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Cover :

Kanchenjanga from Sandakphu

Photo: Bimal Dey



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No. 8

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

SRI RAMAKRISHNA REMINISCES

'No sooner was one state transcended than another took its place. Before that whirlwind, the sacred thread was blown away. Not only that, even the wearing cloth hardly remained.... Everyone thought I was mad. A slight stimulus from outside stirred the depths of my spiritual consciousness. Even a street girl appeared to me as Sita, going to greet her victorious husband.... In the Panchavati I would sit in deep meditation with my body perfectly still—losing all consciousness of the outside world. At that time, for want of proper care, my hair was matted. Birds would perch on my head and peck the grains of rice left there during the time of worship. Often snakes would crawl over my motionless body—and neither I nor the snakes knew it. Oh, what visions flitted past my eyes, day and night!...

'As I sat down to meditate, I would find a Sannyasin emerging from my body with a trident in hand and directing me to concentrate my mind on God, leaving aside all other thoughts. He threatened to plunge his weapon into my body if I did not do so. When the Papa-Purusha (personification of sin) came out of my body, it was the same Sannyasin who killed him. When I wished to see some deities in distant places or participate in religious chantings held far off, I would see this shining figure step out of my body, go along a luminous path to those places, and re-enter my body after fulfilling the particular desires.'

*

'I became mad. Narayan Shastri came here and saw me roaming about with a bamboo pole on my shoulder. He said to the people, "Ah, he is mad!" In that state I could not observe any caste restrictions. The wife of a lowcaste man used to send me cooked greens, and I ate them.'

*

'Far from such a state being fully produced in ordinary people's bodies and minds, one fourth of such changes is enough to bring their lives to an end. I remained occupied with some vision or other of the Mother during the greater part of the day and night; that saved the situation; otherwise it would have been impossible for this sheath (showing his body) to survive.'

I had no sleep at all for six long years. The eyes lost the power of winking; I could not close the eyes in spite of all my efforts. I had no idea of the passing of time and was not at all conscious of the body. When the attention turned from Mother to the body, even if a little, I felt apprehensive, thinking, "Am I on the verge of insanity?" I stood before a mirror and put my finger into my eyes to see whether the eyelids closed; I found the eyelids were even then equally incapable of winking; I became alarmed and wept, complaining to Mother: "Mother, is this the result of calling on Thee? Is it the result of my absolute reliance on Thee that Thou hast given this terrible disease to this body?" And the next moment I said: "Let anything happen to this. Let the body go, if it is to do so; but see that Thou dost not forsake me. Do reveal Thyself to me and bestow Thy grace on me; for, Mother, I have utterly taken refuge at Thy lotus feet and have absolutely no support except Thee." I used to weep thus for some time, when my mind would again be filled with extraordinary ecstasy. The body appeared to be a trifling thing—something unworthy of attention. Then I was blessed with Her vision and consoled by Her words assuring freedom from fear.'

*

'When I meditated under the bel-tree I used to see various visions clearly. One day I saw in front of me money, a shawl, a tray of sandesh, and two women. I asked my mind, "Mind, do you want any of these?" I saw the sandesh to be mere filth. One of the women had a big ring in her nose. I could see both their inside and outside—entrails, filth, bone, flesh, and blood. The mind did not want any of these—money, shawl, sweets, or women. It remained fixed at the Lotus Feet of God.

'A small balance has two needles, the upper and the lower. The mind is the lower needle. I was always afraid lest the mind should move away from the upper needle—God. Further, I would see a man always sitting by me with a trident in his hand. He threatened to strike me with it if the lower needle moved away from the upper one.

'But no spiritual progress is possible without the renunciation of "woman and gold". I renounced these three: land, wife, and wealth. Once I went to the Registry Office to register some land, the title of which was in the name of Raghuvir. The officer asked me to sign my name; but I didn't do it, because I couldn't feel that it was "my" land.'

ONWARD FOR EVER!

This way, this method, to which each of us is naturally adapted, is called the 'chosen way'. This is the theory of Ishta, and that way which is ours we call our own Ishta. For instance, one man's idea of God is that He is the omnipotent Ruler of the universe. His nature is perhaps such. He is an overbearing man who wants to rule everyone; he naturally finds God an omnipotent Ruler. Another man, who was perhaps a school-master, and severe, cannot see any but a just God, a God of punishment, and so on. Each one sees God according to his own nature; and this vision, conditioned by our own nature, is our Ishta. We have brought ourselves to a position where we can see that vision of God, and that alone; we cannot see any other vision. You will perhaps sometimes think of the teaching of a man that it is the best and fits you exactly, and the next day you ask one of your friends to go and hear him; but he comes away with the idea that it was the worst teaching he had ever heard. He is not wrong, and it is useless to quarrel with him. The teaching was all right, but it was not fitted to that man. To extend it a little further, we must understand that truth seen from different stand-points can be truth, and yet not the same truth.

Chakravarthi

THE YOGA OF THE BHAGAVAD-GITĀ

EDITORIAL

I

Significantly, the colophon at the end of each chapter of the *Bhagavad-gītā* refers to the *Gītā* as an Upaniṣad, expounding the knowledge of Brahman (*brahma-vidyā*), and at the same time teaching the way of attaining that knowledge (*yoga-sāstra*). In strict orthodox classification the *Gītā* comes in the group of the *smṛti* texts (the epics, code of Manu, etc.) and not the *sruti* (Vedas including the Upaniṣads). Nevertheless, the acclamation in each colophon is acceptable to all the traditional commentators on the *Gītā*, who regard its authority as almost on a par with that of the Upaniṣads. Like them, the *Gītā* is deeply metaphysical, ranging over the whole gamut from duality to non-duality. This is borne out by the fact that almost all the great system-builders in Hindu philosophy have written commentaries on it, trying to show that the *Gītā* lends support to their respective schools of philosophy. The knowledge of the Ātman—or Brahman—is the central theme of the Upaniṣads, and it is no less so with the *Gītā*. The teaching given by Śrī Kṛṣṇa to Arjuna had the purpose of dispelling the cloud of ignorance and sorrow, overspreading Arjuna's essential spiritual nature. And this was accomplished, as is clear from Arjuna's avowal at the end of the dialogue, by the complete destruction of his ignorance and sorrow in the wake of attainment of the memory of his true Self. 'This self', asserts the Upaniṣad, 'is Brahman'. That the *Gītā* teaches the different practical methods of attaining to this self-knowledge, should be apparent to anyone who has devotedly studied it. While the Upaniṣads emphasize almost always the way of knowledge (*jñāna-yoga*), the *Gītā*'s teaching—eminently practical—is broad-spectrum. The yogas of knowledge,

work, devotion, and psychic control are stressed as well as various combinations of two or more of these ways.

To a seeker of metaphysical profundity, the *Gītā* affords as much of it as the Upaniṣads. But in making a philosophical approach to a scripture like the *Gītā*, one misses its essential transforming and illuminating influence. A spiritual aspirant's approach to a holy book necessarily differs from that of a philosophical student. The former hungers for spiritual insights, inspiration, and illumination; the latter looks for cerebral stimulation, logical rigour, and intellectual satisfaction. The philosophical approach yields only the outer doctrinal shell; but the spiritual bestows the inner kernel of divine illumination and joy. Scriptural study, undertaken with the proper attitude of reverence and receptivity, will become a part and parcel of spiritual striving (*sādhana*). To such a student only does the *Gītā* become a storehouse of spiritual wisdom and a guidebook for attaining that wisdom.

Spiritually extremely subtle and sublime as the Upaniṣads are, they require a certain high standard of preparation and eligibility in their students. The *Gītā*, on the other hand, is not so demanding of its students. What however the *Gītā* insists upon is a keen spiritual earnestness. In this Arjuna provides an object-lesson. He was torn by a moral conflict in connection with the discharge of his duties as a ksatriya leader. Blinded by delusion, attachment, and false pity, he wanted to relinquish his own dharma (duty) and take up the dharma of a mendicant monk. He also knew in his heart of hearts that Śrī Kṛṣṇa alone could guide him out of the slough of despond into which he had fallen. So he unconditionally took refuge in Him, declaring, 'I am Your disciple; please instruct me who have taken refuge in You.' Like Arjuna, a student of the *Gītā* should earnestly and humbly seek

the Lord's guiding light. The Lord's voice is still vibrating in its verses. It is that divine voice that an earnest student hears, and as it dispelled Arjuna's delusion, so the student's will gradually be removed, revealing the luminous infinite Self.

Unlike the Upaniṣads which do not compromise with man's weaknesses, the *Gītā* recognizes human limitations and sympathizes with us. It also provides for man's need for dependence on a higher being. Man is active by nature. Activity (action, karma) is built into man's every cell and tissue, impulse and thought. But activity begets bondage and misery. Without overcoming this proneness to activity and the craving for the results of action, man cannot find peace and freedom. The *Gītā*, while pointing out the cosmic fact that activity proceeds from the Supreme Lord, shows a way out of the karmic bondage. That way is the yoga of selfless action, of dedicated activity, of loving surrender to the will of the Lord while performing all one's duties as worship.

II

The second and third chapters of the *Gītā* are called respectively the 'Way of Knowledge' ('Sāṅkhya-yoga') and the 'Way of Work' ('Karma-yoga'). By these names we may be led to think that two different yogas are taught by Śrī Kṛṣṇa here. But it is not so. At the beginning of the fourth chapter, the Lord says to Arjuna that the yoga (mark the use of the singular number) taught him just now had been taught long, long ago to Vivasvān (the sun-god). Śaṅkara, in his brief introduction to the fourth chapter and particularly its first verse, has a remarkably incisive explanation. He says:

'The yoga, which is devoted to knowledge, compounded with renunciation, and attainable by the means of performance of action (*karma-yogopāyah*), has been taught in the (preceding) two chap-

ters. In it thus are comprehended both the life of activity (*pravṛtti*) and the life of retirement (*nivṛtti*) which are declared by the Vedas. It is this yoga alone that has been taught by the Lord throughout the *Gītā*.¹

Man, as the Vedas and the *Gītā* see him, is tossed about in the river of life that has two equally strong but 'opposing' currents, *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti*. The whole phenomenal universe in which man finds himself a helpless, insignificant participant, is the resultant of these two mighty cosmic forces. He can neither give up one and take the other, nor give up both and get out of the stream altogether. Even the most outgoing, dynamic man has some undercurrents, however feeble, of inwardness and introspection. The person who retires altogether from life's stream finds that the 'stream' is not really external at all, but almost entirely internal: his physiological and psychological activities are the real river of life. The ordinary, spiritually numb person may not be aware of this fundamental fact. But the spiritually awakened person is poignantly aware of it, and oft-times may find himself torn by those currents, like Arjuna on the battlefield; and he does not know how to get out of this grim human situation.

The *Gītā* is deeply aware of this dilemma and, out of compassion, points the way to man to find peace and freedom even in the midst of the turbulent river of life. Basically the goal that the *Gītā* sets for man is realization of his spiritual nature, or of union with the Godhead. For this, man need not relinquish either of the streams, for both of them proceed from the same transcendental, all-pervading spiritual reality. Rather, man should make use of even the powerful, complex currents of *pravṛtti* to reach his ultimate goal, self-realization. How to do it? The means is the 'yoga of evenness' taught by the *Gītā*.¹ Work incessantly,

it says, but remain calm, in balance, by cutting off all craving for results. Some result, to be sure, accrues in the wake of every action, whether you gloat over it or ignore. But why forfeit your calmness, your freedom, by fussing over a thing which inevitably follows one as one's shadow? It is this fussing, gloating, or anxiety over the results of one's actions—this deep attachment—which brings on more and more bondage by re-enforcing egoism. Remain at peace, balanced, whether you succeed or fail. But never cease to do your allotted duty, whatever is your own dharma by constitution or circumstances. By cultivating this spirit of detachment, continuing to work even-minded in success and failure, you will transmute the typically bondage-breeding karma into a bondage-breaker. This is the 'skill' (*kauśalam*) in karma which is also called yoga by the *Gītā*.² Here 'evenness' and 'skill in action' are interlinked as cause and effect. Insofar as a person remains even-minded with respect to favourable and unfavourable consequences of his actions, these actions develop this new potentiality—the skill to destroy bondage.

III

Moreover, besides the interpretations of yoga as 'evenness of mind' and 'skill in action'—most notable contributions of the *Gītā*—the word yoga is used by it in many other meanings and nuances. Yoga, in its etymological sense, means 'to join' or 'bring together'. It thus signifies the union of the individual soul with the Supreme Soul. By extension, whatever means helps in bringing about this union, is also called yoga. It is in this sense that the colophon at the end of each chapter calls that particular chapter a yoga: the third chapter is called 'karma-yoga', the sixth, 'yoga of meditation', and so on. Patañjali, the great teacher of yoga,

¹ II. 48

² II. 50

defines yoga as 'the restraining of all mental modifications'. The *Gītā* uses the word in this sense too.³ A definition that the *Gītā* itself gives of yoga is interesting: 'Let that be known as yoga which is severance from the contact of misery.' This definition implies that yoga is a state of bliss untouched by and inaccessible to the senses. The word 'misery', says Śrīdharaswāmī in his gloss *Subodhinī*, also includes sense-happiness, for that is always mixed with suffering.

Though as we have seen, the *Gītā* teaches the disinterested performance of action for its own sake—*niṣkāma-karma-yoga*—, its main emphasis is on dedicating all one's actions to God. This kind of karma-yoga is especially favoured by the *Gītā*. A God-centred life is repeatedly recommended. In two unusually beautiful verses, the *Gītā* speaks of 'work' (duty) as 'worship':

'Man attains high perfection by devotion to his own duty. Hear from me, O Arjuna, how perfection is attained by him who is devoted to his own duty. '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.'⁴

Furthermore, the *Gītā* uses the word yoga with great significance and amplification of meaning in combination with some words like *sannyāsa* (renunciation), *ananya* (single-minded), *abhyāsa* (repeated practice). In all these instances, yoga has the connotation of concentration of mind on God or the Ātman. As these compounds have deep implications, we may well discuss a few of them here.

Sannyāsa-yoga: Arjuna is asked by Śrī Kṛṣṇa to dedicate all his actions, even the most ordinary such as eating, to the Supreme, and thereby attain God.

'Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer in sacrifice, whatever you give away, and whatever you practise in the form of austerities, O son of Kuntī—do it as an offering to Me. 'Thus shall you be free from the bondage of actions, which bear good or evil results. With your mind firmly set on the yoga of renunciation (*sannyāsa-yoga*) you shall become free and come to Me.'⁵

It is *sannyāsa* or a continuous giving up of all selfish motives and desires, which ultimately shatters the very stronghold of 'I' and 'mine'—namely, the ego. What more can *sannyāsa* mean that this continuous and liberating relinquishment of selfishness and egoism? It is also yoga because, as Śaṅkara says, all works are then done as an offering to God. Thus the mind is in constant contemplation of God. And this offering and contemplation confer purification of the soul and elevation of spirit which culminate in the vision of and union with God.

Ananya-yoga: A true lover of God consecrates all his actions to Him, meditates on Him constantly with single-minded concentration (*ananyena yogena*), and looks upon Him as the highest goal. To such a devotee, the Lord ultimately reveals Himself, thereby putting an end to the devotee's transmigratory existence.⁶ What is stressed here is the need for a devotee to become attached to God only. His mind should not be a victim of divided or multiple loyalties. Only then can he love God with fierce intensity. He then becomes, as Sri Ramakrishna says, a magnet—as it were attracting God to himself.

Abhyāsa-yoga: Arjuna is taught that if he is unable to fix his mind steadily on the Lord, then he must seek to attain him by *abhyāsa-yoga* (yoga of constant practice).⁷ Since the human mind is by nature scatter-

³ VII. 1 (*vide*: commentaries of Śaṅkarācārya and Madhusūdana Sarasvatī on this verse.)

⁴ XVIII. 45-6

⁵ IX. 27-8

⁶ *vide*: XII. 6-7

⁷ *vide*: XII. 9

ed, plagued by conscious and unconscious distractions, it is difficult to fix it on God or the spiritual ideal. But none on that account should despair. By constant vigilance and practice, even this mind can be made to settle at the feet of God. Constant remembrance of the Lord attained by repeated withdrawal of the scattered mind, as Śrīdharaswāmin hints, is what is meant here by *abhyāsa-yoga*. And that brings in the long or short run, an unwavering flow of divine thought.

Buddhi-yoga: The *buddhi* or determinative faculty in man is the key factor in his life and character. It is supremely important in the inner, contemplative life. For it is with the strong discriminative *buddhi* that a spiritual aspirant holds on to his ideals and practices, in the face of sense attractions and temptations. The *buddhi* gets a special nourishment and strength through divine contemplation and self-control. It is with that strength only that it can resist external attractions. Therefore Arjuna is advised to 'resort to *buddhi-yoga*' and thereby remain anchored in God.⁸ In another place in the *Gītā*, the Lord says that He bestows *buddhi-yoga* on those devotees who are constant, and who lovingly worship Him. By its help they attain His vision.⁹ Here, according to Śāṅkara, *buddhi-yoga* is the development of that special faculty by whose help a devotee is able to perceive the truth of God. For such a devotee there is no more any possibility of coming under the sway of delusion and sense attraction.

IV

Each chapter of the *Gītā*, as we have noted, is called by the name of a certain yoga. But mainly, in accordance with human

psychological needs, the yogas may be said to be four in number: those of work, of devotion, of knowledge, of psychic control. Yet the *Gītā*, which looks on man in a total perspective, seems strongly to recommend to spiritual seekers a combination of two or more basic yogas. This is borne out by the judiciously mixed nature of the contents of each chapter. For instance, the second chapter, which is entitled the 'Way of Knowledge' deals also with the theme of karma-yoga.¹⁰ The third chapter, entitled 'Karma-yoga', also reveals elements of *bhakti* (devotion)¹¹ and *jñāna* (knowledge).¹² And this is true of most if not all other chapters. Nevertheless, a few of these exhibit the spirit of yoga-synthesis to a remarkable degree: chapters five, six, eight, nine, and eighteen.

Thus in conclusion we will only quote two of the many passages which embody essential elements of two or more yogas. And these may be considered as typifying the harmony of yogas taught by the *Gītā*:

'He who does My work and looks on Me as the Supreme Goal, who is devoted to Me, who is without attachment and without hatred for any creature—he comes to Me, O Arjuna.'¹³

'Shutting out all external objects; fixing the gaze of his eyes between his brows; equalizing the outward and inward breaths moving in his nostrils; controlling his senses, mind, and understanding; being ever bent on liberation; ridding himself of desire, fear and anger—such a man of contemplation is indeed always free.'

'And having known Me, who am the Dispenser of all sacrifices and austerities, the great Lord of all worlds, the Friend of all beings, he attains peace.'¹⁴

¹⁰ *vide*: II. 47-51

¹¹ III. 9, 30

¹² III. 38-43

¹³ XI. 55

¹⁴ V. 27-9

⁸ *vide*: XVIII. 57

⁹ *vide*: X. 10

LETTERS OF A SAINT

The Math, Belur P.O.
Howrah
9.5.17

My dear Doctor,

...I am glad to find that you are no more nervous to go to Burma, but are confident of your internal strength. That is very well. But at the same time you must be very careful and not too much overconfident. Yes, better to wear out than rust out. So it would be nice if you can get something to do when you have the mind to do so and the circumstances require it too. Yes Rama and yourself are quite right, and I am also not different in opinion with you both. I trust Mother will help and protect you wherever you be and will not let you go astray....

Trusting this will find you well and prosperous, with sincere prayer to Mother for your true well-being.

Yours in the Lord
TURIYANANDA

Sasi Niketan,
Puri
28th June 1917

My dear Doctor,

I am in receipt of your kind letter without date just this morning. I received your another letter dated 14-6-17 duly. I thank you for both of them. You are so very kind to me. But the Mother has not freed me yet from ear-ache fully. Sankarananda and myself went to the Government dispensary here this morning, and saw the Civil Surgeon for medical advice. Let us see how we get the benefit of it. We have been doing almost everything that you have asked us to do in your letter since these twenty days. But who can take away the suffering before it is completely endured? I must wait till Mother is pleased to relieve me in her good time....

How I long to see you and like to be with you! But Mother's ways are different. She knows as you say what is best and let us abide by Her decrees. I know She is very kind to us all and will do the needful to take us to Her arms. Wishing you all success, and trusting this will find you well and prosperous and with my best wishes and love to you as ever,

Yours affectionately,
TURIYANANDA

Sasi Niketan,
Puri
9th August/17

My dear Doctor,

You need not trouble yourself about freedom from work so soon. Mother knows well when it would suit you and She shall arrange it that way in Her good time. Of course, you should have time for meditation above everything else. You must have time to think of Mother without which none can get along all right. I know you will be able to make time for that anyway. Some way will open for that no doubt. Wait and see how it works in that direction. I felt uneasy when you were without employment, and I am so glad to find you now in the midst of work. What does it matter whether you be in Rangoon, or Madras, or in Naini Tal so long as you are well and prosperous, and under the care of Mother? May Mother keep you always in Her arms and protect you evermore....

Swami Brahmananda is feeling not very well at Puri this time. He may take a change in Bhubaneshwar shortly. Bhubaneshwar is a very healthy place indeed, and he may feel all right there. You will be pleased to hear that about five acres of land have been purchased in Bhubaneshwar by the Swami only recently in order to start an Ashram there before long. It would be nice to have a place there so near to the Math and so healthy and beautiful at the same time. The Swami has an idea of raising a few rooms on the land presently to make it habitable just now [?]....

Hoping this will find you free from all ailments and troubles, and in the enjoyment of sound health, and peace of mind, with my best wishes and love to you as ever,

Yours affectionately,
TURIYANANDA

Sasi Niketan,
Puri
22nd August/17

My dear Doctor,

...You need not be anxious for making any plans. Mother will show you the way in time and direct you which course to follow. I am so glad you have time for meditation, and that you do take advantage of it. How excellent that is. It is meditation alone that shall keep you in direct touch with Mother....

Yours affectionately,
TURIYANANDA

GOD AND THE OTHER GOD

SWAMI ASHOKANANDA

(Continued from the previous issue)

III

Here now we come to this proposition: If we talk of creation from the standpoint of God (remembering the conditions made earlier), then we have to say that God, as it were, becomes associated with *māyā* and out of *māyā* an infinite number of forms proceed in their own graded stages. We say also that He Himself becomes all the substances there are: the substance of me, of you, of a tree, of a stone. Wherever there is anything that becomes an object of perception and has substance, He is the substance of that.

If you say, 'I might accept that the substance of a conscious being is God, who is conscious Being Himself, but I cannot think that the substance of a stone is God, because a stone is matter and God cannot be matter', then I should again remind you that the substance of everything is the same. The difference is a difference in form only. So we say God Himself has become the substance of everything; it is He who, as it were, has enclosed Himself in these different forms: it is He who has become all these different things—some mental and some physical.

Now, when we think of the whole creation of the universe in aggregate, we can think of cosmic intelligence, which is the intelligence of God; cosmic mind, which is the mind of God; cosmic life, the life of God; and cosmic matter, the body of God. In short, there is a cosmic Being, God, and He has cosmic intelligence, mind, life and body. But whenever you think in individual units, and not in this universal aggregate, at once you think of individual souls,

which I am and you are: individual intelligence, individual mind, individual life, individual body. Are these individual souls, minds, and so on, separate and different from this cosmic soul? No. The idea is that on each level there is an aggregate made up of individuals. This aggregate is not a mere summation: every aggregate is more than the summation of individual units; the very summation gives it a certain unity and individuality surpassing the mere aggregate. An inconceivably large number of cells make a living body, and this body as a whole has a function of its own transcending the summation of the individual cells. There comes something over and above the mere aggregate of individuals, a sort of over-soul as it were. Similarly, it is said that the cosmic intelligence is not made up of the limitations of the individual intelligence, but is a surpassing intelligence transcending all these. The same may be said of our minds, bodies, and souls, too. God is not just the summation of our individual souls banded together. There is an organic unity surpassing the mere summation of individuals, and that is the divine individuality called God. That is the general way the relationship between the individual soul and the cosmic soul is put by Vedānta philosophers.

Another view is that just as out of a fire many sparks fly, so out of this divine soul many souls proceed. They are of the same quality, the same nature as the fire, but they are parts of the fire and not the whole. The soul seems somewhat limited, compared with God: God is all-knowing and all-powerful; we who are only parts of God are limited in knowledge and power.

(Remember that this is an attempt to explain how we have become what we are now—ignorant of our true nature.) Brahman is the knower of all, we are knowers of little; His intelligence is illumined, enlightened; our intelligence suffers from darkness; His mind is all-powerful, our mind, being a part, is very limited. This is the distinction that has been made.

Therefore it has been said that as long as we are in this state we must look up to God as our Lord and Father, that we should look up to the omniscience of God for guidance, pray to Him, adore Him. This is the view that has been generally accepted all over India, and you will find it is not much different from the theological conclusions of other religions; they too have spoken of the dependence of the soul on God; you find a great similarity if not sameness among theistic religions.

This view of souls, of their dependence on God, of their being parts of God, this view that the individual man's intelligence is clouded and different from the cosmic intelligence of God, is the general view that commands our attention, whether we have known it from philosophical study or have been told it in an unphilosophical way. And this view has created a peculiar situation in the mind of man. If I say: 'O man, why are you weeping? You, the infinite One, why are you lamenting? In you is all power, truth, and blessedness. What are you lacking?', you will reply: 'That is not philosophically correct. It is a nice pep talk, but it is not meant literally. I can accept it as superstition, but how can I take it seriously?'

Here I shall join issue with these theories of man's dependence on God, whatever their source. Even if you don't accept that the soul is the 'other God', it is literally true. The soul is no different from Brahman, *no* different. If you say: 'Why not? A spark is certainly different from

the fire; it is all very well to say that the spark is the same in quality as fire, but quantity also counts. Look at our mind and intelligence: we are full of ignorance, whereas God's intelligence is full of truth and knowledge. Why should we not accept this difference?', I would reply: 'Yes, we have accepted that this difference is there. The question is, is there any valid justification for accepting it? I say there is no justification.'

Here again I shall lapse into philosophical disquisition. If you want to believe that souls are only parts of God, like sparks of fire, you will find that certain Vedāntins have presented various theories, and of these, two are essential. One is the reflection theory, the other the partition theory. The reflection theory is put this way: just as the sun is reflected in oceans, rivers, lakes, pools, or even in dew-drops, so there are these infinite reflections of Brahman. According to the partition theory, this Infinite Soul, Brahman, becomes partitioned by these little souls. There is a vast body of water in which are sunk many hollow forms. We say the water within this form is mine; this is yours; this is his. Or, as it is usually explained, there are many vessels, and a space is enclosed by each vessel. There is a space enclosed in these walls, or in a little pot, or in this vast firmament we see. It is the same space, but when it is enclosed by a small vessel it looks small, and when it is enclosed by a large vessel it looks large. It is as if these vessels had partitioned this infinite space, and that gives the idea of limited space. These are the two views.

But the question is—who is saying there has been this partition? Who is saying this soul is a reflection? Reflection in what? Again they say, in *māyā*, that mysterious thing out of which forms have come. It is said that Brahman is reflected in *māyā* and *māyā* has become manifold and there-

fore Brahman appears as many souls. According to the things in which It is reflected It appears large or small. If the sun is reflected in muddy water, the reflection looks muddy; the same reflection in a mirror blazes like the sun itself and your eyes get dazzled. A reflection on the earth won't dazzle your eyes at all. It is the thing in which the reflection appears that gives character to the reflection. So we sometimes think, I am sinful, I am virtuous, I am strong, I am weak, I am ignorant, or I am learned. These differences are made by my mind and intelligence, on which the Divine Substance is reflected. If my mind is restless, the reflection is cloudy and I feel confused; but if my mind is calm, I feel wonderful; I understand everything. It is the condition of mind that makes the difference.

But I ask again, 'Who is it that makes this difference in the condition of mind?' Consider the one weakness in the whole argument. I say I am a bad person or an ignorant person. Why? Because this body and mind and intelligence are not so good. But how did it become a bad mind and intelligence to begin with? This explanation is required: it is because I have been thinking of myself as a bad person. This is an argument in a circle. I am saying I have an ignorant mind because I feel so, and I feel so because I have an ignorant mind. That is really the whole essence of the problem. For instance, the cosmological argument that this Divine Self, this Brahman, is reflected in all these small forms would be true if already there were a limited mind on which God were reflected. But the very existence of this ignorant, limited mind or intelligence is dependent on my thinking that my mind is so ignorant or that I am so limited.

In other words, I am casting doubt on these cosmological theories—a very bold thing to do. You will find that at once the

philosophers will stand up and say, 'You cannot say that! Do you mean to say that the great teachers of Vedānta were mistaken and that you have discovered their mistake?' No, I am a modest man; yet truth has neither modesty nor arrogance.

I pointed out in the beginning that in the study of cosmology there is a shifting of ground. At one time you look at it from your standpoint, at another time you try to imagine how it would appear in the eyes of God or of a person who no longer identifies himself with body and mind. You should continually go from one standpoint to the other; you should never stop at one. Even in our sense experience, we are continually shifting ground: If I want to see what a mountain is like, I move from one side to the other and view it from all directions. From the east, it looks steep and bleak. I move to the western side and find a beautiful slope covered with wonderful trees. If I had looked from only the east side, I would have said, 'What a bleak mountain!' But when we come to the study of philosophy, we have a strange fixity of viewpoint, and all we do is try to proceed correctly and logically from this one view. How, then, can we expect to have a true idea of things? I admit that even if we *want* to see things from the standpoint of God, we really do not know how He looks at them. But that does not mean our present viewpoint is right. It does not make us correct; it only makes us helpless. Others may not think they need to be so helpless.

The question is, how did this small mind come? It is here now, but in the beginning of creation it was not here. I know my mind; somehow it is limited and it is small. If I have to think that it has limited the Infinite Being and given rise to my idea of myself as small, I may accept that. This mind or intelligence is limited, and my self is so mixed up with this intelligence that it can measure itself only in limited terms. So

it is no wonder I think of myself as small. But what right have I to think this is an ultimate state? This is only my *own* state. So I make again this bold statement: only when we look at things with our ignorant mind is such a theory acceptable.

There is no justification for thinking that in the beginning man was created as a small being by God, or as a part of God, or as associated with an ignorant mind. There is no justification for thinking that until man realizes God he will always remain inferior to Him and should be looked upon as different from Him. I don't accept that. I say if you want to continue to think that you are a small person, that your mind is small, and that you are bound up with this mind, you will of course continue to think that you are a small soul and that there is this vast, infinite God above you. It is no wonder that with this view you find God so confusing and bewildering. What devotee has not cried: 'Mysterious are Your ways, O Lord! Why You make Your devotees and good people suffer and sinful people prosper, I do not understand. Although You have the power to grant salvation, men still remain in bondage to a life of sin and ignorance!' No wonder when we think as we do, the ways of God remain profoundly mysterious, and no adequate answer ever comes. But we are not compelled to think this way.

IV

How, then, should we think? I shall make this cautious statement: You cannot say, 'I am the cosmic life, the cosmic mind, the cosmic being.' That is very wonderful, but you cannot start with it. It will be against your present conception, and you will at once know it is a pretension. But this you can do: you can say, 'Large or small, I am neither this body, this life, this mind, nor this intelligence.' If you tell me, 'That also is a pretension; it is not real', I

will answer it is not real because it is an unrealized fact, not because it is against fact. It would be against fact to say, 'My mind is infinite'; your present experience will contradict it. But if you say now, 'I am not the body and mind, not this physical and mental being', and if you persist in it, you will find that the path becomes clear. You will realize that you are not body and mind, and you can make progress.

Why do I make this distinction? Because at present you estimate the Infinite Mind in terms of this small mind; so if you say you are the Infinite Mind, you will only be magnifying the smallness of your mind. All you will accomplish will be to become demoniacal, and that won't do. There have been many demons like this in the world. They magnify their smallness quantitatively, and as a consequence they bring about terrible destruction.

So say to yourself, 'I am not this body, not this mind', and you will find there is no reason to think you have been created small and are associated with a small mind. Dissociate yourself by repeating this statement, and you will not have to explain where this small mind and body came from; it will not matter: you are not any of these things.

A time comes when actually you feel separated from the body, even though apparently living in the body. Things pertaining to the body seem extraneous. If this robe gets torn I shall know it, but still this robe is extraneous to my body. Similarly this body and mind will appear extraneous. Body and mind are literally just vestures of the soul; both are separated from the soul. To know this is to be eternal; for when you realize that state, you don't see any distinction between yourself and God. You might think that is a highly egotistical statement. No, there is no ego there; when you are separated from the mind, ego goes. You feel that Divinity is your true nature.

It is from a practical standpoint that trouble arises. Because we think we are small and distinct, we think others are small and distinct. And we like to know them that way so that we may love them, stop loving them, hate them, and thus play our game in this life. Let us be honest about it: we want to indulge in this game of life; therefore we find we are associated with a small mind, a clouded intelligence; we find we are like a blurred reflection of the sun in a muddy pool, our consciousness of our own self is so clouded and limited and ignorant.

But we don't have to do it. At this moment we can say: 'No, I don't want to play this game of life, this game of hating and loving and running after petty gains. I don't want to play this game. I don't want to be associated with this mind and body. Let them be what they like; I am not the mind and body, I am the Spirit, and I won't be identified with them.' Do that, and you will find the whole theory of the creation of the soul and of the small mind becomes abolished. The whole thing falls to the ground. As long as we think in this present way, that theory is the best we can have. But we are not bound to think like this; if it is true that we are not this body and mind, the theory which differentiates us from God cannot be correct. The truth can be only this: The same Absolute Divinity reflects Himself, as it were, in continuously different ways in this *māyā*. Just as young people stand before a mirror preening themselves, looking this way and that, so Brahman is playing in front of this mirror of *māyā*. Yes, I shall admit that Brahman is reflected in *māyā*. But there is no question of small or large. It is true that He, as it were, makes Himself manifold. There is, as it were, a series of mirrors, and He looks into all these mirrors and sees many forms of Himself. But each is the 'other God'. *Each is the other God*. Man is

nothing but God Himself in another form, and therefore it is true to say that man is the other God.

The idea of blasphemy that might accompany the feeling that man is the other God will at once disappear from your mind if you remember that the difference you make between God and man is based solely on the idea that you have to identify yourself with the small mind. But you do not have to do that. Disidentify yourself from the mind. Disidentification, of course, contains within itself the destruction of this foolish dream, this game of life you are playing. You must stop this game of attachment, detachment, loving, hatred, greed. Make a bundle of the whole thing and drop it into the Pacific Ocean, the ocean of pacification. You cannot be disidentified from this mind and intelligence and at the same time be identified with playing this game. If you stop this game, you will find *this* mind will become the cosmic mind. This mind will be the cosmic mind because it is the cosmic mind.

Isn't it odd! There is somewhere some little aberration. It was certainly not there in the beginning. As long as we think this is a normal state we trace it to God; but we do not have to do so. Consider the psychological and moral effect of dissociating yourself from this state! I have already mentioned it, but consider further how it will be. Consider the tremendous burden of this limited being! It is constituted of the memories of many lives of finite relationships; therefore it is all mental. Just as one becomes free of all sorrow by following Buddha's teaching of no-soul—when he tells us there is no soul, we throw off all worries about heaven and hell, about past, present, and future, and consciousness enters that realm called Nirvāṇa—just so, the whole thing will drop off if you dissociate yourself from the mind and body. Consciousness has never belonged to time;

nor has it ever belonged to any states of mind.

If we dissociate ourselves from these states, at this moment the truth will be ours. I see your face; I do not have to say, 'What a beautiful face!' or 'How ugly, how intelligent, how strange, how pure, how impure.' I do not have to say any of those things. My eyes will learn not to see a physical face at all. It is the one Spirit that we are mistakenly seeing as matter, and when our minds have become clear there will not be any physical, material face for us to see. Everywhere we will see Divinity shining. It is not that God has become a man. God is always God; what we will see is the same God shining in different ways. This is the vision that comes.

If you still have to act here, what will you do, what will you think? If your mind and body remain, you will not be a prisoner of them; tremendous forces of goodness and truth will flow from your being! Think what you will be able to inspire in others! Of course you won't have to think about it. If you know that there is God and nothing but God and that what you have called

man is nothing but the other God, you will be in the very heart of truth.

Whatever philosophers and theologians may say to show how man was created, I say the whole thing is like a novel telling about all the dirt and filth of mankind and filling volumes, but still telling only a small portion of human life. When the theologians speak of the bondage and ignorance of man, they tell only a small portion of a small period of man's history. The larger history of man is that man *is* God.

This fact has not been appreciated. In the past it has been said that these are high truths and should not be given to the masses. Even that assumption was wrong: it was an assumption by some men that other men were ignorant; that assumption was only indicative of their own ignorance. The time has come when even such pretence is not possible. Let us flood our own minds and the minds of others with this most profound truth; that man is always God, God only, and nothing but God. Let us speak of it, let us feel it, and let us act upon it and realize it.

(Concluded)

LOVE OF GOD

SWAMI BUDHANANDA

I

Out of life we seek to get many things. But alas, in things we seek and in those we get, lies hidden a disconcerting irony. As Tagore says, the irony is: 'What I seek, I seek erroneously; what I get I do not want.' Those who are able to analyse their life's experiences dispassionately will be surprised to find how largely right is the poet.

There is, however, a creative meaning in this irony. Through trial and error, experiment and rejection, disappointment and education, it leads us to desire that supreme thing to which this irony can never apply. And that supreme thing is *bhakti*, or love of God. This is the greatest thing we can get out of life.

Love of God can never be regretted by those who have it. Nārada, the great teacher of *bhakti*, says, '*Bhakti* is that by gaining which one becomes perfect, immortal and completely satisfied.'¹

It is not that out of desire for worldly satisfaction, the devotee loves God. *Bhakti* to the true devotee is its own end. For love's sake he loves God. Nevertheless, from such love come—one may say as by-products—perfection, immortality, and unqualified satisfaction.

II

Sri Ramakrishna says, '*Bhakti* is the one essential thing.'² Again, 'The best path for

this age is *bhakti-yoga*, the path of *bhakti* prescribed by Nārada.'³ '*Bhakti-yoga* is the religion for this age.'⁴

These are oft-repeated statements of Sri Ramakrishna, which careful readers of his *Gospel* must have noticed. The saying that *bhakti-yoga* as prescribed by Nārada is the religion of the age, is repeated in various ways at least ten times. It would therefore appear that through such statements Sri Ramakrishna made an especial contribution to traditional Vedānta.

How?

According to Sri Ramakrishna, '... one can see God through *bhakti* alone.'⁵ But, he points out: 'It isn't any and every kind of *bhakti* that enables one to realize God. One cannot realize God without *prema-bhakti* (ecstatic love of God).'⁶ 'When one has that *bhakti* one loves God even as a mother loves the child, the child the mother, or the wife the husband.'⁷

And it is not merely that through *bhakti* one can see only the personal God: Sri Ramakrishna said, '*Bhakti* is the one essential thing', and '*Bhakti-yoga* is the religion for this age.' Foreseeing that these statements will require clarification, Sri Sri Ramakrishna himself says:

'But that does not mean the lover of God will reach one goal and the philosopher and worker another. It means that if a person seeks the Knowledge of

¹ Nārada: *Bhakti-sūtras*, I. 4

² 'M': *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Tr. by Swami Nikhilananda, published by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras 600004, 1947), p. 38

³ *ibid.*, p. 405

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 422

⁵ *ibid.*, p. 105

⁶ *ibid.*, p. 104

⁷ *ibid.*, p. 105

Brahman, he can attain It by following the path of bhakti too. God, who loves His devotee, can give him the Knowledge of Brahman if He so desires.’⁸

We must realize that Sri Ramakrishna’s conception of devotion and knowledge, *bhakti* and *jñāna*, is somewhat different from the traditional conceptions, one belonging to dualism and another to non-dualism. In perfect consonance with his realization that Brahman and Śakti (the Power of Brahman) are identical, in his teachings *bhakti* and *jñāna* are the obverse and reverse of the same coin. As he says: ‘The knowledge and love of God are ultimately one. There is no difference between pure Knowledge and pure Love.’⁹

The proof that there is no difference between pure knowledge and pure love, can be abundantly seen in the lives of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda.

But if such is the case, why did Sri Ramakrishna specially advocate *bhakti-yoga* as the religion of the age? One simple answer to this question is: Out of compassion for struggling multitudes. The Lord does not intend salvation to be the devotee’s burden. It is the Lord’s burden and the devotee’s privilege. God incarnates in the world in order to help mankind, and nothing He does can hinder it in any way. The Lord of māyā knows where māyā pinches us.

Mark Sri Ramakrishna’s words of supreme realism, yet full of compassion:

‘To follow jnana-yoga in this age is ... very difficult. First, a man’s life depends entirely on food. Second, he has a short span of life. Third, he can by no means get rid of body-consciousness. The jnani says: “I am Brahman; I am not the body. I am beyond hunger and thirst, disease and grief, birth and death, pleasure and pain.” How can you be a

jnani if you are conscious of disease, grief, pain, pleasure, and the like?’¹⁰

Sri Ramakrishna’s compassionate realism does not stop here. In another context he says:

‘The Jnana Yogi longs to realize Brahman—God the Impersonal, the Absolute and the Unconditioned. But, as a general rule, such a soul would do better, in this present age, to love, pray, and surrender himself entirely to God. The Lord saves His devotee and will vouchsafe to him even Brahma-jnana if the devotee hungers and thirsts after it. Thus the Jnana Yogi will attain Jnana as well as Bhakti. It will be given to him to realize Brahman. He will also, the Lord willing, realize the Personal God of the Bhakta.’¹¹

Bhakti, Sri Ramakrishna implies, is not an exclusive instrument of dualism: it can be a personal way of realizing the Impersonal, by the side of the traditional impersonal way, known as *jñāna-yoga*.

Through all these teachings, we will have noticed that Sri Ramakrishna is enriching the traditions of Vedāntic *sādhana*, while fully accepting the view that *Brahma-jñāna* is the acme of spiritual experience.

Readers of *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* may remember that when the Master advised a devotee to practise *bhakti*, he almost always added that the devotee should also at the same time practise discrimination between the real and the unreal. Thus while he advised the *jñāna-yogī* to practise devotion, he also advised the *bhakta* (devotee) to practise one or more cardinal disciplines of *jñāna-yoga*.

In this way Ramakrishna’s compassionate realism enlarged the areas of spiritual idealism by demolishing many of the artificial conceptual walls that had tradition-

⁸ *ibid.*, p. 422

⁹ *Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna* (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Dt. Pithoragarh, U.P. 1948), p. 171 (Teaching No. 398)

¹⁰ *The Gospel*, p. 421

¹¹ *Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras, 1938), p. 248 (Saying No. 801)

ally, in Indian thought, separated *jñāna* and *bhakti*.

That both his teacher of non-dualism, Totapuri, and his foremost disciple Narendranath, who pre-eminently tended towards Advaita, came to accept the Divine Mother Kālī, was highly significant not only in their own lives, but for the entire wisdom of Vedānta. This wisdom, which Vivekananda learnt in a special way from Sri Ramakrishna, he taught in later life as the synthesis of the yogas, the teaching signified by the emblem of the Ramakrishna Order.

For the present age we are facing, development of the totality of man's spiritual potential is a great need. Swami Vivekananda's teachings on the synthesis of the yogas, open an endless vista for man's spiritual adventure.

With this background, we shall now focus on the path of love for God, or *bhakti-yoga*. Yet we have to remember that *bhakti* can not only give us the vision of the Personal God but also Knowledge of Brahman. Such is Ramakrishna's special teaching.

III

First let us consider some of the more tangible ways through which *bhakti* blesses our spiritual life. And these will be found to be hard to attain by any other means than *bhakti*. What are these blessings?

Bhakti, we may say, provides the devotee with four types of blessings, namely:

- (1) a conquering force;
- (2) a compensatory force;
- (3) a protective or saving force;
- (4) a directive and integrating force.

We shall briefly explain how these work in the devotee's life.

(1) *Bhakti* provides for the devotee a conquering force which successfully subdues the two groups of enemies which tend to create bondage for the soul. The first group

consists of man's own uncontrolled senses which subvert him from within. The second consists of the temptations of the world which ambush him from without.

Anyone seriously striving to attain spiritual excellence will have to encounter both, and subdue them. They are the most powerful and obstinate hazards on the way. But how is this to be done?

Once a devotee asked Sri Ramakrishna, 'Is it necessary, sir, that one should first get one's senses controlled by right discrimination?'

Sri Ramakrishna answered:

'Well, that is one path—the path of right discrimination. In the path of *Bhakti*, self-control comes of itself—and it comes very easily. The more one's love of God increases, the more insipid would become the pleasures of the senses....'¹²

He further says:

'A poet has compared devotion [towards God] to a tiger. As the tiger devours animals, devotion also swallows up all the "arch-enemies" of man, such as lust, passion, and the rest. Once the devotion to God is fully awakened, all evil passions like lust and anger are completely destroyed. The Gopis of Vrindavan attained that state through their strong devotion to Krishna.'¹³

In the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* Śrī Kṛṣṇa says:

'As fire kindled into a blaze burns the faggots to ashes, so, O Uddhava, devotion to Me totally destroys all sins.'¹⁴

This latter is, of course, in reference to one who has attained perfection in *bhakti*.

But what about the rest of us, who have not attained such perfection? What Śrī Kṛṣṇa says in this regard will enthuse every seeker who has some true love for God in

¹² *ibid.*, Saying No. 758

¹³ *ibid.*, Saying No. 760

¹⁴ XI. xiv. 19

his heart, though perfection in devotion may yet be far away for him:

'High-souled sages—penniless, devoted to Me, and unsmitten by desires, calm and compassionate to all creatures—derive that bliss of Mine which they only know who care for no gain, and not others.

'Even a devotee of Mine who not being a master of his senses is troubled by sense-objects, is generally not overcome by them, owing to his powerful devotion.' ¹⁵

(2) *Bhakti* provides for a devotee a compensatory force. *Bhakti* is the all-compensating acquirement in life. So Nārada says:

'Attaining that, man has no more desire for anything; is free from grief and hatred; he does not rejoice over anything; he does not exert himself in furtherance of self-interest.' ¹⁶

You may be deformed. You may be ugly. You may be blind or lame. You may suffer from incurable disease. You may have no glamour or pronounced talent, may be a mediocre nondescript. You may be a poor man, may have no education, may be friendless. You may be a victim of social injustice or political oppression. If you do not have love of God, any one of these situations is enough to make you miserable. And often enough, in our life there will be a combination of two or more such, which will make life a constant agony.

But he in whose heart there is love of God, none of these situations can make him miserable. For what God has deprived him of, God compensates from within by Himself coming closer to His devotee.

If one is deprived of the common physical or mental endowments and at the same time is not endowed with at least a little love of God, that situation is indeed

tragic. Again, one may be given beauty, money, learning, power and fame—all of which most people value—; yet if one has not love for God, with even a little of any or all these, one may travel by expressway to one's own undoing.

There is this Chinese proverb:

'When God wishes to send disaster upon a person, He first sends him a little luck to elate him and see whether he can receive it in a worthy manner; when God wants to send blessing upon a person, He first sends him a little mishap and sees how well he can take it.' ¹⁷

It is only the real devotee who truly understands such dispensations from the Lord's gracious hands. Others clamour for those very things which will take them further and further away from God, to their own ruination.

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

'Mother, who do You think is crying for Your wealth? If You give it, it will lie somewhere uncared for. But if I can get at Your feet, I shall cherish them in my heart.'

Bhakti, as it continues to grow in a devotee, spontaneously enriches him with an inner affluence of what the *Gītā* calls *daivī sampad* or divine treasures, such as non-injury, truthfulness, absence of anger, detachment, tranquillity, aversion to calumny, compassion to beings, uncovetousness, gentleness, modesty, absence of fickleness, fearlessness, forgiveness, fortitude, purity of heart, freedom from hatred and pride, etc. Like flowers of spring, appearing in unexpected places, with the advent of love of God these qualities blossom forth unsought in the devotee's life. One whose understanding has been opened

¹⁵ XI. xiv. 17-18

¹⁶ *Bhakti-sūtras*, I. 5

¹⁷ Lin Yutang (Ed.): *The Wisdom of China and India* (Modern Library, New York, 1942), p. 1096

knows that no richer treasure is to be found anywhere: thus no question of 'compensation' can any more arise.

(3) *Bhakti* provides the devotee with a protective or saving force.

The worries of life consume even the stoutest of minds. Increase of worries seems to keep pace with the growth of affluence in almost all societies; the more affluent a society, the more are the cases for the psychiatrists. But for the true devotee—how easily can he get rid of his worries!

The sage Nārada says in his Aphorisms on Divine Love: "The *bhakta* has no cause to worry himself over the miseries of the world; for he has surrendered his own self, the world, as well as the Vedas, to the Lord!"¹⁸

If a man says he loves God, and yet worries over things of any sort, he is simply giving the lie to himself. A true devotee of the Lord has no worries.

Again, *bhakti* destroys sinful tendencies, and thus saves the devotee from all kinds of sufferings which would otherwise have been his lot. Moreover, if the devotee can really surrender himself, his ego and his karma, to the Lord, he is released from the binding effects of that karma, and from the interminable miseries thereof.

Finally, over and above all these blessings, there is the Lord's unequivocal declaration, 'Arjuna, declare it boldly, that My devotee never perishes.'¹⁹ This declaration, which in essence has been repeatedly made by Incarnations, we take to mean that whatever may happen to the devotee, as far as worldly situations are concerned, through every danger the Lord will see to the devotee's advancement towards the only ultimate goal of life, namely, God.

Even a depraved man, says Kṛṣṇa in the

same context, if he resolves rightly and turns Godward, will quickly attain spiritual excellence.²⁰

In the *Devī-māhātmyam*, a scripture on the Divine Mother, it is said: 'No calamity befalls men who have taken refuge in You. Those who have sought You verily become a refuge to others.'²¹

We see this daily happening in the world. Why do people go to preachers or priests to unburden themselves of worries and seek guidance in troubles? Because they think these ministers, being men of God, have developed within them a power of giving solace, guidance, and protection. Such expectation may not always be wholly justified, but it is an authentic expectation in a valid direction. And how much more valid when one turns for help to a true devotee of God!

The saving force implanted in the devotee's heart by *bhakti* finally manifests itself as utter fearlessness. Rāmprasād says in a famous song:

'I have surrendered my soul at the fearless feet of the Mother,
Am I afraid of death any more?...
Deep within my heart I have planted
the name of Kālī,
The Wish-fulfilling Tree of heaven;
When Yama, King of Death, appears,
To him I shall open my heart and show
it growing there.
I have cast out from me my six unflagging
foes [the six passions];
Ready am I to sail life's sea,
Crying, "To Durgā, victory!"'²²

(4) *Bhakti* provides the devotee with a directive and integrating force, and makes out of an amorphous raw human being a highly evolved person through whom God's love and light may play even in the habitations of men.

Bhakti may be defined as the emotive

¹⁸ *Bhakti-sūtras*, IV. 61

¹⁹ *Bhagavad-gītā*, IX. 31

²⁰ *vide* *ibid.*, IX. 30

²¹ *Devī-māhātmyam*, XI. 29

²² Quoted in *The Gospel*, p. 245

verticalization of all one's inner forces for the most intimate attainment of God. Such a verticalization of forces makes one like a single leaping flame. In a true *bhakta* nothing goes to waste; nothing goes helter-skelter. Integration is so spontaneous that there is a minimum of struggle for it. Everything falls into place in a supreme pattern of the ultimate economics of life, like a divine symphony.

Swami Vivekananda points out:

'Bhakti is not destructive; it teaches that all our faculties may become means to reach salvation. We must turn them all towards God and give to Him that love which is usually wasted on the fleeting objects of sense.'²³

(To be concluded)

²³ *The Complete Works* (Advaita Ashrama), Vol. VII (1958), p. 83

TRUTH: ITS QUEST AND REALIZATION IN PRACTICAL LIFE

SWAMI SASTRANANDA

If today we utter the word 'truth', the first associations evoked in people's minds are most likely to be the admission of, or owning up to, some vice or guilt, such as, taking bribes, making false tax-returns, affairs with the opposite sex, giving doctored evidence in court, etc. It is also somehow taken for granted that truth, or speaking of truth, is an unpleasant and risky affair, usually unfavourable to one's material prosperity and social advantage; that it is better to leave it alone as far as possible. Something deep in us, however faint its voice, makes us respect and fear truth. Yet the lawyer in us counsels: 'Leave truth for the saints and mahatmas; reserve it for the next world; admire it, praise it, worship it if you will, but so far as your own life is concerned, use it very sparingly; it is best taken in homoeopathic doses; more might be impractical and harmful!'

Mature reflection will however reveal that truth is not merely the admitting of one's vices and sins. It is much more: it is to admit one's virtues and merits as well; it is to declare one's moral and spiritual assets as well.

Again, truth is not merely the recogniz-

ing of facts and realities of the outer world. It also extends to the vaster inner world of man's higher and positive nature, his unlimited possibilities and potentialities, and the working out of their actualization.

To understand things as they are in truth, to gather factual data and to adapt them suitably for human use, is the quest of science and technology. However, science, if it is to rise to its fullest stature and glory, has to take into its scope not only matter and material energy but also mind and conscious energy. The true man of science will not be content with studying and manipulating mere gross matter or even living bodies; he goes into subtler and vaster levels—from biological to mental phenomena, from personal truth to the cosmic law and order, from *satya* to *rita*.

While the petty dabbler in science or the inventor of a few gadgets may become proud and conceited, dismissing mysterious phenomena as superstition, the truly great scientist takes a different line. Listen to what one of the greatest of them, Sir Isaac Newton, says:

'I do not know what I may appear to the world, but to myself I seem to have

been only a boy playing on the sea-shore, and diverting myself in now and then finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell than ordinary, whilst the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me.'¹

Science so far has been dealing only with the outer aspect—the appearance of things, the 'observable universe'—and trying to control its energies for the use of man, while the 'unobservable universe', the 'inner and vaster ocean of reality' has lain untouched behind. Science has so far avoided man, and his striving and aspirations, which by default have been left to religion. Hence a misleading dichotomy between science and religion has resulted. Perhaps it is this which made Einstein observe that 'Science cannot ensure human happiness and fulfilment ... the science of the inner nature of man is the province of religion.'

An all-embracing view of truth and its quest would, however, give science its right dimension; it would become the 'science of reality', the very core and culmination of knowledge, or *vedānta* (lit., 'the end of knowledge') in Sanskrit terms. India's greatest seekers and seers of truth have taken this approach. One such authentic voice of truth-seeking India, namely, Swami Vivekananda, says:

'What is needed is a fellow-feeling between the different types of religion....

And above all ... between types of religious expression coming from the study of mental phenomena—unfortunately even now laying exclusive claim to the name of religion—and those expressions of religion whose heads, as it were, are penetrating more into the secrets of heaven though their feet are clinging to earth, I mean, the so-called materialistic sciences.

'To bring about this harmony, both will have to make concessions, sometimes

very large, nay more, sometimes painful, but each will find itself the better for the sacrifice and more advanced in truth. And in the end, the knowledge which is confined within the domain of time and space will meet and become one with that which is beyond them both ... the Infinite, the One without a second.'²

Science and truth are really inseparable from each other and from man and his life. Truth is fundamental to man, to his survival, stability, and progress. It needs no prophet to say that unless we take into account facts, unless we understand things and persons in their true nature, our plans and our projects, our aspirations and our quests are bound to fail, and frustration is bound to result. *Satyameva jayate*—'Truth alone prevails'; and it is to our advantage that we enlist on its side, the side which is bound to prevail.

Again, it is said that truth *hurts*. It need not. Actually it helps; and real help comes only from truth. All else is undependable aid, superficial and ultimately betraying. Truth *seems* to hurt us only because our own outlook has become warped and perverse; it is the straightening of ourselves that is painful. Real 'truth' is synonymous with 'real joy'—*satya* is *ānanda*.

By the same token, truth need not be ugly. In fact it is beautiful. Nay, it is the very source of real beauty. *Satyam* and *sundaram* are identical, even as Keats declared, 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty...' It is, again, our own warped or perverse vision that fails to discover true beauty. Only that beauty which proceeds from truth is lasting and satisfying. All else is only a passing show, skin-deep and cosmetic; it is just *māyā*. When such surface-beauty wears out, what is left behind appears all the more

¹ Brewster's *Memoirs of Newton*, Vol. II, ch. 27.

² *The Complete Works* (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Dt. Pithoragarh, U.P.), Vol. II (1963), pp. 68-9

ugly by contrast, like make-up washed off by rain.

As regards the so-called life of practical utility too, it has to be noted that all things, all creatures, are genuinely strong, beautiful and useful to the extent that they remain *true to their nature*, true to themselves—whether a flower or a fruit, a bird or a fish, an ant or an elephant, a man or a woman. Thus human beings also become most beautiful and worthy when they realize and express their real self, which in turn is the common Self of all.

Eternal India's call and challenge, therefore, has been: 'Be *true to yourself*. Realize yourself at the very core; then in and through that you will be true to others as well, and one with all. You will realize the great culminating truth, "*Aham Brah-māsmi*"—"I am the Infinite". Then alone the whole creation becomes truly beautiful and lovable. The "prison of *māyā*" gives place to the "mansion of bliss". And, when you realize that all are your own, what more need is there to *tell* you, to command you to love and serve others? Love and service, and doing good, become the natural and spontaneous expression of such a life, even as flowers and foliage are of the springtime. So our great ones explicitly stressed the realization of the truth of our infinite, divine nature, leaving other things to follow as natural and inevitable corollaries.

In the words of Swami Vivekananda, it means:

'Teach yourselves, teach every one his real nature, call upon the sleeping soul and see how it awakes. Power will come, glory will come, goodness will come, purity will come, and everything that is excellent will come, when this sleeping soul is roused to self-conscious activity.'³

That is how the truly spiritual or holy

person becomes equally well the scientist or philosopher, artist or lover, social servant or philanthropist *par excellence*. That explains why our own great sculptors and architects, poets and philosophers, artists and musicians, and even politicians like Gandhiji, have been primarily spiritual men.

In the grand co-operative quest of humanity, the scientist discovers facts of reality; the poet, the philosopher and the artist present the same facts and reality in an appealing and arresting way, liberating and expanding the human spirit, opening up joyous paths to fellow-men to reach and find truth. The task of politics and social organization is to utilize these facts of existence for the greatest good and happiness of the greatest number—*bahujana-hitāya, bahujana-sukhāya*.

The thesis and synthesis of truth according to the spirit of India may be summed up as follows:

- (1) Speak the truth; speak it sweetly and not harshly, but never sacrifice truth for the sake of being sweet.⁴
- (2) Truth is not merely verbal accuracy or technical correctness of speech; it is that which leads man to his *highest good* and works for his greatest benefit.⁵
- (3) The children of Truth live for ever; the followers of *vox populi* (popular opinion) go to destruction.⁶

Sri Ramakrishna was one such marvellous child of truth—a joyous, lively and loving person whose whole life was from his childhood to his last moments on earth, a free, fearless and whole-hearted quest after truth,

⁴ सत्यं ब्रूयात् प्रियं ब्रूयात् न ब्रूयात् सत्यमप्रियम् ।
प्रियं च नानृतं ब्रूयात् एष धर्मः सनातनः ॥

⁵ यद्भूतहितमत्यन्तं तत् सत्यम् । न केवलं यथार्थ-
भिभाषणम् ।

⁶ vide Swami Vivekananda: *The Works*, Vol. V (1959), p. 71

³ ibid., Vol. III (1960), p. 193

its realization and expression in a variety of ways—through high philosophical insight, through homely tales and parables, through song and dance, through wit and humour, through intense compassion to fellow-beings, through complete readiness to sacrifice himself working for their welfare. Even as a young boy, he never accepted anything which went contrary to his sense of truth and decency. He persisted in experimental verification and actual experience before accepting. He defied any social or ritualistic observances which went counter to truth. But he also dared to stand by tradition or custom staunchly until and unless he was convinced that it stood in the way of a higher truth. He refused to take up the education of the kind that would not help him along the path of truth, an education which was merely mercenary. Obeying the voice of truth, he followed all the paths of the spirit to which it led him on. He realized the truths of various authentic religious disciplines and finally discovered that all of them led to the same one indivisible truth of non-duality, the one Truth behind the universe.

And as a 'post-graduate experience', which he termed *vijñāna*, Sri Ramakrishna discovered that all creation—all beings from the highest to the lowest, from the noblest to the pettiest—all are different manifestations of the same one truth—*sat*—which is also at the same time love and bliss—*ānanda*. In an intense and living way, he verified the ancient Vedic wisdom: 'Truth is one but sages speak of it variously.' He himself declared, 'Truth

is one but the paths leading to it are many.' He pleads with us, he admonishes us, his fellow-men: To realize *this truth* or God, is the real goal and destiny, duty and privilege of man. Do it by following any right path. All that is necessary is sincerity and intense longing.

In his inimitable way he put it: just as zeros in themselves have no value but have a value loaned to them by the integer 'one', so also persons and things in their isolation are zeros. With truth, the prime integer *one*, they become valuable, nay, invaluable; that is true of art or science, morality or philanthropy. Sri Ramakrishna further said: Seek this truth; discover and reveal this central truth of life and existence. Let your inside and outside be in tune with this truth. Let your words and heart correspond.

Sri Ramakrishna stresses that speaking truth is the *indispensable* starting discipline for realizing the 'cosmic truth' or God, and he himself set a supreme example in this regard, keeping to his words fully, even in apparently most trivial matters. For the love of God he was prepared to renounce everything else, but not truth! So time and again he taught, 'Stick to truth and all else will follow.' He demonstrated through his life that this truth is not something dry and sterile but is a virile and abiding joy, it is faithful love and unremitting service—as expressed in his own words, 'I would gladly be born a thousand times and suffer any miseries if I can help even a dog.'

May this truth which is strengthening and illuminating, integrating and ennobling, motivate us all throughout our lives!

AT THE FEET OF SWAMI AKHANDANANDA—VII

BY 'A DEVOTEE'

18 May 1935, *Buddha-pūrṇimā*

By the 6 p.m. train the Devotee reached Sargachi Ashrama along with a monk of the Belur Math. The next day was to be the day of the annual celebration commemorating the installation of the temple of Sri Ramakrishna in the Ashrama as well as the starting of the first famine relief work of the Ramakrishna Mission.

Many devotees had come. One of them, a young disciple perhaps, had written to Bābā¹ about his mental unrest. As soon as he got up after offering his salutation, Bābā began to speak:

'What shall I do? Whatever was to be given was given to you all at once. Now it is your turn. You do not get peace, you are not happy in a family atmosphere! Who has compelled you to remain there? There are so many forests, so many *āśramas* (monasteries and retreats)—go to any of them. The company of *sādhus* (holy men and monks) is essential; doing some work is absolutely necessary for peace. Work to your heart's content and you will have peace. Tomorrow is the day of the annual festival—get engaged in some kind of work, get tired through ceaseless activity. Let me see whether or not you get peace and joy. Start work right from tonight; just go and ask somebody what you have got to do.'

As a part of the celebrations next day, a meeting was to be held. Bābā was dictating an address to be read there. His secretary was taking down notes. In the address Bābā depicted how the work had begun here, starting with famine relief in 1897 and culminating in the dedication of the temple in the year 1929.

After a while Bābā began to speak, addressing the devotees who were sitting nearby:

'My coming here was due to the command of the Master. During the famine of 1897 I came from Calcutta to Chandannagar. A desire arose in my mind to go to Navadwip from there. Afterwards I wanted to wander further along the bank of the Gaṅgā. Thus I came to Beldanga. There on the bank of the Gaṅgā I saw a Moslem girl weeping—her pitcher was broken. From whatever little sum of money I had, I bought her a pitcher and also some flattened rice. Immediately afterwards, ten or twelve famine-stricken people surrounded me. They said, "Bābā, do give us some food." From that time I became "Bābā". With whatever money was left, I bought more flattened rice and gave them and then went forward from there. Evening found me near the Bhavta station and I spent the night there. In the morning I wanted to proceed north. But at Mahula² I got an invitation for the worship of Annapūrṇā (Goddess of food). From then on, by the will of the Master, I became engaged in his work—I got stuck in this place.

'In this land of famine our Master manifested himself as Annapūrṇā. That is why we make arrangements to feed the people. I had no idea of building a temple here. It came at last according to His will. The temple could not be completed on the birthday of the Master. It was completed only the day before the Annapūrṇā-pūjā and next day—the day of the pūjā—the temple

² Beldanga, Bhavta and Mahula are along the Gaṅgā, not far below Sargachi, and successively from south to north as one journeys from Chandannagar or Calcutta. Mahula, very near Sargachi, was the site of the first Ashrama started by the Swami.—Ed.

¹ The name by which Swami Akhandananda was called by devotees and disciples.

was dedicated. Spiritual life is not possible with an empty stomach, so real "religion" in a country of chronic hunger is feeding the poor; then comes education and medical service. That is why here I teach them a bit of modern agriculture and something of health and hygiene.'

19 May, Morning

The whole Ashrama was vibrating with a spirit of joy and dedication. Once when the Devotee approached Bābā, he was in a mood for scolding, perhaps due to the disobedience of some one. He was saying:

'Everybody says, "The Guru's words are to be respected like the words of Vedānta." Nobody however obeys the Guru, nobody keeps his word. Our Master did not give us too many instructions; but one thing he said, I remember, "Never (in dejection) think with your face on your palm." To the letter I follow it. The young men of today will do just the reverse of what you ask them to do, that is why I do not ask anybody to do anything. Let us play our part well and go away. Never have I thought with face on palm. Why should I act that way? I have received his love and care, his assurance; I am full of joy always.'

The young boy whom he had admonished the day before was moving nearby; Bābā told him instantly, 'Work, work, I cannot bear the sight of anyone idling away time; do something—cut vegetables, sweep the rooms with a broomstick, look around the Ashrama and keep it clean.'

20 May

The day after the celebration there was feeding of the workers and volunteers and then many devotees left by the evening train.

21 May

At the time of taking leave, some of the monks asked Bābā to come to the Math and stay there. He said: 'How can it be? I have just started a garden for growing

fruits and flowers all the year round. There is a lot of work to do here; rather some of you come and stay here.' Saying this he burst into laughter like a child. One by one the sadhus and devotees took leave of Bābā because it was near time for the 5 p.m. train.

11 October 1935

After the Durgā-pūjā this autumn, the Devotee reached Sargachi Ashrama on the following full-moon night to pay his respects to Swami Akhandananda in person.

In the early hours of the morning the moonlit Ashrama seemed to be wrapped in a thin veil of calm and indescribable beauty. Coming along the highway before dawn, the Devotee entered the Ashrama through the main gate and stopped for some time to enjoy the silence. It seemed that nobody was up yet—only the eucalyptus trees standing as sentinels, and spreading their invigorating fragrance in the pure air of the Ashrama grounds.

Not much time had passed before there was a click: the door opened; Bābā is up. Quickly washing himself, the Devotee in that dawn twilight bowed down at the feet of Bābā, who asked in a half-whisper: 'What have you brought for me? Keep them here. And what for the Master? Take them to the shrine store-room.'

Later in the morning Bābā was alone sitting on a chair in the hall, reciting the *Devīsūkta*³ with folded hands. The pronunciation was very distinct and the voice sonorous.

That evening in course of conversation, Bābā said:

"The Self cannot be attained by the weak..." Understand? Just build up a strong body. A healthy strong body alone can have healthy thoughts. Otherwise a

³ A hymn occurring in the tenth book of the *Rg-veda*, ascribed to Ambhṛṇī, a woman-ṛṣi.—Ed.

weak mind weaves a cobweb of thoughts. Fruits are good in the morning, they keep the liver all right.

‘Our Master Sri Ramakrishna, in his universal form is God; here in his particular form he is Annapūrṇā. That is why I don’t feel happy if people do not get proper food here.’

Letters of *Vijaya* (Pūjā-greetings) were pouring in every day. Bābā asked the Devotee to answer some of them. There were some letters in English among others. Bābā said: ‘Write with fullest freedom, as if you were answering your own letters. Go on writing. I shall see them later on.’

In the evening the Devotee had to tell stories to the little boys of the Ashrama; with them Bābā also enjoyed the stories of *Son of Kong* and *Adventures on the Karakoram Mountain*. At the end he exclaimed: ‘Oh, I am so glad; I shall certainly hear such stories again. It was this Karakoram mountain which I thought of scaling to reach Central Asia.’

‘Next time you come, purchase the return ticket for six days and stay for a longer period.’

Some of the devotees were getting ready for the 5 p.m. train and said, ‘It is half past four.’ Bābā would not allow them to leave so easily and began to write letters, telling them, ‘There is enough time, why so much hurry?’ But the devotees were getting uneasy. Bābā was smiling and said at last, ‘Finish your salutations when you *must* go, but come here again as soon as you can.’

15 January 1936

On the eve of the birthday celebration of Swami Vivekananda, the Devotee left for Sargachi and arrived there very early in the winter morning and met Bābā just as on the previous visit.

Later that morning as he approached Bābā, the latter said, ‘Not here now; go

for work in the shrine. Surely you know how to cut fruits: go and help them.’

The day was spent in festive joy. In the evening a simple young man—perhaps a new spiritual seeker—from East Bengal asked, ‘Do you remember the Master quite well?’

Bābā: ‘Certainly. Whom else shall I remember?’

Young man: ‘In the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* by “M”, we do not find your name except in one or two places.’

Bābā: ‘So I did not go to him?’

The young man, taken aback, remained silent.

Bābā explained: ‘Do you know the actual fact? “M” used to go to the Master mostly on holidays, and on those days householders came in large numbers. We went usually on other days and spent the nights there. During the day I would fly off to the Panchavati or to the temples if too many people entered the Master’s room.’

The young man was initiated next morning and in the evening he asked, ‘Tell me something about the Master.’

Bābā: ‘What more shall I say? Everything is now printed in books. Moreover how can I go on talking the whole day and then again in the evening?’

Disciple: ‘I want to hear something about the Master from you—when you saw him and how you felt. Who knows whether I shall get another opportunity or not?’

Bābā: ‘When I first went to him I was very young. His room at Dakshineswar was always charged with spirituality. Everybody felt it more or less. Spiritual craving would be awakened easily. One could get the fruits of the *sādhana* (spiritual striving) of a hundred lives merely by sitting in that room. The Master’s divine ecstasies could be seen frequently. How can these be forgotten? One word from

his lips would simplify the teachings of the Vedas and the Vedānta. The Master asked me, "Do you know Naren—a Calcutta boy, with prominent eyes and with mind indrawn? Go to him and mix with him." The very next day I went to him and he drew me near him. Later I followed him like a shadow.

'At that time I observed the austerities of religious life and took a vegetarian diet, but Swamiji [Vivekananda] scolded me saying, "This has nothing to do with spiritual life." I would not yield in the beginning. Then the Master also said, "Why should you be so austere? Go and take the *prasāda* (offered food) from the Kālī temple." The Master would notice to which temple I was going. I would go to the Kālī temple and take the vegetarian *prasāda* there. Memories are rushing into my mind. If I go on telling of them, it will never end. How much is published? One fourth or a fourth of that?

'Oh, so many things about Swamiji are coming to mind. When he would lay emphasis upon a certain idea, for the time being everyone present would feel that that idea was the whole truth and all else was nothing. In the Belur Math by the Gaṅgā, from day to day he would talk about so many kinds of ideas, and the Math would be filled with each idea in turn. The day he talked about Śiva, we would feel that Swamiji was Śiva Himself—he was Śaṅkara—; the Math would be surcharged with that idea. On a certain day he was talking about Buddha and we began to feel that this was a Buddhist monastery—everything calm and quiet. Again on another day when he started talking about Rādhārāṇī, all barriers gave in. It seemed he was the divine Gopī and the entire Math was full to the brim with the sweet love of the Gopī. How many times he said that Rādhā was not of flesh and blood; Rādhā was the froth (essence) of the ocean of love.'

17 January, Evening

Brahmachari Adī Chaitanya⁴ had come with a bundle of fruits and sweets. Squatting on the floor he bowed his head to the feet of Bābā, and Bābā blessed him, placing both hands upon his head. It was a disciple meeting his Guru. It might have been taken as a re-union of father and son, as well.

Later Bābā was telling the Ashramites: 'Just see and learn from them (Westerners) what is love and devotion. Just see their renunciation, meditation, earnestness, grasp, and power of retention. They know how to take care of rare spiritual treasures.

'I do not know what he has seen in this (meaning himself). The first time he came, he told me one day, "Bābā, I shall go to bathe in the Gaṅgā." It was a hot summer day; at first I tried to dissuade him, but later asked someone to accompany him. What more does he need who has devotion to the Gaṅgā? When he came back, a white-clad Brahmacharin with *daṇḍā* (staff) and *kamaṇḍalu* (water-pot), I could not recognize him at first: it seemed to me that Śiva Himself had come.'

Adī left a message that Miss Josephine MacLeod was coming.

19 January, Early morning

Br. Adī Chaitanya had come again, this time with Miss MacLeod and her friends Mr. and Mrs. Brewster. Their railway car was left on a siding at the station.

Miss MacLeod, the great 'Joe' of Swamiji and the 'Tantine' of devotees, now somewhat aged, had never yet seen Sargachi. So she had taken all the trouble to come up here: maybe this would be her last opportunity to see Swami Akhandananda here. She had brought her food with her—only

⁴ Rudolf Ady, a German-Austrian who fought in the First World War; later, disgusted with Enrope he went to America where he came in contact with the Vedanta Society of New York; thence he came to India.

she wanted some milk from the Ashrama.

After breakfast the two ardent devotees of Vivekananda began to talk about him, sitting on the floor of the shrine-room itself.

Bābā: 'Yes, I have seen Swamiji after his passing away, as clearly as I see you now; otherwise I could not have lived. Separation from him was so painful that I was going to commit suicide, but I was prevented by Swamiji. He caught my hand as I was about to jump under a running train.'

Miss MacLeod: 'Yes, he lives in you, in me, in all. He cannot die. He is the Ātman. They say Swamiji was a great teacher, but I and many others know him also to have been a great learner. He learnt from all, so he conquered all. He would be learning something always, so he was always fresh, never monotonous, never repeating the same thing.'

Bābā: 'Yes, that was the teaching of our Master. On his death-bed, though hardly able to speak because of throat-cancer, he violently protested against somebody's saying "I know". At once the Master said: "You know? What do you know of the Infinite? Don't say this any more. Rather say, 'Friend, as long as I live, so long do I learn.'"'

Miss MacLeod: 'Give me your message

for the coming centenary (of Sri Ramakrishna). They want it.'

Bābā: 'I have no message of my own, but I have this message from the Lord, "I am infinite and eternal, what is my centenary?"'

Miss MacLeod: 'All right, I shall take this message with me.'

The entire morning they spent in talks about Swamiji and Sri Ramakrishna. They walked and looked around the Ashrama with the enthusiasm of young people.

At the altar of the shrine, pleased to find the crystal figure of Swamiji—prepared under her direction and presented to some selected centres of the Ramakrishna Mission—, Miss MacLeod looked at it affectionately and was heard to remark as if in soliloquy, 'Yes, nothing but crystal can represent Swamiji.'

Perhaps she was hinting at the many-sided brilliance and transparency of Swamiji. After a day of inspired talks and revived memories the two parted and the guests left by the evening train.

On his way to the station Brahmachari Adi was walking and talking with the Devotee. Just at the moment of parting he remarked, 'Sargachi is an oasis in the midst of a desert.'

The words echoed and re-echoed in the sombre silence of the evening.

FIRST MEETINGS WITH SRI RAMAKRISHNA: TARAKNATH GHOSHAL

SWAMI PRABHANANDA

Seized by a longing to know of samādhi, the young Taraknath had gone to see the Paramahansa of Dakshineswar at the home of his devotee Ramachandra Datta, on Madhu Ray Lane, Calcutta. Elbowing his way through the crowd in the visitors' room on the ground floor of this house, Tarak moved forward to discover that the centre of attraction was a slender man with a short beard, transfixed as if in a picture on canvas. The glow of serenity on his face bespoke the supernatural bliss he was enjoying within. He seemed unconscious of what was happening around him. After a while he softly said, 'Where am I?' Someone promptly answered, 'At Ram Babu's house.' 'Oh yes,' said he approvingly. Then he began to expound the mysteries of samādhi. Startled at the marvellous revelation of the science of samādhi, answering his unspoken question, Tarak felt that here was a man who had realized God. The attraction which resulted made such a profound impression on his mind that he resolved to see the Master again within the week.¹

Tarak's father, Ramkanai Ghoshal, of Barasat, 24 Parganas, who was himself an advanced spiritual aspirant, had once helped cure Sri Ramakrishna of an acute burning sensation all over the body, resulting from intense spiritual exercises and divine yearning. As a legal adviser to Rani Rasmani's family, he visited Dakshineswar a number of times during the 1850s. His only son to live beyond childhood, Taraknath, was born,

probably some time in the mid-1850s, in the Hindu month Agrahāyana (November-December); but with his characteristic indifference to such matters Tarak soon forgot about dates,² and when he became a monk he threw into the Ganges the horoscope which had been cast at the time of his birth. From early childhood he showed unmistakable signs of spiritual hankering. At the age of nine, he lost his mother, Vamasundari (later his father married a second time). Soon afterwards his eldest sister, Chandi, died leaving behind two children; and his second sister Kshirode became a widow and took shelter at her father's house. These bereavements removed much of the charm of worldly life which Tarak might otherwise have felt. Never serious about his studies, he gave them up while in the Entrance Class (pre-college), and went out on a pilgrimage. But his father's earnings had begun to decrease, and so Tarak found employment in the railways, spending some years in Ghaziabad and Mughalsarai. Nevertheless his early dedication to God continued to grow, expressing itself as meditation and contemplation whenever he could find free time. And one of his colleagues, Prasanna, told him for the first time of Sri Ramakrishna, who was known to have experienced samādhi.

Meanwhile Tarak had been persuaded by

¹ Cf.: Swami Apurvananda: *Mahāpuruṣ Śivānanda* (Bengali) (Udbodhan Office, Bagh-bazar, Calcutta, Bengali Era 1356), p. 23. The subsequent account of this visit and the first meeting at Dakshineswar are also based on this source-book, pp. 24-6.

² Apurvananda: op. cit., p. 9, gives the year as 1855; but the other more recent and definitive sources (Swami Vividishananda: *A Man of God* [Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras 600004, 1968], p. 5; and *The Apostles of Ramakrishna* [Ed. by Swami Gambhirananda, pub. by Advaita Ashrama, Mavavati, Dt. Pithoragarh, U.P., 1972], p. 200) indicate that no definite year is known. The latter however states that 'it is inferred' the year was 1854.

his father to marry Nityakali Chattopadhyaya, in exchange for his sister Niroda's marriage with Nityakali's brother. Foreed by circumstances and filial loyalty, he had to accept the marriage, but worldly life had no attraction for him. He dived ever deeper into the recesses of his own heart and devoted more time to meditation and prayer.³ Not long after this, he came down to Calcutta and joined Messrs. Mackinnon Mackenzie & Co., as a clerk. He lived for a time with one of his relations, not far from Keshab Sen's 'Lily Cottage'. He began visiting the Brahmo Samaj and the Lily Cottage: he had come under the Brahmo influence, but only slightly it seems. Although he was finding that the teachings of the Brahmos were inadequate, and though he was learning more about Sri Ramakrishna from the Brahmo leaders, he still did not meet him until his (Tarak's) residence was shifted to Simla where lived Ramachandra Datta.

To have a glimpse into the inner life of Tarak we may refer to one of his later letters—as the Swami Sivananda—in 1932:

'From my early boyhood I had a deep longing to know God and to realize Him. That longing grew with age. Urged by it, I would go to the Brahmo Samaj and visit holy men, who I thought would be able to help me. I also practised what they advised me. Family life had no charm for me, even from my boyhood.

... I had to give up my studies early on account of the straitened circumstances of the family. Myself being the only male child, with two dependent sisters, I had to come to Calcutta to seek a job. This made my heart very heavy. I

would often weep and pray to God, asking Him to free me from all these ties.'⁴

Again, in talking with some devotees in 1922 he related:

'I used to practise *Sadhana* even from a boy. I was attached to Brahmoism in those days, and I read about the Master in Keshab Babu's paper, *Dharma-tattva*. I did not, however, know the exact location of Dakshineswar or the way to it. I was afterwards told by Ram Babu's relation that it was opposite to the mouth of the Bally Khal [Bally-canal].... For a long time I had been eager to know the nature of *Samadhi*. I used to meditate and sometimes realize a condition which I thought was approximate to *Samadhi*. But I wanted very much to know what it exactly was. I questioned many people, but none could explain it to me. Only one man said: "None can realize *Samadhi* in this *Kali Yuga*. I have seen only one man who has it,—he is Ramakrishna Paramahansa of Dakshineswar.'⁵

It was at such a time, about the middle of 1881,⁶ that Tarak first saw Sri Rama-

⁴ Vividishananda: op. cit., p. 261

⁵ *Prabuddha Bharata*, March, 1930, p. 120 ('The Diary of a Disciple')

⁶ In the introduction to *Vivekānanda-carit* (Bengali) by Mahendranath Chowdhury (Ramakrishna Home of Service, Silchar, Bengali Era 1326) Swami Sivananda himself wrote that he had met Sri Ramakrishna at Ram Datta's house some time in 1879 or 1880. Later (*Prabuddha Bharata*, March, 1930, p. 107) the Swami mentioned that he went to see the Master in the house of a devotee in 1880 or 1881.

In Apurvananda: op. cit., p. 24, f.n., it is said that during the first visit to Dakshineswar Taraknath's companion brought with him mangoes: this suggests the time to have been about June or July. And 'M': *Śrī-Śrī-Rāmakṛṣṇa Kathāmṛta* (Bengali), 17th Ed., Vol. I, p. 6, strongly implies that the meeting occurred earlier than the last part of 1881.

Sri Ramakrishna went to Kamarpukur and remained away from Dakshineswar from 3 March to 10 October, 1880. Soon after his return, he visited Ram Datta's house during the Pujas; thus it is possible that Tarak first saw him there

³ Tarak (then Swami Sivananda) wrote in 1932: 'I had to marry against my wish, and that was a great trial for me. My determination to renounce the world deepened as I prayed night after night with tears in my eyes, asking God not to bind me down with chains of the world.' (Quoted in Vividishananda: op. cit., p. 262)

krishna at Ram Datta's. Virtually unknown a few years before, Sri Ramakrishna had by then emerged as one of the most influential and lovable religious leaders in or near Calcutta, the then capital of India. One Saturday a friend of Tarak's who also was a relative of Ramachandra Datta, told Tarak that Sri Ramakrishna would visit Ram's house that very day. Tarak accordingly went there. Let us return to Taraknath's own account:

'Anyhow, I went that evening to Ram Babu's house. I found the Master sitting in a room crowded with people. The Master was scarcely conscious. I saluted and sat near him. What was my surprise when I heard him talking eloquently on a subject which I had been so eager to know about—on *Samadhi*! I do not remember details. But I remember that he dwelt on *Nirvikalpa Samadhi* and said that very few could realize it in the *Kali Yuga*, and if one realized it, one's body did not live more than twenty-one days, and that Shyam Mukherji of Salkhia realized *Nirvikalpa Samadhi* and his body lived only twenty-one days.

'I did not have any talk with the Master on that occasion.'⁷

then, as per Swami Gambhirananda in the *Udbodhan*, Vol. 52, p. 519. But in both of Swami Sivananda's writings cited above he mentions that his first visit was at the time when Vivekananda and other future sannyasin-disciples had begun to come to Sri Ramakrishna. Now Vivekananda first met Sri Ramakrishna in November 1881 (cf. among others, *The Apostles of Sri Ramakrishna*, p. 16) and Rakhal about six months earlier was the first of them all. Since Sivananda seems to have had a marked indifference to dates, whereas his memory for personalities was keen, it seems best to fix the time of the first encounter not earlier than May 1881. The Master's second visit to Ram Datta's house was in that month. Again, Swami Saradananda [*Sri Ramakrishna The Great Master* (Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras 600004, 1970), p. 711] states that the future sannyasin disciples began coming from about the first part of 1881.

⁷ *Prabuddha Bharata*, March, 1930, pp. 120-1

But the Master's words had deeply stirred his heart.³ Though it is not known that Tarak was even introduced to him that day, it is most unlikely that the spiritual insight of the Master failed to recognize in Tarak an aspirant of great promise.

Tarak's resolve to visit Sri Ramakrishna the following Saturday remained fresh in mind, and a friend who lived near Dakshineswar agreed to accompany him. After office hours the next Saturday, Tarak went by boat to the friend's house and thence to the Kālī Temple. It was dusk and evening services were about to begin. They looked here and there for Sri Ramakrishna till at last they came upon him, standing on the western circular veranda of his room as if in expectation of someone's arrival. At first sight of the Master, Tarak was seized with a strange feeling of awe. He reverentially touched the holy man's feet. Sri Ramakrishna lovingly enquired, 'Have you seen me before?' 'Yes, sir, I saw you at Ram Babu's last Saturday.' Much pleased at this reply, the Master talked a bit with Tarak, then took him into his room. As he took his seat on the small couch, Tarak began to feel as if his own mother were sitting in front of him. Overwhelmed by this emotion, he again bowed to him and placed his head on Sri Ramakrishna's lap; he, too, began stroking Tarak's head very slowly. As Tarak later wrote:

'The short audience was enough for me: at once I felt a deep attachment for the Master. I felt as if I had known him for a long time. My heart became filled with joy. I saw in him my tender, loving mother waiting for me. So with the confidence, faith and certitude of a child, I surrendered myself to

⁸ Cf. Apurvananda, op. cit., p. 23: '...my mind was as it were dancing in joy.... It appeared to me that he who was speaking on samadhi in so simple a way surely had attained it.... I shall also attain samadhi and be blessed if somehow his grace falls on me....'

him, placing myself entirely under his care. I became certain that at last I found him for whom I had been searching all these days. Since then I looked upon the Master as my mother. He also treated me the same way.⁹

Soon Sri Ramakrishna asked him, 'In what do you believe—in God with form or without form?'

'In God without form,' replied Tarak humbly.

'But, you can't help admitting also the Mother, the Divine Energy, who manifests Herself in many forms.'

Hearing the peal of bells and the gong of the evening services, Sri Ramakrishna started for the Kālī temple, asking Tarak to accompany him. There he prostrated himself before the image of the Mother. Tarak hesitated as to what to do, for he had learnt at the Brahma Samaj that prostration before an image was rank idolatry. Then however the idea flashed into his mind: 'Why should I have such prejudices? God being omnipresent must be present in this stone image as well.' His doubt thus resolved, he prostrated himself before the image. Sri Ramakrishna seemed greatly pleased by Tarak's presence of mind and broadness of view.

No doubt the Master's deep insight had already made an assessment of the young man's potentiality. He asked Tarak to stay overnight, and further said: 'Look here, you can't gain any lasting benefit by the chance visit of a day. You must come here often.' As Tarak had already promised to spend the night with his friend in the neighbourhood, he begged to be excused. This too seemed to please Sri Ramakrishna, for he said: 'One must keep one's word. In the Kali-yuga, speaking the truth is a penance.' After a while he bade Tarak farewell, and in an affectionate voice said, 'Well, come here tomorrow.'

Tarak left with his friend, but Sri Ramakrishna was in his thoughts all the time. Love for the Master was fast growing, and he visited him the next day and thereafter quite frequently. As he later wrote: 'After this momentous visit my life at home and work at the office seemed to be like a heavy load. I would often run to him, visiting him at Dakshineswar or Calcutta.'¹⁰ One may ask what it was in Sri Ramakrishna that appealed so much to him. Tarak himself has supplied an explanation:

'He used to love us; and this love of his attracted us to him. What shall I say of his love? His love was just indescribable. In childhood we were aware of the love and affection of our parents and imagined then that nothing could ever surpass it. But, having come to Sri Ramakrishna I found that the love of parents was quite insignificant compared with his. In his company I felt I had at last come to my own place—before that I had been moving in unfamiliar places.... The Master too took me as his own from the very first meeting.'¹¹

And recalling those wonderful days he said later:

'...we would spend an hour or two with the Master—sometimes there would be very little talk or exchange of words. The effect of his association lasted for days. We remained in a state of spiritual intoxication, as it were, absorbed in the thought of God.'¹²

Sri Ramakrishna's sympathetic treatment soon kindled in Tarak's heart such spiritual yearning that worldly life could hold him no longer. The Master himself recounted that one day—as a direct result of Sri Ramakrishna's divine touch—Taraknath experienced a great eagerness and a wailing, welling up in his mind, as a result of which

¹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 262

¹¹ *Sivānanda-vanī* (Bengali) (compiled by Swami Apurvananda, pub. by Belur Math, Dt. Howrah, W.B., B.E. 1344), Vol. I, pp. 36-7

¹² *Vividishananda*: op. cit., p. 305

⁹ *Vividishananda*: op. cit., pp. 261-2

all the knots of his heart were loosened.¹³
In later life Tarak wrote:

'I have not yet come to a final understanding whether he was a man or superman, a god or God Himself. But I have known him to be a man of complete self-effacement, master of the highest renunciation, possessed of the supreme wisdom, and as the very incarnation of Love; and as, with the passing of days, I am getting better and better acquainted with the domain of spirituality and feeling the infinite extent and depth of Sri Ramakrishna's spiritual moods, the conviction is growing in me that to compare him with God, as God is popularly understood,

would be minimizing and lowering his supreme greatness.'¹⁴

It was this idea that grew and expressed itself in fullest grandeur in the life of Tarak, gradually transforming him into the Swami Sivananda who finally assumed the high responsibility of guiding the Ramakrishna Order for twelve years, as its second President. Purged of egotism¹⁵ and with all self-centred desires completely effaced, he lived a long life of approximately eighty years 'to bear a direct testimony to his [Sri Ramakrishna's] great spiritual powers'.

¹⁴ *Prabuddha Bharata*, March, 1930, p. 107

¹³ *vide* Saradananda, op. cit., p. 812. Swami Sivananda himself wrote that he 'had the privilege to attain to that high spiritual consciousness (Samadhi) thrice by his (Sri Ramakrishna's) touch and wish during his lifetime'. (*Prabuddha Bharata*, March, 1930, p. 110).

¹⁵ He would sometimes point to his pet dog and then to himself, saying, 'Here is that fellow's master'; and then point to himself and to the picture of Sri Ramakrishna, commenting, 'and this fellow is *his* dog'. (*vide* Vividishananda, op. cit., pp. 122-3.)

A NOTE ON SOME INTERNAL CONTRADICTIONS IN MODERN MATERIALISTIC THEORY

DR. JAMES F. NEWELL

Since materialistic theories confuse illusion with reality by defining the universe as a complex mechanism of differentiated structures, each such theory must eventually develop internal contradictions showing that it is false and pointing towards what is actually true. These contradictions will arise naturally from the distortions inherent in a false theory.

Metaphysically based materialistic theories might be expected to develop internal contradictions among their assumptions. Empirically based materialistic theories, which are historically more recent, might similarly be expected to develop contradictions among their empirical observations. This implies that one might approach an

empiricist through his own system of data.

Modern materialistic theory completely equates events in consciousness with neurological activity, leaving no room for any Unity of all Consciousness. This assumption has in no way been proven by the materialist but it is not considered open to question. However, it appears that the assumption is not tenable if one looks at certain hard data, which the materialist always claims to accept.

For example, let us look at a concise *empirically* based *reductio ad absurdum* argument. Certain easily observable events in consciousness have properties which could not be produced by the neurological system because there are certain inherent

limitations in the observed structure of that system. Therefore, it may not be postulated that the observable events in consciousness and the neurological activity are exactly equated.

One of the events in consciousness which demonstrates such a non-equatable property is the perception of multiplicity *per se*. An individual may perceive two spots at the same time, or three tones at the same time, or an odour and an itch at the same time, or any other combination of single bits. That there is multiplicity means that there must be some sort of integration of the multiple bits of information or else when one bit were being perceived, it would be impossible to perceive the other bits. However, when they are integrated, the multiple bits must not actually merge in perception; they must maintain their differentiation, or there would remain no multiplicity to be perceived. To perceive multiplicity then, integration and differentiation must occur simultaneously, a kind of unity in difference. This is a completely replicable empirical observation in perception, not an assumption or speculation or even a form of perception requiring special Yogic training. It is completely ordinary.

In the neurological system, there is no possible way for integration and differentiation to occur simultaneously. Integration may occur only by nerve impulses converging to a single point, because a neurological system in the materialists' view does not include an alternative 'supra-physical' way for the nerve impulses to be connected. In a strictly physical system, elements

may only come together within the framework of the observed physical structure of that system. However, whenever nerve impulses are integrated by convergence to a single point, they merge by that very process into a single value so that all differentiation is lost. In a wire at any one point at any one time, there can only be one voltage, not many. Likewise, on a neuron at any one point at any one time, there can be only one nerve impulse, not many.

In summary, certain observable events in consciousness can only occur when integration and differentiation of information occur simultaneously, but the neurological system is limited by its very structure in such a way that at no place within it at any time can integration and differentiation occur simultaneously. Therefore, although observable events in consciousness and neurological activity are often related, they cannot be equated in the manner proposed by modern materialistic theory. The simultaneous integration and differentiation is essentially the unity in diversity taught by the ancient seers. This resemblance becomes more marked upon noticing that more than just number is integrated; that quality is also integrated, colour with shape, shape with sound, odour with motivation. The integration is none of these qualities alone and somehow all of them together. The ideas presented philosophically by the ancient seers therefore suddenly turn up in modern scientific empirical observations, compelling us to re-evaluate radically all materialistic concepts.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

IN THIS NUMBER

Reminiscences are taken from: *Life of Sri Ramakrishna* (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Dt. Pithoragarh, U.P. 1964); 'M': *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Tr. by Swami Nikhilananda, Pub. by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 600004, 1947), and Swami Saradananda: *Sri Ramakrishna The Great Master* (Madras, 1970). References: *Life*: No. 1, pp. 105-6. *Gospel*: No. 2, p. 510; No. 4, pp. 325-6. *Great Master*: No. 3, pp. 180-1.

The words quoted in 'Onward For Ever!' are from *The Complete Works*, Vol. IV (1962), p. 53.

The yoga taught by the *Bhagavad-gītā* is a favourite theme with scholars and spiritual aspirants alike. Some of the scholarly writers on this theme have tended to emphasize with a fanatical flourish a particular yoga as *the* yoga taught by the *Gītā*. These opinions are more likely to be the writers' own, than that of this holy scripture of universal spiritual validity. But from the point of view of a sincere spiritual aspirant it may be safely said that the *Gītā* offers an abundant choice of yogas, leaving the aspirants free to take that which suits each one of them the most. In this month's Editorial we have made an attempt to study this subject in a way that may prove spiritually helpful.

In this second part of 'God and the Other God', Swami Ashokananda points out how the 'Other God', namely man, has always remained the only God, and has not changed into a limited being. By getting rid of the misconceptions about one's own nature and realizing one's infinitude, one does perceive man as God Himself, thereby bringing

untold blessings to oneself and to humanity. The first part of this article appeared in our July issue.

Bhakti-yoga or the path of divine love, is highly recommended by almost all saints and prophets for the common run of humanity as the easiest and safest way to attain God. Sri Ramakrishna, who was, we may say, an incarnation of divine love, laid especial emphasis on cultivating love of God as the most suitable path of *sādhana* (spiritual striving) for this materialistic age. In 'Love of God', Swami Budhananda discusses the various aspects of *bhakti-yoga* in the light of the teachings of a few great teachers, ancient and modern. The second part of article will be published in our next issue.

Swami Vivekananda used to say that that society is the greatest where the highest values become practical. Any society laying claim to greatness must express the values of truth and goodness—two of the highest values cherished and cultivated by the cream of humanity down the millenniums—in the personal and group life of a majority of its members. A great society is also a healthy society. Dishonesty, falsehood, corruption and other forms of immorality are symptoms of moral malady and social decadence. Human society today is morally and spiritually ill. To restore this sick society and its unhealthy members to moral health and spiritual vigour, 'truth-treatment' and 'goodness-medicine' are absolutely necessary. In 'Truth: Its Quest and Realization in Practical Life', Swami Sastrananda, a monk of the Ramakrishna Order, speaks with insight and convincingness about how, by making truth the goal and the means, human life can become

meaningful and fulfilling both on the individual and social levels.

This article originally formed the introductory speech by the Swami at a Symposium on 'Truth: Its Quest, Realization and Expression in Various Fields of Human Endeavour', conducted at the Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Chandigarh, on 16 March 1975 in the context of the 140th Birth-anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna.

Though the ancient Hindu sages and thinkers did not make the empirical approach to the epistemological and ontological truths they sought, yet their discoveries were fundamental, and modern postulation, research, and findings in various sciences continue to corroborate them. Resorting to the method of introspection and rigorous logical reasoning, our ancient sages and philosophers discovered in the Ātman the

unity of consciousness; the unifying substratum of all external cosmic phenomena in the cosmic Self; and further, the identity of the Ātman with Brahman, the ultimate, irreducible Truth, the substratum of all phenomena, internal and external. Therefore they declared that all this is Brahman, the non-dual Truth, and that the perception of multiplicity is an illusion.

In 'A Note on Some Internal Contradictions in Modern Materialistic Theory', Dr. James F. Newell informs us of a discovery in neurological studies that the materialistic approach to the problem of perception involves us in contradictions, which themselves point strongly to a spiritual unifying consciousness within man. The author took his B.A. in psychology from the University of California, Berkeley, and his doctorate in the same subject from the University of Washington at Seattle, U.S.A.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

EVOLUTION TOWARD DIVINITY: TEILHARD DE CHARDIN AND THE HINDU TRADITIONS: BY BEATRICE BRUTEAU, Published by The Theosophical Publishing House, Wheaton, Illinois, U.S.A., 1974, Pages 270, Price \$ 10.00.

While the international political landscape today is not very cheering—most governments still going the same old crooked way of distrust and hatred, selfishness and greed, bullying and violence, and politics remains as untouched as ever by the light that never was on sea or land—, it is heartening to see that intellectuals are doing their bit to bring peoples closer together on the cultural plane. 'We, the people of the future, can no longer think of ourselves as heirs only of this culture or that, belonging to one or another corner of our tiny globe. Each of us is heir of all that humanity has ever produced in diversity and splendor of life, knowledge, art and wisdom. Only as we bring all of this, our human wealth, into an intense but differentiated union, will we be able to live beyond, to survive, our present phase of deve-

lopment and continue our evolution toward divinity.'— These are the concluding words of the author's brilliant study of Teilhard de Chardin and Hindu religious thought.

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, the Jesuit scientist-priest, developed an evolutionary philosophy very much akin to the evolutionary philosophy of Sri Aurobindo. He had a very low opinion about Hindu religious thought and considered Indians as good for nothing in practical affairs. This is because, the author opines, Teilhard took Advaita Vedanta, that simplicist monism which drowns all multiplicity in a homogeneous unity and reduces the world to an illusion, to be the whole of Hindu religious and philosophical thought and was ignorant of other systems opposed to the Advaita. In the present work, Dr. Beatrice Bruteau gives an account, quite faithful and lucid, of these other systems and shows them as congenial to and as parallels to Teilhard's own cardinal principles.

Teilhard's misunderstanding of the Advaita is unfortunate but pardonable. Have not our own men, including some of the most eminent

amongst them, made a travesty of it? But as the Advaita is only incidentally referred to in this volume, I shall say nothing on the point here.

The book has four chapters, an Epilogue, a Bibliography, and an Index. The first chapter is devoted to a brief but lucid exposition of the cardinal tenets of Teilhard's evolutionary philosophy. From atoms to molecules, from molecules to cells, from cells to organisms and from organisms to man, the world exhibits the pattern of an evolving process. With man, evolution arrives at a turning point. 'At the level of man, the full energy of evolution appears to shift from attempts to improve the physical vehicle to efforts to elevate the consciousness in its own proper terms.' (p. 23) This means intensification of our life *as persons*. This *personalization* is achieved through *amorization* or the focusing of love-energy, binding men through love into societies, communities, etc. This organization through love requires a central person or a Centre who must be an ideal and an exemplar of pure love. Teilhard identified this Centre with Christ. Christ stands at the end of the evolutionary journey as Omega as he stood at the beginning as Alpha (cf. p. 24).

Is this Christ the historical Jesus or the Eternal Divine Principle who incarnated as Jesus and also in other Forms in other times and climes? *Philosophically* speaking, it should mean the latter, but Teilhard inclines towards the former. Even when he speaks of the 'mystic Christ', 'the Cosmic Christ' and Christ as 'All-in-everything', this greater Christ for Teilhard, the author tells us in Chapter II, 'has no meaning or value *except as an expansion of Christ born of Mary*' (p. 57, italics mine). In a philosophical milieu it would be more appropriate to say that the historical Incarnation is a focalization in a particular centre of the Eternal and Infinite Spirit which pervades and transcends the entire manifested universe—and not the latter the expansion of the former. In the *Bhagavad-gita* Sri Krishna draws a clear distinction between His incarnation in the human form (*manushim tanumashritam*) and His Eternal Transcendent nature (*param bhavam*), the ever Unmanifest (*avyaktam*).

The second chapter is concerned with describing the immanent and transcendent nature of the Godhead in the Veda, in the *Bhagavad-gita*, in Vaishnavism and in the philosophy of Ramanuja. All these are cited as Hindu parallels to Teilhard's conception of Cosmic Divinity.

The author's citation of the *Purusha-sukta* of the *Rig-veda* as a parallel to Teilhard's expansion of the historical Jesus to cosmic dimensions, is far from appropriate. The *purusha* spoken of in the *sukta* is no historical person but the Supreme Spirit who manifests Himself in the myriad forms, human and otherwise, on earth.

In the third chapter, the author compares Teilhard's law of Complexity/Consciousness, with the *Prakriti-Purusha* conception of the Sankhya; Teilhard's conception of the unity of psychic energy with the Hindu notion of Sakti; and Teilhard with Sri Aurobindo in respect of the evolution of consciousness in some collective form.

The fourth chapter is concerned with man's responsibility to act. The author refutes the charge levelled against Hinduism by Teilhard, that it favours inactivity. The *Bhagavad-gita*, she points out, is a stout rebuttal of this charge.

I congratulate the author on her readable and learned work.

The printing and get-up are excellent.

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BOOKS RECEIVED

DIALOGUES ON THE FUTURE OF MAN:
BY FREDERICK PATKA, published by Philosophical Library, New York City, 1975, pp. 331, Price \$ 10.00.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA—THE MILITANT HINDU MONK: BY C. M. JAGTIANI, published by 'The Shooting Star', D/22 Self-Help Housing Society, St. Francis Rd., Vile Parle (West), Bombay 400056, 1975, pp. 101, Price Rs. 4/-.

INDIAN THOUGHT: AN INTRODUCTION: EDITED BY DONALD H. BISHOP, published by Wiley Eastern (P. Ltd.), J43A, South Extension—1, New Delhi 110049, 1975, pp. 427, Price Rs. 36/-.

THE BRAMASUTRAS AND THEIR PRINCIPAL COMMENTARIES: BY B. N. K. SHARMA, published by Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay—7, 1974, pp. xxviii + 464, Price Rs. 45/-.

THE REALM OF BETWEEN: BY K. SATCHIDANANDA MURTY, published by the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla, 1973, pp. xv + 221, Price Rs. 25/-.

THE LIGHT OF A THOUSAND SUNS—MYSTERY, AWE, and RENEWAL IN RELIGION: BY JACOB TRAPP, published by Rider & Co., 3 Fitzroy Square, London W.1, 1975, pp. viii + 133, Price £1.45.

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NEWS AND REPORTS

RAMAKRISHNA MISSION SEVASHRAMA— KANKHAL: HARDWAR

REPORT: APRIL 1973 TO MARCH 1974

'My boy, can't you do something for the ailing monks at Hardwar and Rishikesh? There is no one to look after them when they fall ill. Go and serve them.'

These words of Swami Vivekananda to his disciple Swami Kalyanananda, bore fruit as early as June 1901, in the form of the Ramakrishna Home of Service at Hardwar, in a rented house. By 1903 it was moved to its present site, two furlongs away, and in 1911 it was affiliated to the Ramakrishna Mission. Through the Swami's unswerving devotion and inspiration, plus resulting generous help from friends and from government, the Ashrama has steadily grown to include a full-fledged hospital with 52 beds, treating over a lakh of patients indoor and outdoor, plus a Mobile Dispensary treating another 60,000 in the first nine months. The present year was particularly auspicious in seeing the opening of a long-awaited Eye Section in the hospital; again, in the first part of 1974, the *Purnakumbhayoga* ('Kumbhamela') brought an estimated 40 lakhs of devotees and sadhus to this holy place, with naturally increased opportunity for service from the Ashrama.

The *Medical Services* may be summarized thus: (1) *Indoor Hospital* treated during this year 1472 patients, of whom 1135 were discharged 'cured', 204 otherwise, 76 died, and 57 remained in hospital at end of period. Average daily bed occupancy was 49.8 (a remarkably high figure). Of the 1472 patients, 605 were 'surgical'; 124 major operations were done, plus 507 'minor' ones which however included some as serious as Tracheotomy, Inguinal Hernia repair, removal of stones in bladder, etc. (2) *Outdoor Dispensary* treated in this year 21,500 new

cases and 69,041 old cases. Of the total, 301 cases were surgical. (3) *Mobile Dispensary*: Begun in July 1973, operating along the three main roads from Hardwar, within radius of 15 km., the unit serves a village population of about 95,000. Among other advantages is a (mobile) X-ray unit. During the less than nine months, 33,459 new cases and 29,340 repeat visits were treated. (4) *Para-medical*: the Pathological laboratory investigated 22,994 specimens, including some from patients referred by local physicians; the X-ray department took 4492 films; the electrotherapy unit treated 179 cases; the E.C.G. was used in diagnosis of 105 cardiac cases; the Blood Bank continued its acutely vital function.

Religious Activities: The Temple, with prayer-hall to accommodate over 150 persons, dedicated in 1972, is an attractive centre for devotees and visitors. In it, regular worship is conducted, and on Ekadashi days *Ramanama-sankirtana* is sung after the *arati*. Birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi, Swami Vivekananda and other great religious figures are fittingly observed.

Educational Activities: The Ashrama has a small library and reading room, including 4,500 books, and receiving 30 periodicals, six dailies. Specially related to the *Medical* services, were several meetings of the local Indian Medical Association, held in our Hospital, whose doctors also took active part in the sessions. During World Health Week organized by the W.H.O., the doctors cooperated—among other things by distributing health pamphlets.

Other Activities: The *Dairy* this year yielded over 37,500 kg. of milk. Efforts are being made with help from the U.P. Government to make the dairy entirely self-supporting. The *Kitchen Garden* of about 3.5 acres, yielded enough paddy and wheat for seven months' consumption

plus potatoes for the whole year. The help and guidance of the Agriculture Extension Training Centre, Gurukul Kangri, was important in this department; the total output was valued at over Rs. 15,600/-. A *Guest House* is maintained. This year's *Purnakumbhayoga* involved much activity for the Ashrama, both in receiving of guests and emergency medical relief. In co-operation with government agencies and the Indian Red Cross, a temporary hospital with 50 beds, first aid unit, plus the Mobile Dispensary in attendance, served uncounted numbers of pil-

grims during the three months of the gatherings.

Immediate Needs: (1) Endowment of hospital beds—the majority still being without endowment—: each bed at Rs. 10,000/-. (2) Hostel for Nurses and other para-medical staff, now inadequately housed: estimated cost of Rs. 2,45,000/- of which a kindly institution has already contributed Rs. 50,000/-. (3) New building for the Outdoor Department of Hospital: at least Rs. 5,00,000/-. (4) Replacement of monastic quarters, in sad disrepair: Rs. 75,000/-.

ADDENDUM

Prabuddha Bharata, March 1975

p. 151, 'Prefatory Note', line 3: add the translator's name (which was not available to us then): Mrs. Khadijeh Farjaneh.

ERRATA

Prabuddha Bharata, March 1975

p. 128, col. 1, para 2, lines 1-2: *for* Sarasasundari *read* Saradasundari.

Prabuddha Bharata, June 1975

Page	Col.	Para.	Line	
244	1	2	9	: <i>for</i> experimental <i>read</i> experiential.
251	1	6	6	: <i>for</i> of <i>read</i> or.
251, footnote 25: <i>for</i> सुखान्तशयी <i>read</i> सुखानुशयी				
253	2	3	21	: <i>for</i> me <i>read</i> life.
254	1	1	last	: <i>for</i> preacheu <i>read</i> preached.
255	1		bottom	: <i>omit the word</i> 'open'.
273	2	2	4	: <i>for</i> revived <i>read</i> be revived.
274	1	2	1	: <i>for</i> is is <i>read</i> is.
277	2	1	7	: <i>for</i> impregnabte <i>read</i> impregnable.