं जीवबुद्ध्या त्वदंशकः ।  
आत्मबुद्ध्या त्वमेवाहं इति मे निश्चिता मतिः ॥

can be silenced by the conviction rooted in Advaita, that all prayers to God are only the supplication of the lower self to the Highest Self within us.

Even the divine incarnation who comes with full knowledge as a saviour of erring humanity, is motivated by infinite compassion which is non-different from the 'Love' aspect of the Divine Self. While the Divine manifests Itself as a spark in the ordinary aspirant, it is a blazing fire in an Avatāra.

While seeing of difference (*bheda-dṛṣṭi*) leads one from death to death, the difference seen by a perfected *bhakti* between himself and the Beloved makes the earlier advaitic realization sweet. It is only a manifestation of eagerness to get back to the union which has already been experienced in *samādhi*. Therefore it can bind no more.

## DAYS OF MANHOOD

BY ERIK JOHNS ; MUSIC BY JOHN SCHLENCK

'Go thou, the free, from place to place and help them out of darkness!'

### I

Speaker: Baranagore! In those early days it was a place filled with the spirit of the Master. . . . In the young men whom Sri Ramakrishna had made his own, a fire had been lighted which nothing could extinguish. They practised the severest austerities with the delight of martyrs, that they might secure the way their Master had shown.

Chorus: There were neither days nor nights for them, neither hours nor moments. The disciples dwelt in ecstasy. The spirit of *sannyas* was upon all!

Speaker: And the spirit of *sannyas* grew until even holy Baranagore was not free enough for them. They chafed to cut even this holy bond.

Chorus: One by one they struck out on unknown paths . . . wandering monks depending solely on God.

Speaker: So, also, did Naren become restless. He went on short journeys, but soon returned to his brother disciples. Love for them was a golden chain which he knew he must break, for their sakes and his own.

Solo: Naren's mind was filled with great longing. He was consumed with the



desire to be absorbed in the highest bliss—to hide himself away and live in great austerity. But in his deepest meditation he saw another life awaiting him—a life intense with activity and self-immolation.

**Chorus:** The horizon of his vision widened. The idea of service to man as the manifestation of God began to obsess him.

**Speaker:** He urged his brothers to go into villages and preach, but they were averse to lectures and sermons. He said to them:

‘Because sages are silent, do you think they do not preach? Their very silence is a sermon. What they do unconsciously, I will do consciously.’

**Solo:** And using various names, he went forth into his motherland—to the north and to the west. . .

**Chorus:** (spoken) Go thou forward without a path,  
Fearing nothing, caring for nothing. . . .

**Solo:** To the south and to the east he went. . . .

**Chorus:** (spoken) Wander alone like the rhinoceros.  
(sung) Go thou forward without a path,  
Fearing nothing, caring for nothing;  
Wander alone like the rhinoceros.

*Solo*

With the bearing of a prince,  
He lived with princes.  
With the humility of a beggar,  
He lived with beggars.  
He spoke to scholars  
With the brilliance of his mind  
And touched the illiterate  
By his compassionate heart.  
He was alone and with multi-  
tudes. . . .  
Reviled and adored. . . .  
Everywhere he went he awaken-  
ed a new spirit. The ancient  
creeds of his people were seen  
in new light.

*Chorus*

(spoken) Even as the lion,  
Not trembling at noises;  
Even as the wind,  
Not caught in the net. . . .  
(sung) Even as the lion,  
Not trembling at noises. . . .  
(spoken) Even as the lotus leaf,  
Not stained by water. . . .  
(sung) Even as the wind,  
Not caught in the net. . . .  
(spoken) Do thou wander alone  
Like the rhinoceros.  
(sung) Even as the lotus leaf,  
Not stained by water. . . .  
(sung) Do thou wander alone  
Like the rhinoceros.

**Solo:** . . . until he reached the southernmost tip of India. For six years had he roamed his land, and now was finished his great pilgrimage.

**Speaker:** He had heard of a Parliament of Religions to be held in America. Others had urged him to go. And sitting on the last stone of India, he passed into a deep meditation. About him stormed the ocean, but an even greater storm filled his soul. He brooded on India’s millions, oppressed by priesthood, downtrodden by caste. . . . What was religion without care for the poor and the lowly? Naren’s heart throbbed. He felt their sufferings and found himself humiliated at their degradation. Had not his Master said, ‘An empty stomach is no good for religion’?

‘For all ages we have sucked their blood and trampled them underfoot—what is the use of teaching them metaphysics? It is all madness. . . . Religion is not to blame; it is men!’



**Chorus:** In his despair he looked at the infinite ocean, and his vision was pierced by a ray of light. Service and renunciation: these must be the twin ideals of India! By the power within him he would earn money to regenerate his countrymen. In India's name, with these same ideals, he would cross the seas and wake the West!

**Solo:** In this hour of wonder even the final vision of God faded for him. His soul was caught up in the supreme Lord whose love is without limit—whose pity knows no bounds. In this hour of wonder religion was not only scriptures or the meditations of sages....

**Chorus:** It was the heart of the people—their lives and their hopes, miseries and sorrows. Without men the Vedas were so much straw in the eyes of God. Verily, at Kanya Kumari the prophet and the patriot became one.

**Solo:** After the meditations of many years, in one of the most luminous visions of his life, the spirit of Ramakrishna was thus revealed to him.

## II

**Chorus:** For seventeen days and a thousand papers the Parliament of Religions lasted. The illustrious and the learned were there, but from the first his name, above all others, resounded—"The Monk, Vivekananda!" This was the name he had chosen for himself. Soon it was known throughout the world.

**Speaker:** But glorification of his name filled Swami Vivekananda with sadness. Like a child he wept on the night of his triumph.

**Solo:** The joys of the free life of an unknown monk were at an end—no more the quiet solemn peace, but unending labour and strain.

**Chorus:** With the powers of his mind and soul he spread the ideals of his race. He carried the message of the spirit wherever he was called, speaking words that stirred the minds and fed the souls of men.

**Speaker:** Vivekananda found a great spiritual hunger in the West. India needed material aid, but the West needed India's message even more. His mission must be to give himself to the West as to the East. He must give himself for all mankind.

**Solo:** The joys of the freedom of an unknown monk were ended. . . .

**Speaker:** From nation to nation, from place to place he travelled, burning like a brilliant fire....

**Solo:** No more the quiet solemn peace, but unending labour and strain....

**Speaker:** Organizing and teaching, moulding men and institutions in India and the West....

**Solo:** O Mother, what do I care for name and fame? Guide me in Thy mission.

**Speaker:** Inspiring vast crowds with passion and eloquence, or whispering intimate instructions to disciples, he was a brilliant fire....

**Solo:** O Mother, no more the quiet peace, but unending labour and strain....

**Speaker:** . . . . a fire that gave a dazzling light for all the world.

**Chorus:** For eight years, eight long years he worked without thought of self, until the weariness of those years lay heavily upon him. Broken in health



and longing for rest, he took himself to Belur Math for a final stay. There on the bank of the Ganges he gave himself to the guiding of that holy place. But now his work was over.

### III

Speaker: It was July 4th, 1902. As evening came on, Vivekananda's mind became more and more withdrawn. The bell for evening service rang, and prayers and devotions filled the monastery grounds. There was a sense of peace. Then in the evening stillness, Swami Vivekananda retired to his room.

Solo: 'Great things will be done by you for the good of the world. Only after that will you go to whence you came.' So had his Master spoken. Now that time had come.

Speaker: From his meditation he drew a last deep breath and passed into a final bliss. The tired child slept in the lap of the Mother, no longer to wake to this world of Maya.

Chorus: Gods have walked among the sons of men.

Solo: The spirit of India has been made flesh.

Chorus: They who were born to awaken have passed into the silence of Eternity.

Solo: Celestial light has sundered darkness and the gospel of the age has been spread to the nations of the earth.

Chorus and Solo: Gods have walked among the sons of men.

Chorus: Because religion had declined and unrighteousness prevailed, they came and will come again and again for the good of the world. To establish righteousness and manifest that kingdom not of this world, they will come again and again !

Renounce ! Renounce ! Realize the Divine Nature !

Arise, awake and stop not till the goal is reached !

HARIH OM TAT SAT.

### CORRIGENDA

PRABUDDHA BHARATA, July 1974

p. 245, footnote 3, for परमार्थतत्त्वमनुभवतो	read	परमार्थतत्त्वमनुभवतो
p. 249 „ 2, for निर्भंशं	read	निर्भंरां
p. 250 „ 3, for बलादाकृष्य	read	बलादाकृष्य

# FIRST MEETINGS WITH SRI RAMAKRISHNA : SUBODH CHANDRA GHOSH

SWAMI PRABHANANDA

Born on 8 November 1867 in Calcutta, Subodh Chandra Ghosh was brought up in an atmosphere of religious piety. He belonged to the family of Sankar Ghosh who owned the famous temple of Siddheswari at Thanthania, Calcutta. His parents, Krishnadas and Nayantara, contributed greatly to the growth of his religious life. He began regularly practising meditation on the gods and goddesses at home.

As was the custom, Subodh Chandra was pressed by his parents to get married, but he stubbornly refused. His parents finally declared that soon after he passed the school-leaving examination he was to be married. The simple-minded Subodh prayed fervently to God that his examination result might be unsatisfactory. It seems that his prayer was granted, for he did not pass the examination. However, his career took a decisive turn at this stage.

Subodh was seventeen when he came across a copy of the Bengali book *Śrīmat Rāmakṛṣṇa Paramahamser Ukti* ('The Sayings of Paramahansa Ramakrishna') compiled by Suresh Chandra Dutta. Though he had heard of Sri Ramakrishna from his father, the reading of this book made him impatient to see the holy man as soon as possible. His father promised to take him to the Paramahansa on some holiday when it would be convenient; but Subodh could not wait so long. He persuaded his class-friend and neighbour Kshirode Chandra Mitra to accompany him and visit the Paramahansa.

Accordingly Subodh and Kshirode started on foot one early morning<sup>1</sup> for Dakshin-

eswar. As the road was not familiar to either of them they simply walked northwards. Arriving at Ariadaha they learnt that they had left Dakshineswar behind. They retraced their path. Subodh was somewhat anxious. Afraid of his parents, he said, 'Kshirode, let's go back home. It is already noon. We must return home before dusk.' Kshirode, however, persuaded him to make

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day of the Car Festival in 1884. However according to *Śrī-Śrī-Rāmakṛṣṇa Kathāmṛta* (Bengali) (by 'M', Pub. by Pravas Chandra Gupta, Calcutta, 10th ed.) Vol. I, p. 6, the visit took place in 1885, and ('M': *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* Tr. by Swami Nikhilananda, Pub. by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 1947, p. 824), some day shortly before Aug. 31, 1885. The Car Festival that year came off on Tuesday, July 14, and Sri Ramakrishna spent that day at Balaram Bose's house in Calcutta. Subodh was not present there. Since, as we shall see, on the very first visit, Sri Ramakrishna urged that Subodh visit him on Tuesdays and Saturdays, it is probable that the first meeting was not on either of those days. So it is almost certain that the first visit was not on the day of the Car Festival, and definitely not in 1884, since the book *Śrīmat Rāmakṛṣṇa Paramahamser Ukti* (Part I) was first published on December 23, 1884. 'M' (Mahendranath Gupta, author of the *Gospel*) was not present when Subodh first met Sri Ramakrishna. Subodh is first mentioned in the *Gospel* on Monday, Aug. 31, 1885. 'Two boys came here [the other day]. One of them was Subodh. He is Sankar Ghosh's great grandson. The other, Kshirode, is his neighbour.' 'M's' previous visit to Dakshineswar had been on Thursday and Friday, Aug. 27th and 28th, 1885. It may thus be presumed, and with reason, that Subodh's visit took place on Sunday, Aug. 30, 1885.

In contrast with this view, Gurudas Burman says in *Śrī-Śrī-Rāmakṛṣṇa-carit* (Pub. by Kalinath Sinha, 13 Nikasipara Lane, Calcutta, 1st ed.), p. 332, that on some week-day when the school classes were dissolved early, Subodh and Kshirode left for Dakshineswar. Very likely the reference is to some visit other than the first.

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<sup>1</sup> According to *Śrī-Śrī-Swāmī Subodhānander Jivan O Patrāvali* (Bengali), it was the auspicious



for Dakshineswar. They went along the ridges of the cultivated land to lessen the distance. Subodh was apprehensive about meeting the holy man. He had not had occasion to talk to a holy man before. He urged that Kshirode should take the lead and should do all the talking; he himself would keep silent. Kshirode agreed.

At last they arrived at Dakshineswar. Very probably it was early afternoon. Sri Ramakrishna was in his room. He was perhaps sitting on the small couch, after his short rest following the noon meal. It is not known whether Subodh and his friend had to forgo their midday meal. If they had, it can safely be presumed that they were fed by Sri Ramakrishna. Kshirode was first to enter the room. He saluted Sri Ramakrishna while Subodh stood in the further corner.<sup>2</sup> Sri Ramakrishna received them affectionately and asked, 'Where do you come from?'

'From Calcutta,' replied Kshirode.

'Why does the other Bābu (gentleman) stand so far off?' asked Sri Ramakrishna, smiling. 'Oh Bābu, why do you remain so far away? Do come nearer.'

Subodh came forward a few steps. Looking at his face Sri Ramakrishna said, 'You belong to Sankar Ghosh's family, don't you?'<sup>3</sup>

Surprised at this, Subodh asked, 'Yes, but how do you know, sir?'

'When I was living at Jhamapukur, I visited the temple of Siddheswari and your house many a time. You had not been born then. I knew that you would come here. The Mother sends here those who have a bright future in spiritual life. Why do you stand so far away? Come close to me, please.'

Subodh came still nearer. Sri Rama-

<sup>2</sup> According to Gurudas Burman they greeted Sri Ramakrishna with folded hands as was the custom of the day.

<sup>3</sup> Burman, op. cit., p. 333.

krishna made him sit on his bed. Subodh protested saying that he had come into contact with many people on the way in that dress; that it was no longer clean; and that therefore he should not sit on the bed of a holy man. Sri Ramakrishna, putting his hand round Subodh's waist, said affectionately, 'Look, you belong to this place. What is there in the clothes one wears?'<sup>4</sup> Taking Subodh's wrist in his hand Sri Ramakrishna sat quietly with his eyes shut and then lost outward consciousness. After a while regaining consciousness, he began to laugh within himself. Afterwards he said, 'Look you will succeed. [The Divine] Mother says so.'<sup>5</sup>

By this time Subodh had summoned enough courage to ask, 'If I really belong to this place, why did the Mother not bring me here before?'

Sri Ramakrishna smilingly replied, 'Look here, nothing happens until the time is ripe.'

Subodh's first impression of Sri Ramakrishna was like that of many who had come in contact with him—that the holy man's simplicity and spirituality were astoundingly attractive. Quite unnoticeably Sri Ramakrishna was already entering into Subodh's heart, infusing into him a warm and firm faith.

<sup>4</sup> Swami Subodhananda (Subodh) narrated his experience of this visit in a letter dated 23.6.25. There he explained, 'That Thakur [Sri Ramakrishna] told, "You belong to this", means, I belong to him only.... Though I had gone to Thakur with another person, I know for certain now, other persons are but aids. He attracts his own men, his own belongings.'

<sup>5</sup> During Subodh's second visit, Sri Ramakrishna wrote something on his tongue, stroked his body from the navel to the throat, and said, 'Awake, Mother, awake!' He asked Subodh to meditate and at once Subodh's latent spirituality was awakened. Joy filled his heart. His body trembled. He felt a current rushing along the spinal column to the brain. (*The Disciples of Ramakrishna, Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Dt. Pithoragarh, U.P., 1943, p. 278.*)



After a while Subodh moved a little away and sat on the floor in front of Sri Ramakrishna. At the latter's bidding Ramlal [Sri Ramakrishna's nephew] gave Subodh a small carpet to sit on. Subodh made himself comfortable, while his friend Kshirode sat on the mat nearby.

Sri Ramakrishna inquired, 'How have you come this distance?'

'Why, on foot,' was Subodh's prompt reply.

'What do you mean? You have come such a long distance on foot? But how did you come to know of this place?'

'I read your sayings. I was charmed. You are a well-known man, a holy man. That's why we have come to meet you.'

At these words Sri Ramakrishna's mood changed. He fell into ecstasy. He said: 'Humble am I, humbler than a night-soil worm; what can be my name and fame? I am very humble.' The humility of the holy man and his words made a deep impression on Subodh's mind. Keeping quiet for a while, Sri Ramakrishna then said: 'Those whom the Mother sends here will certainly attain spirituality. You visit the place on Saturdays and Tuesdays. It is good to visit on those days. A number of people living in your locality visit on those days. You too come.'<sup>6</sup>

Subodh felt like accepting the invitation, but he was apprehensive of his parents' reaction. He said: 'If I come away on Saturdays and Tuesdays my parents will come to know. Please tell me just now what you have to say. It is not possible to come here on Saturdays, for on Saturdays my father returns from his office early.'

Sri Ramakrishna insisted: 'No, since these words came out of my lips I cannot take them back. When I say I shall visit a place on such and such a day I have to go in spite of hindrances like rain or storm.

Even if I do not want to, the Mother takes me there. There is no escape. Please come here on Saturdays and Tuesdays.'<sup>7</sup>

Sri Ramakrishna was not keeping good health. For at least four months he had been suffering from pain in his throat—a symptom of his cancer of the throat. He asked the two young men to meet Mahendranath Gupta, who was living in the same locality as theirs.<sup>8</sup>

As it was getting rather late, Subodh and Kshirode got up to take leave of Sri Ramakrishna. The latter offered them some food which Subodh at first declined to accept.

'Take a few sweetmeats and drink a little water before you go,' said Sri Ramakrishna. At his bidding Latu gave them some *prasāda* (offered food). They partook of it and prepared to leave for Calcutta, when Sri Ramakrishna said: 'It is a long distance and you are too young. You had better travel by boat or hackney-carriage. I shall give you the fare.'

'I don't know how to swim. We can't go by boat,' said Subodh.

'Then hire a carriage,' Sri Ramakrishna urged.

'No, we shall go on foot,' Subodh insisted.

Endearingly Sri Ramakrishna said, 'Look here, it will be difficult for you youngsters; it is quite difficult to walk such a long distance.'

Subodh was emphatic. He repeated that as they were quite energetic it would not be hard for them to walk this distance. Outspoken as he was, he argued further, 'Where will you get the money from?'

Sri Ramakrishna replied smilingly, 'You need not worry. There are many people to offer me money. I am asking Ramlal to

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, loc. cit.

<sup>8</sup> *Gospel*, p. 824: Sri Ramakrishna to 'M': 'I told them I was ill and asked them to go to you for instruction. Please look after them a little.' 'M': 'Yes, sir. They are our neighbours.'

<sup>6</sup> Burman, *op. cit.*, p. 335.



give you some ; hire a carriage.' As Subodh still did not agree, Sri Ramakrishna offered Kshirode the money. At Subodh's request Kshirode also declined to accept the offer. They saluted the Paramahansa who, in his sweet voice, reminded Subodh, 'Visit here ; visit on Tuesdays and Saturdays.'<sup>9</sup>

Though there is no mention in available records, it can be safely presumed that the visitors went round the temples before they left hurriedly for Calcutta.

Despite all his apprehensions, however, Subodh ran away from school to Dakshine-

<sup>9</sup> Burman, op. cit., p. 336.

swar with his friend the next Saturday. Visit followed visit, and Subodh was drawn into the new world of spirituality so steadily yet imperceptibly that he hardly understood what was happening. Most of his deep-rooted attitudes were collapsing. A new life dawned on him. Subodh surrendered himself to his Master's loving care. The latter, too, like an affectionate mother watched the sprouting seeds of spirituality in Subodh, whom Swami Vivekananda and others affectionately called 'Khoka' (child).

Subsequently he renounced the worldly life and joined the Ramakrishna Order under the name of Swami Subodhananda.

## NOTES AND COMMENTS

### IN THIS NUMBER

Reminiscences are taken from: 'M': *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 600004, 1947; Swami Saradananda: *Sri Ramakrishna The Great Master*, Madras, 1952; and *Life of Sri Ramakrishna*, Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Dt. Pithoragarh, U.P., 1964. References: *Gospel*: No. 1, p. 816; No. 2, p. 358; No. 3, p. 924; No. 4, p. 1005; No. 5, p. 511; No. 6, p. 305. *Great Master*: No. 7, p. 130; No. 9, p. 143. *Life*: No. 8, p. 69.

The words quoted in 'Onward For Ever!' are from *The Complete Works*, Vol. VIII (1959), pp. 135-6.

Some of the most insightful statements that were ever uttered regarding the significance of the life, mission, and message of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, fell from the lips of Swami Vivekananda. A lion alone, not a fox, can grasp the strength of another lion. Swami Viveka-

nanda was a man of God, the anointed disciple of Sri Ramakrishna—the divine incarnation of his age—and so could reveal so well the glory of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa had become a fact of experience both for his Guru and for himself. So he exhorted the youth of the country to worship the heroic Kṛṣṇa 'uttering forth the Lion-roar of the *Gītā*'. 'Let Pārthasārathi be our Sārathi (charioteer)', he declared at another time. The *Editorial* of the month is an attempt to study Śrī Kṛṣṇa as a spiritual phenomenon of profound power and significance. Incidentally we may remind our readers that Śrī Kṛṣṇa's birthday will be observed this month in and outside of this country.

In nature, no forward movement is seen to occur in a straight line and at a regular speed. Progress invariably is through undulating motions and at irregular speeds. This law seems to hold good also in the psychological and spiritual realms. No

spiritual aspirant can hope to have a swift and straight march to God. Even saints do not feel the same divine inspiration every hour and day! That is mainly because of the fact that the *gunas* (*sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*) exercise their subtle influence on all minds. There are also other factors such as *samskāras* (past mental impressions) good and bad, which either accelerate or retard one's spiritual progress. Whatever the causes of irregularity in spiritual advancement, all aspirants should cheerfully persist in their struggles and fortify their faith in God and the sublimity of the goal they have accepted. They should know that through every struggle, advancement or retardation, the 'inner sinews' are growing strong. No effort is ever wasted, no event insignificant. And above all, the breeze of God's grace is always available for everyone who cares to unfurl the sails, through prayer and self-surrender. God's grace is one of the greatest aids in spiritual progress. In this month's 'Essay On Applied Religion', Swami Budhananda discusses the problem of stagnation and 'Dark Night' on the spiritual journey and suggests remedies in the light of the teachings of holy scriptures and saints. Some of the other obstacles in spiritual life will be discussed by the Swami in the next essay.

It has been almost universally believed that Swami Vivekananda was unknown to Indian journalism before he attained worldwide celebrity at the Chicago Parliament of Religions. Even the fullest-yet biography of Swamiji does not contain any newspaper report or extract pertaining to his wandering days in India. But Swamiji was not a needle to be lost in a haystack. In spite of his diligent efforts for anonymity, people took immediate notice of him and spread their impressions to others. Rich and poor, scholars and humble folk, young and old—all were attracted to him. He took part

in dialogues and discussions, and, when opportunity offered, addressed small groups and big gatherings.

Sri Sankari Prasad Basu, Reader in Bengali, Calcutta University, and the noted co-author of *Swami Vivekananda in Indian Newspapers*, has, as the result of his indefatigable search into this period of Swamiji's life, come up with precious findings. He presents them in 'Swami Vivekananda in Madras—1892-93', himself providing background information on Swamiji's wandering days and his own researches. The article forms part of his unpublished research work in Bengali, *Vivekananda O Samakalin Bharatvarsha*, and has been translated by Swami Jitatmananda, a monk of the Order, for the *Prabuddha Bharata*. The translation has been slightly edited and a few explanatory footnotes have been added to it.

Though the paths of *jñāna* (knowledge) and *bhakti* (devotion) seem to be divergent at the beginning, middle and end, they in fact have basic common characteristics and goal. *Bhakti* begins in the search for limitless love and *jñāna* for shadowless wisdom. In the moment of fruition, both the *jñānī* and the *bhakta*—the latter in spite of himself—attain complete union with the Supreme Self (Paramātman). The means of renunciation and dispassion are also common—the *jñānī* renounces and turns away from all unreal and impermanent objects and relations, and the *bhakta* rejects all worldly loves and enjoyments for the love and joy of the Beloved. As the experiences and utterances of many mystics decisively show, it is the same goal, namely *Sat-cid-ānanda*, that is reached through both these disciplines. The follower of *jñāna* climbs to unitary consciousness by denying duality at every step, but when he climbs down from that sublime level, he uses the 'ladder of duality' and finds 'duality more delicious



than non-duality'. The follower of the path of love, on the other hand, wants to avoid union with the Beloved, all along the path. Though he succeeds at the lower levels, he is at the higher levels slowly but irresistibly drawn and assimilated to the Beloved. This unitary experience of the lover was once beautifully worded by Swami Vivekananda: 'Dearer unto me than I am myself. I would have no name for Thee. The nearest I can use is I....'

'The Place of *Bhakti* in Advaita Vedānta' is a comprehensive approach to a theme which apparently contains a contradiction. Swami Smaranananda brings to bear on this important theme scholarship and insight

to repudiate the seeming contradiction and reveal the inherent harmony.

We are offering our readers in this issue the final part of the musical trilogy on Swami Vivekananda by Erik Johns and John Schlenck, members of the Vedanta Society of New York. The first part dealing with the Swami's birth and childhood appeared in our January issue this year. The second, which described his spiritual quest and tutelage under Sri Ramakrishna, was published in May. For more details about this composition we refer our readers to the prefatory note published with the first instalment.

## REVIEWS AND NOTICES

LETTERS FROM SRI RAMANASRAMAM, BY SURI NAGAMMA, translated by D. S. Sastri, Published by Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai pp. 474., Price Rs. 10/-.

Sri Ramana Maharshi, the great Saint of Tiruvannamalai, taught more by silence than by speech. A good many of his discourses were recorded in Telugu by the devotee Suri Nagamma, and she mailed them to her nephew at Madras. These letters do not teach any system of philosophy in a methodical manner. But they are replete with great wisdom, a wisdom that comes from a teacher who has realized the non-dual Brahman. As a result these letters provide the richest introduction to theoretical and practical Advaita, to the layman and the *sadhaka* (spiritual aspirant) alike. Here are 241 letters of a devoted pious woman who never thought of publishing them. But when some of these were to be published, the Maharshi himself heard them read out, and gave his approval.

The rendering is extremely good. The translator deserves our gratitude. This is a book which everyone interested in the practical side of Advaita Vedanta should read.

DR. P. S. SASTRI

SRI-MA-DARSHAN : BY SWAMI NITYATMANANDA, Published by Sri Ramakrishna-Sri Ma Prakashan Trust, 579 sector 18-B, Chandigarh : Vol. XI, pp. 180, Vol. XII, pp. 204, Price Rs. 8/- each.

These two volumes are recent additions to the *Sri-Ma-Darshan* series. The conversations were recorded by Swami Nityatmananda in his diary while he had the good fortune to enjoy the holy company of Sri Mahendranath Gupta (Sri-Ma), the distinguished disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. From the study of these volumes the reader will see how Sri-Ma was an instrument of the divine Will in his householder's life. Sri Ramakrishna prayed to the Divine Mother to bless Sri-Ma with a little power so that he might remain among the householders and show them how to lead a life aimed at spiritual achievement.

These volumes point out how spiritual light was shed by Sri-Ma, enabling people to understand the broad ideas of Sri Ramakrishna and their translation into actual life. In Volume XI many valuable Sanskrit quotations find a place among the conversations. With a little more care, a number of spelling mistakes in these could have been avoided. The get-up is good and attractive.

SWAMI JYOTIRUPANANDA

## BOOKS RECEIVED

WHAT IS RELIGION ? By T. B. PAHLAJANI, 19, Kasturba Rd., Bangalore-1 (is also the Publisher ?), pp. 76, Price Rs. 1.50

GEMS FROM THE GITA: By M. P. PANDIT, Published by Ganesh and Co., Madras-17, 1974, pp. 128, Price Rs. 6/-

THE RAMAKRISHNA LEELASTHANAS (PILGRIM CENTRES OF MODERN INDIA):

By SWAMI BODHASWARUPANANDA, Published by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras-4, 1974, pp. 74, Price Rs. 1.75

A FEW ZOROASTRIAN FUNDAMENTALS: By DR. JAL K. WADIA (Author and Publisher), 1973 (?), pp. 36, Price not given

GODA'S "THE GARLAND OF SONGS": By V. RAJAGOPALAN, Published by Rajalakshmi Pathippakam, 3, Kondi Chetty St., Madras-1, 1974, pp. 83, Price Rs. 7/-

## NEWS AND REPORTS

SRI RAMAKRISHNA ASHRAMA,  
TRIVANDRUM, KERALA

On 4 June 1974, Rev. Swami Vireswaranandaji inaugurated the new building for the Outpatients' Clinic at the Charitable Hospital conducted by the Ashrama. Sri N. N. Wanchoo, Governor of Kerala, presided over the function. In the course of his Presidential address he said in part:

'It is not necessary for me at this date and time to speak at length on the dedicated humanitarian service which the Ramakrishna Mission has been rendering for the last nearly eighty years to our needy brothers and sisters. The Mission, which has as its motto 'Service of man is worship of God'<sup>1</sup> translates the ideal of Sri Ramakrishna into practice. Swami Vivekananda's inspiration which led to the founding of this noble Mission still guides its activities and illumines the path of all those who work in it. It is interesting to recall that the first organized social activity of the Ramakrishna Mission was in fighting the plague in Bengal in 1898. The tradition of helping suffering humanity which was then started has been strengthened over the years and has won for the Ramakrishna Mission a unique place of love and affection in the hearts of our countrymen.

'One may well ask what has been the reason for the wonderful success of this Mission, when many others have not been able to make the same impact on national life. I feel that there are three answers to this question. The first is the holy impulse given to it by its inspired founder, Swami Vivekananda, and its motto of service as worship.

<sup>1</sup> Or, as given by Swami Vivekananda, 'For one's own salvation and for the good of the world'.—Ed.

The second, I think, is the extraordinary combination amongst the members of this Mission of both contemplative faith on the one hand and socially useful activity on the other. Thirdly, what is most remarkable is that even though its socially useful activities have brought the Mission and its members into close contact with the public, the Mission has always remained politically uninvolved. Even during the last twenty-five years, when there has been tremendous political ferment in the country, this unique aloofness of the Mission from political involvement has been, if I may be permitted to say so, one of its most marked characteristics. The ability to work untainted by political involvement in the hurly-burly of modern life, for socially benevolent activities, is a tribute to the strength of character of the members of the Mission, which I think ultimately derives from the basic contemplative and meditative features of the movement. The Mission with its hospitals, schools, colleges and libraries is obviously involved in mundane affairs, and yet I am happy to note that it has known how to accept help for its projects without being influenced by the political policies of its helpers. I would like to take this occasion to publicly pay my tribute to the extraordinarily beneficent activities of the Mission, which its members have carried out in the spirit of devotion and truly in the spirit of the motto provided them by Swami Vivekananda. It is therefore a pleasure for me to be associated with today's function, which marks one more step in the endeavours of the Mission to expand the scope of its social service activities.

'I think I am only stating what everybody else is saying these days when I say that at the present juncture our country is facing a crisis of various aspects—an economic crisis, a crisis of character,



and a crisis of faith. In this dark situation, the Ramakrishna Mission with its noble motto and its gospel of the harmony of religions and humanitarian services and with its small band of dedicated workers, is a shining light.

The new building for the out-patients' clinic is a spacious one, and the very fact that the old building has now become too small and inadequate shows that the service which this hospital is rendering to the people round about is gratefully appreciated by them. I understand that this hospital was started in 1938 by the late Rao Bahadur Dr. K. Raman Thampi only as a small dispensary. It has over the last 35 years grown into a full-fledged hospital, due mainly to the organizing ability and zealous efforts of Swami Tapasyananda, who was President of the Ramakrishna Mission in Trivandrum for over thirty years. It is not necessary for me to enumerate the many facilities which are now available in the hospital, but I am glad that there is also a Nurse Midwife Training Centre where students are undergoing training and that this training is recognized by the Government. I consider that today's event marks another phase in the expansion of the services which the Ramakrishna Mission is rendering to our people, and I am sure that if more funds are available—as they are bound to be—the efforts of the Mission for further expanding the scope of its beneficent activities will be realized. It is also a matter of great pleasure that His Holiness Swami Vireswaranandaji Maharaj, who is the President of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, should have graciously consented to inaugurate the building. This in itself is a good augury for its success and usefulness.'

### VIVEKANANDA ASHRAMA SHYAMALA TAL (HIMALAYAS)

REPORT APRIL 1972—MARCH 1973

Founded in 1914, by Swami Virajananda, as a spiritual retreat for monks and devotees, this Ashrama's site was beautifully chosen. 1481 metres above sea-level in quiet forest-surroundings overlooking the river Kali (Sarada) which divides Nepal from India, the Ashrama has also a view of several great Himalayan snow-peaks. Swami Virajananda stayed here for many years, and often revisited the Ashrama even after becoming President of the Order.

Less than a year after its founding, there was felt an intense need for medical services to the local villagers, who till this day continue to be grossly under-cared-for despite the great services

of the Charitable Hospital and Dispensary. These were opened in 1915—as the Ramakrishna Sevashrama—and have steadily grown in size and usefulness: still there is no Hospital within 19 miles southwards or 35 miles north. Currently the Hospital has 12 beds and in this year treated 117 In-patients; the Outdoor patients' visits totalled 12,143, of which 5,576 were new and 6,567 repeated visits. All medicines, including injections and in some cases diet, were supplied free. An experienced and qualified physician is in residence.

In 1939, further, a Veterinary Unit was added; it too meets a widely-felt need since the animals are not only valued in themselves but also mainstays of the villagers' livelihood. In the current year, 279 animals were treated—indoor and outdoor.

The Ashrama itself, besides its basic function as spiritual retreat and pilgrim-centre, maintains: (1) a *Guest House* for the convenience of friends, sympathizers, devotees and *sadhus*—to provide opportunities for their spiritual practices; (2) a *Library* with 2377 books, as well as 216 more in the Patients' Library, and a reading room with 16 journals and two newspapers; (3) a *Dairy* supplying some, though not all, of the needed milk.

All those who wish to spend time at the Ashrama, in quiet meditation or other spiritual practices, may write in advance to the President of the Ashrama.

*Finances:* Swami Virajananda created a permanent fund for maintenance of this Centre, yielding annual interest of about Rs. 9,600 (of which Rs. 3,100 goes for the Sevashrama). But the total annual expenditure is nearly Rs. 34,000, of which Rs. 16,000 is for Sevashrama. The Headquarters at Belur do not give any financial assistance to any branch centre. This Centre therefore has to secure every year more than Rs. 24,000 additional; and for this it depends entirely on contributions from devotees and friends. No Government grant is given for the hospital.

*Immediate Needs:* In view of the above, plus the obvious inability of local villagers to give financial help, plus the absence of any market within 19 miles (greatly increasing cost of getting even daily necessities), all 'Needs' are greater than would ordinarily be expected. (1) The *residential buildings*, built by Swami Virajananda, need major repairs, totalling Rs. 20,000/-. (2) Improvement of *Dairy* requires Rs. 10,000/-. (3) To create permanent funds for upkeep and improvement of *Sevashrama* including Veterinary unit, plus for maintenance of the monks and the *Ashrama's* general activities: Rs. 50,000/-.