

VOL. LXXXI

SEPTEMBER 1976

Prabuddha Bharata

OR

AWAKENED INDIA



ADVAITA ASHRAMA, MAYAVATI
HIMALAYAS



Editorial Office

P.O. Mayavati, Via Lohaghat
Dt. Pithoragarh 262-524, U.P.

Publication Office

5 Dehi Entally Road
Calcutta 700-014
Phone: 44-2898



Annual Subscription

India, Nepal & Bangladesh	Rs. 10.00
Sri Lanka	Rs. 12.00
U. S. A. & Canada	\$ 6.00
Other Countries	£ 2.00

Life Subscription

Rs. 180 \$ 140 £ 40

Single Copy

Rs. 1 40 cents 12 P.

Information for subscribers,
contributors and publishers
overleaf.

Prabuddha Bharata

Started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896

A MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE
RAMAKRISHNA ORDER

SEPTEMBER 1976

CONTENTS

Sri Ramakrishna Reminisces	...	...	361
Onward For Ever!	...	...	363
Reflexions on the 'Tree of Samsara'	...	...	363
— Editorial	...	...	363
Letters of A. Saint	...	...	367
At the Feet of Swami Akhandananda—IV — 'A Devotee'	...	...	370
Attainment of Peace — Swami Budhananda	...	...	373
Illuminating Dialogues from Indian Lore : Yudhishtira—The Path of Dharma	...	...	380
Human Trends : The Christian Monastic Concept of 'Meditation' — Br. Bernardin Schellenberger	...	...	385
First Meetings with Sri Ramakrishna : Shivanath Shastri — Swami Prabhananda	...	...	389
Sermonettes at St. Moritz—IV — Swami Yatishwarananda	...	...	394
Notes and Comments	...	...	396
Reviews and Notices	...	...	397
News and Reports	...	...	400

Cover :

Reflections of Mounts Shwetwana, Thailu,
Sudarsan in a lake in Tapovan ground, Central
Himalayas.

Courtesy: Reliable Calendar Co.

Prabuddha Bharata

VOL. LXXXI

SEPTEMBER 1976

No. 9

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

SRI RAMAKRISHNA REMINISCES

‘The “naked one” (Nangta¹) used to say that there were seven hundred naked spiritual aspirants in their community. Those who were beginning to learn meditation were asked to do so on cushions; for, they might feel an ache in their legs if they were to sit and meditate on hard seats and their unaccustomed minds might come to think of their bodies instead of God. Then afterwards, the deeper their meditation became the harder were the seats on which they had to sit. And at last they had to sit on a piece of skin only, or on the bare ground to practise meditation. They were also made to observe strict rules regarding everything, namely, eating, drinking, etc. As regards their dress, the disciples were also made to practise gradually how to remain naked. As man is bound by the eight fetters of shame, hatred, fear, egoism regarding one’s birth and good conduct, secretiveness, caste, pretentiousness, and grief, they were taught to give them up one by one. Afterwards when they developed deep concentration of mind they had to go and travel from one place of pilgrimage to another, at first with other monks and later alone and then return. The naked monks had such rules.’ . . .

‘That one only who was found amongst the naked monks to have attained the true state of Paramahansa was elected by all to the seat of the Mohanta [Abbot] of the community when it fell vacant. How could, otherwise, the elected person remain true to his vows when he would have in his possession money, respect, and power? He would then surely have his head turned. This is why they placed that person alone on the Mohanta’s seat from whose mind the attraction for gold was found to have really vanished, and gave him the charge of money and other valuable property. For it was such a person alone that could rightly spend that wealth in the service of God and holy men.’

✱

‘What a subtle mind he [younger Naren] has! Nangta also could understand things that way, in a flash—the meaning of the *Gita*, the *Bhagavata*, and other scriptures.’

✱

¹ *Lit.*, the Naked One. By this name, Sri Ramakrishna referred to Totapuri, the monk who initiated him into monastic life, and who went about naked. Out of supreme reverence for his Guru, Sri Ramakrishna would not generally refer to him directly by name.

'After initiating me, the "naked one" taught me many dicta conveying the conclusion of the Vedanta, and asked me to make my mind free of function in all respects and merge in the meditation of the Self. But it so happened with me that when I sat for meditation I could by no means make my mind go beyond the bounds of name and form, and cease functioning. The mind withdrew itself easily from all other things but, as soon as it did so, the intimately familiar form of the Universal Mother, consisting of the effulgence of pure consciousness, appeared before it as living and moving and made me quite oblivious of the renunciation of names and forms of all descriptions. When I listened to the conclusive dicta and sat for meditation, this happened over and over again. Almost despairing of the attainment of the Nirvikalpa Samadhi, I then opened my eyes and said to the "naked one", "No, it cannot be done; I cannot make the mind free from functioning and force it to dive into the Self." Scolding me severely, "the naked one" said very excitedly, "What, it can't be done! What utter defiance!" He then looked about in the hut and finding a broken piece of glass took it in his hand and forcibly pierced with its needle-like pointed end my forehead between the eye-brows and said, "Collect the mind here to this point." With a firm determination I sat for meditation again and, as soon as the holy form of the Divine Mother appeared now before the mind as previously, I looked upon knowledge as a sword and cut it mentally in two with that sword of knowledge. There remained then no function in the mind, which transcended quickly the realm of names and forms, making me merge in Samadhi.'

*

'Nangta instructed me in Vedanta. In three days I went into Samadhi. At the sight of my Samadhi under the madhavi vine, he was quite taken aback and exclaimed, "Ah! What is this?" Then he came to know who resides in this body. He said to me, "Please let me go." At these words of Totapuri, I went into an ecstatic mood and said, "You cannot go till I realize the Truth of Vedanta."

'Day and night I lived with him. We talked only Vedanta. The Brahmani used to say to me: "Don't listen to Vedanta. It will injure your devotion to God."'

*

'The bhaktas retain "I-consciousness"; the jnanis do not. Nangta used to teach how to establish oneself in the true Self, saying "Merge the mind in the buddhi [determinative faculty] and the buddhi in the Atman; then you will be established in your true Self."'

ONWARD FOR EVER!

We are all babies struggling. Millions of people make a trade of religion. A few men in a century attain to that love of God, and the whole country becomes blessed and hallowed. When a son of God appears, a whole country becomes blessed. It is true that few such are born in any one century in the whole world, but all should strive to attain that love of God. Who knows but you or I may be the next to attain? Let us struggle, therefore.

We say that a wife loves her husband. She thinks that her whole soul is absorbed in him: a baby comes, and half of it goes out to the baby, or more. She herself will feel that the same love of husband does not exist now. So with the father. We always find that when more intense objects of love come to us the previous love slowly vanishes. Children at school think that some of their schoolfellows are the dearest beings that they have in life, or their fathers or mothers are so; then comes the husband or wife, and immediately the old feeling disappears, and the new love becomes uppermost. One star arises, another bigger one comes, and then a still bigger one, and at last the sun comes, and all the lesser lights vanish. That sun is God. The stars are the smaller loves. When that Sun bursts upon him a man becomes mad, what Emerson calls 'a God-intoxicated man'. Man becomes transfigured into God, everything is merged in that one ocean of love.

Richardson

REFLEXIONS ON THE 'TREE OF SAMSARA'

EDITORIAL

I

As perceived by our senses or as revealed by modern science, this universe is boundless, wondrous, and literally incomprehensible. To primitive or untutored man, the multiplicity of forms and shapes, forces of nature, forests and mountains, rivers and oceans, the sun, moon and the star-spangled sky are awe-inspiring and enigmatic. He imagines a supersensuous power or being behind every object or force of nature, to whom he prays for favours and protection. The modern scientific man looks at the same universe, equipped with all his boasted knowledge and so-called power over natural phenomena, but is yet awestruck and puzzled. He prides himself on not imagining a supernatural being behind the phenomena of nature, or seeking favours from such a being; still, droughts and floods, storms, volcanoes and earthquakes mock at his limitations and impotence. Large-scale terrestrial occurrences are closely related to events in the sun and other parts of the solar system, and farther into the depths of this vast cosmos; and the further the search is pushed, the more this inter-relation is found to extend to the minutiae. In spite of the secrets being unravelled by atrophysics and cosmological studies, the nature of this universe, with its billions of stars and hundreds of millions of galaxies, is still a closed secret. Neither the big-bang theory nor the steady-state theory—nor any other theory for that matter—holds the key to that secret.

In ancient India, the Vedic sages also at first tried this sort of external approach, and thereby discovered many cosmological truths, compared to which the discoveries of modern science seem quite superficial. They however then came to realize that unless the

true nature of man himself is first known, the true nature of the universe—of which man is part and parcel—cannot be at all understood. Therefore, turning their gaze inwards, they realized the Ātman, the spiritual Self within, which is none other than Brahman, the all-pervading substratum of the whole universe. Thus, long ago they ascertained the immaterial nature of the phenomenal universe, and taught their discovery to humanity: 'This universe is rooted in Infinity, in Brahman. It rises from Brahman, is sustained by It, and dissolves in It—to rise again. By realizing Brahman one realizes the true nature of the universe and thus conquers relative existence—bondage, misery, and death. A person of such realization becomes free, blissful, and immortal.'

With a view to bringing home this great truth, the *Kaṭha-upaniṣad* compares the phenomenal universe to a tree with its roots 'above' and branches 'below', and teaches :

'This is that eternal Aśvattha Tree [fig tree of India] with its root above and branches below. That root, indeed, is called the Bright; That is Brahman, and That alone is Immortal. In That all worlds are contained, and none can pass beyond. . . .

'Whatever there is—the whole universe—vibrates because it has gone forth from Brahman, which exists as its Ground . . . Those who know It become immortal.'¹

Since the whole 'tree of creation' emerges from Brahman which is beyond even space, time, and causation, the 'root' of this tree is said to be 'above'—above all relativity. Its branches are 'below', that is, within the framework of space-time-causality. Nothing in this universe, not excluding the human mind, is outside this framework. The tree is said to be eternal, for the process

of creation knows no beginning and no end. Modern science envisions a time when the cosmos will 'die' because of relentless loss of energy-entropy, as it is called. But Vedāntic cosmology differs with this view also. 'Death' or dissolution, it holds, is not complete destruction, but only going back to subtle causes. So the universal process, after aeons of activity, only quiets down, goes into a fine state of vibration. According to another Vedāntic school, this quieting down is confined to one particular part of the cosmos: when one part becomes quiescent, another quickens to full activity. Because Brahman, the absolute reality and the root of the cosmic process, is an infinite, inexhaustible ocean of energy, so the tree of creation is eternal and deathless.

A plant, to qualify as a tree, according to botanists, must be perennial. Besides, trees usually have a single self-supporting trunk that contains woody tissues. Commonly producing secondary limbs, called branches, this trunk is dominant for some distance above the ground. In some species, however, the trunk divides at a low level—or even at ground level—to produce two or more trunks. Transient though they are, buds, leaves, flowers and fruits are other essential parts of a tree. Though the Upaniṣad does not stop here to work out the tree-simile for this *saṁsāra*, in every detail, later the hint was taken up by the great Hindu sage and commentator, Śaṅkara. In his lucid and illuminating commentary on the above verses, Śaṅkara gives such appropriate yet poetic description of the *saṁsāra*-tree that it becomes, for us, living and palpable. The purpose of this comparison and description, however, is rather to arouse in us a burning dispassion for this transitory, death-ridden world, and to instil a deep hankering for realizing the infinite and immortal reality, namely, Brahman.

¹ II. iii. 1-2.

Śankara's description of the *samsāra*-tree runs thus in part:

'[This *Aśvattha* tree] . . . issuing from the seed of *avyakta* (undifferentiated nature), constituted of ignorance, desire, and action; having for its sprout *Hiraṇyagarbha* (cosmic mind) which is Brahman in its manifested form, and which combines in itself the two powers of knowledge and action; having for its trunk the various subtle bodies of all living beings; acquiring its pride of stature by getting irrigated with the waters of the respective sense-desires of these living beings; having for its tender buds the objects perceived by the intellect and sense-organs; . . . with lovely flowers consisting of sacrifices, charity, austerity, and various other deeds; endowed with diverse juices such as the experiences of joy and sorrow; having innumerable fruits on which living beings subsist; . . . with "birds' nests", namely the seven worlds beginning with what is called *satya* (the plane of Truth), built by all living beings from *Brahmā* downwards, . . . this tree of *samsāra* is like the *Asvattha* with its constantly trembling leaves, always moving owing to the winds of desire and action. . .'

This mighty tree, with its network of roots and branches, and sweet and bitter fruits of happiness and misery, has become unfortunately very dear to us. Being born on it, again and again, we have become extremely attached to it. But this attachment compels us to ride the wheel of repeated reincarnations, further resulting in more bondage and more misery. This tree can only be destroyed by developing detachment and gaining knowledge of our real nature. Śankara, taking his cue from the teaching of the *Gītā* in a passage of striking similarity, therefore says that this tree can be 'cut down by the weapon of non-attachment forged by the realization of the unity of Brahman and *Ātman* as taught by *Vedānta*'.

II

Let us also turn to the *Gītā*, which borrowing from the Upaniṣad the basic idea of *samsāra* (as proceeding from the Supreme Being) and the metaphor of the *Asvattha* tree, supplements these with its own spiritually beneficial hints and details.² The leaves of this tree, we read, are the *Vedās*; its branches, nourished by the three *gunas*³ and having the leaf-buds of the sense-objects, spread throughout the human and subhuman planes. Though its tap-root is above in the Supreme Being, its secondary roots, clustering and pertinacious spread downward in the world of men, giving rise to actions, virtuous and sinful. Because, on this earth alone, the scriptures say, can souls perform actions that bear fresh results. 'Its true form', says the '*Gītā*, is not comprehended here, nor its end, nor its origin, nor even its existence.' How true is this description of the nature of the cosmic process, even when viewed from the standpoint of modern physics, with its working concepts of the Heisenberg's principle of indeterminacy, anti-matter, faster-than-light particles, 'black' and 'white-holes' in space, expanding universe, etc.!

Furthermore, the *Gītā* here supplements the thought of the Upaniṣad by showing a way out of the intricate world-process. *Asaṅga* or non-attachment, is the strong axe to be wielded to cut the entanglements of this tree and reach that 'Goal from which they who have reached it never return'. The true nature of the *Ātman*, as one Upaniṣad describes it, is non-attachment—'*asango hi ayam puruṣah*'. 'This Purusa or Self is verily unattached'. In Its present state, It has

² *vide Bhagavad-gītā*, XV, 1-4.

³ lit., qualities; namely, *sattva* (tranquility and poise), *rajas* (dynamism and activity), and *tamas* (inertia and darkness).

come under a delusion, as it were, of weakness, limitation, and worldly attachment. By cultivating the spirit of detachment with respect to this world, its enjoyments, relationships, and prospects, the pristine unattached nature of the Ātman gradually manifests itself. Then the Self comes to know its infinite, all-blissful nature, and with that knowledge attains freedom and immortality. Saikara, in his commentary on these *Gītā* verses observes that *strength* comes to this weapon of detachment by 'a resolute bent of mind towards the Supreme Self' and *sharpness* by 'honing it again and again in the whetstone of true discrimination (*viveka*).'

In further development of the metaphor of the Upaniṣad, and in keeping with its own theistic tendency, the *Gītā* here teaches a prayer to be used by one who wants to practise this detachment. He should pray, 'I take refuge in that Primal Being from whom has streamed forth this eternal activity.' A spirit of surrender to the Supreme Being saves such a man of detachment from the possibility of falling victim to his own ego. Moreover, it opens the way for the flow of God's mercy, which is a crucial factor in the attainment of release from this relative existence.

III

It is one of the basic ideas with the Vedānta philosophy, that the microcosm and the macrocosm are built on the same plan. If the cosmic process can be appropriately compared to the Asvattha tree, the individual's own little world of beginningless activity in birth after birth, can also be equally well compared to such a tree. The *Srīmad Bhāgavatam*,⁴ among others,⁵ does so with

great poetic excellence. It says that the ancient tree of *samsāra*, full of activity, has the dicotyledonous seed of virtuous and sinful action, innumerable roots of desires, and three trunks which are the three *guṇas*. Its five 'main branches' are the five elements—namely, ether, air, fire, water, and earth—in their subtle, unmodified state; and its minor branches, which are eleven, are the ten sense-organ⁶ and the mind. The five saps, which are taken in and course through it, are the five sense-objects. Two birds, the individual soul and the Supreme Soul, nest in this tree; and the two types of fruits that grow thereon are happiness and misery. Those who are greedy and indulgent eat the fruits of misery and those who are self-controlled, contemplative and devoted to God, eat the others—the fruits of happiness.

Furthermore, the scripture here refers to the axe of knowledge 'sharpened by the service of the guru with one-pointed devotion'. Only the knowledge of one's real nature and one's eternal relation with the Supreme Being can put an end to the *samsāric* bondage. Devoted, unswerving service to one's guru gives a sharp edge to this axe, because the teacher is God in human form. Devoted service rendered to him becomes devoted divine service. The scripture adds with great insight that the seeker after freedom has to be always steady and attentive. Otherwise, the powerful axe, instead of cutting the tree of *samsāra*, may injure the wielder himself!

with the body is its sprout, attachment its tender leaves, work its water, the body its trunk, the vital forces its branches, the organs its twigs, the sense-objects its flowers, various miseries due to diverse works are its fruits, and the individual soul is the bird on it.'

⁶ The ten sense organs, according to Sāṅkhya and Vedānta, consist of five of perception and five of action: eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and skin; hands, feet, and the organs of speech, evacuation and generation.

⁴ *vide* XI. xii. 21-4.

⁵ *Cf. Vivekacūdāmaṇi*, 145; Of the tree of *samsāra*, ignorance, is the seed, the identification

It is, moreover clear that what the *Gītā* says about the felling of the *Aśvattha* tree of *samsāra* with the axe of detachment is not to be understood as the destruction of the whole cosmic process by one individual's successfully achieving his own liberation from it. This *samsāra*-tree is not the creation of any one individual. Therefore no individual can destroy it. It proceeds from the Primal Being, without beginning and without end. The person who wields the powerful axe of detachment cuts the tangle of roots that bind him to this *samsāra*. For him only, the bondage of the tree is destroyed, but not for others. The *Bhāgavatam* verses make this point very clear, as they take up only the microcosmic *samsāra*. With the axe of knowledge, the *Bhāgavatam* here says, 'cut asunder the tree of *samsāra* rooted in the subtle body' The subtle body is the storehouse of all our experiences, which are the cause of transmigration and reincarnation. Destruction of this subtle body with its fund of past actions and results, destroys the cause of *samsāra* at the root. Thus the individual

attains freedom from death and rebirth. The cosmic process, nonetheless, continues in its own undisturbed rhythm.

Will a liberated man have to continue his spiritual struggles? The answer is a definite 'no'. A liberated man is a man of illumination who perceives the nondual truth and existence both within and without. Though the tree of *samsāra* continues to appear before him as in the past, it has now transformed its substance and character. He sees it as non-different from the infinite reality, the Self or Brahman. Where then is any room for struggles? So the scripture counsels that after the attainment of freedom, the weapon of knowledge should be laid down. This is what Sri Ramakrishna describes as the attainment of the state of a Vijnani, a supreme knower of God. A Vijnani goes beyond all relativity and duality : for him the duality of knowledge and ignorance ceases forever, as the earthlings' dichotomy of night and day ceases for a man who reaches the self-luminous sun.

LETTERS OF A SAINT

SRI SRIRAMAKRISHNA THE REFUGE

Sasi Niketan, Puri
17th Āṣāḍh 1320¹

Dear Sri—,

I have duly received your letter of the 8th inst., and I am glad to do so. Accept our love and blessings and convey them to the others at the Ashrama.

Yogin-Ma and others who are here are all doing well. My health is not bad. Since arrival here, the rheumatic trouble in the leg has not been as bad as before.

You must not feel sorry for what I have said to you in my previous letter. Because all men have some defect or other. But then some endeavour to give it up and others don't even feel the necessity for giving it up. As you all have taken

¹ Āṣāḍh: third month of the Bengali year, included within June-July. 1320 (B.E.) would fall in 1913.

shelter at the holy feet of Sri Sri Thakur [Sri Ramakrishna], then certainly you have felt the need and also the desire within you to give it up; moreover, He surely will give you strength to give it up. We too just like you, having taken refuge in Him, are still—even today—trying to be thoroughly free from all manner of drawback. What capacity is there then in us that we can do something for someone else? Nonetheless, for the welfare of you and of all others I have sincerely prayed to the Lord in the past and am still doing so.

Ever your well-wisher,
SRI SARADANANDA

SRI SRI RAMAKRISHNA THE REFUGE

Calcutta
26th Māgh 1320²

Dear Sri—, ,

... You do not know how we used to carry on in those days at Baranagore Math when we had nothing to call our own. There used to be no rice on certain days and we begged alms and ate what we got. Many days passed when we ate only rice with salt, and that once in the evening; and on several days we could not get even salt, what to speak of vegetables! You may also live like that, provided you possess that kind of firm determination and have understood that God-realization is the one and only goal of life. Otherwise, in this transitory life of two days, acquiring the bad name of a 'thief', you will have to depart hence—the attainment of God and peace will be a far cry. I look upon you with the eyes of sincere love, and really you have many good qualities; therefore I am writing you so many things. The delusion of sense-objects is such that they overpower even an intelligent person. See to it that such a thing does not happen to you. Believe me, if such a thing happens in your case I will suffer great agony. If you feel that day by day sensuality is enmeshing you, then move away from the Ashrama work and stand apart. The duty which blocks up the path of God-realization and day by day increases restlessness, is no duty. Cast it off from you. You are an intelligent man and there is no use telling you more... I pray to Sri Sri Thakur that you may not spend more than the income available to the Ashrama, and that, for the sake of conducting divine service, you may not have to sell your property and thereby earn a bad name.

What more shall I write? Accept my blessings and convey them to others at the Ashrama. Accept the blessings of the Holy Mother and give them to all the Ashrama members.

If you sell off all the property in that manner, then it is useless to desire to get the Ashrama affiliated to the [Ramakrishna] Mission. Because, the Mission will not be able to accept its responsibility and run it, and so the responsibility will not be taken up at all.

Ever your well-wisher,
SRI SARADANANDA

² Māgh: tenth month of the Bengali year, included within January-February.

SRI SRI RAMAKRISHNA THE REFUGE

Calcutta

21 May [Year?]

My dear——,

I am in receipt of yours of the 19th inst.

Always try to engage yourself in some kind or other of good thoughts or activity. After occupying yourself with meditation and *japa* (repetition of a mantra or the Lord's name) and divine remembrance for as long as these can be done properly, then in the remaining time engage yourself in good activity—with the attitude that it is Sri Sri Thakur's work. In that case, there will be no room for the entrance of useless thoughts. Sri Sri Thakur used to say, 'The more you advance eastward the more the west is left behind.'

I am praying to Sri Sri Thakur that you may have immaculate devotion to his lotus feet. If you want, you can go to pay a visit to your mother.

Accept my blessings and good wishes which are always with you, and convey them to the others at the Ashrama. My health is all right, and all well here.

Ever your well-wisher,
SRI SARADANANDA

SRI SRI RAMAKRISHNA THE REFUGE

Calcutta

3/11/'24

My dear——,

I have yours of the 12th Karttik.³ If you go on doing your *japa* and meditation, keeping firm faith in Sri Sri Thakur and the mantra, then gradually you can know everything. How to remain depending entirely on him while in the midst of activity, can be known by yourself as a result of continuously doing the work, provided you keep up the effort to know it.

If during meditation you cannot think of the luminous Form [of your chosen Deity]—and the figure seen in the pictures appears in the mind—, then think of the Figure as seen in the pictures. If while trying to contemplate the Form as seated on a lotus, the thought of the lotus vanishes, and only the Form remains, then contemplate that only. The purpose is to see the Form—not the lotus. All thought of that kind is only with the view that it aids in making the mind meditative easily. Therefore, act and think in that way by which the mind is made to move towards Him. This indeed is the general rule. Everything is got if you attain a clear idea about God. 'I will begin my spiritual practice after acquiring that kind of clear knowledge' and 'I will get into water after learning swimming'—these two are similar statements [equally meaningless].

Accept my blessings. I am well.

Ever your well-wisher,
SRI SARADANANDA

³ Kārttik: seventh month of the Bengali year, included within October-November.

AT THE FEET OF SWAMI AKHANDANANDA —XIV

BY 'A DEVOTEE'

29-12-1936. After evening *ārati*,¹ one by one the Ashramites gathered round Bābā² who was sitting on a reclining chair in the verandah. He was reciting some Hindi songs of Sūrdās and explaining them :

'Where will you go, my Beloved, from me? You know I am weak, so you can easily shake off my hand. But I shall know you to be strong if you can shake yourself off from my heart.'

'O Lord, look not upon my evil qualities!

Thy Name, O Lord, is Same-sightedness. . .'

'The Guru is the object of meditation, The Guru is the end of all knowledge. Without money you cannot purchase anything in the market,

Without the Guru you cannot know which way to go.'

The devotees and disciples were listening to all these new ideas of spiritual life as if they were drinking nectar.

After some time, Bābā began talking about the Hindi literature on Vedānta :

Sundaradās and Niscaladās have popularized Vedānta with the result that in the Punjab, even the womenfolk can carry on a Vedāntic discussion.

The *Viveka-cūdāmaṇi*³ is really a jewel. The illumined teacher is teaching the sublime truth and the disciple is realizing this in the highest state of meditation. The disciple, after experiencing *samādhi*, exclaims: 'Where has the world vanished? Has anyone carried it off? Where has it got

dissolved?'⁴ *Sat-cit-ānanda* is in everything. In everything there is existence, consciousness, and bliss—or, *asti*, *bhāti*, *priya*.⁵ These aspects are common to all things. Everything has existence. Everything is expressing itself and everything is dear to someone or other—Existence, Consciousness and Bliss—this is Brahman.

The Knowledge of Brahman cannot be attained easily. It demands the four *Sādhanas* (means or disciplines): *Viveka*, *Vairāgya*, *Samādi-ṣaṭ-sampatti*, and *Mumukṣutva*.

Viveka: Discrimination, between the permanent and the impermanent. Brahman alone is real; all else is unreal or impermanent.

Vairāgya: Dispassion, for enjoyment here and hereafter. Renunciation of all enjoyments of this world, as well as of heaven. Our Master used to say, 'A golden chain and a chain of iron are both bondages.'

Samādi-ṣaṭ-sampatti : Six acquisitions beginning with *śama*. (1) *Śama* is mental restraint. (2) *Dama* is control of body and senses. (3) *Titikṣā* means forbearance—bearing heat and cold, happiness and misery and all the pairs of opposites. (4) *Uparati* means withdrawal. Each of the senses is attracted to its respective objects; *uparati* is the abstaining from sense objects. In the words of Sri Ramakrishna, 'Turn them to Him.' (5) *Śraddhā* is faith, in one's Guru

⁴ क्व गतं केन वा नीतं

कुत्र लीनमिदं जगत् । *Viveka-cūdāmaṇi*, 483

⁵ That these three attributes pervade everything we perceive, is reflected in our common parlance when we say of a physical object or being, that it exists (*asti*), shines (*bhāti*), and is dear (*priya*—this denoting the bliss-aspect of the triune Reality).—Ed.

¹ Evening service in the Shrine, consisting of waving of lights, etc.

² The name by which Swami Akhandananda was called by most of his devotees and disciples.

³ *Lit.* meaning 'Crest-jewel of Discrimination'. This is a Vedāntic treatise in metrical form, ascribed to Śrī Śankarācārya.

and the teachings of Vedānta. (6) *Samādhāna* is concentration of the mind, thus restrained, on scriptural or other elevating truths. This is peace also.

Mumukṣutva: Desire—intense desire—for liberation.

Are all these very cheap and easily attainable? Never! But since you have come under the shelter of our Master, you have to practise all these. Then will you be ready for the highest knowledge.

I feel hesitant to talk; yet I am speaking—in the faint hope it may help someone. Otherwise, to whom am I speaking, and who is there to hear all these things?

Still, Sankara has said: Even if a householder, or one devoid of these four *Sādhanas* (outlined above), reasons about Brahman, it will do him good—a good idea will crop up in his mind. Even such a simple act as giving food to a *sādhu* (monk) will bring good to a householder. On seeing a *sādhu*, he is reminded of God. At the sight of a *sādhu*, all good and great ideas flash up in his mind—the ideas of renunciation, dispassion, and surrender at the feet of God. Were there ever any such ideas previously in Bengal—Vedāntic disciplines and monastic life? Rather, there was a sort of repulsion for them. We have brought the Vedāntic *sannyāsa* (monasticism) into Bengal.

After a little silence, Bābā began singing to himself:

‘I am the son of Brahmamayi [the Divine Mother as Embodiment of Brahman]...’

‘I am the son of the Lord of the Universe:

I have full right over my father’s wealth...’

After singing for sometime, he began speaking again:

It was in Etawah (a big town in Uttar Pradesh) in 1891 on the Janmāṣṭamī day [Sri Kṛṣṇa’s birthday], that I was fasting and reading the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*.⁶ After

reading for some time I placed my head on the book and was thinking of the Master. Just then, right near my head I saw the Master smiling and asking, ‘Are the people gradually coming to know that I came?’

*

Bābā was talking

A *sannyāsin* should have no anger. What kind of *sādhu* is he with anger within? We meditated like this: ‘Someone is throwing filth over me, another is applying sandal-paste to my body—I am not angry with the one or attracted to the other. I am sitting silently without any reaction.’ Our Master used to say, ‘Where will desire and anger go? Turn their direction.’ That which is an obstacle will become a helping force. *Desire* to have Him. Be *angry* with Him, asking Him, ‘Why are You not coming to me?’ All emotions—love, anger, etc.—directed towards Him! Be *greedy* to taste His playful life, His name and form. Be *infatuated* with His beauty. Feel *proud* that I have loved Him and got His assurance. Nurture *jealousy* in this way: ‘O, how he is advancing in *sādhana*! Why not I? He has a vision of God: why have I none? These six enemies⁷ become six friends when turned towards God

*

Words of Maharaj (Swami Brahmananda) are published in the *Udbodhan*,⁸ such as these: A *yogī* sleeps only for four hours, a *bhogī* (worldly man of enjoyment) for six hours, and a *rogī* (sick person), for still more hours. How can a spiritual aspirant sleep? A fire is burning fiercely in his heart. How can

lives and doings of Incarnations of God—most extensively with Sri Kṛṣṇa’s.

⁷ The six enemies, called *sadripu* in Sanskrit, are: lust, anger, greed, infatuation, pride, and jealousy.

⁸ The Bengali organ of the Ramakrishna Mission founded by Swami Vivekananda.

⁶ A Sanskrit devotional classic dealing with the

he sleep? He keeps awake the whole night weeping sometimes, and speaking to the Lord, 'One more day is gone, and You have not come to me.' We sang this song with the Master:

'In vain the night is passing away, O dear maid,
The bed is spread, but where is He?
He is the mirror in my hand, where I see my face;
He is the flower in my hair, where I seek His happiness;
Everything is meant for Him, but where is He?'

Such songs as this one are songs of Rādhā's pangs of separation. Everything is there, but where is He? While singing this song, the Master would touch the bed endearingly and sob. The whole night would thus pass without a wink of sleep.

In the first stage of his *sādhana*, the Master would rub his face on the sands of the Ganga. The blood would come out, and the boatmen, seeing this, would be bewildered and would sympathize with him.

With the bells of *ārati*, the Master would go to the groves of the Panchavati and looking at the setting sun in the west, he would cry aloud: 'O Mother, one more day is gone; but You have not appeared before me yet.'

O, whoever has come to our Master and stayed with him even for a short while is fortunate. He that has taken his feet on his lap is blessed. The Master would say, 'Behold!'; and we have indeed 'beheld', that is, realized the spiritual truths.

30-12-36: The preceding night, Bābā did not take any food. So in the morning he seemed to be weak. Noticing the feeling of sympathy for himself in those who came to see him, he began to explain: 'You see, feeling weak after eating is bad; feeling weak after a fast is good. This increases mental power and self-confidence.' After a few minutes' silence, he spoke, as if to himself,

'Just show, my Lord—show Your play through these old bones; just show Your great power!'

By the 9 a.m. train a devotee had brought from Ranaghat his sister to the feet of Swami Akhandananda. Her husband has also come. For some time they had been hearing of Bābā: now they wanted to see him. After *praṇāmas* (reverential prostrations) they expressed their desire to have *dīkṣā* (initiation) from him.

At this, Bābā seated himself in a majestic way on the reclining chair and began the story of how he gave his first initiation [of a householder disciple]:

I had been to the [Belur] Math during the last illness of Mahapurush Maharaj [Swami Sivananda]. A young man from South India had come for initiation to the Math. And he was a married man. They in the Math asked me to initiate him, as he had come all the way from the distant South. I replied: 'How can it be? How can I do something which I am determined not to do? I will not initiate married people.' During our travels in the Himalayas, at times Swamiji [Vivekananda] would teach me, 'This is the mantra, and this is the Iṣṭa (Chosen Deity). I could not make out why he was saying all this to me. Later, he wrote to me to tonsure the heads of a number of young men and make them disciples. Then I understood the hint—to have monastic disciples—but determined not to initiate married people. So at the pressing request of the Math people, my mind was very much troubled. In the afternoon I was sitting alone on my cot, when the Master, as it were, reminded me of his own words:

I could clearly see in a packed room at Keshab's house [more than fifty years before] our Master was speaking: 'O Keshab, enough of it. Now stop the machine, and live like brother and sister!' Do you understand the meaning of 'machine'? I

came to the conclusion that I would repeat these words to all married people that would come to me. In the beginning, I would ask them to write it down— 'We will live like brother and sister.' But if you live in a room full of black soot, you will get some of the soot on you—at least a little of it.

Bābā called the couple very near to him and was seen to ask them some questions. Later on, that very same day they were initiated.

ESSAY ON APPLIED RELIGION

ATTAINMENT OF PEACE

SWAMI BUDHANANDA

Peace of mind is a universal longing of the human heart. We may differ variously—by race, religion, complexion, politics, occupation, likes and dislikes ; by our habits and views, our convictions and aspirations. On this one thing, however, we all agree, namely, all of us long to have a peaceful mind. But it is really a wonder that, though we all long for and seek for peace of mind, so few of us ever get it !

Actually, in spite of this universal longing for peace, the number of mentally suffering people seems to be on the increase in many countries of the world—including perhaps all the so-called developed nations !

Many persons go on silently bearing their mental agonies all their lives. Many have no material wants whatsoever, and live in luxury ; yet have no peace of mind. They frantically move from one peak of excitement to another, in search of a little peace. But they always emerge more miserable than before. They eat well but they do not sleep well. They wear costly dress, but the heart is always troubled. No quiet, no tranquillity—a perpetual burning goes on inside.

Sometimes our mental troubles may not

be acute. We may go on working, meeting friends, attending church services and social functions. Yet like a slow burning fire the mind continues to be in agony.

It is absolutely needless to suffer like this. It is not only needless, it is also fruitless and senseless to suffer like this.

One may undergo suffering if it produces worthwhile results. But mental suffering as such produces no such results. A calm, tranquil and peaceful mind alone can help us to worthwhile things in life. Otherwise we are condemned to live a dreary life in our private world, the sufferings of which are not known even to our nearest ones.

In acute cases we naturally have to take the help of those who are specialists in the treatment of human mind. Generally speaking, however, we must all know how to take care of our own minds, as we should know how to take care of our physical health. In our age of ever-increasing complexities, ever-greater importance should be attached to taking care of mental health. We should learn this early in life, for once mental troubles become chronic they obstinately resist easy handling.

II

There are certain proven methods in the Hindu tradition, by practising which peace of mind can most certainly be attained.

To get peace of mind we must do those things which appertain to true peace and avoid doing those things which destroy peace. This is a very simple proposition.

Broadly speaking, there are two approaches to this theme: the psychological approach and the religious approach.

In the psychological approach, the complex instrument which is the human mind has to be understood and handled in a way conducive to the attainment of peace.

In the religious approach, certain disciplines are to be practised, from which peace will naturally follow.

Both are proven methods. If one does not help, the other certainly will.

We shall first discuss the psychological approach, and that according to Hindu psychology as taught by the great sage Patañjali. To be sure, his analysis, though eminently psychological, must in keeping with the Hindu tradition go back in the last analysis to the Purusa or the spiritual Self.

The mind, like the *māyā* of Vedānta—and anything else of any basic importance—defies all definition. The instrument which we use to try to define the mind, is mind itself. The peace we seek of the mind is a function of the mind itself. That which disturbs this peace is also the mind.

According to Hindu psychology, the mind is subtle matter in a state of vibration. The mind itself cannot be seen. But our smiles and tears, our exclamations, horror, joy, and exaltation all originate only because of the mind.

Through the mind the sense organs receive impressions of objects and react upon them. Mind is called the 'inner organ', which can

on the one hand, reflect the Ātman or the Self and on the other, the impressions of the objective world.

Thinking, feeling, willing, doubting, knowing—all these are various functions of the mind.

Probing further into the mysteries of the mind, it may be said that the mind has three strata: subconscious, conscious, and superconscious.

The superconscious stratum is completely unknown to ordinary human beings. When a rare person becomes aware of this level of the mind, he discovers that the so-called individual mind is but a partial apprehension of the cosmic mind. Moreover, one who knows that his is a cosmic mind, also discovers the fact that the pure mind can hardly be distinguished from the Self or the Ātman.

Ordinary persons are also not fully aware of the subconscious mind. It is like the cellar of a house, in which things which you want to use in future, or those things which are unpresentable, are kept piled. Very few people are aware how many odd things there are in their cellars. Only when one day we decide to clean the cellar, then we know what an impossible mess it is.

It is in this cellar of the subconscious mind our past thoughts and actions are stored up as *samskāras* or impressions, not only of this life but also of past lives. And these impressions are constantly seeking expression at the conscious level. These constitute our ingrained desires, instincts, tendencies good and bad, talents and shortcomings.

It is from the conscious level of the mind that impressions go down to the subconscious. Again the impressions bubble up from the subconscious to the conscious, and powerfully influence the motivations and actions of the conscious level. These complex functionings are going on constantly in

the human mind. Most of us do not know how even to notice them, not to speak of controlling them.

Again, according to Hindu psychology, mind is constituted of three substantive forces, partaking of the divine, human and animal qualities. They are called the *gunas*, namely, *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*. Therefore, the same mind can mediate acts brutal, human or divine.

This is how among men we have saintly persons and also wicked and villainous ones. Not only that, we also find sinners becoming saints and attaining perfect peace. A man is no better or worse than his state of mind at a given point of time.

Human personality, according to Hindu thought, is a complex. Man is essentially the pure spirit or the *Ātman*, which is not different from Brahman, the Supreme Spirit.

The *Ātman*, or the individual soul, is clothed in a subtle body consisting of the mind with its many strata, and the senses, and also in a gross physical body. Though the *Ātman* inhabits this body, it is separate from the body, in the manner that we are separate from the apartment in which we live or the garments we put on.

The mind is compared by Patañjali to a lake, which is constantly lashed into waves.

How are these waves caused? Sense objects from outside provide stimuli to the external sense organs. These in turn affect the internal organs. The internal organs in turn affect the conditioned inner self. The reactions that follow such transference of sensations are the waves of the mind.

These waves of mind create *thought*, *feeling*, and *willing*. These three are inherent in every wave of the mind. When a wave 'strikes the head' more strongly than the heart it comes to be known as *thought*.

If it 'strikes the heart' more strongly than the head, it is known as *feeling*. When it 'strikes' equally both the head and the heart, *willing* is the result.

The *Ātman*, which is the pure spirit and the indweller of the mind, is constantly getting eclipsed by the perpetually rising waves of the mind: thought, feeling, and willing.

Not only that, it is even getting identified with these waves. But this is a totally illusory identification. And in the strength and persistence of this identification is the root cause of all our sufferings, mental or otherwise.

Now if we want to remove the sufferings and disquiet of our minds, then we must remove this root cause. There is no surer way of attaining peace of mind. In other words the attainment of peace of mind will depend on the disidentification of the Self from the waves, on the one hand, and the quelling of these waves, on the other.

This, in short, is a rational and concise analysis of the whole issue of peace of mind and its achievement, according to Hindu psychology.

An understanding of this analysis can indeed be helpful in gaining peace of mind. This, however, is not to say that peace of mind depends on a knowledge of Hindu psychology, or for that matter, on any other system of psychology. Many people, perfectly innocent of any knowledge or psychology as such, have attained peace of mind; but it is doubtful whether many scholars and professors of psychology have ever known peace of mind.

What is important is to do the things that are productive of inner peace. By doing the things that appertain to true peace, people have attained peace of mind everywhere in the world. Therefore let us turn to those things.

III

Here we have to understand that peace can be of two kinds: relative peace and absolute peace.

In our ordinary parlance we speak of relative peace only. Not even one in a million, perhaps, thinks in terms of absolute peace, because that is not his immediate need. That is also beyond the comprehension of most people. The relative peace alone is our daily concern, our immediate need. We shall therefore first discuss how relative peace can be attained.

Later on we shall discuss the method of attaining absolute peace also, for without aiming at absolute peace we cannot have stable relative peace.

The basic secret of relative peace is the control of the mind. The mind must be our 'horse', and not we the 'horse' of our mind.

In terms of Hindu psychology, relative peace comes when the *vṛttis* or modifications of mind are controlled and *viksepas* or distractions are removed.

How do we do this?

In the *Bhagavad-gītā*,¹ Arjuna, the hero, says in despair to Śrī Kṛṣṇa :

'O Kṛṣṇa, the mind is obstinate, powerful and restless; to control it appears to be as difficult as to control the wind.'

Śrī Kṛṣṇa replies:

'Doubtless, O mighty Arjuna, the mind is restless and hard to control. Yet it can be controlled through practice and dispassion.'

There is hardly any other way of controlling the mind except through 'practice' and 'dispassion'. So we need to understand these two disciplines in all clarity. Commenting on these as taught in the *Gītā*, Śrī Śaṅkarācārya says :

"Practice" consists in constantly repeating the same thought at a particular

level of consciousness. "Dispassion" means freedom from desire for pleasures seen or unseen, attained through a constant perception of evil in them. It is by practice and dispassion that *viksepa*, the passage of thought in the direction of external objects, can be restrained. It is thus the mind is restrained.'

Those not prepared to submit themselves to these disciplines cannot expect to have much peace of mind, even in the relative sense, what to speak of absolute peace !

From another viewpoint we may say that it is the impurities of the mind which cause it disquiet and rob it of its peace. So to get peace of mind we must remove these impurities. And impurities of mind are not easily removed.

Therefore Śrī Kṛṣṇa says constant practice is necessary. Moreover it is the basic thirst for life, for pleasure, which gives all strength to these impurities to stick to our minds. Hence detachment is necessary.

What are these impurities ?

According to Hindu psychology, the impurities of the mind—sometimes compared to dust and dirt on an unclean mirror—can more appropriately be compared to the dyes in a coloured fabric. They are those urges, instincts, and passions—like envy, hatred, anger, fear, jealousy, lust, greed, conceit, avarice, etc. These impurities sway and swing the mind, create disquiet, and rob us of our tranquillity.

What practices have we to do in order to remove this disquiet ?

Patañjali says in his *Yoga-sūtras* :

'Undisturbed calmness of mind is attained by cultivating :

- (1) friendliness towards the happy.
- (2) compassion for the unhappy.
- (3) delight in the good.
- (4) indifference to the evil.

The practice of being friendly—or happy—at the happiness of others creates a sooth-

¹ vi. 34-5.

ing mental climate in which impulses like jealousy cannot easily thrive.

Emphasizing this idea of friendly feeling towards all, the Buddhist scripture, *Suttanipāta* enjoins that the secret of a peaceful mind is in the cultivation of boundless goodwill for all beings.

With all our heart and soul we must repeat: 'May all beings be happy and secure! May they be happy-minded!'

On this point, the *Suttanipāta* utters some of the most memorable words to be found in any scripture. We shall do great service to ourselves by cherishing these words all our lives and reciting them every morning and evening. The words of the scripture are:

'As a mother, at the risk of her life watches over her child, her only child, so also let everyone cultivate a boundless (friendly) mind towards all beings.

'And let him cultivate goodwill towards all the world, a boundless, (friendly) mind, above and below and across, unobstructed, without hatred, without enmity.

'Standing, walking or sitting or lying, as long as he is awake, let him devote himself to this mind. . .'

We all have noticed that even after a bottle of perfume is emptied, for a long time the fragrance lingers in it. If we concentrate on great thoughts earnestly every morning, their fragrance will suffuse what we think and do during the day.

But though we can repeat these words easily, the actual feeling of universal goodwill cannot be attained all of a sudden. Practice is needed. By and large we are content to be puny creatures. Our hearts are small, and resist expansion remarkably. We can wish them well who feed our self-interest in some way or other. But to those who do not, we are indifferent at best. To those whom we take to be our enemies, we wish hell. But really, we cannot wish hell to

anyone without risking it for ourselves! So, universal goodwill has to be cultivated. To do so is our true self-interest.

In the cultivation of universal goodwill, we had best proceed step by step.

First, as suggested by Patanjali, we must feel happy at the happiness of others.

Second, we must be compassionate to those in misery. Active compassion will mean service of the afflicted. There is hardly anything more purifying than service to fellow human beings, looking upon them as children of God. Any contraction of heart causes within us a special type of inner disquiet. We are essentially great: we are, in fact, one with the Supreme Spirit. Therefore the smaller we become in consciousness, the less are we aware of our true nature—and inevitably, the greater is our suffering. Let us release ourselves from all types of smallness, and we shall find joy and peace permeating our being. Service expands our hearts and begins to liberate us from the cramping agony of our smallness; and this gives us inner joy and peace.

Third, our delight should be in the good. When we take delight in the good, we tend to imbibe those qualities of goodness in which we delight. We have heard it said that God is good. Naturally then, goodness helps towards godliness. Growing in godliness, surely, is growing in peace.

Fourth, we are to be indifferent to evil. Undoubtedly to turn evil into good is a high and noble task. But that task is for those who have lifted themselves up from the common human frailties, and are firmly established in a high state of being. It is not for us weak human beings, who do not know even how to start to purify our own minds, wherein are plenty of evil tendencies to tackle! Therefore, those of us who seek peace of mind must avoid meddling with evil and the wicked. That way alone can

we avoid greater troubles for our own minds.

Those who live immoral and unethical lives may be considered 'evil'. Though we should accordingly avoid their company, we must scrupulously refrain from hating them. Rather, we should daily repeat this great Sanskrit prayer for them :

'May the wicked become virtuous.
May the virtuous attain tranquillity.
May the tranquil be free from bonds.
May the free make others free!'

It will be good for our hearts to pray for them as we pray for ourselves.

Thus therefore, we have outlined the four methods of gaining calmness of mind, according to Patañjali, the great teacher of Yoga.

But even if we earnestly practise these methods, we may come against powerful undesirable thoughts and tendencies, which will tend to frustrate all our efforts. We must know how to deal with these bad thoughts as they arise. If we cannot check a wrong thought, we cannot easily check a wrong action, because thought is the seed of action.

In this regard also, Patañjali gives a very handy and useful precept. It is embodied in the discipline of *pratipakṣa-bhāvanam* (thinking of the contrary). Says Patañjali, 'To obstruct thoughts which are inimical, contrary thoughts should be brought.'

For instance, we often notice that a wave of anger is just rising in our mind, certain to upset its peace. We should then at once raise a contrary wave, a wave of love. If lust assails us, and the mind is about to be thrown into waves, we should at once raise a contrary wave of purity, by thinking of the consciousness of a holy person—say of Christ, or of Buddha, or of Sri Rama-krishna.

But in doing so we have to remember

that it is much more effective to raise these contrary waves at the very inception of the inimical thoughts. There is a stage when anger is just a bubble, and there finally comes a stage when the person is anger-itself. There is not much use calling the fire engines when the whole house is ablaze!

Constant vigilance is therefore needed. As the fire engine and fire-fighters of a city are kept in perpetual readiness, we must keep powerful good thoughts in constant readiness, so that at a moment's notice we can blast the wrong thoughts.

This means that the mind has to be very carefully watched. A heedless man will soon be senseless. He cannot have peace of mind. Further, the blemishes of the mind, which cause peacelessness, can never be removed in a day. They are not surface blemishes only, but deeply ingrained habits: bad habits can be eradicated only by powerful, persistent self-application to building good habits.

Yet though our faults be many, and we feel discouragement, still, given the determination, we have no reason for despair. In fact there is great heroism in accepting this challenge of our own lower nature. As the Buddha said to Simha, the general-in-chief of the Śākya, 'Great is a successful general O Simha, but he who has conquered self is the greater victor.'

To think of removing the impurities of our mind one by one, may appear in the initial stage to be a staggering task. How long will we then take to get peace of mind?—we wonder in despair.

But we have not necessarily to remove all our faults and impurities one by one, in order to gain peace of mind. In that case we may very well expect only the peace of the grave. But who is looking for that peace? We are seeking a peace which will be

with us every day and everywhere, even while we live in full vigour.

So, if we can find out the root cause of all our faults, weaknesses and impurities—even of our thirst for life—, and attack that root, then our task will become much simpler. Is there any such root to find?

Yes there is. Patañjali points out that all these imperfections are rooted in *asmitā*, egoism. What is this egoism? Patañjali explains it thus:

‘Egoism is the identification of the seer with the instrument of seeing.’²

Who is the seer and what are the instruments of ‘seeing’?

According to Vedānta, man is, as we have already outlined, essentially the pure spirit, infinite and immortal. This self of man, known as Ātman, is really the seer, the perceiver. The mind, the intellect, and the sense organs are its instruments of perception. The feeling of egoism ‘arises’ when the self, the pure spirit, somehow gets identified with the instruments of perception. We must know for certain that if we identify ourselves with our organs of perception including the mind we cannot have peace of mind. If we think we *are* our mind, we can never find peace of mind.

Therefore constant discrimination between the seer and the instruments of perception, and avoidance of all involvement of the seer, is here the way of destroying the root cause of our peacelessness. We must impress on ourselves this fact, that the mind and the senses are separate from the true Self, even as pictures projected on a screen are separate from the screen. Otherwise when a house is on fire in a movie, the movie-house itself would catch fire. As a matter of fact, so complete is our identification with the mind

that *we* do seem to burn when our mind is on fire.

Still this need not at all be so. Nothing in the universe can affect the pure spirit, which is the core of man. It is only when through egoism we again and again identify ourselves with the instruments of seeing, that we feel pleasure and pain—and this prevents our inner peace. True detachment, as Patañjali teaches, can be developed only when we are established in the conviction that all the instruments of perception, including the mind, are separate from our true Self.

Again, it is not enough merely to know that the mind is separate from the true Self. The mind has also to be tamed. Its vagaries have to be controlled with great firmness.

How do we tame the mind and control its vagaries?

Swami Brahmananda, one of the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna, and a great spiritual teacher says:

‘Unless you meditate, the mind cannot be controlled, and unless the mind is controlled, you cannot meditate. But if you think, “First let me control the mind and then I shall meditate”, you will never enter the path of spiritual life. You must do both at the same time—steady the mind and meditate.’³

In the controlled mind alone there can be peace. Without practising meditation, the mind cannot be controlled. Therefore, those who seek peace of mind must practise meditation.

One of the ways of controlling the vagaries of the mind, which many may practise before beginning meditation, is to sit quiet for some time and watch the movements

(Continued on page 388)

² *Yoga-sūtras*, ii. 6.

³ Swami Prabhavananda : *The Eternal Companion* (Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras-600004, 1945), p. 229.



ILLUMINATING DIALOGUES FROM INDIAN LORE

YUDHISTHIRA—THE PATH OF DHARMA

After the bloody eighteen days of the Kurukṣetra—which left all except three of the warriors among the Kaurava's huge army, dead, along with all of Kṛṣṇa's army and all but a handful of the Pāṇḍavas—the five brothers with Sṛī Kṛṣṇa performed the cremation-ceremonies for that host of the dead, in the presence of the bereaved mothers and relatives from both sides. That mournful task ended, they turned to making provision for these helpless women and children. Then, seeking solace and purification, they camped on the banks of the holy Gangā for a month.

Still, Yudhiṣṭhira especially continued to be oppressed with anguish at the memory of the horrors for which he and his brothers seemed responsible, and his mind returned to his oft-cherished thoughts of renunciation and the forest-life. But his brothers, friends, and advisers without exception urged on him his kingly responsibilities. Arjuna, among many, recounted glowingly what Yudhiṣṭhira had already achieved, and pointed out the folly of pseudo-renunciation in one whose nature was kingly. Bhīma, typically, was very blunt:

I find you have lost your wisdom and talk like an unfortunate brāhmaṇa. If you had disliked the kingly duties and wanted to live idly in the forest, why then did you

kill so many Kaurava warriors in this battle? Followers of the kṣātriya-dharma (duties of the warrior caste) do not show even to friends, forgiveness, compassion, or non-violence. Had we known that you cherished such ideas, we would never have taken up weapons or killed anyone: our whole lives we would have spent in begging! Nor would all those kings have joined us. One who wishes to gain a kingdom should lay low all who oppose him; accordingly we have acted and gained the kingdom. Now you should enjoy that kingdom according to dharmic conventions. One who digs a well for water but comes out after merely smearing his body with mud, and not drinking, ...like him is our situation! You are our eldest brother and we are bound to follow your lead; if you go to the forest we shall also follow; but then we shall certainly become the butt of ridicule for all. And why not? For though so strong and so successful, yet wandering from the proper path we shall have followed in the wake of an unmanly man!

Still Yudhiṣṭhira continued silent, unconvinced as ever. Thereupon Nakula, the fourth Pāṇḍava brother, very pious and generally reticent, cogently appealed:

Even today, in sacrificial grounds, one finds the remnants of those altars built by

the devas (gods) on which to light holy fires and pour oblations in sacrifice. Thus even those great ones had to resort to fruitful activity, in accord with Vedic rules, for attaining godhead. Again, the *pitṛs* (ancestors who have gone to heaven) are protecting us their children by sending rains (etc.) in proper time and are even now performing such actions according to Vedic injunctions. Atheists indeed are those who discard the Vedic rules and regulations. In this world, he who earns money righteously and spends it for prescribed sacrificial purposes (without any special enjoyment for himself) is known as a *sāttvika saṁnyāsin* (a monk, desireless and without insignia)... But he who, indifferent to the enjoyments of the householder's life, wanders forth into the woods desiring liberation and gives up his body in that attempt, is called a *tāmasika saṁnyāsin*. Learned men say that the householder's stage alone is equal to all the other three stages put together. Virtuous householders have to practise all the ethical and moral disciplines of a recluse (patience, truthfulness, purity, guilelessness, self-sacrifice etc.) and also serve the devas, guests, and *pitṛs*. [A king, further, has withal to protect and nourish his subjects.] Thus the three *vargas* (ends of life, i.e., virtue, wealth, and enjoyment) are attainable in this life whereas the ascetics attain only the fourth (liberation); O King, after acquiring all these powers and wealth, you are spurning their proper use in sacrifices (and for the welfare of your people) and talking like an atheist. And for the king's wrong judgement, the innocent subjects also will suffer.

Still Yudhiṣṭhira replied not a word. So his youngest brother Sahadeva brought out the most compelling philosophical points of all:

You know there are the two kinds of 'my-ness'—both of which mean bondage

and death—the internal and the external. To give up the external my-ness (attachments) while keeping the internal, is a miserable kind of hypocrisy; the merit and happiness which accrue from that, we wish only for our enemies! For our friends we wish the renouncing of inner my-ness so far as possible, and the resulting virtues and enjoyments (which come of themselves). My-ness is like death, and non-my-ness is like the eternal Brahman. Both these have taken their abode in every soul and are impelling it to activity, *saṁsāra*. There is indeed no end to this *saṁsāra* (relative existence) without realizing the Ātman. Until one does that, any decision to go here or go there will be fallible. In such case, the wise man will follow the path (externally, that is) laid down by the good people. But still, you are my father, brother, protector, preceptor: therefore do not be angry at this lamentation of mine, made with all sincerity and devotion.

Yet despite such appealing and practical exhortations, Yudhiṣṭhira remained gloomily silent. So at last Draupadī, the long-suffering wife and mother who had lost all her sons in the frightful war, spoke lovingly:

Like the *cātaka*-bird (a mythical bird which drinks only the water falling from clouds) crying for water, your brothers have been appealing to you, yet you answer not a word? Now it is your duty to cheer them by using reasonable words. When we all were suffering in the forest, from cold, wind, or burning sun, you promised that when Duryodhana would be killed and the kingdom obtained, you would perform great sacrifices—and that then the memory of those forest-miseries would itself become sweet. Why then now this sad silence and unbecoming stance which only add to our misery? Our mother Kuntī assured me that you brothers would make me supremely happy by conquering enemies and acquir-

ing a kingdom; but now it seems her prophetic words are being nullified by your actions. Hear well these words of mine,

But Yudhiṣṭhira remaining still unmoved, Arjuna and then Bhīma renewed their appeals, sweet or harsh; and at length Yudhiṣṭhira spoke, addressing Bhīma in particular:

Under the influence of delusion, peaceless, drunk, full of passion, hatred, and ego—in such a state you desire to enjoy the kingdom! Please give these up, cultivate patience, and be happy. Even if a king rule over the whole world, he still has only one stomach. Why then do you make so much fuss about the number and variety of enjoyments we now possess? Try for one day, for one month, even one whole lifetime: you can never fulfil all your desires. If fuel is thrown onto a fire, its flames only increase; but if fuel is withdrawn, then only will it die down. Similarly you should try to calm the fires within yourself. Conquer your own belly (physical appetites) and all the world will be conquered. Instead, you are highly praising the life of those wholly devoted to wealth and desires, while you disparage those who devote themselves to austerities forgetting body and enjoyments—those who alone can attain the highest goal. The acquiring and protecting of kingdoms necessitates mixing up dharma and adharma hopelessly. Therefore, give up all such thoughts and rid yourself of a great burden.

Consider the proud tiger, who for his one stomach collects food in plenty—only to have it largely consumed by the many smaller animals who hang about him. Likewise a king, out of greed, acquires so many things—to be enjoyed at their ease by flatterers and parasites! See what a wonder: even after seeing this again and again, how few kings are able to renounce! Only those who have lived the forest-life can ever conquer hell and destroy the fear of death: the

king who rules even the whole earth cannot be called successful, but only he who sees with an equal eye both mud and money. For instance, King Janaka, having taken to the path of liberation and destroyed his mine-ness, said, 'I have immeasurable wealth, but I have none! If my capital city Mithilā burns, nothing that is mine burns.' Those who have climbed the highest pinnacle of Knowledge do not grieve for transient things.

Arjuna, though greatly pained, for himself as well as Bhīma, by these penetrating words of his brother, still rejoined soberly and forcefully;

You point out Janaka, O King, but hear now what happened to him also. When he, renouncing kingdom, wealth and family, took to living on alms in a spirit of utter dispassion, his queen sought him out in his solitude and sharply pointed out what he was actually doing. Though giving up so much, yet he could not give up his need for alms of parched corn; he had left his mother sonless and wife husbandless; and whereas thousands had previously been living on his charity, now he was begging from them! This begging business, she said, could have no end: though one gave up kingdom and every luxury, still so long as any desire remained, one would grasp after even a few fried barley-corns—which after all was no less a bondage than the hankering after a kingdom. See thus how even the kingly sage Janaka, who is described as supremely wise, had fallen into delusion! Therefore it seems that delusion can overpower anyone and everyone. So, you please also shake off your present delusion.

But Yudhiṣṭhira was not at all shaken, and rejoined:

I am well versed in the *dharma-śāstra*¹

¹ Books, most notably Manu's dealing with law-codes and day-to-day duties of individuals, their social responsibility in life, etc.

and Vedas. In the Vedas, both performance and renunciation of action are variously prescribed. But consider well: all scriptures are complex. To be sure, I know the conclusions to be drawn by reasoning. You on the other hand, as a heroic warrior are well versed in use of all weapons, but hardly in understanding the import of the *śāstras* (holy scriptures). If you really knew their hidden meaning and the final conclusions about dharma, you would not have advised me as you just did. In all activities of worldly life and valorous warfare, you are unsurpassed in the three worlds. You may well advise on even the most subtle points of the military arts. But concerning the questions I was discussing, you have no business to doubt. You see, you have never served the wise ('old-in-wisdom') who know the essence of scriptures both in detail and in sum. Thus you have never had the chance to hear their expositions of these matters. Men of the highest intelligence have firmly declared that among these three—austerities, renunciation, and *brahma-jñāna*, (knowledge of Brahman)—renunciation is superior to austerity and *brahma-jñāna* superior to either. But, disregarding even the least of these, you have come to the conclusion that nothing is superior to wealth: that wealth, indeed, is necessary to all other dharmas! I can never agree to this. Just see: those devoted to scriptural study and virtue—what to speak of great sages—through their austerities attain the eternal *lokas* (worlds); those forest-dwellers who devote themselves to holy studies also attain heaven; the Āryas (persons of noble character) who have given up desires, rid ding themselves of darkness (of ignorance) follow the Northern Path to those celestial worlds of those devoted to dispassion and renunciation. Those, again, who only practise scriptural actions, follow after death the Southern Path from which they must return

to rebirth. But the goal attained by the Yogīs (seekers of liberation) is described only with greatest difficulty [because it is supersensuous and infinite]. Therefore renunciation (leading to *brahma-jñāna*) is the highest and desirable path. Dear brother, knowing of these higher paths, why keep praising worldly wealth which is beset with miseries? Even those wise men devoted only to charity and sacrifice come also to see that wealth is only misery.

But Arjuna, fully convinced as he was—with the memory of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's immortal words of the *Gītā* only a few weeks before—of the supreme value *for them* of the ksatriya's dharma, exhorted:

According to the dharma of a ksatriya, you have killed your enemies and earned the kingdom—the highest achievement of a ksatriya. So why are you grieving? To die in battle is the prescribed duty for a ksatriya just as austerity and renunciation are for a brāhmaṇa. The dharma of a ksatriya is based on weapons and is very terrible. *Sannyāsa*, begging, austerity, and living on the earnings of others are very reprehensible for a ksatriya. You are a knower of all paths of dharma, you are devoted to dharma, and you know the consequences of each dharma. Therefore, cease this futile heart-burning and turn to the kingly duties, and then to the *yajñas* (sacrifices)—with giving of gifts to brāhmanas and to the poor.

But, as Yudhiṣṭhira again kept silence, the great sage Vyāsa, having seen and heard all this, became greatly concerned about the calamity threatened by Yudhiṣṭhira's resolve, and spoke thus:

O King, all that Arjuna has said is justified. The highest dharma can be achieved in the householder's stage of life, say the scriptures. Consider: even the gods, as well as our ancestors and all guests, are supported by the householder; and servants, domes-

tic animals and birds are protected by him. Naturally his duties are greatly demanding: thus ordinary men with uncontrolled senses cannot fulfil them. Already you have performed ample austerities and gained enough knowledge of the Vedas. So now it is your evident duty to take up the burden of your ancestral kingdom. Austerity, sacrifices, forgiveness, contentment, begging, meditation, solitude, sense-control, and attaining Knowledge (etc.) are duties for a brāhmaṇa. But more specially for the kṣatriya kings are heroism, righteous striving for wealth, administration of justice, sternness, protection of subjects, austerities (relevant to one's vocation in life) and knowledge of the Vedas. But foremost among these is administering justice. About this, hear a story.

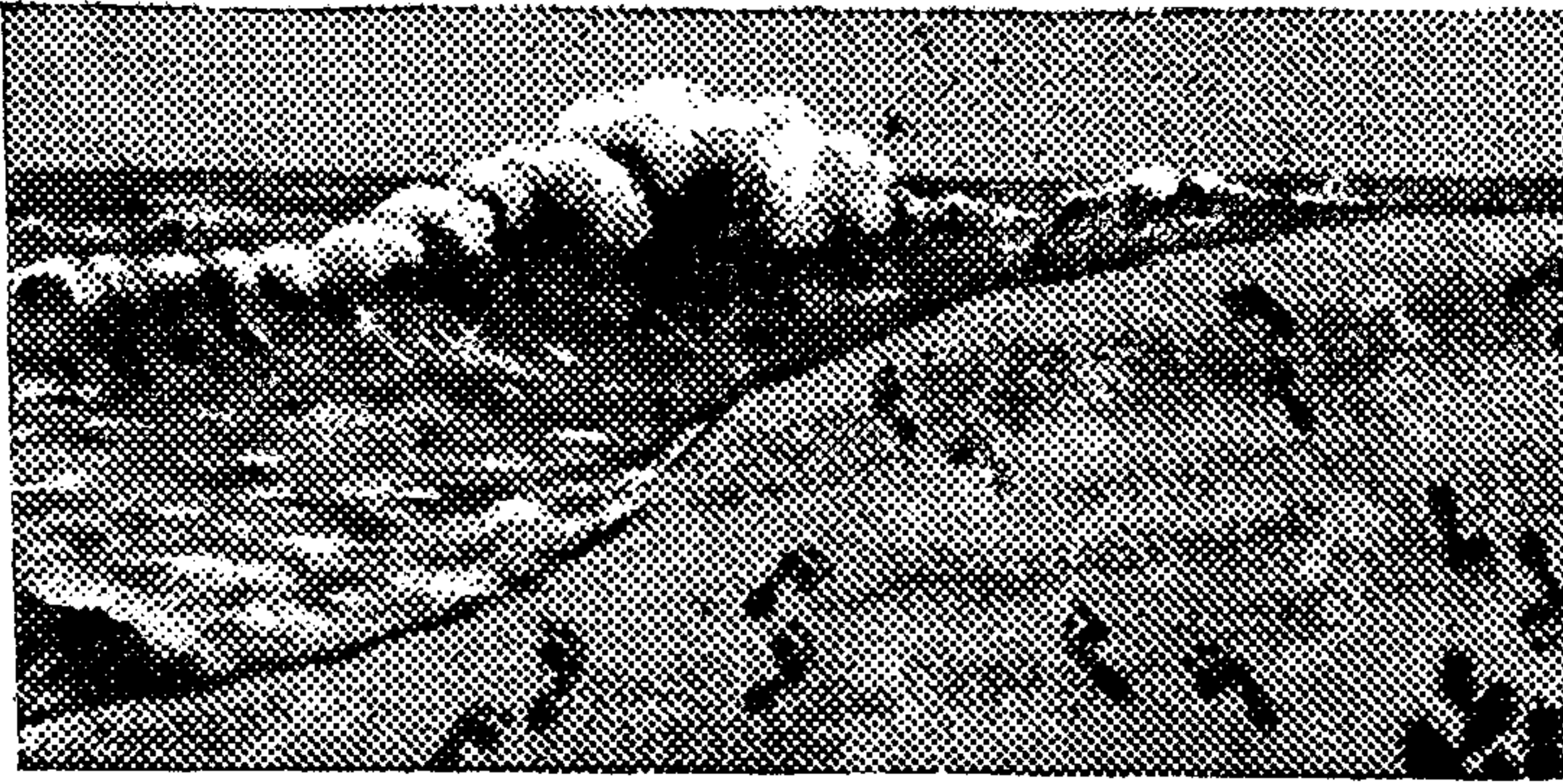
'Once two brothers, Saṅkha and Likhita, were doing severe *tapasyā* (austerity) in adjoining hermitages on the bank of the river Bāhudā. One day the younger (Likhita) without permission ate some fruits from the elder's Ashrama. Having noticed this, the latter told him, "Since you have actually stolen these, you should go to the king and beg for punishment." The king, Sudyumna, however was embarrassed at the sage's request and of course declined to punish him: "Revered sir," he said, "as a king is supposed to punish, he is also allowed to forgive. You are devoted to holy vows and a man of pure actions: thus I now forgive you." Still the sage would ask no other boon than the punishment; and at last the king reluctantly ordered the sage's hands to be cut off. In such a plight he returned to Saṅkha and asked his forgiveness. The latter at once said: "Dear brother, I was not at all angry with you; only inasmuch as you had

broken your vows of a recluse by taking something without permission, I wanted to have you purified by the king's decision. Now you please go to the river and perform *tarpana*² to gods, your ancestors in heaven, and ṛṣis (sages). And never repeat such an action." Accordingly the brother acted; and wonderfully, as he was about to start the *tarpana* his hands reappeared! Joyfully he returned, showed his hands to Saṅkha, who said, "Don't have any doubts: this has happened because of the power of my austerity." Thereupon Likhita asked his brother, "If you have such powers, why did you send me to the king instead of purifying me yourself?" The elder replied: "Dear brother, to give punishment is not in my jurisdiction: that is why I sent you to the king. Now, by this punishment, both you and the king have become purified, and have achieved the world of your ancestors as well."

'O King', added Vyāsa, 'by such acts of righteous judgment (although perhaps harsh) that king achieved the highest good, like unto the Prajāpati (Lord of creation) Dakṣa. Thus for you, as a kṣatriya, the protection of your people and administering of justice is your foremost duty—not shaving of the head (taking monastic vows). You therefore must shake off grief and heed the words of Arjuna which conduce to the welfare of all'.

(To be concluded)

² A ceremony in which a libation of water is made to dead relatives—and which obviously required use of hands. Hence the prompt obedience of Likhita indicates his implicit trust in his brother's words.



HUMAN TRENDS

THE CHRISTIAN MONASTIC CONCEPT OF 'MEDITATION'

Christians believe in one God, the Creator of the universe, who is eternal and infinite. At the same time, they believe in the triune God, that is, one God composed of three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit who unifies the two; they are different from one another, but not separate; they are one, but not identical. Philosophically speaking, in this conception of God, unity and diversity are no longer conflicting ideas.

This God has created man in his own likeness: as a being as mysterious as he himself; a being incomplete in himself, who, paradoxically, when left to himself is not 'himself' any more, and loses the meaning and fulfilment of his existence.

God has implanted in the deepest ground of every man's soul the seed of his divinity. It enables man, and makes him desire, to live in intimate communion with God; more so, to live, in a mysterious, complete unity with him and thus to gain eternal peace and happiness.

Strangely, one tendency of the human heart is to rid itself from this desire for God, and be autonomous. This is what Christians call sin. Man has, from the beginning of time, stubbornly tried to isolate himself from God, has believed in his self-sufficiency, and in his ability to lead a

happy life by his own efforts only, by means of exterior and worldly things, without, or even against, God. This selfish attitude is the cause of all lack of love, of all wars, of all misery in the world. Yet, sin has actually destroyed the divine seed in man—it still is, and remains intact in the deepest ground of the human soul—, but sin has covered the divine seed so much that, by his own efforts, man cannot find access to it.

It remains, for the Christian believer, an inexplicable mystery, why this sin of apostasy from God occurred even at the very beginning of man's history. And his deliverance from this state of sin, too, happened in a mysterious way: God chose not to nullify this sin by a simple act of forgiving, but he himself entered the world as Jesus Christ to partake in the misery of man into which he had fallen on account of his isolation from God. Jesus Christ lived among us, as man, in complete obedience to God the Father and in selfless service to his fellow-men. He is called the Light which entered the darkness of the world. But the darkness did not understand him: He died on the cross as a victim of human blindness and wickedness; crucifixion was the method of execution which the political rulers used in the Israel of that time. Yet,

Jesus did not remain dead, but was brought back to life again because of his unreserved obedience to the Father.

A well-known poetic passage from St. Paul primarily describes, Jesus Christ's act of sacrifice; but we may also regard it as the basic model of what a Christian means by 'meditation'. It reads as follows:

Be of the same mind, as had Jesus Christ:

He was God,
but dispensed of his Godhood,
and made himself low,
and took upon him the service of a slave,

and was made in the likeness of men.

And living the life of a man,
he humbled himself,
and became obedient unto death,
even unto the death of the cross.

Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him,

and given him a name which is above every name:

That at the name of Jesus
every knee should bow,
of things in heaven, and things on earth,
and things under the earth; and that
every tongue should confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord,

to the glory of God, the Father.¹

So, 'meditation' for a Christian is bound to mean to 'be of the same mind, as had Jesus Christ'. It presupposes an intimate acquaintance with, Jesus Christ, with his life and his teaching, as the holy scripture and the tradition of the church have presented them. His followers are called upon to become one with his life and teaching.

Even more, meditation also means 'to live in Jesus Christ'. This short formula is very significant. Jesus Christ is, for a Christian, not merely a historical figure: a moral example of the past. After resurrection, Christ has entered into a new state of existence in which he is mysteriously 'present' to those who have left their sinful ways and have begun to follow him. The

spirit of God the Father is transmitted to those aspirants through Christ, and God the Father gives guidance and spiritual strength to them.

A symbolical act, the baptism, marks the beginning of a Christian existence. The candidate is immersed in water which signifies the dying with Christ and then raised from water, signifying his resurrection with Christ. After baptism, a true Christian no longer lives 'in himself', but 'in Jesus Christ'. Christ is from now on his actual, new life. Baptism was his initiation into the new life 'in Christ'. And the rest of his life, and thus his meditations too, should be spent in bringing out this new reality which is the gift of baptism. His illusionary, self-centred, and death-doomed ego must yield to the true, selfless and eternal Ego which the life of Jesus Christ will help him to assimilate. According to Christian understanding, meditation does not mean to reach another plane of existence, but simply to make room, more and more, for a reality which is actually already his own. And thus, meditation, in the Christian understanding, is not to begin and complete a certain text, but essentially it is to listen to the Spirit of God which dwells in every human being, to listen more and more intently, and to understand It ever more clearly, and to allow Its rhythm to pervade one's entire being.

The verses of the hymn just quoted describe the Path Jesus Christ has chosen as the exact counter-path to the ways of the world which lead to sin and to a mere ephemeral existence. Naturally then, Christ's Path is the Path of Christian meditation: not to hold fast to one's unreal life of the senses, but to 'let oneself go', in obedience to God, 'unto death', in an ecstasy of surrender and total renunciation of self. This unconditional death with Jesus Christ—spiritual and intellectual, and (as for example in times of persecution) also physi-

¹ Epistle to the Philippians, Chap. 2, vs. 5—11.

cal—, can not throw man into eternal nothingness; but this death makes room for God to act in man, to fill man with his divine Life which actually constitutes his real, true, and eternal life. This mystical death enables man to discover his unity with the triune God (unity, though not identity with God).

It was necessary for the sake of our topic to sketch these basic concepts of Christianity, however inadequately. But it ought to have become clear how vitally important for the study and practice of Christian meditation, is the God-man Jesus Christ.

As to its formal aspects of meditation, Christianity has, in contrast to the Eastern religions, not developed any well-defined and detailed technique of meditation. The Bible and the life and teaching of Jesus Christ do not refer to any such technique. Emphasis is given on developing the entire personality in such a way that it will reflect the life and teaching of Christ as clearly as possible. From the beginning of Christianity, two schools of thought have evolved: The one maintains that the goal of Christian asceticism is a life of perfect love to God and to man; whereas the other holds that the goal is direct experience, and knowledge of God as Jesus Christ, and union with him. The two, knowledge and love, are, however, not opposed to each other, but complement and further each other. Depending on the spiritual temperament of each aspirant he may choose which is more suitable for him. Yet, in the final analysis, spiritual perfection does not depend on the degree of knowledge, but on the degree of love one has achieved. The pursuit of these two paths has led to richly varied modes of living, particularly within the monastic life. Those monastic orders which emphasize social and educational activities have, in the last centuries, by far outnumbered the orders which make prayer, meditation, and asceticism the centre of

their lives. In these so-called 'contemplative' orders even, spirituality has, by and large, degenerated to the mentality which may be expressed in this one sentence, 'Let us lead an ascetic life here and perform good deeds, and expect the vision of God after death.' Only the last few decades have brought about a reappraisal of our own rich spiritual heritage, especially of our monastic heritage. This awakening has in no small measure been inspired by our confrontation with the spiritual teachings of the Eastern religions, which emphasize the element of contemplative experience more strongly than our own tradition does. It ought to be mentioned, however, that the 'normal', 'average' Christian is not nearly enough conscious of the contemplative tradition of his own culture, not to speak of those of other cultures. Clearly, the churches must urgently dispel this ignorance. Many religious seekers in the West have begun to practise meditation according to Eastern methods, though, unfortunately, they have not always been fully perceptive about them. Christianity is, as a matter of principle, open to these methods of meditation provided, of course, they do indeed lead to self-surrender and liberation from self; or, at the primary stage, at least liberate men from the present-day hectic way of life, so that the spiritual life may take root.

The method of 'meditation' followed by early Christian monasticism, as well as by the more contemplative among our contemporary monks (wherever spiritual renewal has been inspired by the traditional wisdom of Christianity), is a life of strict physical and mental asceticism. It is a life of solitude and silence. Concentrated spiritual reading, memorizing and reciting or singing holy texts and prayers occupy a prominent place in the life of the monks. For long centuries, 'meditation' has meant 'to murmur holy texts in a contemplative attitude'. Doing so, the monk tries to penetrate

into his own nothingness, and at the bottom of this nothingness he perceives his own divine essence, which once perceived and understood, will unfold and bear fruit in his life: the fruits of love, of purity, and spiritual joy. During the first centuries and down through the Middle Ages, Christian monasticism was strongly attracted by the eremitical life. In the last few centuries, however, community-life has almost completely replaced it. Community-life, too, is a 'method' to practise self-surrender by obedience to the superior, and by service to the brothers of the community. The last few decades, however, have witnessed a renewal of the eremitical life, though still it is not more than a small and hesitant beginning. The main interest of the Christian churches of today is to combine the contemplative life with the active life of service to the world.

Since its beginning, Christian asceticism knew short prayers which, accompanied by a particular technique of breathing, were repeated again and again as is done with Hindu mantras. They were designed to facilitate man's withdrawal from the 'brain', that is, from discursive and objectifying thinking

which erects barriers between man and God and between man and fellow-man; they were meant to fix man's inner activity in the 'heart', where union with God and with fellow-man takes place. Modern Western man's thinking and feeling are so deeply influenced by his scientific and technological civilization, that he finds withdrawal from mental activities into the heart a tremendously hard task. As a result, many of the forms of 'meditation' nowadays offered to Western people—meditation on images, or on short texts, meditation in connection with lectures or theological discourses—do not reach beyond the discursive-intellectual or the emotional-affective levels. Due to this shortcoming, a contact with the rich Eastern traditions is all the more necessary and welcome. Theologically, the Christian point of departure for meditative experience may be incommensurable with that of other religions. Yet, the practical execution as well as the heights of meditative experience may well be very similar to or identical with the practice and the experience of many other religions. So far there are only few comparative studies on this subject.

(Continued from page 379)

of the mind, knowing that one is really separate from the thought waves. But as soon as a wrong thought arises, one has to say to it, and impress upon it, that one is not available to associate with that thought. One must tell it in definitive terms, 'no consent.' Again, when a good thought arises, one must bless it.

In this way, with great patience and care we have to remove the impurities of the mind. To the extent that we remove these impurities, the mind comes under our con-

trol: we become gradually tranquil and peaceful.

The whole secret of peace of mind is in the control of the mind.

To be sure, this method of working for gaining peace of mind, is not an easy one. It will require long and steady self-application, much intellection, and constant vigilance. But it is a powerful and a sure method. One who follows it long enough and hard enough will certainly attain peace of mind.

(To be concluded)

FIRST MEETINGS WITH SRI RAMAKRISHNA: SHIVANATH SHASTRI

SWAMI PRABHANANDA

Although coming from a poor family and rural surroundings, Shivanath Bhattacharya, son of Haramohan Bhattacharya and Golakmani Devi, rose rapidly from obscurity to eminence in Calcutta, the then capital of India. Born on 31 January 1847, at Changanipota, Hooghly district, in the residence of his maternal uncle, Shivanath easily drew the attention of others, even as a boy. His maternal uncle, Dwarakanath Vidyabhushan, an erudite scholar and editor of the Journal *Somprakash*, exerted considerable influence on the growing boy. His coming to live in the family of Mahesh Chandra Chaudhury at Bhowanipur, South Calcutta, in 1862 opened up a new horizon for him.¹ His dominating father married him first to one Prasannamayee, daughter of Nabin Chandra Chakravarti, and thereafter to Virajmohini, daughter of Abhayacharan Chakravarti. The second marriage took place in 1865, and it notably changed the course of Shivanath's life. He considered this second marriage very unjust, especially since it resulted simply from his father's taking a dislike to Nabin Chandra's family. His conscientious mind constantly reproached him, and finally he was driven to seek shelter in God only. Theodore Parker's *Ten Sermons and Prayers* helped him learn how to pray. Still, he had to live through a time of mental torment and he needed healing. He resolved to obey the dictates of religion and the God dwelling in the heart.²

The Brahma Samaj movement was then at its zenith, among all classes of society

¹ Shivanath Shastri : *Atmacarit* ('Autobiography' in Bengali), (Signet Press, Calcutta-20), p. 57.

² *ibid.*, pp. 68-9.

and especially the English-educated youths. Though naturally attracted to its programme, Shivanath was a strongly orthodox brāhmana boy, and to explain how he came to join the Brahma fold his biographers—as well as he himself—have suggested at least two factors : firstly his natural religious inclinations, and secondly the unfortunate second marriage.³ In any case, up to 1868, he was associated with the Adi Brahma Samaj (the original group founded by Ram-mohan Roy) rather than the new-formed Brahma Samaj of India led by Keshab Chandra Sen. Soon thereafter, however, Vijaykrishna Goswami, Shivanath's friend and classmate, prevailed upon him to join Keshab. So Shivanath gradually detached himself from the Adi Samaj and joined the more progressive group. And in August of 1869, Keshab initiated Shivanath and twenty other educated youths into Brahmaism on the occasion of the consecration of the Brahma Mandir (temple). This shocked Shivanath's father so much that he actually disowned his son! All the same, Keshab's dynamic influence soon transformed the orthodox brāhmana youth into an ardent leader of the Brahma movement. Justifying his conversion, Shivanath wrote :

'When we renounced Hinduism for Brahmaism, we did so in the firm conviction that Brahmaism is a religion not only of the soul, but of the Mind, the Heart and the Conscience. We re-

³ Hemlata Devi, a daughter of Shivanath and one of his biographers, wrote emphatically : 'I can say definitely that had he not been married a second time, he would never have come under the influence of the Brahma Samaj . . . Almost mad because of the terrible agonies of his heart, he took shelter in God.'—*Shivanāth Jivanī* (Bengali), p. 104.

nounced a religion which not only worshipped a myriad of Gods and Goddesses and failed to satisfy the higher craving of the soul, but which was also a hot-bed of superstitions, social evils which stunted and hindered the growth of healthy social and religious customs and habits among our countrymen, [—this we renounced] for one which was capable of satisfying not only our spiritual aspirations but our purer social and intellectual wants too.⁴

On the successful completion of his Master's degree course in Sanskrit, Shivanath was awarded the title of 'Shastri' (lit., one versed in scriptures) in 1872. Two years later he joined the South Suburban School as its Headmaster and took up his residence in Bhowanipur. Soon the Bhowanipur branch of the Brahma Samaj of India began its meetings at his residence and he became not only an ardent follower of Brahmaism but an aggressive leader, ready to meet any challenge for vindicating his rationalistic standpoint. So, by 1877, strong forces of dissension had polarized around Shivanath, Anandamohan Bose and a few other youth leaders, resulting a few years later in the second and perhaps the deepest schism in the Brahma movement. The apparent acceptance of divine honours by Keshab, the mixing of male and female worshippers in the congregations, and the 'Bharat Ashrama libel' controversy had already prepared the ground for this dissension. The new group which split off from Keshab's Samaj was named the Sadharan Brahma Samaj.

To appreciate Shivanath's role in these evolving phases of the Brahma movement, one must take note of the elements of his mental make-up. He observed in his diary :

'The nature of certain persons is conducive to spiritual life—they are natural-

ly endowed with spirituality. In my nature my love for men prevails over my love for God—I am more sensitive to morals than to spirituality. I was not born with the nature of Devendranath, Keshabchandra, Vijaykrishna or Umeshchandra Datta.⁵

Kind-hearted, truthful and courageous as Shivanath was, his learning, dutifulness, and patriotism further marked him among his fellows. Still, his natural talents were tending more towards literary achievement than spirituality. Valuable as were his contributions to Bengali literature, we must keep in mind the view held by no less a man than the patriot-orator Bipin Chandra Pal :

'Had he [Shivanath] devoted his heart and soul to develop his natural literary power and poetic talent he would have occupied a much higher place in modern Bengali literature and in the history of social life than what he has achieved as a Brahma leader in his country's religious thought and life of activity. Besides, what he had achieved in the Brahma Samaj is in fact based on his oratory and literary achievements and not on any other extraordinary spiritual practices.'⁶

Rabindranath Tagore wrote to Shivanath, 'You have God-gifted mastery in literature.'⁷ However, the pushes and pulls of circumstance around Shivanath, especially those associated with the internal conflicts among the Brahmos, did not permit a spontaneous and all-round manifestation of his literary potentialities. All the same, his relentless and continuous struggle from boyhood for rising in life, and optimistic, ceaseless search for new light and inspiration, built his life into what it eventually became.

⁵ *Diary* (in Bengali), dated 12/9/1888, as reproduced in *Alekhyā*, B.E. 1380, Pous-Māgh issue, p. 293.

⁶ Quoted in *Sāhitya Sadhakmala* (Bengali), Pub. by Bangiya Sahitya Parishad, Vol. VII, p. 42.

⁷ Quoted by Pramathanath Bishi, in *Banglar Lekhak* (Bengali), B.E. 1357, p. 2.

⁴ *The Brahma Public Opinion*, dated 2 May 1878,

The mounting pressure of western secular institutions and the subsequent slandering of Hindu society by the Brahmos and the Christian missionaries, threw a great challenge to the Hindus. But at this juncture, Sri Ramakrishna emerged as a mighty support. Though not a scholar, he was the owner of the 'book of life'; and the magnetism resulting therefrom attracted to himself great intellectuals and leaders of thought. He actually showed how the life divine could be *lived*. Religion was for him the very essence of man. Religion stripped of its theological intricacies, was held by him to be the all-comprehensive dynamic force competent to solve all the basic problems of life. His life and teachings injected fresh vigour into the veins of Hinduism. Again, his God-intoxication, his burning faith in God and man, his profound respect for women, his unsullied purity of character, and his love and respect for all faiths, endeared him to the Brahmos and Hindus alike.

But to return to the historically significant year of 1875: on 15 March of that year, Sri Ramakrishna first met Keshab Chandra Sen. The latter, whose broad heart and keen spiritual insight responded at once to the saint's personality, announced in the *Indian Mirror* of 28 March 1875, his discovery of the great 'Yogi of Dakshineswar'. Naturally then, Keshab's admirers and Brahmos in particular began to show interest in Sri Ramakrishna. Even a bit before this, Shivanath had heard about the Saint from one of his neighbours who was a teacher of the London Missionary Society's School. This man was married to a girl of the Dakshineswar village, and so used often to visit Dakshineswar. He told Shivanath the fascinating story of Sri Ramakrishna, 'his sayings and doings'; and often quoted from his illuminating teachings. These, clothed in simple and easily understandable language, were profound and beautiful. Though Shivanath was extremely busy with his own responsibilities, the teachings

of Sri Ramakrishna stirred his mind, and he began to feel attracted towards the Saint.⁸ Thus the *Indian Mirror* announcement served to hasten Shivanath's decision to visit the Dakshineswar temple soon.

One day, almost certainly in April 1875,⁹ Shivanath visited the temple of Dakshineswar accompanied by the teacher of the Missionary School. Sri Ramakrishna was then almost forty; Shivanath, only twenty-eight. After formal exchange of greetings, Shivanath and his friend took their seats. Sri Ramakrishna was expressively glad to see Shivanath. No doubt he could at once recognise the spiritual potentialities of the new arrival. The Master used to say, 'I know the nature of a man by a mere look; I know who is good and who is bad; who is of noble descent and who is not; who is a man of knowledge and who is one of devotion; who will realise God and who will not . . .'¹⁰ Shivanath was pleased to notice that the Paramahansa (as Sri Ramakrishna had come to be called) was treating him as one of long acquaintance. Shivanath thought his teacher-friend might have already told the Paramahansa about him; otherwise how could he treat him with such familiarity?

Even in the first few minutes Shivanath became greatly impressed by the Paramahansa—especially by his extraordinary simplicity. The latter too formed a high estimation of Shivanath, as can be seen from some of his later remarks, such as: 'Ah! What a devotee Shivanath is! He is soaked in the love of God, like a cheese-

⁸ Shivanath Shastri: *Men I have Seen* (Sadharan Brahma Samaj, Calcutta-6), p. 59.

⁹ Shivanath first went to Dakshineswar soon after the publication of the article about Sri Ramakrishna in the *Indian Mirror*, March 28, 1875. It thus seems the visit cannot have been later than April 1875.

¹⁰ Swami Saradananda: *Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master* (Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras-600004, 1970), p. 348.

cake in syrup.¹¹ 'I feel very happy when I see Shivanath. He always seems to be absorbed in the bliss of bhakti.'¹² 'Ah! Here is Shivanath! You see, you [Shivanath] are a devotee of God. The very sight of you gladdens my heart. One hemp-smoker feels very happy to meet another. Very often they embrace each other in an exuberance of joy.'¹³

Shivanath was moved to hear Sri Ramakrishna say 'again and again' in his open-hearted, simple and childlike manner, "I am so delighted to meet you; won't you come to see me now and then?"¹⁴ Sri Ramakrishna told him—if not in the first visit, at least soon thereafter—that he had formerly been the priest of the temple of Kālī. Many mendicants and friars, belonging to different sects, used to visit the temple. Whatever instructions they used to give him about spiritual practices, he would follow implicitly; and the resulting austerities actually drove him to insanity for a time. Besides, he had contracted a disease which made him lose his consciousness whenever he was seized by trance.¹⁵

11 'M': *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Tr. by Swami Nikhilananda, pub. by Madras Math, 1947), p. 88.

12 *ibid.*, p. 255.

13 *ibid.*, p. 74.

14 *Men I Have Seen*, p. 60.

15 *Atmacarit*, p. 128. Obviously Shivanath held some wrong notions about what Sri Ramakrishna might have told him. He has himself recorded that the Master once strongly emphasized this 'insanity' in order to stop his nephew Hriday from 'flattering' him before rich visitors [cf. *Life of Sri Ramakrishna* (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Dt. Almora, U.P., 1964, p. 282)]. Later Sri Ramakrishna tried to correct Shivanath's ideas, saying: 'Look here, Shivanath, is it true that you call these [his ecstatic states] a disease and say that I become unconscious at that time? Ah, you people remain all right, although you apply your minds night and day to insentient things like brick, wood, earth, money, etc., and I, who think night and day of Him whose consciousness makes the whole uni-

verse conscious, become unconscious! Where have you borrowed your intellect from?' (*Great Master*, pp. 542-3).

Though the Master's mind had never been drilled and disciplined according to Western methods, as had been Shivanath's the latter found in Sri Ramakrishna a deep philosopher, a lover of God, and above all, a noble soul. What surprised the highly educated visitor was not only the lucidity of the spirited talks but also their deep mystical import. In short, he was charmed by the sweet personality of the Master. Later on he was to conclude that Sri Ramakrishna was 'certainly one of the most remarkable personalities I have come across in life'. Further he wrote:

'In fact, the impression left in my mind, by intercourse with him, was that I had seldom come across any other man in whom the hunger and thirst for spiritual life was so great and who had gone through so many privations and sufferings for the practice of religion. Secondly, I was convinced that he was no longer a Sadhaka or a devotee under exercise, but was a Siddha Purusha or one who had attained direct vision of spiritual truth.'¹⁶

In another place he wrote:

One effect from these austerities was that Ramakrishna's health was permanently undermined and he emerged from his wonderful religious exercises with the direct vision of many spiritual truths, and with the grand conception of Divine Motherhood. There was another faculty in him. His expositions of great spiritual truths, and specially of the motherhood of God, were very remarkable. He would often use the simplest and most familiar facts of ordinary life as parables to illustrate these truths. Many of the parables he used were so apt and so simple that men were often left wondering and highly edified.¹⁷

verse conscious, become unconscious! Where have you borrowed your intellect from?' (*Great Master*, pp. 542-3).

16 *Men I Have Seen*, p. 66.

17 Shivanath Shastri: *History of the Brahmo Samaj*, Vol. II, p. 7-8.

Unfortunately, nothing else of note is recorded about this important first meeting. Nevertheless its significance can be easily and clearly seen from subsequent events. For, though Shivanath tried hard—from sectarian as well as social considerations—to remain aloof, still he could not altogether resist the great attraction which the Master possessed for so many sincere seekers. He visited Sri Ramakrishna many a time, yet tried his best to keep himself at a safe distance from the orbit of his penetrating influence. Though the unfailing judgment of the Master had revealed the spiritual potentialities of Shivanath, still the latter did not benefit so much as he could have from the influence of the Master. Nonetheless Sri Ramakrishna's love and compassion for him knew no bounds. As Swami Saradananda well summarizes :

'Seeing the love of truth, the disposition to renunciation and thirst for spirituality and other good qualities of the members of the Brahma Samaj . . . , the Master tried to help them forward on their own chosen path of religion . . . It did not take him long to understand that, under the influence of Western education, they were being carried far away from the religious ideal of the nation and were regarding social reform as the acme of their practice of religion. He, therefore, tried to make them accept the realization of God as the ideal of their lives even if their Society failed to follow them to that extent.'¹⁸

Naturally then, for some time Shivanath showed ambivalence in his attitude towards Sri Ramakrishna. Finally, following the secession of Vijaykrishna Goswami from the Brahma Samaj in order to devote himself wholly to spiritual practices, Shivanath entirely stopped visiting the Master, thinking that the latter's ideas were partly if not fully responsible for the sharp turn in the

course of Vijay's life. In fact Shivanath—now the leader of the Sadharan Brahma Samaj—openly confessed, 'If I go there [to Sri Ramakrishna] frequently, all the others of the Brahma Samaj will do so in imitation of me and, as a result, the Samaj will collapse.' Yet try as hard as he might to dispel the Saint's influence, he could not help being seized by occasional self-reproach and lamentation, which became frequent in his later life. No wonder we find him admitting several times, 'It is true that the Sadharan Brahma Samaj has failed to implant well spiritual ideas in our countrymen.'¹⁹ Again: 'I failed to comprehend the seriousness involved in establishing the Sadharan Brahma Samaj as a measure of protest against Brahmananda Keshab Chandra. I have failed to devote myself to spiritual practices as much as I should have done.'²⁰

Still, although Shivanath thus failed to admire and accept Sri Ramakrishna as much as he might have done under other circumstances, the latter's benign influence on him was in many ways evident. Indelible as it was, it worked on his heart slowly and silently but steadily. As he himself once put it: 'My acquaintance with him, though short, was fruitful by strengthening many a spiritual thought in me. I owe him a debt of gratitude for the sincere affection he bore me.'²¹ His biographer writes: 'True it is that the deep attachment Shivanath had then developed towards Ramakrishna left its permanent impress on Shivanath. He acquired the concept of the universality of religion specially from Ramakrishna.'²² A still more striking statement to this effect is recorded in Shivanath's autobiography:

¹⁹ *Diary*, 12/9/1888—in *Alekhya*, Vol. IV, No. 4, p. 292.

²⁰ *Diary*, dated 9/1/1915 (*Alekhya*, Vol. IV, No. 3, p. 179).

²¹ *Men I have Seen*, p. 77.

²² *Sivanath Jivani*, p. 146.

¹⁸ *Great Master*, pp. 686-7.

'Contact with Sri Ramakrishna brought home the truth that religion is one, various are its manifestations. Such catholicity and universality in religious ideas were widely interspersed in his teachings In the company of Ramakrishna I have convincingly realized the universality of religion.'²³ Similarly the concept of Divine Motherhood, so dear to Sri Ramakrishna, influenced Shivanath no less than many others Brahma leaders. Many will be surprised to learn from his authentic biography that Shivanath used to recite every morning a Sanskrit hymn to Gurus, composed by himself, in which occur the lines :

'Ramakrishna who was perfected in the worship of Śakti and endued with the attitude of Divine Motherhood These men and women are all my Gurus. By thinking of them, remembering them, I derive great strength in religious practice.'²⁴

Shivanath considered that Brahmaism as

²³ *Atmacarit*, p. 128..

²⁴ रामकृष्णः शक्तिसिद्धो मातृभावसमन्वितः ।

 एते मे गुरवः सर्वे योषितः पुरुषाश्च ये ।
 स्मृत्वैतान महतीं शक्तिं लभेऽहं धर्मसाधने ॥
Śivanāth Jivanī, p. 289.

represented by the Sadharan Brahma Samaj was a God-sent religious dispensation²⁵ and that it was the religion of the age.²⁶ Also he took on himself the leadership of the Brahma movement as a divine command. But his regrets in later years over his shortcomings, were many and deep. In 1903 he confessed that the spiritual condition of the Brahma Samaj was low and that his own condition was worse still.²⁷ On the completion of his 68th year, he admitted that he had neglected his search for depth in spiritual life, that he had dedicated himself to preaching Brahmaism at the cost of progress in his own religious life, and that his reliance on and faith in God had loosened.²⁸ Could any serious student of Sri Ramakrishna or of Shivanath's life miss seeing herein the permeating and abiding influence of the Master, who advocated religion as *being* and *becoming*? Surely Sri Ramakrishna and his teachings continued to inspire Shivanath till his death on 30-9-1919.

²⁵ Prafulla Kumar Das: *Śivanāth Śhāstrīr Aprakāṣita Vaktrta O Smaraklipi* (Bengali) (Pharma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta, 1975), p. 85.

²⁶ *ibid.*, p. 73.

²⁷ *ibid.*, p. 3.

²⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

SERMONETTES AT ST. MORITZ—XIV

SWAMI YATISWARANANDA

It is important to make our thoughts, speech, and action one. We should be true to ourselves. But that does not mean we should go about telling every one about our mistakes. Do not tell people about your weakness. That weakens you as well as your listener. Confess your weaknesses and troubles to the Divine. Let us be true to God and not try to hide anything from

Him. Let us place our troubles before Him and seek His assistance. That is a means of acquiring familiarity with the Divine. This sort of intimacy slowly takes you nearer to Him. Instead of washing your dirty linen in public, retire into the sanctuary of your heart and pray to the Divine.

It is a mistake to think that we can

pray to God only when we have thoroughly purified ourselves. Self-purification takes a long time to achieve. We cannot wait till then. We should pray to God as we just now are and place before Him all our mistakes and troubles. We must offer to Him not only our good deeds but also our bad ones. In His eyes they are the same. The Divine Lord showers His grace upon those who thus surrender themselves to Him. Such devotees quickly find themselves elevated.

Clear your relationship with God. You should learn how to open your heart to God. Simple faith and trust in God are needed. In modern times, to be sure, people are becoming more and more intellectual and worldly. Their minds are becoming more and more complex. So, many such people need a certain amount of reading and reasoning to put themselves in tune with the Divine.

Still, we need simplicity. Not only physical or external simplicity, but also internal or mental simplicity. It is not enough that we simplify our daily food and dress but it is equally necessary to simplify our minds. Throw overboard your complexes.

•

We should not overestimate our capacity to meditate. Sustained meditation for long periods needs tremendous reserves of mental energy and training. Attempt only as much as you are capable of. Otherwise you open yourself to severe disappointment and frustration. Do not invite frustration and dejection by overdoing your spiritual practice. Hasty climbers often have nasty falls.

Learn to store up energy first.

•

By nature we tend to be one-sided. Either we are too emotional or too intellectual. Avoid extremes. Learn to strike a balance among your feeling, willing, and

thinking faculties. Head, heart and hands must work together in harmony. This saves a lot of energy which would have otherwise been wasted. Mental energy which is channelized too much in one direction is likely to throw you off the path. This can be avoided by distributing it properly among all the faculties. Many people do not seem to realize the importance of this.

*

It is difficult to attain a sense of proportion in everything. We must do what we ought to do under the circumstances. Take things as calmly as possible. Try to see the situation as it really is. Do not try to exaggerate your difficulties. Do not be touchy, too sensitive. Learn to live in harmony with all. We often prick others knowingly or unknowingly. Adjust with all, knowing that we are dealing with human beings with all their weaknesses.

Some people emanate good, peaceful vibrations. Others give out bad, restless vibrations. You should learn to remain unaffected by the latter type of vibrations.

*

Do not be like weathercocks turning with every wind of change. Do not be constantly changing your ideals, patterns of life, and plans. Have a lofty ideal and be controlled by it. Gear your life to one supreme goal. Do not be upset or discouraged by trifles.

Sometimes we try to lean on others too much. We look up to them too much and so get disappointed. We must have our centre of gravity within ourselves and not in somebody else.

Learn to lean on the Divine—who is really your innermost Soul—more and more. Only a perfected Being can take up our burdens. You may have your centre of gravity in the Divine, who is the Soul of your soul.

*

NOTES AND COMMENTS

IN THIS NUMBER

Reminiscences are taken from: Swami Saradananda: *Sri Ramakrishna, The Great Master* (Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras 600004, 1970), and 'M': *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Tr. by Swami Nikhilananda, Pub. by Madras Math, 1947). References: Great Master: No. 1, pp. 479-80; No. 3, p. 251, *Gospel*: No. 2, p. 717; No. 4, p. 816; No. 5, p. 629.

The words quoted in 'Onward For Ever' are from *The Complete Works*, Vol. IV (1962), pp. 16-17.

Samsāra (lit., moving round and round) or relative existence characterized by repeated birth and death bringing inevitable happiness and misery, is a key word both in Hinduism and Buddhism. *Samsāra* also means the cosmic process, which can be seen to proceed in a cyclic manner. *Nirvāna*, or liberation, is the state of absolute freedom and bliss, attainable only by destroying the *samsāric* bondage. For facilitating our comprehension of man's predicament in this world, and teaching a way out of it, the Vedāntic scriptures have used the metaphor of the Asvattha tree for the cosmic process. The Editorial this month is an attempt at analysing this teaching in a spiritually helpful manner.

Peace is a pearl of great price. Cessation of or freedom from any strife or dissension, is peace or tranquillity. Achievement of peace is attainment of happiness. But the price for this precious pearl can only be paid with persistent and intelligent effort. Attempts to buy it with tranquillizers or drugs or hypnotic shortcuts, are bound to prove self-defeating and

perhaps even disastrous. Since peace of mind almost wholly depends on mental control, and gaining mental control in turn depends on knowing the mind's subtle workings, Hindu psychology tells us in vivid detail about the intricacies of the mind and its workings. Again, Hindu psychology in the last analysis has built its theories and practices on the real, unchanging, infinite spiritual nature of man. By trying to realise one's identity with this unchanging Self in us, the mind can be controlled and peace attained.

In 'Attainment of Peace', the Essay on Applied Religion this month Swami Budhananda discusses this important theme from the standpoint of Hindu psychology. The concluding part of this Essay will be published in our next number.

Immediately on the conclusion of the Kurukṣetra war, Yudhiṣṭhira, the eldest of the five Pāṇḍava brothers, was overcome by deep remorse at the carnage, and dispassion towards the sovereignty they had jointly earned. Just like Arjuna before the war, Yudhiṣṭhira now wanted to renounce his kṣatriya duties in favour of those of a monk. Then the other brothers, and Draupadī the queen, all tried to persuade Yudhiṣṭhira to see the greatness of the royal kṣatriya status and the duties pertaining to it. Still Yudhiṣṭhira remained unconvinced and unmoved from his resolve. Thereupon the venerable sage Vyāsa, who had been present during the dialogue, threw in his weighty wisdom to turn the course of Yudhiṣṭhira's mind.

'Yudhiṣṭhira—The path of Dharma' is a succinct summary of a large portion of this dialogue which is enlightening as to the duties of a heroic kṣatriya and king.

In Hindu spiritual practice, *dhyāna* or meditation occupies a central position. It is only the last step before *samādhi*, the highest level of consciousness in which God is 'seen', experienced. The Vedic and Upanishadic sages, more than five thousand years ago, perfected the art of meditation and thereby perceived the subtlest of spiritual truths and realized the all-pervading presence of the divine Reality. Later sages and philosophers have worked out the details of the steps leading to meditation and thus have made a perfect science of it. Meditation in Indian tradition is inseparably linked with the truth that God is present within one's own heart, and by realizing Him there, one perceives Him everywhere. In recent years, moreover, a great interest in this tradition has been aroused among Western seekers.

In this context we welcome 'The Christian Monastic Concept of "Meditation"', by Brother Bernardin Schellenberger, Prior, Mariawald Abtei (Trappist), West Germany—a learned summary of this concept according to Christian monastic tradition, in the background of theological beliefs. Incidentally, he makes a strong plea for in-

corporating the essential elements of Hindu meditation into the Christian's own forms of spiritual practice. We are thankful to our friend Dr. Martin Kämpchen for the English translation of the original German writing sent by Brother Bernardin.

Pandit Shivanath Shastri (1847-1919) is a bright star among the galaxy of Indian Renaissance leaders. He was one of the founders of the Sadharan Brahma Samaj, and soon thereafter became its undisputed leader. As a preacher and social reformer, educationist and writer, his contributions to the spread of Brahma thought and Bengali literature and society are immense. He had met Sri Ramakrishna shortly after Kehsab Chandra Sen first met the Master, and Shivanath's first meeting developed into a sweet spiritual friendship and mutual regard. Though Shivanath could not fully understand Sri Ramakrishna's mystical profundity, still he considered him as a perfected soul, and drew from him much inspiration for his own inner life. An informative write-up on their first meeting and long association is contributed this month by Swami Prabhananda, a monk of the Ramakrishna Order.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

SISTER NIVEDITA : BY BASUDHA CHAKRAVARTY, Published by National Book Trust, India, A-5, Green Park, New Delhi-110016, 1975, pp. 84, Price Rs. 4.25.

Sri Basudha Chakravarty is already well known as a co-worker of the late M. N. Roy, a noted socialist and radical humanist, as also the author of several essays, poems, short stories, translations, and a biography of Kazi Nazrul Islam. His present work is based on a study of many relevant books, and is extremely readable. Its eleven chapters deal briefly with all aspects of Nivedita's life and work, with a select bibliography. The author has succeeded in bringing

out in bold relief the many-sided character of this remarkable Irish lady and the great impression she left on her times. How she adopted the land of a subject race and dependent people and made it her life's mission to uplift them; how she took up cudgels against the English Governor-General, Lord Curzon, in vindicating the honour of the people of India (pp. 47-8); how she influenced almost every great Indian of her times; and how she discovered the hidden spiritual wealth which is the richest heritage of Indian culture—this book thus unfolds the story of one of the noblest and most dedicated souls of all time. The author well points out: 'She was a Guru to young Indians who wished to serve the

country. . . . The leading men and women of contemporary Bengal—and they were a galaxy—were all her friends and admirers.' (p. 75).

Although it is certainly not possible to compress into 84 pages all the life and work of a soul so dynamic and versatile as Sister Nivedita, still the author has done a remarkable piece of condensing and distilling, and thus rendered signal service. The book is a valuable addition to the Sister Nivedita literature.

DR. PARESH NATH MUKHERJEE,
Head, Dept. of History,
D.A.V. College, Dehra Dun

EXISTENTIALISM AND CREATIVITY: BY MITCHELL BEDFORD, Published by Philosophical Library, Inc., New York, 1972, pp. 376, Price \$ 12.50.

John Dewey is amply justified when he maintains that if a theory makes no difference in educational endeavour, it must be artificial. Now, Existentialism as a philosophical doctrine has come to stay in many parts of the world, and it is the duty of some of its upholders to justify its stand in the context of education. Dr. Bedford recognizes the fact that in the United States it is open to such examination. In the book under review he takes up the writings of four representatives of existentialism and scrutinizes their thinking with special reference to school education in the U.S. For justifiable reasons he chooses Kierkegaard (representing Protestant religious existentialism, and regarded as 'founder' of the School), Sartre (representing the atheistic wing), Buber (existentialist thinking arising from Judaism) and Jaspers (Germanic movement in existentialism).

The author puts forward three hypotheses, which he proceeds to support. His first is that each existentialist has a concept of the individual. Secondly, this concept has definite implications for developing an educational philosophy relevant to the educational endeavour. Lastly, the essential agreement amongst these thinkers provides basis for developing an existentialist philosophy of education.

The individual is of utmost importance to the existentialists. Though the author admits that it is very hard to define the concept of 'individual', it is undoubtedly important to do so. Though man is a part of this universe and of his society, it is his individuality that makes him responsible for what he does; for man is nothing but what he makes of himself.

The idea of individuality leads to the concept of authentic personality, as developed by Karl

Jaspers. According to him, the main characteristic of an authentic person is that life becomes for the individual the responsibility of the human being, aware of himself as being, and in addition and simultaneously, the experiment of the Knower. The authentic man fully realizes that he is a free agent capable of choosing in life the path he is to tread.

The aim of any educational institution is to develop the sense of authentic personality in the child. This requires recruiting of devoted teachers who come not by accident or under compulsion. At the lower levels particularly, teachers should be screened very carefully and only alert and expert minds chosen. The main purpose of a school is to transmit culture. But since health is necessary, primary schools should have hot lunch and medical programmes also. The youths (ten to thirteen years' age) have some insight into man's affairs, and teachers must be alert to handle them carefully. And for the adolescents, who want to assume full responsibility for their actions, teachers have to be again very resourceful.

The author seems not to have treated adult education at adequate length. Higher education presently is in a most chaotic state. Jaspers of course does discuss university-level education, and warns against its disintegration. The universities seem to have become diploma-mills and student-teacher relationships are at low ebb. More serious consideration is due here.

The book is an addition to the literature on the philosophy of education, especially in view of its orientation towards the currently popular Existentialist school.

DR. S. P. DUBEY,
Reader, Dept. of Post-Graduate Studies
and Research in Philosophy,
University of Jabalpur, M.P.

RAMANA MAHARSHI: BY K. SWAMINATHAN
Published by National Book Trust, India, New Delhi, 110016, 1975, pp. 156, Price Rs. 6/-.

During the first half of the present century, India produced a number of great minds in various fields. In the spiritual realm, Sri Aurobindo and Gandhi are among the better known personalities. Ramana Maharshi (1879-1950) of South India, falls in the same line with the other great sons of India. But because of his dedication to purely spiritual endeavours, he is not so well known yet to the larger section of society. However, he has attracted a large number of admirers and devotees from all walks of life, within as well as outside India. In the words of

Carl Jung he is 'a true son of the Indian earth. He is genuine and, in addition to that, something quite phenomenal. In India he is the whitest spot in a white space.'

Ramana Maharshi in fact belongs to the line of the Upanishadic seers and Advaitic teachers like Shri Sankaracharya. In this century he is one of the most outstanding adherents and propounders of the path of Knowledge, although he was not averse to other paths. Sometimes it is said that the fact of death is the beginning of Indian philosophy. In the case of Ramana Maharshi it was almost literally true. He himself experienced 'death' several times, and, therefrom came to know the truth about the Atman or Self, which must evidently be different from the body. For him, the Self is the all-pervading unitary Reality, and one is ever that Self. To ask oneself—or to ask anyone—about the Self is like a drunken man's enquiry about himself.

Sri Ramana, the Sage of Arunāchala, being immersed in spirituality, did not write or speak much, although he possessed working knowledge of Sanskrit, English, and a few South Indian languages. Some of his devotees have collected his sayings, conversations and occasional compositions which are available now in print. The life and personality of this Sage was an open book; and whoever approached him received some divine message, whether the Maharshi conversed with him or not. The name of Sri Ramana has become known to the outer world partly because of Paul Brunton, who did much to spread his name and message in the West. Arthur Osborne, another Westerner of note, devoted himself to the cause of Truth realized by Bhagavan Ramana; and till his death in 1970 was spreading the Sage's message through the Rāmanashrama quarterly, *The Mountain Path*. Of the noted Indian writers, mention may be made of Dr. T. M. P. Mahadēvan, who in his works discusses the philosophy of existence as realized by Ramana Maharshi.

The present work by Professor K. Swaminathan is a welcome addition to the steadily growing literature on the Sage. In his lucid style, 'K.S.' presents the life and teachings of this saint in a manner inspiring to laymen as well as those advanced in the field of religion. After introducing Sri Ramana Maharshi through biographical, institutional and conversational accounts, the author compares and contrasts his thinking with that of Mahatma Gandhi and J. Krishnamurti. This may

be suggestive for further such study and research by other interested scholars.

The low price of this readable book will make it possible for anyone to buy and go through the illuminating account of the life and thought of the saint of Arunachala.

DR. S. P. DUBEY

THE VEDAS—WHAT AND WHY? BY K. S. SRINIVASACHARYA, Published by the Author, 'Ayodhya', 3/5 South Bank Road, Madras 28, 1973, pp. 84, Price Rs. 2/-.

In this excellent introduction to Vedic studies, the author explains what the Vedas are, in what sense the *Veda* is eternal, and also how more than one interpretation of these ancient scriptures is possible. He traces the history of the Vedic tradition and records how it has made a profound impact on the higher mind of humanity. He devotes a chapter each to the four Vedas and outlines their contents and application. A select Vedic bibliography at the end is a useful feature. A similar monograph on the Upanishads and the Tantras will be welcome.

SRI M. P. PANDIT

*Sri Aurobindo Ashrama
Pondicherry*

BOOKS RECEIVED

HINDUISM AND CHRISTIANITY : BY SWAMI SATPRAKASHANANDA, Published by Vedanta Society of St. Louis, 205 So. Skinker Blvd., St. Louis, Mo., 63105, 1975, pp. 196, Price \$ 7.50.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA'S LIFE AND MESSAGE IN THE PRESENT AGE : BY SWAMI SATPRAKASHANANDA, Published by Vedanta Society of St. Louis, 1976, pp. 208, Price \$ 6.00

THE WAY OF KABALAH : BY Z'EV BEN SHIMON HALEVI, Published by Rider & Co., 3 Fitzroy Square, London, W-1, 1976, pp. 224, Price £ 4.75.

INITIATION INTO YOGA : BY SRI KRISHNA PREM, Published by Rider & Co., 1976, pp. 128, Price £ 1.95.

BRAIN AND THE DILEMMA OF MAN : BY PROF. K. N. SHARMA, Published by Indian Institute of World Culture, Basavangudi, Bangalore 560004, 1976, pp. 10, Price not stated.

RAMMOHUN ROY AND THE PROCESS OF MODERNIZATION IN INDIA: Ed. BY V. C. JOSHI, Published by Vikas Publishing House (P) Ltd., 5 Daryaganj : Ansari Road, Delhi, 110006, 1975, pp. viii + 234, Price Rs. 40/-.

NEWS AND REPORTS

THE RAMAKRISHNA ASHRAMA AND RAMAKRISHNA MISSION, BOMBAY

REPORT FROM APRIL 1974 TO MARCH 1975

This Centre, started in 1923 in a rented house, had its own building inaugurated in 1926 by Swami Sivananda, a great disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. Of the two branches, the Ashrama and the Mission, the former had the following activities:

Spiritual and Cultural: Daily worship, prayers, Vedic and *Gita* chanting were conducted in the Temple; Weekly Classes on religious topics in Hindi and English, on Saturdays and Sundays, respectively; on Ekadasi days—'Ramnam Sankirtan'. Durga Puja was celebrated, as usual accompanied by musical entertainments, educational dramas, and other interesting programmes. Birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother and Swami Vivekananda were publicly celebrated with great eclat. And the birth-anniversaries of Krishna, Buddha, Sankaracharya, and Jesus Christ were also fittingly observed.

The monastic head granted interviews to earnest seekers.

Classes and lectures on Religion and Culture were held elsewhere in the city; also some were held outside the city and even the State. At the Ramakrishna Vivekananda Centre, Dadar, regular classes in Marathi were conducted by a monastic member; also a fortnightly class on the *Gita* at Koliwada, and weekly class at Parel.

Recitation competitions: Open to all school students of Bombay and suburbs, these events included students of Classes 5 to 11, divided in four language-groups, etc. All recitations were from the works of Swami Vivekananda; the competitions were held on the Mission campus. This year 2,153 students participated—from 52 schools. 208 prizes were distributed to the various winners.

The activities of the Mission may be summarized under the following heads:

Educational: A Students' Home for college boys—69 in number this year—supplements their academic training with religious classes, plus other opportunities to acquire the basic values of Hindu culture and tradition. The public Free Reading Room and the Sivananda Library, with more than 19,700 books and 148 dailies and other periodicals in more than seven languages, continued to be widely used. During this year 13,806 books were lent.

Medical: The Charitable Outdoor Dispensary and Indoor Hospital have both Allopathic and Homoeopathic sections, and are run under qualified doctors. The Allopathic section is equipped for Surgical, Pathological, Gynaecological, Dental, E.N.T., Ophthalmic and Radiological work. The Indoor Hospital treated 628 cases of which 484 were surgical. The Outdoor Dispensary, in its various sections, treated 24,054 new cases, plus 1,09,392 repeats. 5,174 specimens were examined in the Pathological Department, and 26,556 X-rays (screening and exposures) were taken.

Philanthropic: With its long history of active work in times of national calamities, the Centre this year collected donations—in cash and kind—and utilized them for Gujarat Drought Relief, Flood Relief in North Bengal and Orissa, Scarcity Relief in West Bengal and Madhya Pradesh.

Rural Health and Welfare Programme (Adivasi Relief): The Mission carried on its 'mobile medical centre' at village Sakwar, Palghar Taluk, about 55 miles from Bombay. This Adivasi (aboriginal) village, together with similar surrounding villages, has a population about 30,000. The honorary medical staff included 6 doctors, and had valued help from a group of social workers. The team visits the village weekly, distributing medicines, vitamin tablets, protein foods, garments; seriously ill people are helped toward admission into proper city hospitals. In this year, 12,961 sick people were served.

The Ashrama celebrated its Golden Jubilee ((1923-1973) from 4th to 12th of May, 1974. About 9,000 people participated in the celebrations. The State Governor, the Chief Minister, and 74 monastic members of the Ramakrishna Order also graced the occasion. The adjoining road to the north was named 'Ramakrishna Mission Marg' and a nearby park was renamed 'Swami Vivekananda Udyan' by the City Corporation. A marble bust of Swami Vivekananda was installed there.

The following are the Immediate Needs of the Centre:

- (a) The renovation of the Hospital building and purchase of equipments: Rs. 2,00,000/-.
- (b) Shifting Library and Reading Room to new house (hardly any room now remains for new books or for increasing number of readers): Rs. 2,50,000/-.
- (c) Adivasi Relief work: Rs. 50,000/-.

Donations may kindly be sent to the President, Ramakrishna Ashram, Khar. Bombay 540052.