

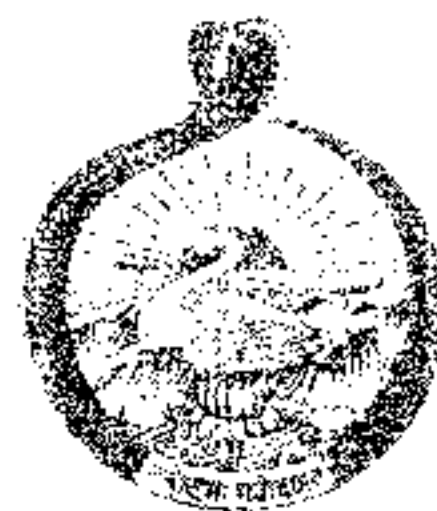
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Cover :

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

Courtesy: Reliable Calendar Co.

Prabuddha Bharata

VOL. LXXXI

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No. 11

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

SRI RAMAKRISHNA REMINISCES

'Where is man's free will? All are under the will of God. Nangta¹ was a man of great knowledge, yet even he was about to drown himself in the Ganges. He stayed here eleven months. At one time he suffered from stomach trouble. The excruciating pain made him lose control over himself, and he wanted to drown himself in the river. There was a long shoal near the bathing-ghat. However far he went into the river, he couldn't find water above his knees. Then he understood everything² and came back. At one time I was very ill and was about to cut my throat with a knife. Therefore I say : "O Mother, I am the machine and Thou art the Operator ; I am the chariot and Thou art the Driver. I move as Thou movest me ; I do as Thou makest me do."'

*

[From shortly after Totapuri's departure from Dakshineswar] 'I was for six months in that state from which ordinary mortals never return ; the body lives for twenty-one days only and then falls like a dry leaf from a tree. There was no consciousness at all, of time, of the coming of day or the passing of night. Just as flies enter into the nostrils and the mouth of a dead man, so they entered into mine ; but there was no consciousness. The hair became matted on account of accumulation of dust. Calls of nature were perhaps answered unconsciously. Could the body have lived? It would have succumbed at that time. But a holy man came then. He had a small stick like a ruler in his hand. He recognized my state as soon as he saw it, and knew that much of Mother's work was yet to be done through this body ; much good would be done to many if only it could be saved. Therefore he would carry food in time and, by striking this body again and again, would try to bring it back to consciousness. The moment he saw signs of consciousness appearing he would thrust some food into the mouth. Thus on some days a little food found its way into the stomach and on others it did not. Six months passed that way. Then the Mother's command was heard. "Remain in Bhavamukha³ ; for the spiritual enlightenment of the people, remain

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 reverence for his Guru, Sri Ramakrishna would not generally refer to him directly by name.

² That is, that man is not free even to kill himself, that everything depends on the will of the Divine Mother.

³ An exalted state of experience in which the aspirant's mind remains on the 'borderline' between Absolute and Relative, contemplating the attributeless Brahman, while yet participating in activities of the relative world, seeing all as manifestations of God alone.

in Bhavamukha." This was followed by illness, blood-dysentery; there was wringing pain in the intestines, and it was excruciating. It was after continually suffering for about six months that the mind gradually came down to the normal body-consciousness; before that it used to go up and reach that Nirvikalpa state ever and anon.'

'Ah, what a state of mind I passed through! My mind would lose itself in the Indivisible Absolute. How many days I spent that way! I renounced bhakti and bhakta, devotion and devotee. I became inert. I could not feel the form of my own head. I was about to die. I thought of keeping Ramlal's aunt⁴ near me.

'I ordered the removal of all pictures and portraits from my room. When I regained outer consciousness, when the mind climbed down to the ordinary level, I felt as if I were being suffocated like a drowning person. At last I said to myself, "If I can't bear people, then how shall I live?" Then my mind was again directed to bhakti and bhakta. "What has happened to me?" I kept asking people. Bholanath⁵ said to me, "This state of mind has been described in the *Mahabharata*." How can a man live, on coming down from the plane of samadhi? Surely he requires devotion to God and the company of devotees. Otherwise, how will he keep his mind occupied?'

[As a result of the Master's establishment in the non-dual state, he thereafter would return to it at the slightest suggestion. Once, on seeing a man walking on a plot of newly-grown grass near the Dakshineswar temple, as he said:] 'I then felt just that kind of pain which is felt when anybody tramples on one's chest. That state of Bhavasamadhi is very painful. Although I had it for six hours only, it became quite unbearable.'

'One can eat food even from an untouchable if the untouchable is a devotee of God. After spending seven years in a God-intoxicated state at Dakshineswar, I visited Kamarpukur. Oh, what a state of mind I was in at that time! Even a prostitute fed me with her own hands. But I cannot allow that now.'

'The present state of my mind is such that I cannot eat any food unless it is first offered to God by a Brahmin priest. Formerly my state of mind was such that I would enjoy inhaling the smell of burning corpses, carried by the wind from the other side of the Ganges. It tasted very sweet to me.'

'I used to go to Krishnakishore's house. Once, when I was there, he said to me, "Why do you chew betel-leaf?" I said: "It is my sweet pleasure. I shall chew betel-leaf, look at my face in the mirror, and dance naked among a thousand girls."⁶ Krishnakishore's wife scolded him and said: "What have you said to Ramakrishna? You don't know how to talk to people."'

⁴ Sri Sarada Devi, the Holy Mother, his wife.

⁵ A clerk at the Dakshineswar temple garden.

⁶ Because he was a *vijnani*—one with Special Knowledge of the Absolute, by which one affirms the universe, seeing all as the manifestation of Brahman, and hence beyond all restrictions meant for spiritual aspirants.

ONWARD FOR EVER!

Man feels, consciously or unconsciously, that he is bound; he is not what he wants to be. It was taught to him at the very moment he began to look around. That very instant he learnt that he was bound, and he also found that there was something in him which wanted to fly beyond, where the body could not follow, but which was as yet chained down by this limitation. Even in the lowest of religious ideas, where departed ancestors and other spirits—mostly violent and cruel, lurking about the houses of their friends, fond of bloodshed and strong drink—are worshipped, even there we find that one common factor, that of freedom. The man who wants to worship the gods sees in them, above all things, greater freedom than in himself. If a door is closed, he thinks the gods can get through it, and that walls have no limitations for them. This idea of freedom increases until it comes to the ideal of a Personal God, of which the central concept is that He is a Being beyond the limitation of nature, of Maya. I see before me, as it were, that in some of those forest retreats this question is being discussed by those ancient sages of India; and in one of them, where even the oldest and the holiest fail to reach the solution, a young man stands up in the midst of them, and declares: 'Hear, ye children of immortality, hear, ye who live in the highest places, I have found the way. By knowing Him who is beyond darkness we can go beyond death.'



ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF AN EFFECTIVE EDUCATION—I

EDITORIAL

I

In the vibrant scheme of the vast universe, our plundered planet has its share of problems. And the human individual, so far considered the most essential being in Nature's creation on this earth, is constantly and continuously striving for effective solutions to these problems. In this day and age when inordinate and short-sighted emphasis is being laid on the materialistic and mechanistic aspects of life, on narrow racial, communal, and sectarian interests rather than on the abiding and universal values of ethics, discipline, and spirituality, an ever escalating confusion of aims, ideals, and goals is entering into people's minds and hearts. Human ability and efficiency are on the increase all round, but without the expected proportionate increase in happiness, or peace. Solutions based on political ideologies, economic systems, or dogmatic doctrines have not provided a successful basis for the growth and development of an intrinsically joyful and soulful personality.

Science is great and necessary. With its help we—most spectacularly in the West—have gained comforts, conveniences, and satisfactions of various kinds. Yet man—proud and reckless man—, 'most ignorant of what he most cherishes', seeking to solve his problems externally, is becoming a problem unto himself both internally and externally.

What is a man for, and what is the true end of one's life? In answer to this simple and straight question, the greatest men the world has seen, most notably in India, have answered simply: Man is for achieving the twin goals—his ethical and spiritual fulfilment (*ātmano mokṣārtham*), and the greatest good for the greatest number

(*jagaddhitāya*). Self-development calls for inward, subjective, experiential education and training. It needs an effective system of communicating direct integral wholesome knowledge from those who have to those who need it. Again, social welfare and the good of all and for all, is not attained enduringly by systems of dialectical reason, speculative logic, or even by means of wealth and power. These latter have a tendency to accumulate and be vested in the hands of a few who cultivate them more vigorously than the large mass of mankind. What we need in every society, what the world is waiting for, is a true, effective educational enterprise: not a mere 'system' or 'syllabus' or 'organization' such as we are used to, because these only scratch the surface of the problems of the individual and society and still remain impersonal (if not indifferent), non-human (if not inhuman), and professional (if not commercial).

The essential elements of an effective education have been delineated from time to time by noble-hearted educationists of the past and the present. Institutions for the taught are perhaps plenty, but we need more, no doubt. Institutions for the teachers, for research and training, for evolving modern methods to suit the needs and conditions of the times and the persons concerned, are being established in larger numbers. Yet in India at least, leaders and educationists feel worried that something essential and precious is somehow lacking in our educated youth which ought to have been inculcated and enshrined in them by our own national and practical systems of education, at least after our political Independence. It seems that education has lost its inner enlightening core, and only the outer shell of institutional and academic paraphernalia is left.

In this encircling gloom, whom shall we turn to for light and leading? What are

the essential elements of an effective education?

II

Swami Vivekananda has given to India and to the world a dynamic educational vision and an intensely efficacious educational philosophy of life values. As is well known, he defined education as 'the manifestation of the Perfection already in man'. The soul of each person is an eternal storehouse of infinite knowledge, as our Vedānta philosophy has always emphasized. All knowledge is within the child, potentially contained in the learning individual, and the secret of true 'teaching' or 'learning' or 'understanding' is the uncovering or unveiling of that innate light and power which remain obscured even from the person who contains them. All the potentiality that is needed to make a huge banyan-tree is confined in a tiny seed no bigger than a mustard grain, at the start. From this potentiality existing like fire in flint, the child's knowledge, is brought out by the 'friction' of the educative process. The 'iron cask' which is the unregenerate individual becomes refined and transformed into a 'glass cask'—the educated person—by self-discovery, self-mastery, self-fulfilment, and self-realization.

Our emerging developing nation does not lack energy, enthusiasm, and enlightenment. Swami Vivekananda's clarion call to our nation is unmistakable and unambiguous:

'The ideal of all education, all training should be this man-making . . . The end and aim of all training is to make the man grow.' 'The training by which the current and expression of will are brought under control and become fruitful is called education.'¹

¹ *The Complete Works* (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Dt. Pithoragarh, U.P.), Vol. II (1963), p. 15, and Vol. IV (1962), p. 490.

According to Swamiji, we learn, the essential elements of an effective education are: Life-building, man-making, character formation, assimilation of ideas, strength of mind, expansion of intellect, a deep reverence for life, a sympathetic heart sensitive to the needs and feelings of others, a sense of duty and discipline, a patriotic passion for serving the motherland, physical courage and moral stamina, breadth of vision and depth of spirituality. To help activate these elements in the teacher and the taught, Swamiji wants us to cultivate positive ideas and a powerful will. Instead of harping on the mistakes that youngsters may make or have made, it is necessary to point out how things could be improved upon and the work done better. In the field of effective education, criticism and condemnation of weakness and wrong-doing can defeat its true purpose. We should emphasize and encourage right action and proper attitudes repeatedly, untiringly, lovingly and patiently. The fabric of the child's mind is delicate and impressionable. Undignified use of epithets like 'fool', 'dunce', and 'good-for-nothing' should be avoided, and replaced by uplifting correctives such as, 'You have done fairly well, now you *must* do better.' Violent and penal attempts at reforming a growing student end by frustrating the reform. Says Swamiji, 'If you do not allow one to become a lion, one will become a fox.'

Notwithstanding his wide travels abroad and his close identification with the whole human world in and beyond India, Swami Vivekananda could never be distracted or diverted from his tremendous conviction that the most essential elements of an effective education are contained in the perennial cultural and spiritual heritage of India itself. 'One may desire to see again the India of one's books, one's studies, one's dreams. My hope is to see again the strong points of that India, reinforced by the strong

points of this age, only in a natural way. The new stage of things must be a *growth* from within.'² Yes, today we are eager to impart to our youth that form of education by which they can know India and remain truly Indian, and at the same time learn the strong points of modern science and technology from other parts of the world. The Indian way of life and thought should be preserved so that the educated youth do not feel alienated from the large mass of their own country and countrymen. Yet their minds and hearts are to be suitably educated to remain receptive to all the healthy and helpful achievements and advancements of the whole of humanity. Almost eight decades ago, Swami Vivekananda had expressed this integral yet practical element of India's education, saying, 'What we need . . . is to study, independent of foreign control, different branches of the knowledge that is our own, and with it the English language, and Western science; we need technical education and all else that will develop industries so that man, instead of seeking for service, may earn enough to provide for themselves, and save something against a rainy day.'³

It is common all over the world for people who do not know the facts of life to blame everything undesirable on the younger generation and their wrong education. But any system of education can do only so much for the pupil, and the rest of his development depends upon his social, spiritual and family environment. The evils often seen in the social milieu, like unfair power-politics and corrupt commercialism, can exert a deleterious influence on the educational system. A purely secular approach to education, bereft of the eternal and universal verities of religion and spirituality, can leave the educated 'high and dry', with-

² *ibid.*, Vol. VIII (1959), p. 266.

³ *ibid.*, Vol. V (1959), pp. 368-9.

out meaning, purpose, or direction in life's long journey. The family environment, a broken home, parents and relatives whose lives are hardly exemplary for their youngsters, can cause in the minds of the youth a rebellious indiscipline, a confusion of values and goals, and a distaste for education itself. Much of the student unrest and youth discontent can be traced to this social milieu and its harmful effects which have deprived the educated of a valid sense of security, stability, and self-confidence.

Therefore, Swami Vivekananda did not fail to forewarn us of the dangers of the wrong methods of education, both in and out of school. He said, 'The education which does not help the common mass of people to equip themselves for the struggle for life, which does not bring out strength of character, a spirit of philanthropy, and the courage of a lion—is it worth the name?'⁴

If then education cannot prepare one to face the challenges of life, can provide neither wisdom nor efficiency in action, and does not lay stress on 'Brahmacharya as the

⁴ *ibid.*, Vol. VII (1958), p. 147.

guiding motto, and also Shraddha and faith in one's own self'⁵—it is a waste of precious time for both the teacher and the taught, like an aimless exploration in a gigantic wasteland. Wags are not wanting who have taken facetious cracks at such uneducative education and its unworthy products. One such comment is that the sacred temple of learning has been turned into a 'black-board jungle' and the biped inhabitants of this jungle are turning out as 'rebels without a cause'. Another comment occasionally to be met with is: 'It was said of old that one ought not to cast pearls before swine. But modern meaningless education looks like the casting of artificial pearls before genuine swine.' Appalled by the stagnation of standard and quality that has resulted from the 'stuff-the-brain' type of education, some are tempted to define such education as 'the mysterious process whereby information passes from the notes of the professor onto the note-book of the student, through his pen, without entering the mind of either of them.'

(To be concluded)

⁵ *ibid.*, Vol. V, p. 366.

There are five tests of the evidence of education—correctness and precision in the use of the mother tongue; refined and gentle manners, the result of fixed habits of thought and action; sound standards of appreciation of beauty and of worth, and a character based on those standards; power and habit of reflection; efficiency or the power to do.

—*Nicholas Murray Butler.*

The secret of education lies in respecting the pupil.

—*Emerson.*

LETTERS OF A SAINT

Calcutta
30 Śrāvaṇ, 1325¹

Dear——,

I am in receipt of your letter of 25th inst. Everywhere in Bengal the scarcity of cloth has become grim. I have begun publishing appeals, etc., in the newspapers, but so far no one has sent any new or old clothes. I hope to get some after a few days. However it may be, I can send you now for the purpose of distribution ten new pairs of cloth—they are ready at hand. But, how to send them is also no small problem.

Moreover, V—— in his letter of 24th inst. has written that he is not feeling well both in body and mind, and that you are not pleased with him—you have assumed an attitude of harsh indifference towards him—; therefore he wants to stay elsewhere for some time. His letter in such a vein has also become a cause of serious worry for me. Because if all leave the Ashrama and go elsewhere, what will be its fate? And it is also a matter of surprise that those who are leaving do not want to return, even after a long time. From this it seems to me that there is hidden a grave defect in the way we are managing the Ashramas—a defect which we are not able to detect. Sri Swami [Vivekananda] used to say that he who can truly understand himself to be the servant of all, he alone can in course of time become a leader—not any other. If you cannot bring home to all the feeling that the Ashrama is their own place, then by simply framing stiff rules, you cannot run an Ashrama. Anger, annoyance, intolerance of others' mistakes, inability to make thought and speech conform—and above all, being unable to keep all in proper restraint through love, trying to do so through cunning—all these naturally turn out to be causes of the break-up of an Ashrama. You should specially investigate whether all these are entering into us or not. I have become very much worried to see the kind of misunderstanding that has appeared among those of your Ashrama, when already there have been repeated misfortunes befalling us here. If you cannot change the attitude of V——, then ask him to come here for a few days.

What more shall I write? Accept all of you the Holy Mother's blessings and our love. All well here. . . .

Ever your well-wisher,
SRI SARADANANDA.

SRI SRI RAMAKRISHNA THE REFUGE

Calcutta
9 Bhādra, 1325²

Dear——,

I have duly received your letter of the 5th inst. and the postcard of 7th inst. . . .

¹ Śrāvaṇ : fourth month of the Bengali year, beginning in mid-July. 1325 (B.E.) here falls in A.D. 1918.

² Bhādra : fifth month of the Bengali year, beginning in mid-August.

The Holy Mother and others are well. Accept all of you the blessings of the Mother.

You have written, 'The reason for the non-returning of those who have gone from here is sheer lack of money [in this Ashrama].' It seems that these words of yours are not entirely correct. The reason is [this]: for lack of money we also repeatedly left the Math (when it was at Baranagore and Alambazar) and went away; but nonetheless the thought that we would never return to the Math, never came to anyone's mind. I concede that because of paucity of funds, people will go elsewhere; but unless the mutual bonds of love become loose, this thought that 'I won't come back any more' will not arise in the mind. Furthermore, at any proposal of enforcing very strict rules, many, becoming frightened, try to flee away. Many will not hesitate to procure the necessary food for themselves [by begging, etc.]; but if, on top of that, it is proposed that each has to cook food for himself, many get frightened. It is not true to say that if they all go 'wandering all over the country or the town or bazaar' they will come back all changed and hardened.

This is my one earnest prayer to Sri Sri Thakur (Sri Ramakrishna)—that selfishness may not enter into you and sever the bonds of love and affection.

Ever your well-wisher,
SRI SARADANANDA.

OM

Calcutta
4/12/25

My dear—,

I got your letter of 1st December. . . . Education [learning to read and write] is not an obstacle on the path of *sādhana* (spiritual practice). By acquiring knowledge you come to know various things, and your power of practicality gets augmented. But then after acquiring that power, you will get results according to the way you use it. If you want to utilize it in the direction of God-realization, it will give you the result *par excellence*. . . . Know that you have my blessings.

Ever your well-wisher,
SRI SARADANANDA.

SRI SRI RAMAKRISHNA THE REFUGE

Calcutta
26/4/26.

My dear—,

I have received your letter of 3 Vaiśākh³ duly. As I was unwell, I couldn't reply. Now I am well. Accept my blessings. . . .

Wherever you stay, act as per the instructions of the President of the Ashrama, and perform your *japa* (repetition of the mantra) and meditation as best you can.

³ *Vaiśākh* : first month of the Bengali year, beginning in mid-April.

There is no need to inform me of everything you do. With your own natural intelligence, decide for yourself where to stay and what is good for you to do, and do that only. If any questions, etc., arise in your mind regarding religion or spiritual life, you may inquire about that from me. In regard to everything else, exercising your discrimination, try to stand on your own feet. Convey my blessings to all.

Ever your well-wisher,
SRI SARADANANDA.

AT THE FEET OF SWAMI AKHANDANANDA—XVI

BY 'A DEVOTEE'

5-1-1937 ;

After early morning *ārati* and *bhajan*¹ the Ashramites hastened to pay their respects to Bābā² who was already seated in his chair, in his room. After they had prostrated themselves, Bābā asked, 'How did you like the talks and songs last night?'³ The devotees said, 'But it was a great strain on you.' But Bābā replied smiling : 'If it were really a strain on me, I would have taken to bed long ago. I tell you the truth when I say that I really forgot all body-consciousness. I was quite well : all the pain—everything—was forgotten. It came back again only after I retired to bed.'

In the evening, Bābā, after repeating *śaranāgata*, *śaranāgata* a few times, began to talk :

It means, 'Renounce everything and take refuge in Me [that is, God].' No *śaranāgati*⁴ is possible without renunciation of

everything. With *saranāgati*, the goal (of spiritual life) is reached. A person protects one who takes refuge in him. Water allows the fish to swim against its current. But the proud, defiant elephant is carried away irresistably by a powerful current. This attitude does not come of itself ; for this, the company of a saintly man is needed. The great poet-saint Tulasīdās says, addressing himself :

'O Tulasī, in this transitory world there are five permanent gems : Company of Sādhus, Talks about God, Compassion, Humility, and doing good to others.'⁵

From company of *sādhus* (holy men) begin talks about God ; from such talks proceed compassion and humility. It is from compassion that spiritual ideas begin to grow. Compassion is the root of all virtue and happiness, and arrogance is the root of hell, or narrowness and misery. 'O Tulasī, do not leave compassion even when life is about to leave the body,' says the poet.

6-1-37 :

In the evening when all had gathered round Bābā, he started to speak: Be active, and at the same time sensible. The Master has made us sensible, if not anything else. He never made us insensible.

⁵ Translation of a Hindi couplet by Tulasīdās, the great saint and devotee of Srī Rāma.

¹ *Arati* : worship of the Deity accompanied by the waving of lights. *Bhajan* : religious singing, usually with accompaniments.

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

³ These are detailed in the October 1976 issue of the *Prabuddha Bharata*.

⁴ *lit.*, 'coming for refuge'. The Swami is here interpreting it in the commonly accepted sense of total self-surrender to God. *Śaranāgata* means, literally, 'one who comes seeking refuge'.

Sleep is a senseless state without any consciousness.

You are so careful about your body ; but when you are asleep, you are not aware even if a dog passes water on you. This is all an ordinary man is ! What, are we going to repeat the performance [long devotional singing] of the other day? You can't. You will have to get up with the bell. [But though routine is necessary,] still you cannot call on God with routine time. This is relative and God is absolute. Now sing some songs.

A devotee began to sing, others later joining him :

'In dense darkness, O Mother, Thy formless beauty sparkles ;
Therefore the yogīs meditate in a dark mountain cave.'

Bābā commented that Swamiji [Vivekananda] used to sing this song at the Brahma Samaj meetings. Another song :

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

Bābā explained the song thus : The little child is overjoyed at its mother's breast ; it is with the mother, yet calling her ! Just to call her, for joy, and not for anything else.

Another song :

'O *jabā* (hibiscus-flower) tell me please—
How did you attain to the feet of the Mother?'

With the fourth song, Bābā himself joined the singers :

'Who has offered those red *jabās* at your feet?
O Mother, give me one or two ; I would like them on my head.'

This song went on for a long time. As it ended, the singer started the fifth song :

'Come and see the dance of light
Down at the feet of the dark-coloured Girl [that is, Kālī]
Enchanted by Her beauty, Siva offers His chest

So that She can go on dancing there !'

Silently Bābā heard the song. When it ended, after a pause he remarked : 'How beautiful are the words ! The idea is also equally so.'

Another devotee started the well-known song :

'Lo, there you see the Abode of Bliss,
on the other shore of the ocean of life!
Come, O ye grief-stricken people—
come all :

Ye shall be free from all miseries.'
With nicely combined melody and rhythm the song began to vibrate in the room. Bābā also kept time clapping his hands. The song went on for a long time. When it stopped, there was perfect silence. A little later, Bābā broke it and began speaking slowly :

This song has very sad associations for us. Towards the end, Maharaj [Swami Brahmananda] looked around for me and asked, 'Has he not come yet?' When I reached [Balaram Bose's home, where Maharaj spent his last days] it was all over and this song was filling the place : as if death were nothing—only a return to the Master. Again at the time of Sarat [Sarananda] Maharaj's death, this song was sung from 2 a.m. till daybreak. This song was also sung after the passing away of Hari Maharaj [Turiyananda]. Nonetheless, the song is very dear to us.

7-1-37 :

A lady devotee had written to Bābā about her eagerness to surrender herself completely to the Master. Bābā was very much pleased to hear this letter read, and asked his monastic secretary to write in reply :

'You want to surrender everything to our Master. Let this wish of yours be fulfilled by His will. The Lord [in the *Gītā*] taught Arjuna knowledge, work, devotion, and so many other things. At the end of the eighteenth chapter thereof, He revealed the secret of self-surrender : Leaving all forms

of duties, come and surrender yourself to Me alone. "Surrender" of oneself to God—there is nothing higher than this !' Then after the dictation, Bābā looked at the Devotee and said, *Śaranāgata, śaranāgata*—this is also a mantra ; it was uttered so many times by the Master.'

The Devotee considered himself blessed. Some time before, Bābā had told him that he would teach him the essential meaning of the *Gītā*. That promise was thus fulfilled this day in an unexpected manner.

8-1-37 :

Bābā was talking of his travels in the Himalayas. He told of a miserly man near Badrinath, who was extremely fond of money and would never part with it. A tall, strong and stout monk once came and said to him : 'Give me your money. I will turn it into gold in three days.' The miser gave him a big amount ; and on the third day, began from early morning to ask the monk, 'Where is the gold?' About noon-time the tall monk took the miser near the temple where *sādhus* were being fed, and said to him : 'See your money is being transmuted into gold. What better gold is there on earth?'

9-1-37 :

This day, Bābā was talking about writing his reminiscences, and the layout of the book :

Behind the image of Durgā there are some painted pictures. Similarly, in the background of real events, there are many insignificant topics and stories. Yet behind the bare serious facts, these things create interest. After this chapter on 'Sevāvrata' (Vow of Service), I shall take up the travels. Our entire life has been full of hardships and suffering : first in Baranagore, then in Himalayas, then in Rajputana, and lastly here. What further shall I say about myself? But this much we have known—it is through suffering that we can live with Him.

11-1-37 :

As the Ashramites were coming in and making their morning prostrations to him, Bābā was recounting softly, to almost all of them one by one, a dream he had had the previous night :

In the small hours of the morning I dreamt that the Master said to me, 'Celebrate the Durgā Pūjā.' I replied, 'That is a long way off (in October).' Then he told me, 'In that case celebrate the Vāsantī Pūjā.'⁶ Just then I found that near the *bakul* tree a temporary structure had been raised and within it, the image of the Mother was shining brightly ; and the Master was looking at the Mother from the verandah of the shrine upstairs. The whole compound here was filled with people—how many of them had come! What joy in the name of the Mother !

While everyone was expressing happiness at the prospect of the festive occasion, Bābā said : 'Now, in my present state of health, I am not sure whether I shall see the next dawn or not. Swami Brahmananda wanted to see the Vāsantī Pūjā, but could not. [He died before that.] Nor Swami Shivananda. Now see what happens in my case !' At this a long shadow of gloom fell on all. But just then Bābā brightened them by saying, 'Within the Vāsantī Pūjā days falls the Annapūrṇā Pūjā.'⁷ It was on that day that I came here forty years ago. Again, the shrine of the Master was consecrated thirty years later on that very day. Earlier we had had no shrine-room here. The boys had only their play-shrine. I had no mind to build one here. Later, nevertheless, it was built, but we could not install the Master [that is, his photograph] there on his birthday. Alone I was thinking about the instal-

⁶ Worship of Mother Durgā in spring (*vasanta*), as contrasted with the more widely popular autumnal worship.

⁷ Worship of the Divine Mother in her form as Giver of Food.

lation—it was a sort of meditation—when the Master began speaking to me : ‘In my collective form [for the good of the world] I manifest myself on the third day after Śivarātri.⁸ Here I manifest myself to you as Annapūrṇā.’

12-1-37 :

The Ashramites enjoyed this day with a picnic. After their mid-term examinations the boys did not have to attend school for a few days. In the garden they were busy preparing the food. Naturally everything went a bit slow and the meal was late. In the afternoon everybody took part in a *kabaḍī*⁹ game in the presence of Bābā. The whole day was spent in great joy.

14-1-37—*Pauṣ-saṅkrānti*¹⁰ :

Many from the Ashrama left for a bath in the Ganga, two miles off. The watchdog of the Ashrama followed them. But they came back without the dog; and Bābā asked about it. Nobody could tell a thing about it. At once, therefore, he sent a *Brahmacārin* on a cycle to ascertain the whereabouts of the dog. Bābā became sad, like one in bereavement. In the afternoon a man came with the news that the dog had been taken to a distant village and the villagers would be returning it the next day. On hearing this, Bābā regained his normal mood.

In the evening, Bābā spoke :

At Cossipore, in the hearing of the master, someone said, ‘I know.’ The Master at once corrected him : ‘Never say it again. What

do you know? Rather say, “As long as I live, so long will I learn.” He who says “I know”, he knows not. Out of the infinite expanse of knowledge, how much do you know?’ But the Master could not stand the strain of even that much talking in his sick state [throat cancer]. His throat bled. We never could utter those two words again. Later on, I found in the Upaniṣads the very same words : ‘ . . . It [Brahman] is not known by those who know It; It is known by those who do not know It.’¹¹

16-1-37 :

It was evening, and already the talk had begun. When the Devotee arrived, Bābā had already started telling the story of the brāhmaṇa, his bundle, and the hired bearer :

This brāhmaṇa, after going some distance, became for some reason annoyed with his bearer and—not knowing his caste—called out to him, ‘Hey, *cāmār*’ (the term means a tanner of hides or cobbler—a very low caste). As soon as the brāhmaṇa uttered these words, the bearer threw down the bundle and fled away. For he really was a cobbler by caste.

The Master used to tell us this story to explain the nature of māyā, and the way to get rid of it. Māyā vanishes the moment you really recognize her. The moment you thoroughly understand that you are a fool, you begin to become wise. Just cry for one night, saying : ‘O Lord, I am a fool, without any intelligence. I do not know anything, I do not understand anything. You show me everything. You please give me understanding; You appear before me.’ One such earnest prayer will change things overnight. One who has known that he is a fool—does he remain a fool any more? ‘The fool who knows that he is a fool is wise so far. But the fool who thinks him-

⁸ Śivarātri : The most important of the occasions of worship of Śiva, in which fast and vigil are maintained through the night—approximately that of the new moon at the end of the month of Māgh (January-February). Sri Ramakrishna’s birthday comes the third day after Śivarātri.

⁹ A game native to India, somewhat similar to the game of ‘Tag’ but with its own special rules, making it very lively.

¹⁰ Holy day at the beginning of the month of Pauṣ (January-February).

¹¹ *Kena-upaniṣad*, II. 3

self wise is a fool indeed.' (A well-known English quotation.) A very wonderful idea, beautifully expressed !

Staying with a teacher, a guru—if you do not have this much awareness, then what is the good of it? You will get nowhere else the love that prevails in the spiritual relationship. The mother's love is ten times more than that of the father. The guru's love is even more than the mother's. Does anybody care for you more than your guru? Can anybody do so? The mother cares only for this physical body, and that in this life only.

A fool has no spiritual life. He that is cheated here is cheated there also. He that gets nothing here, gets nothing there also. A fool is duped everywhere ; he can have no spiritual life. These are axiomatic truths uttered by the Master.

Desire to know everything ; try for that end. We are learning all through our life. How many books have I read ! And only once?—not once, many times !

I am learning even now. The village elder came to me and said : 'Root out the weeds : they are spreading their seeds. Otherwise the whole compound will be filled up with weeds.' Quite correct. Shall I learn these things from M.A.'s and B.A.'s—or from a village elder? 'Reject the words of Brahmā (the Creator) like straw, if they are not according to logic. Accept the highest truths even from a child.'

In our boyhood we used to go to the forest, to learn how to identify trees by their leaves. Modern young men do not know the difference even between two most ordinary kinds of creepers ! Since the Master has placed me in the midst of this kind of gardening and agriculture in a village, I have had to learn these very well. In former days there was only a plot of two

bighas of land.¹² I used to dig it alone, preparing it for sowing of maize, etc., and finally take my food at 2 p.m.—sometimes even at 3. Now you have 55 *bighas* of land : raise on it whatever you like.

17-1-37 :

Bhakti and Annapurna¹³ had conveyed their desire of coming to Sargachi once again to meet Swami Akhandananda before finally leaving India for America. Bābā asked his monastic secretary to write a note to a lady devotee at Berhampore nearby : 'Tomorrow two *devīs* (goddesses) will come to our Ashrama. You must come to see them.' Later he added, 'Really those who have come to help in this *līlā* (play) of the Master are gods and goddesses in human form.'

18-1-37 :

By the early morning train Bhakti and Annapurna, with Frances (daughter of the latter) reached Sargachi. This time also they had brought many articles for the use of Swami Akhandananda. He also had got ready for each of them a *bālāpoṣ* (luxury wrapper for winter), a speciality of Murshidabad.¹⁴

They conversed among themselves in whispers. Bābā asked the Devotee to read out to them the translation of a portion of his 'Reminiscences,' wherein his days with the Master were recounted. The ladies were very much pleased to hear this.

Next they discussed something about the Temple at Belur Math which was coming up, and they said, 'You must come at the time of the dedication.' Bābā replied, 'Certainly I will come and see. Swamiji said that he also would come and see it !'

At this they looked at each other, trying

¹³ Cf. the description of their previous visit, in October 1976 issue of the *Prabuddha Bharata*.

¹⁴ Chief town of the district in which Sargachi is located.

¹² A *bigha* is a little less than half an acre.

to find out the real meaning of this enigmatic saying.

They left by the five o'clock train. The lady from Berhampore met them at the railway station—to see the *devīs* with her own eyes. That whole evening Bābā was talking only about their love and devotion to Sri Ramakrishna.

19-1-37—*Evening* :

Bābā was talking about the novels of Hugo, Tolstoi, and Corelli. Then he began to discuss Garibaldi and Mazzini—how the former went to live the life of a farmer on the island of Caprera, after having conquered Rome; and how Mazzini wore black clothes all his life, as a token of the misery of his people. He told us how these lives inspired him. Swami Saradananda, again,

had given him a copy of *Up From Slavery* by Booker T. Washington, and said, 'Dear brother, see how he has built up a work like your Ashrama, how he suffered, and how many times he failed—to succeed at last!' Bābā added, 'They are men with missions—born to be immortal.'

Then Bābā mentioned General Booth's book, *In Darkest England and the Way Out*, and said: 'This book is here in the Library. Read it and you will see how he felt for the country and the society—how he found a way out, and then how he worked in a spirit of dedication. Booth started his work saying, "Salvation Army, we march along with you." Swamiji appreciated this very much and remarked, "We have to say the same thing to our people."'

ESSAY ON APPLIED RELIGION

HOW TO MINIMIZE OUR PERSONAL SUFFERING

SWAMI BUDHANANDA

I

Suffering has been with man from the beginning of time. It is very much with him even today. Sometimes, through long association, you begin to like a thing, though initially disliking it. But this has not happened in regard to man's attitude to suffering. Man generally hates suffering as passionately today as he has always done. He will do almost anything to get rid of it.

Seeking an end to suffering, man down the ages has done ever so many things. Behind the development of sciences, arts, and philosophies, there is the story of man's search for an end to his sufferings. Behind many religious practices is to be found the same

story. Behind the tale of many a crime, including even suicide, is the story of some man or woman desperately seeking the end of suffering. Those who take to drugs or become alcoholics, generally do so in search of an end of their suffering.

Yet again, how much suffering has man caused himself and his neighbours by this very search for ending his suffering! And what has been the result? Has he succeeded in finding out the methods of ending sufferings?

The answer to this question is both 'no' and 'yes'.

In spite of all his efforts man has not yet succeeded in putting an end to his suf-

ferings, which he finally learns are a fact of life. As throughout the day, night remains a fact, so throughout life, misery and death remain a fact. As long as life is here on earth, suffering is going to stay. Man cannot destroy this fact of suffering. It is not given to him to do so.

Nonetheless, man has succeeded in discovering methods of ending personal suffering. This is a very hopeful and helpful finding. Every intelligent human being should know about this in order to make life worth living and enjoyable.

So, the 'no-yes' answer to this vital question about the ending of suffering, may perhaps be simplified thus: There will always be thorns in this world. But you can avoid getting pricked by them. Or, even when pricked by one, you can take another thorn and remove the first; and then throw away both and be soon free of pain.

II

Suffering, by its nature being a fundamental problem of life, calls clearly for a solution of fundamental nature.

The first thing to remember about personal suffering is that for most, if not all, of our sufferings, we ourselves are responsible, and we ourselves shall have to work for their removal.

We must clearly understand that there are levels, or stages, of existence in which suffering is inherent. If you choose to stay and persist in staying at such levels, then your personal suffering simply cannot be ended.

There is, for instance, the level where you as it were press your finger on a thorn, refuse to take it off, and so bleed and weep. The camel loves to eat thorny bushes; and the more it eats the more its mouth bleeds. Still it will never give them up. On this level of existence none can help you unless and until you change your mind.

Then there is the level of existance at

which you think—or at least act as if—you are the body and the mind: that you will always stay young and never grow old; that you will not be attacked by disease; that death will not come to you or your dear ones; that the things you treasure will abide with you forever. At this stage of existence also, you can never end your suffering. For all your expectations are wrong and will be proved so, causing grief soon or late.

There is a level at which you think that by cleverness or through hard work you will avoid the well-deserved consequences of your own evil deeds. But even at such a stage you cannot end personal suffering: you cannot cheat the higher law.

Why can we not hope to end suffering at these levels of existence? Because here existence is characterized by false identifications, false expectations, and the ignorance which underlies all. It is only by changing the level of our existence to one characterized by true insight into the nature of things, an acceptance of the facts of life as they are, with renunciation of all false expectations and false fears, that we can prepare ourselves for getting rid of personal suffering.

If you eat a lot of bad food, your stomach cannot help getting somewhat upset. But you have not to eat it!

III

In regard to methods of finding better 'food'—of raising our level of existence so as to end personal suffering—we must turn to authentic scriptures and the great spiritual masters of the world, masters who knew the truth about things and who were compassionate. There is no use turning to teachers of dubious authority with their controversial assertions and counter-assertions. Such methods alone should be adopted as are authenticated by the test of time and have

been proved truly helpful down the ages.

Confining ourselves to Indian thought alone, we shall now briefly indicate how we should work for cessation of personal suffering. The essence of Indian wisdom, again, is in the Upanisads. In them we can find the solution for all the fundamental problems of life, spiritually speaking.

Striking the keynote of all Hindu thought on the issue in hand, one Upanisad say : 'When men shall roll up space as if it were a piece of hide, then there will be an end of misery without [one's] cultivating knowledge of God.'¹

Here is to be found the most complete and categorical answer to our enquiry—how to end personal suffering : as it is not possible to roll up the sky like a piece of hide, so it is impossible to end suffering without knowing God.

The implications of this statement are at least two :

(a) Only he who has known God has completely ended his personal suffering.

(b) To the extent that we have begun to apply ourselves to the practice of such disciplines as are helpful for knowing God, we are on the way to ending our personal suffering.

All other methods of ending personal suffering are palliatives, which cannot withstand one single onslaught of adversity.

Another Upanisad, further, clarifies the same idea in positive terms in these two verses :

'There is one Supreme Ruler, the inmost Self of all beings, who makes His one form manifold. Eternal happiness belongs to the wise, who perceive Him within themselves—not to others.'²

¹ यदा चर्मवदाकाशं वेष्टयिष्यन्ति मानवाः ।
तदा देवमविज्ञाय दुःखस्यान्तो भविष्यति ॥
Śvetāsvatara-upaniṣad, VI. 20

² एको वशी सर्वभूतान्तरात्मा
एकं रूपं बहुधा यः करोति ।

In other words, by perceiving Him within themselves, they put an end to their suffering for ever.

'There is One who is the eternal Reality among non-eternal objects, the one (truly) conscious Entity among conscious objects, and who, though non-dual, fulfils the desires of many. Eternal peace belongs to the wise, who perceive Him within themselves—not to others.'³

And lasting peace, it is clear, can come only after cessation of all sufferings.

In another verse this same Upanisad teaches :

'Ātman, smaller than the small, greater than the great, is hidden in the hearts of all living creatures. A man who is free from desires beholds the majesty of the Self through tranquility of the senses and the mind and becomes free from grief.'⁴

Human wisdom and spiritual insight have not travelled further; and this is a complete answer as to how to end personal sufferings. No contradiction to this wisdom is ever possible, because it is an absolute truth.

In subsequent Indian thought, of course, this truth has been expounded and elaborated in various religious and psychological terms. The final answer however is already

तमात्मस्थं येऽनुपश्यन्ति धीराः

तेषां सुखं शाश्वतं नेतरेषाम् ॥

Katha-upaniṣad, II. ii. 12

³ नित्योऽनित्यानां चेतनश्चेतनानां

एको बहूनां यो विदधाति कामान् ।

तमात्मस्थं येऽनुपश्यन्ति धीराः

तेषां शान्तिः शाश्वती नेतरेषाम् ॥

ibid., II. ii. 13

⁴ अणोरणीयान् महतो महीयान्

आत्माऽस्य जन्तोर्विहितो गुहायाम् ।

तमक्रतुः पश्यति वीतशोको

घातुप्रसादान्महिमानमात्मनः ॥

ibid., I. ii. 20

here: 'Know the Ātman and end all your suffering.' Cultivate the knowledge of God and there you will find the end of your misery.

Among the outstanding expositions and applications of these great truths for our own lives, Śrī Kṛṣṇa's in the *Gītā* deal often, directly or indirectly, with the problem of personal suffering. In some of His teachings there are direct answers to our question, and in others, implied answers. Let us gather a few of these answers for our study here.

To begin with a basic warning:

'Verily the enjoyments that arise from contact with objects are only sources of pain. They have a beginning and an end, O son of Kuntī, and the wise find no delight in them.'⁵

Then the most categorical statement He makes outlining the means to end suffering is: '...Yoga puts an end to all sorrows.'⁶ Continuing, He amplifies:

'That in which the mind, restrained by the practice of concentration, rests quiescent; that in which, seeing the Self through the self, one rejoices in one's own Self; that in which one knows the boundless joy beyond the reach of the senses and grasped only by the understanding; that in which being established, one never departs from Reality; that on gaining which one thinks there is no greater gain, and wherein established one is not moved even by the heaviest of sorrows—let that be known as Yoga, which is severance from the contact of pain. It is to be practised with perseverance and with an undaunted mind.'⁷

He further defines Yoga as perfect eqnani-

mity, dexterity in work, and balanced living. He calls it Yoga because it helps a person to unite his mind with God.

By implication Śrī Kṛṣṇa says:

(a) It is by becoming a *sthita-prajña* or a man of steady wisdom, one ends personal suffering. A man of steady wisdom is not affected by the pairs of opposites.

(b) It is by becoming a *guṇātīta* or one who has gone beyond the *gunas* (the substantive forces which constitute this phenomenal going on in the world, and staying unaffected by them) that one ends personal suffering.

(c) He who knows that God is the friend of all beings (*suhṛdam sarvabhūtānām*) and works out the implications of this knowledge in life, ends all personal sufferings.

(d) Having come to this impermanent abode of misery, he who worships the Lord with unswerving devotion, ends all personal suffering.

(e) He who crosses *māyā* through resigning himself to God in all possible ways, ends all personal suffering.

(f) That steadfast ascetic who neither hates nor desires, who is free from the pairs of opposites —, he ends all personal suffering.⁸

Śrī Kṛṣṇa further teaches by implication: He who is not perturbed by sorrows—does not crave happiness, is free from attachment, fear and anger—, he ends all sufferings.

Finally, after all these and many other profound teachings, Śrī Kṛṣṇa emphasizes that for the generality of mankind complete self-surrender to God is the simplest way to Supreme Peace—the ending of all suffering.

These authentic teachings when properly put into practice by anyone, at any period of time, anywhere in the world, will ultimately bring about the end of personal

⁵ ये हि संस्पर्शानां भोगाः दुःखयोनय एव ते ।

आद्यन्तवन्तः कौन्तेय न तेषु रमते बुधः ॥

Gītā, V. 22

⁶ योगो भवति दुःखहा ।

ibid., VI. 17

⁷ *ibid.*, VI. 20-3.

⁸ *vide Gītā*, II, 55ff; XIV, 20; V. 29; IX. 14: XII. 17.

suffering. There can be no doubt about this fact

IV

We have so far discussed the fundamental solution of the fundamental problem of suffering. But it may be that many of us cannot avail ourselves of such fundamental solutions. These teachings may go much above our heads. Or our circumstances may not permit us to practise these disciplines.

Still, since the fundamental problem of suffering remains associated with life, we desire to minimize this, at least for ourselves, as much as possible and to make life bearable—so we can go about in this workaday world with sanity and enthusiasm, and a maximum of joy. Yet even in thus seeking only a relative 'cure' of suffering, it will be helpful to keep at the back of our minds the fundamental solution, taught by our most authentic scriptures and sages.

So, now we come to the practical details of reducing or minimizing the personal sufferings in which most if not all of us are involved in a variety of ways.

The most important thing in positively and curatively dealing with our sufferings is the right attitude to suffering. What shall we then do to cultivate that attitude?

(1) We must remember that we are not the only persons suffering in this world. We are only sharers in the world's suffering: our sufferings are shared by all creatures.

(2) We must try especially to train our minds to receive suffering with courtesy. In place of a hateful, hostile or peevish attitude, cultivate a friendly and heroic attitude towards suffering.

(3) We must not exaggerate our sufferings. Maybe we are not really suffering as much as we think! Let us not add, through imagination, past sufferings to the present ones, so as to make them seem more imposing. Nor should we add fear of future suffering to our present condition. After all,

we may not suffer much in future. Let us never forget that many others are always suffering more than we.

(4) Let us not be taken by surprise or caught unprepared by suffering. We must not try to run away from suffering, but face it. 'Face the brute!' as Swami Vivekananda used to say.

(5) We must increase our power of endurance. We little know what a lot of untapped power lies within us. Think how great it must be to at all withstand all the misery we are complaining of! But now let us increase it more and more. One of the best ways to do this is through prayer.

(6) We must begin to dis-identify our Self, the Ātman, from the body and mind. No doubt this is very difficult to do; but all great spiritual teachers say it can and must be done. All sufferings are sure to pass away soon or late, except possibly those of incurable diseases. And none of them, even now, touch the Self.

(7) Let us try to sympathize with others in suffering and serve them so as to alleviate their miseries. We will find our own sufferings become minimized in intensity automatically.

Now it must be specially noted that no attitude toward suffering, however lofty, can be of any value unless it comes spontaneously from within you. It will not work as the Swami's recipe. Your smile must not be a worked-up smile. The flower with which you say, 'Welcome, friend' must not be a paper or plastic flower. It must have the fragrance of a genuine flower. This attitude we seek must blossom from within. And this can result only from an intense spiritual training of the mind.

But a basis for this kind of education can be found in some very helpful teachings of the Buddha. The Buddha says:

'All that we are is the result of our own thought. All that we are is founded on

(Continued on page 469)



DAG HAMMARSKJÖLD: STATESMAN WITH A SPIRITUAL IDEAL

Fifteen years ago, on 18 September, 1961, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Dag Hammarskjöld, died in a plane crash near Ndola, Northern Rhodesia. He had been on his way to Katanga in Central Africa to conduct negotiations with the President of Katanga, Moïse Tshombé in an attempt to end the civil war raging in the Congo for several months. A day later, the Secretary-General's plane was discovered burnt a few kilometres from the airport. The wreck had been pillaged. The corpses of Hammarskjöld's bodyguard and of the accompanying U.N.-officials were riddled with bullets, while the body of Hammarskjöld, lying a little separate, was intact except for two small wounds at the chin and the forehead—wounds which could not have been fatal. Witnesses testified that the body was stretched on the ground as if in sleep. One U.N.-official, still alive, was interrogated by the police before he, too, died; but his story has never been published.

A mysterious death; and, as the world was soon to find out, a mysterious life, too! Among the papers which Hammarskjöld had left in his New York residence was a letter to a Swedish friend authorizing him to publish a private diary which Hammarskjöld had kept since the beginning of his adult life. "These entries", says the letter, "provide the only true "profile" that can be drawn. . . . If you find them worth publishing, you have my permission to do so—

as a sort of "White Book" concerning my negotiations with myself and with God.¹

This diary entitled *Markings*, appeared in the year following his death and made a great impact on intellectuals the world around. To the astonishment of all but the few who had known him well, this book confronted them not with the sober, strong-minded, hard-working, and highly intelligent statesman, peace-maker, and negotiator, as he was known to the world—, but with an infinitely sensitive, delicately balanced, and lonely man who felt a deep yearning for God and spiritual fulfilment. The diary contains none of the commentaries, evaluation and observations concerning world politics which one would have normally expected from a Secretary-General of the U.N. The U.N. and his office are not even as much as mentioned in these pages. A remarkable man who having reached the peak of political influence and prominence chose to call this record of his inner struggle his 'only true "profile"', and, what is more, successfully concealed it from a curious and tactless public until and beyond his death.

HIS PUBLIC LIFE

Seen with the eyes of an outsider, Hammarskjöld had behind him a brilliant career as a civil servant and a politician. He be-

¹Dag Hammarskjöld: *Markings* (Faber & Faber, London, 1964), p. 7.

longed to an old Swedish family of noble descent whose members had distinguished themselves as landlords, civil servants and army officers. Dag Hammarskjöld's father had served as Prime Minister of Sweden during 1914-17. An excellent student of economy, the young Dag soon entered government service and became permanent Under-Secretary in the Ministry of Finance at the age of thirty-one. Five years later, he proceeded to be Chairman of the National Bank of Sweden, and by forty-six he had become a member of the Cabinet.

Firmly rooted in the tradition of his family, and helped on by his many talents, he seemed to steer a course which came easily to him, which was almost predestined, and the obvious success of which would have muted in a more shallow mind, any trace of doubt or hesitancy as to 'what to do with one's life.' Without his depth and complexities, Hammarskjöld might well have emerged as an ideal among brainy government functionaries, of whom the world knows many examples, and who have all the energy and cleverness to do a job which they have been told to do, but never think of anything beyond or deeper than that. Hammarskjöld was a man with a vocation, not just a 'job'. He built an ethos around his work as civil servant which has definite religious connotations :

'From generations of soldiers and government officials on my father's side I inherited a belief that no life was more satisfactory than one of selfless service to your country—or humanity. This service required a sacrifice of all personal interests, but likewise the courage to stand up unflinchingly for your convictions.'²

This he wrote in 1954, shortly after election to the post of Secretary-General of the

² *The Servant of Peace* : A Selection of the Speeches and Statements of Dag Hammarskjöld (Edited and introduced by Wilder Foote, Pub. by The Bodley Head, London, 1962), p. 23.

United Nations. Throughout the eight years he held this office, Hammarskjöld stressed this dedication to work as selfless service whose essence is self-effacement for the sake of higher interests. Going through his public statements uttered on various occasions and to different groups of people, there emerges for us the picture strongly resembling Gandhi's ideal of a Karma-yogi. Naturally, he was careful and reserved in his statements : never were they vaguely idealistic or emotional. When he enunciated his ideal, it was as soberly as he did his political strategies elsewhere. We shall present here two such passages : in one we find him referring to the *Bhagavad-gītā*, in the other to the Sermon on the Mount.

'The *Bhagavad-gītā* echoes somewhere an experience of all ages and all philosophies in these words : "Work with anxiety about results is far inferior to work without such anxiety, in calm self-surrender." These are words of worldly wisdom which we can all share. But they also express a deep faith. We will be happy if we can make that faith ours in all our efforts.'³

'In the Sermon on the Mount it is said that we should take no thought for the morrow—"for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Can anything seem farther from the practical planning, the long-term considerations typical of political life? And yet—is this not the very expression of the kind of patience we must all learn to show in our work for peace and justice? Mustn't we learn to believe that when we give to this work, daily, what it is in our power to give, and when, daily, we meet the demands facing us to all the extent of our ability, this will ultimately lead to a world of greater justice and good will, even if nothing would seem to give us hope of success or even of progress in the right direction?'⁴

As Secretary-General Hammarskjöld's

³ *ibid.*, p. 40.

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 61.

position was necessarily 'above' any particular creed or brand of religion. One should say, having in view the admittedly atheistic countries of the world that he had to be above religion as such. But it was impossible for Hammarskjöld to relinquish his personal life-view and exclude religion. In one speech delivered to the World Council of Churches (1954), he relates his conversation with an American youngster who was troubled because the United Nations Charter made no reference to God. Hammarskjöld drew the boy's attention to the Preamble of the Charter, where the nations express their 'faith in the dignity and worth of the human person' and pledge themselves 'to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours'.⁵ Hammarskjöld interpreted this article not as mere humanism, but gave it a spiritual meaning: 'The United Nations stands outside—necessarily outside—all confessions, but it is, nevertheless, an instrument of faith. As such it is inspired by what unites and not by what divides the great religions of the world.'⁶

This attitude toward his work and his position was based on Hammarskjöld's mystical outlook which was revealed to the world only posthumously in his diary. Once, however, did he spell out his most intimate beliefs in public—when he wrote:

'The language of religion is a set of formulas which register a basic spiritual experience. It must not be regarded as describing, in terms to be defined by philosophy, the reality which is accessible to our senses and which we can analyse with the tools of logic. I was late in understanding what this meant.

'... the explanation of how man should live a life of active social service in full harmony with himself as a member of the community of the spirit, I found in

the writings of those great medieval mystics for whom "self-surrender" had been the way to self-realization, and who in 'singleness of mind" and "inwardness" had found strength to say yes to every demand which the needs of their neighbours made them face, and to say yes also to every fate life had in store for them when they followed the call of duty, as they understood it. Love—that much misused and misinterpreted word—for them meant simply an overflowing of the strength with which they felt themselves filled when living in true self-oblivion. And this love found natural expression in an unhesitant fulfilment of duty and in an unreserved acceptance of life, whatever it brought them personally of toil, suffering—or happiness.'⁷

In this passage he shows an extraordinary maturity of religious belief. Hammarskjöld had no Church adherence; and although his diary frequently alludes to Jesus Christ, his religious belief was certainly not "Christocentric, but universally mystical. Much like a Vedantist, he sees the essence of religion—not in a person, not in an organization shaped by doctrines, but in a 'basic spiritual experience', an experience which transcends man's sensual and mental levels. He seems to have received his mystical 'training' mainly from Meister Eckhart (whom he read in original German and quoted often in his diary), and from the *Imitation of Christ*, a copy of which he left behind in his hotel at Leopoldville on the day of the fatal plane crash. He, moreover, quotes frequently from St. John of the Cross, from Chinese masters, and extensively from the Psalms of the Old Testament.

HIS DIARY

Yet another feature makes the short paragraphs quoted above noteworthy; in them the author gives expression to his attempt to combine a 'life of active social service'—the *vita activa*—with the *vita contemplativa*, aimed at spiritual realization. A casual reader of this statement may not be aware

⁵ *ibid.*, p. 56.

⁶ *ibid.*, p. 56 ff.

⁷ *ibid.*, p. 23 ff.

of its full purport, of the great challenge it indicates. We must consider it in the light of the *Markings*, his diary, revealing this spiritual sincerity, and in the light of the tremendous physical and mental strain his 'active social service' required of him. His friend, the poet W. H. Auden, has called the diary, in his foreword to the English translation, 'an historical document of the first importance'⁸ because it is an account of how a man draws two seemingly extreme opposites together into one life. While the medieval mystics, Hammarskjöld's spiritual guides, led sheltered lives in their monasteries, Hammarskjöld lived—by his own choice—in the very centre of worldly activity, exposed to the strongest pressures—and yet remained a sincere spiritual seeker. In times of crisis, when he spent 18 or 20 hours working daily for weeks on end, he still found the energy and time to enter in his diary profound, deeply-felt aphorisms and poems or excerpts from mystical writers. As a man exemplary in his worldly duty, and at the same time profound and ruthlessly honest as a spiritual seeker, he has few parallels in our time.

Like some of the great saints of modern India, Dag Hammarskjöld emphasized that in our era, the road to holiness necessarily passes through the world of action'⁹ Before he could arrive at such a statement, simple and authoritative, (written in 1955), he passed through a long period of self-searching and tribulations. The first entries show him as an ambitious, self-conscious, overly sensitive, and introspective man. He was plagued by the typical obsessions and insecurities of modern man. Loneliness, death, the purpose of life, *angst*, search for meaning in one's life and in the existence of the world—such all too well-known, and

all too painful themes recur often in the first half of the book. His worldly success did not cool the battle he fought in his heart. In fact, it only seemed to increase his doubts whether his life had meaning: *the* meaning for which he had been born.

We quote one early paragraph, written around 1945, which is paradigmatic for this early phase of development, and sums up the limitations of man's consciousness ever since he had lost touch with the Whole of existence in modern times.

'At every moment you choose yourself. But do you choose *your* self? Body and soul contain a thousand possibilities out of which you can build many *I*'s. But in only one of them is there a congruence of the elector and the elected. Only one—which you will never find until you have excluded all those superficial and fleeting possibilities of being and doing with which you toy, out of curiosity or wonder or greed, and which hinder you from casting anchor in the experience of the mystery of life, and the consciousness of the talent entrusted to you which is your *I*.'¹⁰

But already in these years of early manhood he conceived, though vaguely and gropingly, this great undertaking, this double duty, to live in the spirit and in the world simultaneously; it was perhaps his deep instinctive search for purity which was the initial stimulus. He noted in 1941:

'The more faithfully you listen to the voice within you, the better you will hear what is sounding outside. And only he who listens can speak. Is this the starting-point of the road towards the union of your two dreams—to be allowed, in clarity of mind to mirror life, and in purity of heart to mould it?'¹¹

Hammarskjöld's vision of the road to perfection, having a mystical quality about it, does not lead him through the world ('the neighbour') to God, but directly to God, to

⁸ *Markings*, p. 23.

⁹ *ibid.*, p. 108.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 38.

¹¹ *ibid.*, p. 35.

the voice within, and then through God to man.

Mainly two elements in the mystical life occupied his mind throughout the years: *purity* and *sacrifice*. He struggled for purity of feeling and purity of intent, he struggled to surrender his life for others ("The only value of a life is its content—for *others*."¹²). But he greatly feared that this purity and sacrifice were marred by his own vain introspections, and by the public role which he played; extremely self-critical as he was, he admonished himself often not to take his powers and his accomplishments too seriously. For anybody can be 'great' in the limelight. Yet, he desired the sympathy of people and feared that he would be misunderstood by them. He wished that purity of intention should be correlated to purity of results in the world, and he must have suffered much from the fact that such purity is impossible. Once, for example, he sadly remarks, "The courage not to betray what is purest in oneself is considered, at best, to be pride."¹³ And elsewhere, referring to sacrifice, he warns himself: "Would the Crucifixion have had any sublimity or meaning if Jesus had seen himself crowned with the halo of martyrdom? What we have later added was not there for Him."¹⁴ Such misgivings perhaps never left him; probably they were due to a lack of (mental) simplicity needed by any spiritual seeker and glaringly lacking in modern western man.

¹² *ibid.*, p. 140.

¹³ *ibid.*, p. 76.

¹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 130.

It is wonderful to observe, however, the change of tone in the *Markings* after Dag Hammarskjöld assumed his high office in 1953. Aphorisms expressing doubt or anguish are scarce now; evidently he is filled with a new strength and sense of purpose, and a hitherto unknown security. The eight years from 1953 until his death fill more than half of the book. It is this latter half which contains the most beautiful expressions of mystical vision. As we know it of Sister Nivedita, for example, the mind may, almost miraculously, grow calm and serene and strong when it is overwhelmed by outward activity or by great danger. Something similar must have happened to Dag Hammarskjöld. His mystical perception, it is clear, are not mere intellectual phantasies, but facts burnt hard and powerful in the battle between the demands of active life and the upsurge of spiritual fervour. We conclude with one passage, written in his last years, which may serve as a beautiful example:

'Clad in this "self", the creation of irresponsible and ignorant persons, meaningless honours and catalogued acts—strapped into the strait-jacket of the immediate.

To step out of all this, and stand naked on the precipice of dawn—acceptable, invulnerable, free: in the Light, with the Light, of the Light: *Whole*, real in the Whole.

Out of myself as a stumbling-block, into myself as fulfilment."¹⁵

— DR. MARTIN KAMPCHEN

¹⁵ *loc. cit.*

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S DISCOVERIES ABOUT INDIA—I

SWAMI BHAJANANANDA

INTRODUCTION :

If you walked along the seashore you would leave footprints on the sands. But soon the wind and the waves would come and erase them. Not so the case when a prophet walks along the seashores of history. He leaves behind indelible footprints which none of the historical forces and none of the vagaries of fate can efface. For centuries hundreds of thousands of people following his trail attain the fulfilment of their lives. One such trailblazer of recent history was Swami Vivekananda.

History is generally considered to be the chronological record of the unrepeatable events of the human past. But behind the actions of men are the invisible workings of their minds. History is thus a record of the interactions of the two universes, the physical and the mental, the seen and the unseen. This in essence was what the great nineteenth century German philosopher Hegel thought about history. According to him history is the unfoldment of the cosmic spirit.

Karl Marx took over Hegel's view of historical determinism but put it upside down. Instead of the cosmic mind evolving into matter as Hegel held, Marx said it was matter that evolved into mind. To this materialistic philosophy he added the concept of social revolution and the Surplus Theory of Value, thus converting it into a powerful weapon for social change or revolution.

Marxism is a powerful, integrated socio-politico-economic theory. Whether it is right or wrong, good or bad, about one-third of the world's population has willingly or unwillingly accepted it as its philosophy of life. It has been knocking at the doors of our nation for some time and has already gained admittance through the backdoor.

Its influence over our young intelligentsia, especially college students, is notable. This is only natural. College students trained mainly in science and technology find it easier to understand materialism, with its much-publicized concern for the poor, than spirituality and religion. The idea of revolution fires the young mind impatient with the slow rate of social change and the fast multiplication of acts of social injustice. We now need a powerful philosophy which includes the Marxist concern for the poor but which is free from its sinister materialistic basis. But should we have to import one from outside? Don't we already have one with us? Have we grasped the importance of the message of Swami Vivekananda?

Have we not got a philosophy in India which is revolutionary in its concepts and inspiring to our young men? Have we not got a philosophy which can integrate the socio-politico-economic aspects of our society and on which we can build up a strong, prosperous nation? Have we not got a philosophy which can help the people in solving their day-to-day problems of life—which can help a student to become a better student, a farmer a better farmer, an executive a better executive? Have we not got a philosophy which is especially helpful to the poor and the downtrodden? These were precisely the questions that Swami Vivekananda asked himself when he wandered all over India as a mendicant monk. As is now well known, soon after Sri Ramakrishna's passing away, he travelled throughout the country and saw with his own eyes the pitiable condition of a great nation battered, bruised, and defeated, lying prostrate under the British boots. And his great heart was deeply moved. But he was not an ordinary man but a prophet,

and with a prophet's unerring intuition he made profound discoveries. It is these discoveries of Swami Vivekananda about India that I wish to discuss here.

VIVEKANANDA'S FIRST DISCOVERY :

THE NEGLECT OF THE MASSES

The first discovery that Swamiji made about India was that the main cause of India's degradation was the neglect of the masses, the utter disregard of the higher classes for the millions and millions of poor people. In our presentday context this may not appear to be a discovery at all. But during the time of Swami Vivekananda, in the latter half of the nineteenth century, it was really a great discovery. At that time most of our respectable leaders and reformers were busy only with widow remarriage and abolition of idol worship. It was then that Swami Vivekananda raised his voice and declared :

'Remember that the nation lives in the cottage. But, alas! nobody ever did anything for them. Our modern reformers are very busy about widow remarriage. Of course, I am a sympathiser in every reform, but the fate of a nation does not depend upon the number of husbands their widows get, but upon the *condition of the masses*. Can you raise them? Can you give them back their lost individuality without making them lose their innate spiritual nature?'¹

Swamiji was a great student of history and he knew that the strength of the nation lay in the masses. Whereas in European countries socio-political changes had brought about great transformations in the economic life of the masses, in India owing to the prevalence of the village system and caste, the masses had remained practically unchanged for the previous two or three thousand years. Kingdoms rose and fell,

¹ *The Complete Works* (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, via Lohaghat, Dt. Pithoragarh, (U.P.), Vol. V (1959), p. 29.

armies and marauding hordes came and went, but the villages of India remained unchanged, supplying steady revenues that supported the rise and growth of empires—Hindu, Moslem, British. When trade flourished during the Middle Ages it brought great wealth to the nation but not prosperity to the masses whose simple life and primitive occupations remained unaffected. When Europe was seething with the Industrial Revolution and socio-political upheavals, India, cut off from the rest of the world and colonized by Britain, was sleeping in outer darkness. The masses of India had not only missed the advantages of the Industrial Revolution, but been made to support its triumphs. Britain had been systematically exploiting these masses by pumping in industrial products for the richer classes and siphoning off the wealth of the nation. English education and the British administrative set up had created the small but vocal bourgeois class. And most of the social reforms of the second half of the nineteenth century, inspired by the ideals of the Protestant middle class of Britain, were directed towards only these bourgeoisie. Raja Rammohan Roy, Keshavchandra Sen, Bankimchandra Chatterjee, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Dayananda Saraswati, and others were some of the most prominent social reformers of those days. They were all great men, great in their own respective fields. But none of them pointed to the millions of sunken people, eking out the humblest form of life, and said : 'Here is the hub of the wheel of India's misery.'

So it was left to Swamiji to correctly diagnose that the power of the nation to uplift itself lay with these masses.

'Whether the leadership of society be in the hands of those who monopolize learning, or wield the power of riches or arms, the source of its power is always the subject masses. By so much as the class in power severs itself from this

source, by so much is it sure to become weak. But such is the strange irony of fate, such is the queer working of maya, that they from whom this power is directly or indirectly drawn, by fair means or foul—by deceit, stratagem, force, or by voluntary gift—they soon cease to be taken into account by the leading class.²

“Our aristocratic ancestors went on treading the common masses of our country under foot, till they became helpless, till under this torment the poor, poor people nearly forgot that they were human beings. They have been compelled to be merely hewers of wood and drawers of water for centuries.” “The poor, the low, the sinner in India have no friends, no help—they cannot rise, try however they may. They sink lower and lower every day, they feel the blows showered upon them by a cruel society, and they do not know whence the blow comes. They have forgotten that they too are men. And the result is slavery.”³

Owing to social tyranny and neglect, the conscience of India had for centuries been suppressed and muffled. It was this forgotten conscience of India that found its expression when Swami Vivekananda said :

‘I consider that the greatest national sin is the neglect of the masses, and that is one of the causes of our downfall. No amount of politics would be of any avail until the masses in India are once more well educated, well fed, and well cared for.’⁴

VIVEKANANDA’S SECOND DISCOVERY : RELIGION, THE BACKBONE OF INDIA.

Swamiji’s second discovery about India was that religion was the backbone of this nation. According to him every nation has its particular bent, and the dominant motif of Indian civilization has always been religion.

Sociologists and anthropologists have long known that each culture has a definite pattern. As Levy-Bruhl has shown, every

social type has its corresponding pattern of thought. Pitirim Sorokin has shown that every culture is centred around certain values. It is the change of values that leads to the progress or decay of cultures and civilization. When Swamiji said that every nation had its particular bent or *raison d’etre*, and that of India was religion, what he meant was that religion was the intrinsic value around which the whole culture of the nation had been built up. All the other values of life become instrumental in perfecting that central value which is religion. That is why Swamiji, on many an occasion, emphatically declared

‘Within every man there is an idea ; the external man is only the outward manifestation, the mere language of this idea within. Likewise, every nation has a corresponding national idea.’⁵

‘... here in this blessed land, the foundation, the backbone, the life-centre, is religion and religion alone.’ ‘In India religious life forms the centre, the keynote of the whole music of national life.’⁶

‘... for good or for evil, our vitality is concentrated in our religion. You cannot change it. You cannot destroy it and put in its place another.’⁷

‘You can only work under the law of least resistance, and this religious line is the line of least resistance in India. This is the line of life, this is the line of growth, and this is the line of well-being in India—to follow the track of religion.’⁸

Some people call in question this statement of Swamiji. What about the Islamic countries of the world where religious fever always ran, and still runs, high? What about Europe and America full of churches, cathedrals, thousands of monks, nuns and priests? Do they not have more religion than we have? The answer is : Swami

² *ibid.*, Vol. IV (1962), p. 470.

³ *ibid.*, Vol. III (1960), p. 192 ; Vol. V, p. 14.

⁴ *ibid.*, Vol. V, pp. 222-3.

⁵ *ibid.*, Vol. V, p. 443.

⁶ *ibid.*, Vol. III, pp. 148, 220.

⁷ *ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 178.

⁸ *ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 179.

Vivekananda used the word religion in the special sense of spirituality. For him it meant realization of God. For a Christian or a Moslem, religion means faith in a certain creed and observance of certain religious customs. If he maintains these and lives a tolerably moral life his salvation is guaranteed. But for a Hindu salvation means *mukti* or liberation, which can be attained only through direct supersensuous experience of the ultimate Reality after long, strenuous years of spiritual discipline. Swamiji generally used the word 'religion' in this restricted sense of spiritual discipline and experience. This is clear from his following famous statement :

'Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this Divinity within, by controlling nature, external and internal. Do this, either by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy—by one or more or all of these—and be free. This is the whole of religion. Doctrines, or dogmas, or rituals, or books, or temples, or forms, are but secondary details.'⁹

A little study of the history of world religions will show anyone that in this sense religion has never been the dominant motif of any other nation.

Here another question arises. What part has religion played in the growth of Indian and other civilizations?

Early in his life Arnold J. Toynbee began to think deeply about the cause of the rise and decay of civilizations. After many years of intense research into the dynamics of twenty-one civilizations, he came to the following conclusions. Man achieves civilization as response to a challenge in a situation of special difficulty which rouses him to make a hitherto unprecedented effort. The material obstacles are overcome by a process which he termed 'etherialization',

which releases the spiritual energies of the society. Hence, according to Toynbee the survival of a culture is due to internal and spiritual causes rather than external and material. Religion for him is not just a means of personal salvation but a great creative force in shaping history. He elaborated this central idea, in twelve monumental volumes—entitled *A Study of History*—which read like a stupendous commentary on Swami Vivekananda's fundamental thesis that the main factor that enabled Hindu civilization to survive so many historical cataclysms was its spirituality. It was the understanding of this fact that made Toynbee a great admirer of Indian culture. He even believed that the future regeneration of Western civilization may take its origin in India.

Nor is Toynbee alone in holding this view. Pitirim Sorokin, Russian-born U.S. sociologist, has shown that individuals, society, and culture form an indivisible trinity and for their integration and growth spiritual training is an essential need.¹⁰ According to Christopher Dawson :

'Religion is not a matter of personal sentiment which has nothing to do with the objective realities of society but is, on the contrary, the heart of social life and the root of every living culture. We are just beginning to understand how intimately and profoundly the vitality of any society is bound up in its religion. It is the religious impulse which supplies the cohesive force which unifies the society and the culture. The great civilizations of the world do not produce the great religions as a kind of cultural by-product ; in a very real sense, religions are the foundations on which great civilizations rest. A society which has lost its religion becomes sooner or later a society which has lost its culture.'¹¹

¹⁰ Pitirim A. Sorokin : *Reconstruction of Humanity* (Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1958), p. 91.)

¹¹ Christopher Dawson : *Inquiries into Religion and Culture* (Sheed and Ward, London), p. 295.

⁹ *ibid.*, Vol. I (1962), p. 257.

Religion is not something that is forced upon the people. It is the natural development of the human soul when it confronts the tremendous mystery of the universe and the problems of life. It is the attempt of the human soul to transcend the limitations of the mind and senses, which are inadequate to comprehend the Reality in full. Such an attempt has been made in all societies and cultures from time immemorial. But only in the Indian culture and society did this endeavour attain the thoroughness and exactness of a science, the reality and pervasiveness of a way of life, in what is known as Hinduism. The word 'Hinduism' means both philosophy and religion, for as Max Muller has pointed out, the two have blended harmoniously in India alone. Max Muller further states :

'And if I were to ask myself from what literature we, here in Europe, we, who have been nurtured almost exclusively on the thoughts of Greeks and Romans, and of one Semitic race, the Jewish, may draw that corrective which is most wanted in order to make our inner life more perfect, more comprehensive, more universal, in fact more truly human, a life, not for this life only, but a transfigured and eternal life—again I should point to India.'¹²

Religion has flourished in India for centuries as it has nowhere else, possibly helped by a favourable climate and centuries of material prosperity, but more due to a certain vital urge in the collective unconscious of the people. The spiritual aspirations, struggles, and experiences of hundreds of thousands of people and the images of innumerable myths lie buried in the collective unconscious of this nation. As in the case of the individual unconscious, the collective unconscious of the people is a magazine of power ; and unless this is roused and given

creative expression, the nation cannot rise. This Swami Vivekananda understood very clearly.

When this inner life of the nation is neglected and an alien exterior is forced upon it, the result is loss of cohesion, power and purposiveness. As Dr. Von Ogden Vogt points out :

'When religion fails in its social function then men cannot enjoy the unities of a great society, and culture is lost . . . whatever is the real religion of any tribe or nation it is the primary ordering force of that society. When this coincides with concrete religion then men enjoy the happy fortune of a beautiful culture. Where there are deep clefts in the worship of men's hearts, there will be disorders in that state.'¹³

This is all the more true in the case of the Indian culture. The disorders of Indian society during Swamiji's time were all too patent, and Swamiji with the deep insight of a seer understood that it was caused by a kind of religious undernourishment. The nation had for millenniums been brought up on a diet of spirituality. ('Religion as the rice, and everything else, like the curries', as Swamiji put it.)

And it was the blocking of the life lines of its supply due to internal as well as external causes, that had created the general inertia and lack of self-confidence as symptoms of the spiritual malnutrition. More than seventy-five years later, even after Independence, the signs of this malady are still very much in evidence in Indian society. Swamiji's diagnosis is still true today :

'When the life-blood is strong and pure, no disease germ can live in that body. Our life-blood is spirituality. If it flows clear, if it flows strong and pure and vigorous, everything is right ; political, social, any other material defects, even

¹² Max Muller : *India : What Can It Teach Us?* (Longmans, Green & Co., London, 1926), p. 6.

¹³ Von Ogden Vogt : *Cult and Culture* (Mac-Millan & Co., New York, 1951), p. 36.

the poverty of the land will all be cured if that blood is pure.¹⁴

Time will certainly show the hard truth of Swamiji's warning and assurance that ' . . . religion and religion alone is the life of India, and when that goes India will die, in spite of politics, in spite of social reforms,

¹⁴ *The Works*, Vol. III, p. 288.

in spite of Kubera's wealth poured upon the head of everyone of her children. . . .¹⁵

Swami Vivekananda was not only the first great modern leader to make this discovery but was also the first to bring it home to the nation in such a way as to evoke a significant response.

¹⁵ *ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 146.

(Continued from page 459)

our thoughts and is made up of our own thoughts.

'Pain follows evil thoughts and actions, just as the wheel follows the foot of the bullock that draws the cart.'⁹

So, do not blame any one else for your suffering.

'If a man commits a wrong, let him not do it again; let him not delight in wrong doing; pain is the outcome of evil. If a man does what is good, let him do it again, let him delight in it; happiness is the outcome of good.'¹⁰

'Let no man think lightly of evil, saying in his heart, "it will not come nigh unto me." As by falling of water drops a water-pot is filled, so the fool becomes full of evil, even if he gather it little by little.

Let no man think lightly of good, saying

in his heart, "it will not come nigh unto me." As by the falling of water drops a water-pot is filled, so the wise man becomes full of good, though he gather it little by little.'¹¹

In a similar vein the Buddha teaches :

'Not in the heavens, not in the midst of the sea, not if thou hidest thyself away in the clefts of mountains, wilt thou find a place where thou canst escape from the fruit of thy evil action.

'At the same time thou art sure to receive the blessings of thy good action.'¹²

When we wholeheartedly accept the fact that "all that we are is the result of our own thoughts" and actions—that we have in some way worked in the past for getting these sufferings upon us—this attitude also will help us in minimizing them and in working sincerely and dexterously for ending them.

(To be concluded)

⁹ 'Sutta-Pitaka' (quoted in *Sermons and Sayings of the Buddha*—by Sudhakar Dikshit—Pub. by Chetana, Bombay, p. 36).

¹⁰ Paul Carus : *The Gospel of Buddha* (Open Court Publ. Co., Chicago, 1915), p. 133 ; Cf. *Dhammapada*, Verse 117.

¹¹ *ibid.*, loc. cit. ; Cf. *Dhammapada*, 121-2.

¹² *ibid.*, p. 159 ; Cf. *Dhammapada*, 127.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA AND AKSHAY KUMAR SEN

SWAMI PRABHANANDA

The devotee eagerly stretched his hand to touch the holy feet of Sri Ramakrishna. But the latter hurriedly withdrew them, much to the shock and disappointment of the devotee. The Master was heard to say, 'Let the incrustation of impurity on your mind go, then you will touch the feet.' Such cold treatment, verging even on rudeness, no doubt puzzled the devotee as it had on other occasions also. Recollecting his experiences he later wrote: 'Had anybody [else] received Thakur's [Sri Ramakrishna's] treatment which was meted out to me, he would never have visited him again. Many persons used to massage his feet but as soon as I would offer my services he would bluntly refuse. At times when I tried to take the holy dust of his feet, he would shrink back and remark, 'That's all right, but not now.'¹ Yet, however, dismayed and discouraged he might often have been, such treatment never deterred the devotee from revisiting the Master. For though he felt a kind of fear of Sri Ramakrishna, he nevertheless felt a deep attraction towards him.

The devotee was a humble school teacher named Akshay Kumar Sen. Once Swami Vivekananda, looking at the small eyes, the thick lips, the rather flat nose of the short, stocky, dark-complexioned man that was Akshay, nicknamed him *Sankacunnī*, which literally means 'a female ghost wearing bangles'. In later years, a grey broad moustache and thick glasses framed in by an unkempt grey beard and a large turban, gave him indeed a distinctive appearance!

Among the devotees he became popularly known as 'Akshay Master'.²

Born sometime in 1854 in the village of Mayanapur in the district of Bankura, West Bengal, Akshay was brought up by his father Haladhar Sen and mother Bidhumukhi in the conservative atmosphere of rural Bengal. His education was of the most ordinary kind, consisting of little more than the rudiments of reading, writing, and arithmetic, at the village school. We know otherwise little or nothing about his younger days. However it is clear that his religious propensities and idealistic tendencies developed, lighting up a fire of spiritual fervour in him. Tied down to a householder's life, he was twice married—first to a girl of Rolgopalnagar, by whom he had no children, and after her death, to a girl of Sudhistha village. She bore him two sons and a daughter. His natural ambition for material prosperity, as well as a devoted quest for the vision of Lord Kṛṣṇa, helped him overcome hurdles, one after another till he found a temporary solution to his financial problem—the small job of a private tutor to some children in the Tagore family at Jorasanko (Calcutta). But he was still hard put to it, to make ends meet; and the humble home-tutor often experienced the pinch of poverty then and later. Now and then, also, sorrow would cast a dark and thick shadow across his mind.

It so happened that Devendranath Majumdar,³ a noted devotee of Sri Ramakrishna, was then in the employ of the treasury office of the Tagore's landed estate.

² The word 'Master' is thus commonly used to mean schoolteacher.

³ For a description of Devendranath, *vide Life of Sri Ramakrishna* (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Dt. Pithoragarh, U.P., 1964), pp. 466 ff.

¹ Akshay Kumar Sen : *Śrī-Śrī-Rāmakṛṣṇa-mahimā* (Udbodhan Office, Calcutta-700003, 2nd edition), pp. 33-4.

One day while Akshay was enjoying a puff at a hubble-bubble on the first-floor verandah of the Tagore's, he noticed a group listening attentively to Devendranath speaking on some religious topic. The word Paramahansa once reached Akshay's ears. Now a Paramahansa is one belonging to the highest order of *sannyāsins* (monks)—a person of the highest realization, a liberated soul. Who was this Paramahansa that Devendranath was speaking about? Being curious, Akshay soon after approached Devendra himself and asked him to tell him about the Paramahansa. But Devendra replied, 'What will you be able to understand of him?' Akshay felt hurt and depressed. Yet he was aware that, poor and humble as he was, he was likely to be slighted by many highly-placed people. Thus in spite of such unkind treatment by Devendra, Akshay felt drawn towards him, so much that he began to try to please him in various ways. He even visited his residence at Ahiritola and offered him some personal service. Then one day in the Tagore mansion, Akshay heard Devendra say to his regular listeners, that he occasionally visited one Ramakrishna Paramahansa at Dakshineswar. Also that one of the grandsons of the Tagore's, Dharendra, sometimes accompanied him to Dakshineswar and that Sri Ramakrishna treated them affectionately. Akshay's curiosity about the Paramahansa was thus further whetted. Being impatient to know more, Akshay once again inquired of Devendra about the Paramahansa. Pointing to the young Tagore, Devendra said: 'He may enlighten you on the subject. I know practically nothing.' But when Akshay asked the boy, he replied: 'It is he (Devendranath) who guided me to the place. What do I know of him (Sri Ramakrishna)? You please ask Devendra himself.'⁴ Akshay

again felt disparaged and sad. He did not know what to do. Yet, strangely enough, he felt even more drawn towards this Paramahansa, about whom he knew so little. Nonetheless, shy as he was, he waited five or six months before he could find the proper introduction for meeting Sri Ramakrishna.

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Many figures have moved across the Indian national scene of the nineteenth century with a more spectacular flourish than Sri Ramakrishna; but few if any have exerted an influence so deep and momentous on the religious life of the country in this critical period. Many eminent religious leaders as well as those sunk in spiritual and moral decay, were lifted to new heights of life by his divine touch and words. He lived all twenty-four hours of the day steeped in the thought of God. He wrote nothing but he talked freely when the spirit moved, and when earnest seekers were listening. Although this was usually in an intimate circle, the echoes of his talks were heard in parlours and parks, Hindu temples and Brahma prayer-halls, college class-rooms and the cottages of the poor. What he said and what he was, gained for him an interested and admiring circle of men and women, irrespective of religion, sect, or social status. He urged chiefly a child-like implicit faith in God and resignation to His will, as the essence of religion—the religion of 'being and becoming.' Yet in the midst of zealous intellectual 'reformers', Sri Ramakrishna became a dynamic centre of attraction and spiritual help.

It was in his thirtieth year that Akshay finally managed to meet Sri Ramakrishna for the first time. A year earlier than this, he had received spiritual initiation with a mantra, from a village priest. In his simplicity,

⁴ 'Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa O Devendranath', by Gurudas

Burman, in *The Udbodhan*, Vol. XXIX, No. 1, p. 8.

he had expected to have a vision of Lord Kṛṣṇa soon after he started repetition of the mantra; but nothing had happened, and he was naturally disappointed. The priest then had told him that for such an achievement he had to perform acts of penance, etc. He had to live on the bank of the Ganga, and chant the mantra twelve times only, after a river-bath. But this could hardly satisfy the spiritual aspirant that Akshay was. Dismayed though he may have been, his keen hankering for enjoying the blessed vision and company for Lord Kṛṣṇa became all the more intense. Such was his yearning that he began to think of himself as a member of one of the milkmaid families of Vrīndāvan.⁵

Then one day, Akshay noticed that Devendra was apparently making arrangements for escorting some of the Tagore family in their carriage to meet Sri Ramakrishna. Whatever might be in store for him, Akshay decided to make another earnest attempt to get introduced to the Paramahansa. He waited patiently until they began boarding the carriage, and then dashed to Devendra, clutched his feet with both hands, and beseeched him, 'Sir, please allow me to accompany you to the place you are going to visit.' Devendra consented.

It was a Saturday presumably in the first part of 1885.⁶ The devotees were celebra-

⁵ *vide* Akshay Sen, *op. cit.*, pp. 31-2. The milkmaids referred to, were the 'Gopis', who looked on Kṛṣṇa as their Beloved.

⁶ It is known that Akshay had not seen Sri Ramakrishna at least till after Girish Chandra Ghosh's sixth meeting with the Master, sometime around January, 1885. 'M', in the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Tr. by Swami Nikhilananda, pub. by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 600004, 1947 p. 716 ff), states that Akshay was in the group of devotees at Devendra's house on April 6, 1885. Thus the first meeting of Akshay with the Master must have come between these two events. Gurudas Burman (*op. cit.*, p. 9) states that it was on a Saturday.

ting the occasion of Sri Ramakrishna's visit to the residence of Mahimacharan Chakrabarty, at 100 Cossipore Road, in the northern suburbs of Calcutta. The carriage with Devendra and others, arrived there about 5 p.m. Ramchandra Datta, Manomohan Mitra, Sureshchandra Mitra, Mahendranath Gupta, Vijaykrishna Goswami, and many others had assembled. They were sitting on a white sheet spread on the floor. An atmosphere of festivity and joy prevailed. Devendra and Dharendra Tagore entered the room and reverentially saluted Sri Ramakrishna.⁷ Like others, Akshay took the holy dust of the Master's feet.⁸ While he was bowing before him, Akshay noticed that the Master smiled and cast a gracious glance towards him. That was enough. Akshay felt a change in himself already. A wave of joy filled his mind. A hitherto unknown feeling of love flooded through him. He forgot himself it seemed, forgot his past and felt he had been ushered into a new realm, joining the group of devotees sitting around Sri Ramakrishna. The Master, seated at one end of the room, was looking at the gathered people: there was something extraordinary in his very person and in the words he uttered, which struck Akshay as irresistibly captivating. Sometimes of course he spoke on lofty spiritual matters beyond Akshay's comprehension; but the net impact of his stirring words moved Akshay so much that he was almost overwhelmed.

Soon Sri Ramakrishna burst forth into a rapturous song:

"Behold, the two brothers have come,
who weep while chanting Hari's name,

⁷ *vide* Akshay Sen: *Śrī-Śrī-Rāmakṛṣṇa-punthi* (Udbodhan Office, 2nd edn.), p. 397.

⁸ Both sources for this incident—Gurudas Burman, and Akshay himself—agree that the Master allowed Akshay to touch his feet this time.

The brothers who dance in ecstasy and make the world dance in His name! Behold them, weeping themselves, and making the whole world weep as well, The brothers who, in return for blows, offer to sinners Hari's love.⁹

The devotees joined him. Drums and cymbals gave forth their rhythmic sounds. Intoxicated with divine joy, Sri Ramakrishna began to dance, his face beaming with love and bliss. Sometimes he plunged into deep *samādhi*, standing still as a statue in marble; at other times, in partial consciousness he danced slowly, and again sometimes with great vigour. Surcharged with his spiritual fervour and uplifting influence, Mahima's house now indeed seemed a heaven. This divine drama, for Akshay, reached its climax when Mahimacharan, pointing with his finger to Sri Ramakrishna, exclaimed, 'Here is our Śrī Kṛṣṇa.' This was like a spark to light up Akshay's heart. He felt that the Master was verily the Lord Kṛṣṇa for whom he had been yearning from his youth. The Master appeared to him as the very incarnation of love.¹⁰

Singing and dancing over, about nine o'clock Sri Ramakrishna came back to the 'normal' mood. Devotees began to fan him and offered cold water for him to drink. All then enjoyed a supper of delicious dishes provided by Mahimacharan, their host. Thereafter Sri Ramakrishna went to an adjoining room, where he now and then conversed with the devotees. Then he suddenly began again to sing in his melodious voice (the song representing the words of Śrī Kṛṣṇa):

'Though I am never loath to grant salvation,
I hesitate indeed to grant pure love;
Whoever wins pure love surpasses all;
He is adored by men;
He triumphs over the three worlds.'¹¹

⁹ *Punthi*, p. 398.

¹⁰ *vide* Burman, *op. cit.*, p. 9

¹¹ *Punthi*, p. 400

How Akshay must have rejoiced to hear these words of his Chosen Ideal sung by the Master, and revealing the latter's own attitude towards the 'pure love' for which Akshay had been aspiring! How dear did the Master hold pure love to be! Minutes ticked into hours, but none wanted to leave the charmed circle that had been formed around the Master. But at last, he himself broke the spell and left for Dakshineswar.

Akshay noticed that the Master had not seemed to pay any attention to him—nor even cast a second glance in his direction. It seems that the Master did not allow him to touch his feet again, at the farewell salutations. In fact Akshay was so much enthralled by the elevating atmosphere that he does not seem to have felt like attempting any talk with Sri Ramakrishna.

On the return journey, Ramchandra Datta, the well-known devotee of Sri Ramakrishna, boarded the carriage in which Devendra, Dhirendra, and Akshay were travelling. All along the way Ramchandra spoke only about Sri Ramakrishna. So fascinating was the narration that Akshay, instead of going directly home, got off along with Ramchandra and accompanied him to his residence. There too Akshay listened eagerly to whatever fell from Ramchandra's lips. After a long conversation Akshay started for home, with a joy of heart never felt before. The 'Ramakrishna moon' was rising on the horizon of his mind; it was soon destined to flood his heart with a bright glow. While he was on the road home, he found it was two hours past midnight.¹²

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Two or three days later, Akshay went to Dakshineswar in the company of a friend. This time Sri Ramakrishna enquired as to details about Akshay: among them, he wanted to know if he were a Brahmo. But so

¹² *vide* Burman, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

unacquainted was Akshay with the Brahma Samaj that he hardly knew what a Brahma was! He could not reply.¹³ That day, Akshay's attempts to touch the holy feet of Sri Ramakrishna were frustrated. As on many later occasions, the Master put him off with, 'Let your mind be purified, then you can do so.' Akshay was awed by—'afraid' of—the Master's spiritual loftiness, his ecstasies; his very gait seemed awe-inspiring. In short, his regard for the Master was mixed with fear, as had been his feeling for his own father. Strangely enough, Sri Ramakrishna's image seemed indeed redolent of his boyhood impressions of his father; and that feeling persisted in him the rest of his life.¹⁴ But whatever his fear or apprehension, there was no escape for him from the spiritual attraction of the Master. He fell more and more under its spell as days rolled on.

This visit was followed by more, some in close succession. These firmly reinforced Akshay's belief that if anyone could give him the vision of Lord Kṛṣṇa, it was Sri Ramakrishna. Whenever he visited Dakshineswar, it was always with some high expectation—however unlikely it may have seemed to others. As he later wrote :

'I never told Paramahamsadeva (Sri Ramakrishna) anything, nor did I ask any question. Nonetheless I knew this much, that he who received his divine touch on the chest, loses external consciousness and in that state is blessed with Lord Kṛṣṇa's vision. I too continued visiting him in expectation of that touch. This, however, was not the only source of attraction. On meeting him I always felt myself to be a completely different person. I liked this feeling and I kept going to him with the hope that he would some day bless me by touching my chest. Days rolled on but he did not do any such thing. I used to go

with high hopes, but returned every time shedding tears of disappointment.'¹⁵

Still, Akshay's devoted attention to the words and actions of Sri Ramakrishna brought fresh hopes from time to time. In fact the pendulum of his feelings swung from hope to despair, despair to hope, and back again. But at last he had the great fortune to see his desire fulfilled. This was on 1 January, 1886 at the Cossipore garden house, where the Master was living for treatment of his throat cancer. On that day, Sri Ramakrishna blessed many of his household devotees, including Akshay. When the Master was granting blessings in an ecstatic mood, Akshay offered two *campak* (*Michelia Campaka*) flowers at his feet. Blessed then by Sri Ramakrishna's divine touch on his chest and a holy mantra in his ear, Akshay realized the benediction as overflowing bliss. Unable to stand such an upsurge of emotions, he fell to the ground, his limbs twisted, taking a strange and wonderful appearance. He began to shed tears of joy.¹⁶ At this 'self-revelation' of the Master and 'bestowal of freedom from fear',¹⁷ Akshay's joy knew no bounds. He was blessed indeed, and remained long enveloped in the current of bliss, which opened for him an entirely new vista.

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Contact with the Master had clearly brought great changes in Akshay, as it had for many others. But in his case, the changes came in their own distinctive way. Even before he had met the Master, he had felt drawn towards him on hearing only his name (i.e., 'Paramahamsa'). And on his first meeting, his mind was captivated. Still his understanding of the Master was

¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 33

¹⁶ *vide* Swami Gambhirananda: *Sri Rāmakṛṣṇa-Bhaktamalikā*, Vol. II (Udbodhan Office, B.E. 1359), pp. 352-3

¹⁷ *vide* Swami Sharadananda : *Sri Ramakrishna The Great Master* (Madras Math, 1970), pp. 889-91.

¹³ *vide Mahimā*, p. 31

¹⁴ *vide ibid.*, p. 34

greatly coloured by his petty personal feelings, needless fears and exaggerated hopes. But as time passed, his mind began to clear, his emotions to be tempered, and his thoughts chastened by spiritual practices plus Sri Ramakrishna's silent benedictions. This process may be glimpsed from his account, later on, of his personal views about Sri Ramakrishna :

'What Ramakrishna showed and explained to me has led me to the firm conviction that he is that God, the Avatar of the Divine, the Lord of the Universe, the Almighty, that very Rāma, that Kṛṣṇa, that Kālī, that undivided Satcid-ānanda, who is beyond the reach of mind's understanding, but again within the comprehension of pure mind and intellect under certain conditions.'¹⁸

Most notable of all was perhaps Akshay's composition of *Śrī-Śrī-Rāmakṛṣṇa-Punthi*, at the instance of Devendranath, whom he had come to revere as his second guru.¹⁹ Poorly educated and of inferior mental make-up—as he puts it—²⁰ he himself compared this literary work to 'singing of Rāma's praises by the wild monkeys'. But authorities no less than Swami Vivekananda came to appreciate this work. In a letter to Swami Ramakrishnananda, Swamiji wrote :

'Through his pen, Sri Ramakrishna is manifesting himself. Blessed is Akshay ! . . . I cannot tell in words the joy I have experienced by reading his book. . . . I tell you, Akshay's book and Akshay himself must electrify the masses. Dear, dear Akshay, I bless you with all my heart, my dear brother. May the Lord sit on your tongue ! Go and spread his teachings from door to door. There is no need whatever of your becoming a Sannyasin. . . Akshay is the future apostle for the masses of Bengal. Take great care of Akshay : his faith and devotion have borne fruit.'²¹

¹⁸ *Mahimā*, p. 18

¹⁹ *vide* Swami Gambhirananda, *op. cit.*, p. 352

²⁰ *vide* *Punthi*, p. 425

²¹ *The Complete Works* (Advaita Ashrama), Vol. VI (1963), p. 334

Later in his life, Akshay's creativity culminated in the writing of the masterpiece *Śrī-Śrī-Rāmakṛṣṇa-mahimā* (in 1910), which has secured for him a special niche in the hearts of Sri Ramakrishna's devotees. Therein is found proof of his literary craftsmanship, penetrating mind, and above all the advancement in his spiritual life.

Akshay continued for some years in clerical work in the *Basumatī* publishing house, but when old age and ill health overtook him, he retired to his village home, till his death, 7 December, 1923 (Agrahāyaṇ 21, B.E. 1330).²² Despite so many handicaps and miseries, much suffering and rare joys, while passing through the vicissitudes of life, Akshay had assimilated steadily the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna until he became truly a messenger of the Master. Akshay took as his life's mission what Swami Vivekananda had suggested for him in the above-mentioned letter—'And let Akshay introduce his [Sri Ramakrishna's] worship in every home....Whoever will worship him only with devotion, shall be blessed for ever.' Suffused as was his life with the fragrance of the Master's life divine, Akshay passionately sang the glories of his Master through his books, letters, and discourses. Though racked by painful asthma, ill health, and family troubles, he still occupied himself with the thought of God, sometimes getting deeply absorbed in that. He considered himself a living illustration of what even a fragment of the divine glory of his Master could accomplish. In a letter, he wrote : 'Please do yearn for Him who made me occupy a seat in your gathering. How many instruments like me are trumpeting his glory—who can really count them? All this is but the glory of Sri Ramakrishna.'²³

²² *vide* Swami Gambhirananda, *op. cit.*, p. 354

²³ *Bhakta-bāṇī* (Letters of Akshay Kumar Sen) (published in 1368 B.E.), p. 38.

Thus in the garden of great householder devotees of Sri Ramakrishna, the blooming of a soul from such a humble and ungenial beginning as that of Akshay, has for us a bright message of hope.

SERMONETTES AT ST. MORITZ—XV

SWAMI YATISWARANANDA

We must learn to bridge the gulf separating our life from the Ideal.

There is the danger of our becoming too self-centred, ego-centric. Our real centre has to be God who is immanent in us and in every being. The point of contact with the Divine is within ourselves. Therefore in seeking the Divine we find our own Self. This is a safe method. Some people seek the Self first and then they discover the Cosmic Spirit. First they become centred in their true Self and later on become cosmocentric.

It is better to do some work of service at first, looking upon others as Divine. This prevents us from becoming too ego-centric. In the beginning of our spiritual life we may keep aloof from others. But we should never be selfish and self-centred. Seek the welfare of others also.

Prayer and contemplation also reduce our self-centredness. We should rise above our little selves and their demands.

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Through gloom and darkness we reach the light. As we proceed, darkness will slowly become less dense. Then follows the dawn and finally comes the full day. In this life we should at least see the spiritual dawn if not the brilliant sun and the day.

After some years of striving, sometimes we sit and ask ourselves, 'What have I achieved in spiritual life?' If you work without wasting time and with one-pointed fervour, you may be able to see at least the rosy dawn. Let there be no regrets. Do not remain in darkness all your life. Begin right now.

*

To begin with, the mind is in a restless state. Through steady practice we must bring it into calmness and under control. There may be interludes of restlessness again. The soul must pass through darkness and desolation until we see light.

After some struggle we may get some glimpses which may bring some peace and joy into our soul. But then a new type of restlessness may overtake us, perhaps more violent than ever before. We may feel utterly lonely and diffident. We become disturbed. There comes a burning inner dissatisfaction with what we have achieved so far. It is this intense discontent that makes us seek the Divine with greater zeal, one-pointedness, and devotion. It is this real yearning for God that urges the soul to move forward towards the Supreme Light.

Blessed are those who feel this intense longing for God. The real longing comes only after you have struggled your way through the early stages of spiritual life.

*

Self-analysis is very important. It must be gone through mercilessly. Every night some self-examination is necessary.

We see others but we do not see ourselves.

Actually we are the witness of our thoughts. Usually the 'witness' in us is so much identified with thoughts that we seldom feel we are witnessing them. This attitude of the witness must be more and more developed. Very often, the 'witness' in us is asleep. We should be alert and wide awake and be conscious of every thought that arises in our mind. Always be on your

guard! When a bad thought arises in you, do not try to justify yourself. Do not cover festering sores with rose petals.

Thoughts usually rise from the depths of our own mind. But they may also arise from outside stimuli. The food we take must be pure, not only the food we eat, but also 'food', (sense-enjoyments) which nourish us mentally and spiritually



Do not be dogmatic. Until you realize the Truth you have to depend on faith, even 'blind faith'. Still, do not be dogmatic. Do not think or say that what you think or do alone is true. There are any number of different approaches to Truth. At any moment we should be able to give up our pet ideas if we find that they only distort the Truth. Be open to noble ideas. Have a broader spiritual outlook.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

IN THIS NUMBER

Reminiscences are taken from 'M' : *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Tr. by Swami Nikhilananda, Pub. by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras 600004, 1947), and Swami Saradananda : *Sri Ramakrishna The Great Master* (Madras, 1970). References— *Gospel*: No. 1, pp. 89-90 ; No. 3, p. 746 ; No. 5, p. 540 ; No. 6, p. 526 ; No. 7, p. 431. *Great Master* : No. 2, p. 359 ; No. 4, p. 262.

The words quoted in 'Onward For Ever!' are from *The Complete Works*, Vol. II (1963), pp. 103-4.

One of the basic, fundamental factors contributing to the growth and development of a civilized nation is education. From ancient times India has been trying to formulate effective ideas and ideals in this field. Swami Vivekananda in his forceful sayings and writings on the regeneration of India, and thence of humanity, has dealt with methods, values, and other aspects of education. The *Editorial* this month is devoted to a brief study of the Swami's views on the 'Essential Elements of an Effective Education'. The discussion will be continued and concluded in our next essay.

Swami Vivekananda once forcefully showed that we ourselves really contribute

half the force of every blow that the external world delivers us, and counselled that the first step towards minimizing and ultimately overcoming misery is to withhold our own contribution. It is utterly futile to try to eradicate suffering in this world without beginning first with ourselves. 'How to Minimize our Personal Suffering', by Swami Budhananda, is an illuminative discourse on this theme of overcoming suffering—a theme that is very close to the human heart. The concluding part of this Essay on Applied Religion will be published in our next issue.

Dag Hammarskjöld (1905-1961), economist and statesman, succeeded Trygve Lie as Secretary-General of the United Nations. As the chief executive of the world body, he combined great moral strength with sagacity in handling explosive international situations and challenges. During his leadership, the U.N.'s prestige and effectiveness were enhanced. In recognition of his great services to the cause of world peace, he was posthumously awarded the Nobel Prize in 1961, *Markings*, his spiritual 'diary', published, as he had directed, after his death, reveals Dag Hammarskjöld as a pilgrim who earnestly tried to walk the inner road through dedicated service to humanity. Dr Martin Kampchen brings to our columns a

Profile of this great Swede. Dr. Kampchen received his doctorate in German Literature and is currently teaching German at the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Calcutta.

To Swami Vivekananda's illuminated consciousness past, present and future of India were an open book. The insightful revelations he has made regarding Indian culture, civilization, race, and religion are therefore invaluable. No other thinker of modern times has put forth revelations comparable to Swamiji's in profundity and breadth. Swami Bhajanananda, a monk of the Ramakrishna Order, has made, in his 'Swami Vivekananda's Discoveries about India', a thought-provoking and extensive study of these revelations in the light of modern knowledge. In this issue we present the first instalment, in which the author

mainly focuses on 'The Neglect of the Masses', and 'Religion, the Backbone of India'.

Of the many modestly-endowed householder devotees who were transformed by the divine touch and the grace of Sri Ramakrishna, Akshay Kumar Sen is one of the most remarkable. His later life, filled with the glory of his devotion to the Great Master and of his literary works in Bengali which kindle reverence and love for Sri Ramakrishna in the readers, is glowing proof of this spiritual transformation. 'Sri Ramakrishna and Akshay Kumar Sen', by Swami Pabhananda, a monk of the Ramakrishna Order, is a scholarly delineation of the stirring events of Akshay's meetings with the Master, and the former's extraordinary achievements in the field of devotional literature.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

SRI RAMAKRISHNA'S LIFE AND MESSAGE IN THE PRESENT AGE : BY SWAMI SATPRAKASHANANDA, Published by Vedanta Society of St. Louis, Missouri (USA), pp. 208, Price Six dollars.

'When Swami Vivekananda returned to Calcutta the first time after preaching Vedanta in the Western world, his close relative Ramachandra Datta, a staunch devotee of Sri Ramakrishna, took him to task saying, "Well, Ville (nickname of Swami Vivekananda), you went to the Western world and all the time you harped on Vedanta. Why did you not preach Sri Ramakrishna, whose very name is conducive to man's liberation?" Swami Vivekananda replied, "Well, if I talked to them about Sri Ramakrishna they would at once reply, 'We have our Jesus Christ, what more have you to say?' Now I have preached to them the religion and philosophy of Vedanta and the Vedantic ideal of God-realization. Naturally they would enquire, 'Who is the man who has realized the ideal in this age?'"

This is one of the revealing incidents recalled in this excellent book (in the Preface) on the Master's life and message which have a perennial

relevance to the modern world. Summing up the precise truths that are thus significant, the author writes : God is real ; God can be realized ; this longing for eternal life can be completely fulfilled ; there are many ways to the attainment of this goal. And Sri Ramakrishna's is a life that demonstrates these truths in practice.

The second part of the book contains the author's reminiscences of the Holy Mother Saradadevi and some of the Master's direct disciples like Brahmananda, Premananda, Shivananda and 'M' or Master Mahashaya. Narrating how the name Mahapurusha came to be given to Swami Shivananda, he writes : Swamis Vivekananda, Abhedananda, and Shivananda 'went to Bodh-Gaya a few months before the passing away of Thakur (Sri Ramakrishna). One night the three . . . were immersed in meditation under the Bodhi tree, and Swamiji, imbued with the spirit of Buddha-deva, felt the appearance of Buddha and saw him disappear into your body.' Many thought this to be the reason why Vivekananda had begun calling Shivananda by the name 'Mahapurusha'. But when Shivananda was asked about it, he gave no direct answer. Our

author concluded that, to Shivananda, any such term of respect was 'quite an insignificant affair'; and adds that his own opinion is that the term was conferred by Vivekananda upon learning that Shivananda 'in his youth had to live with his wife under compelling circumstances, but by the especial grace of Sri Sri Thakur, could maintain unbroken celibacy'.

The author's answer to the question by a prominent Church member, 'How does the Vedanta Mission in the United States differ from the Christian missions in India?' reproduced in the Appendix, is a classic.

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MORAL TRENDS SINCE INDEPENDENCE:
Published by Academy of Comparative Philosophy and Religion, Belgaum : 590011, pp. IX + 133, Price Rs. 15/-.

This report of a seminar held in 1975, highlights the different approaches to the problem of decay of values in India since 1947. Some attribute the decline to economic compulsions, some to excessive religion, others, to the neglect of real religion, some to lack of sufficient scientific spirit, and some others to the breakdown of faith in moral and spiritual values. The consensus seems to be that stricter standards must be observed both in personal and public life and an intensive programme is called for to educate the society in this direction.

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ADVAITIC MYSTICISM OF SANKARA :
By A. RAMAMURTI, Published by Centre of Advanced Study in Philosophy, Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan, 1974, pp. xviii + 213, Price Rs. 38/-.

The book under review, is an insightful exposition of Sri Sankara's mysticism, and forms the author's doctoral thesis. With great self-confidence and conviction the author shows that Sri Sankara was first and foremost a mystic, and his philosophy is but an authentic expression of *brahmanubhava* (direct experience of Brahman). Mysticism, the author rightly points out, is in essence nothing but the realization of one's own Self—an objective set forth by the Upanishadic seers. Sankara expounds the *aupanishadam brahma* (Brahman of the Upanishads) on the same grounds of his own realization of the Self as Brahman—but Brahman *not* as an entity in which one's Self is merged. The author points

out that any talk of 'merging' is figurative or metaphorical; and that since all that exists is the non-dual Self, fulfilment or liberation consists in overcoming the ignorance that limits the infinitude or *brahmatva* of the Self or Atman. The *unio mystica* is meaningless where there is only one without a second. The author elaborates this unique perspective of Sankara, in the main body of the work.

Furthermore, he rightly points out that it is this mystical realization which is at the back of Sankara's mind and which orients his metaphysical system; and again, in the light of this realization only, can we gather the implications of *adhyasa* (superimposition) and *avidya* (ignorance) on which Sankara lays stress. In Sankara's metaphysics the criterion of all judgment cannot be anything other than the highest experience of Brahman, which clarifies the limits of reason—even of revelation—as authorities for the estimate of the Real. Sankara's main purpose, as the author sees, is not so much to make us understand Reality through metaphysical or rational techniques, but to make us realize directly the Self, which is the Real.

Though the author's position is succinctly stated in the Introduction, the succeeding chapters on the theme of *brahmanubhava*—its description, the way to it, its object, its validity—are cogent amplifications of the perspective of Sankara as a mystic. In the other chapters, touching upon the *brahmajnani* (knower of Brahman) and the distinctions between empirical experience and *brahmanubhava*, we are introduced to the unique phenomenon of the mystic's way of life and thought. The author has done extremely well in instituting a comparative study between Sankara's mysticism and the typical Christian and Islamic mysticisms of St. John of the Cross and Jalalud-Din Rumi, respectively. This shows not only the speciality of the Indian mysticism as exemplified by the non-dualistic Sankara, but also the place of this type in the general mystical tradition.

On the whole, Dr. Ramamurti's book is a scholarly one; he has spared no pains in collating relevant material and in interpreting the perspective of one of the greatest mystics of India. Indeed the publication is highly welcome, and the author deserves our warm appreciation.

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NEWS AND REPORTS

THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION— MANGALORE

REPORT : APRIL 1974—MARCH 1975

In 1947, the Sri Ramakrishna Ashrama of Mangalore was started; and four years later in response to earnest public demand, the present Branch of the Ramakrishna Mission was opened, in its own permanent building and seven-acre plot, which were the gift of the Hindu Seva Sangha of Mangalore. The Mission also took charge of the Balakashrama—a Free Home for Boys—which till then had been managed by the Hindu Seva Sangha. In April 1955, an outdoor Charitable Dispensary was begun.

The Boys' Home : This maintains poor and worthy students, irrespective of caste or creed, with free board, lodging, stationery, clothing, etc., within the limits of its resources. Currently there were a total of 48 boys, of whom four studied in Higher Elementary School, 33 in High School, and 11 in College. The Home aims at giving 'integral education' by supplementing the school-work with the inculcation of spiritual values in their widest sense—a need which is more and more obvious nowadays, as commercial and utilitarian ideals with their showy material achievements tend to crowd out all interest in higher things. Accordingly, here the boys are encouraged to cultivate the moral virtues, a sense of social responsibility, aesthetic tastes, and enquiry into the real meaning of human life. They are given the management of the affairs of the Home, thus developing self-reliance, co-operation, and

creative effort. They participate in the daily routine of the Ashrama, including morning and evening congregational prayers. They attend a weekly moral-instruction class; they are taught to chant the *Gita*, the *Vishnu-sahasranama*, the *Lalita-sahasranama*, and to sing devotional songs. The important festivals and birthdays of saints are fittingly celebrated.

The Charitable Dispensary : From its modest beginning in 1955, this Dispensary soon rose to become an important centre of medical relief in this town. With its staff of nine Honorary doctors, including a Dental Surgeon, it treated in the current year, 38,683 patient-visits, of which 5,438 were new cases. The doctors also cared for sick boys of the Boys' Home. Of its total expenditure of Rs. 9,777.96, Government Grants covered Rs. 3,000/- and Municipal, Rs. 1,200/-.

Immediate Needs : Boys' Home : Endowments for maintenance of poor students : Each boy can be maintained by annual contribution of Rs. 700/- or by endowment bringing that interest. *Compound-Wall* : there being no wall on the west side of the premises, it is planned to build one, which will cost Rs. 40,000/-. *Dispensary* : The great need is for a permanent Endowment Fund, to bring a monthly income of at least Rs. 1,000/- for maintenance of the Dispensary: purchase of medicines, bandage materials, salaries of staff, and the bare expenses of the workers.

Contributions to the Mission are not income-tax-deductible; and should be sent to the Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission, Mangaladevi Road, Mangalore, 575001.

CORRIGENDA

PRABUDDHA BHARATA, SEPTEMBER 1976

- p. 363, line 28, *for atrophysics, read astrophysics*
- p. 364, column 2, line 4, *for energy-entropy, read energy—entropy.*
- p. 365, column 2, paragraph 2, line 1, *for snpplements, read supplements*
- p. 366, line 10, *for Saikara, read Saṅkara*
line 15, *for in, read on*
line 29, *for atainment, read attainment*
- p. 376, para. 8, line 1, *for Doubless, read Donbtless*
- p. 377, column 2, para 6, line 10, *for tackel, read tackle*
- p. 379, column 1, para 6, line 8, *for someohw, read somehow*
column 2, para 5, line 3, *for spiriutal, read spiritual*
- p. 383, column 2, para 2, line 1, *for was-, read was—*
- p. 385, column 2, line 4, *for sin has actually, read, sin has not actually*
- p. 390, column 1, line 7, *for cusotms, read customs*
- p. 396, para 3, line 4, *for hapiness, read happiness*
- p. 397, column 2, para 2, line 11, *for Kehsab, read Keshab*
- p. 398, para 4, line 8, *for existentialial, read existentialist*
- p. 399, para 2, line 10 *for thereform, read therefrom*
para 3, line 6, *for savings, read sayings*
- p. 400, para 4, line 2, *for seeks, read seekers*

These errors are regretted.—Ed.