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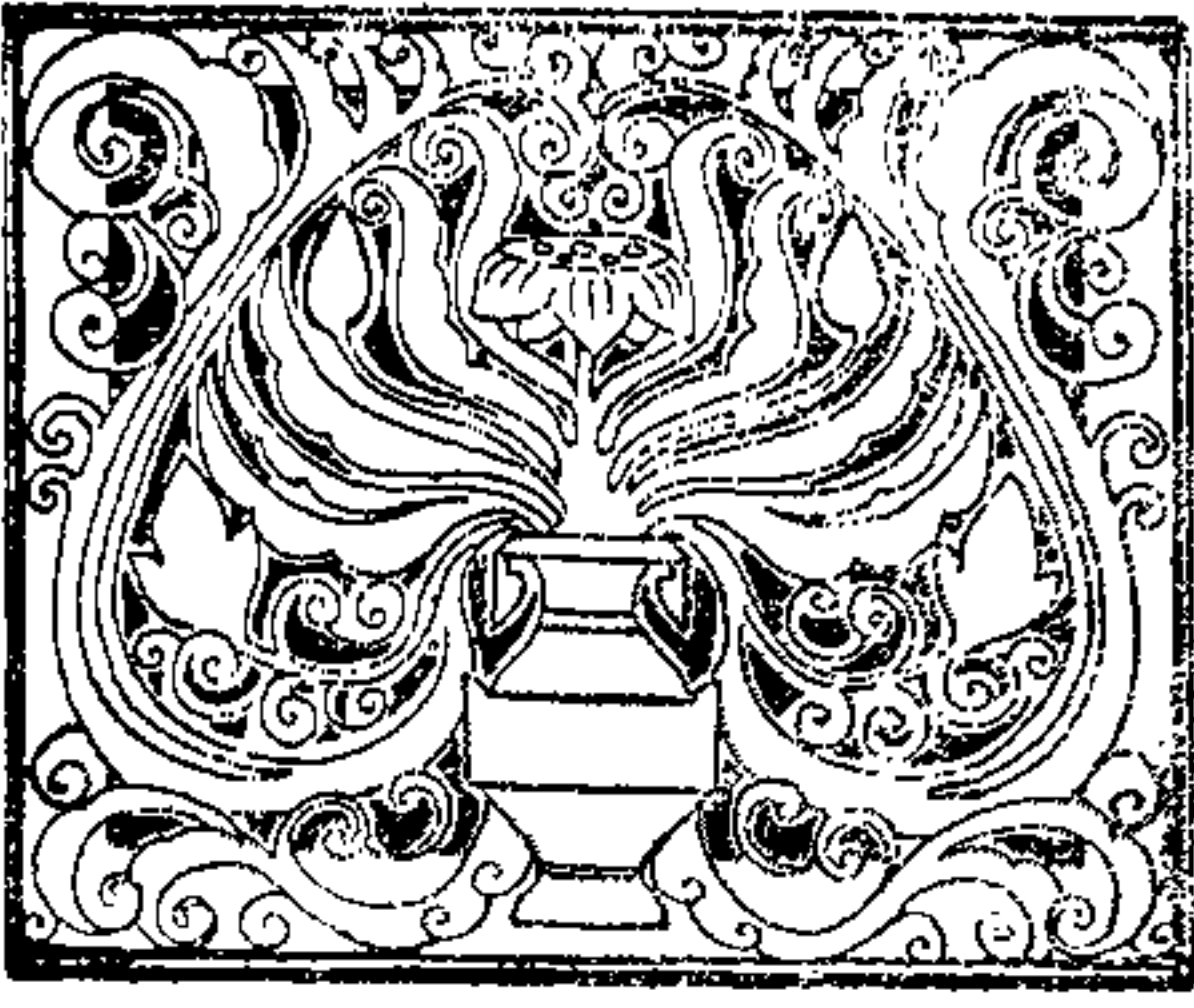
JANUARY 1976

# Prabuddha Bharata

*OR*

**AWAKENED INDIA**

ADVAITA ASHRAMA, MAYAVATI  
HIMALAYAS



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# Prabuddha Bharata

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### Cover :

Kanchenjanga from Sandakphu

Photo: Bimal Dey

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# Prabuddha Bharata

VOL. LXXXI

JANUARY 1976

No. 1

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

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## SRI RAMAKRISHNA REMINISCES

'Once a sadhu of Hrishikesh came here. He said to me: "There are five kinds of samadhi. I find you have experienced them all. In these samadhis one feels the sensation of the Spiritual Current to be like the movement of an ant, a fish, a monkey, a bird, or a serpent."

'Sometimes the Spiritual Current rises through the spine, crawling like an ant.

'Sometimes, in samadhi, the soul swims joyfully in the ocean of divine ecstasy, like a fish.

'Sometimes, when I lie down on my side, I feel the Spiritual Current pushing me like a monkey and playing with me joyfully. I remain still. That Current, like a monkey, suddenly with one jump reaches the Sahasrara.<sup>1</sup> That is why you see me jump up with a start.

'Sometimes, again, the Spiritual Current rises like a bird hopping from one branch to another. The place where it rests feels like fire. It may hop from Muladhara to Svadhishthana,<sup>1</sup> from Svadhishthana to the heart, and thus gradually to the head.

'Sometimes the Spiritual Current moves up like a snake. Going in a zigzag way, at last it reaches the head and I go into samadhi.

'A man's spiritual consciousness is not awakened unless his Kundalini<sup>1</sup> is aroused.'

'Just before my attaining this state of mind, it had been revealed to me how the Kundalini is aroused, how the lotuses of the different centres blossom forth, and how all this culminates in samadhi. This is a very secret experience. I saw a boy twenty-two or twenty-three years old, exactly resembling me, enter

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<sup>1</sup> According to the Tantra system of religious philosophy (in which the Divine Mother is the Ultimate Reality, as Power) there are six centres, along the spinal column and through the head, of which Muladhara is the lowest, Svadhishthana the next; and these centres are often graphically described as 'lotuses'. At the top of the head is the seventh 'lotus'—the largest—called the Sahasrara (thousand-petalled). The Kundalini is the spiritual energy lying dormant in all persons, but dormant in most until 'awakened' by spiritual practices so that it can rise from the lowest centres toward the highest.

the Sushumna nerve and commune with the lotuses, touching them with his tongue. He began with the centre at the anus and passed through the centres at the sexual organ, navel, and so on. The different lotuses of those centres—four-petalled, six-petalled, ten-petalled, and so forth—had been drooping. At his touch they stood erect.

‘When he reached the heart—I distinctly remember it—and communed with the lotus there, touching it with his tongue, the twelve-petalled lotus, which was hanging head down, stood erect and opened its petals. Then he came to the sixteen-petalled lotus in the throat and the two-petalled lotus in the forehead. And last of all, the thousand-petalled lotus in the head blossomed. Since then I have been in this state.’

\*

‘How many other visions I saw while meditating during my sadhana! Once I was meditating under the bel-tree when “Sin” appeared before me and tempted me in various ways. He came to me in the form of an English soldier. He wanted to give me wealth, honour, sex pleasure, various occult powers, and such things. I began to pray to the Divine Mother. Now I am telling you something very secret. The Mother appeared. I said to Her, “Kill him, Mother!” I still remember that form of the Mother, Her world-bewitching beauty. She came to me taking the form of Krishnamayi.<sup>2</sup> But it was as if her glance moved the world.’

\*

‘I felt an inordinate hunger at that time [shortly after the coming of the Bhairavi Brahmani to Dakshineswar]. I could not have my fill however much I ate. Now I ate, now I felt hungry again as if I had not eaten anything. I felt equally hungry, whether I took food or not; night and day that desire for eating prevailed; it had no cessation. I thought, “What is this disease...?” I spoke about it to the Brahmani. She said, “Fear not, my child. Such states, it is written in the scriptures, come from time to time, on the travellers on the path to the realization of God. I will cure you of it.” So saying she asked Mathur to keep arranged within the room stacks of all kinds of food, from flattened and parched rice to Sandes, Rasagolla, Luchi<sup>3</sup> and other things. Then she told me, “My child, remain in this room day and night and eat whatever and whenever you like.” I remained in that room, walked up and down, looked on those stacks of food and handled them, now eating something from one stack, now from another. Three days passed in this way, when the inordinate hunger left me and I felt relieved.’

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<sup>2</sup>The young daughter of Balaram Bose, a noted householder disciple of Sri Ramakrishna.

<sup>3</sup>Sandes: a Bengali sweetmeat made of cheese and sugar. Rasagolla: a kind of sweetmeat—a spongy ball usually made of a sort of cheese and full of sweet juice. Luchi: a thin bread made of flour and fried in butter.

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## ONWARD FOR EVER!

When we begin to work earnestly in the world, nature gives us blows right and left and soon enables us to find out our position...He who does the lower work is not therefore a lower man. No man is to be judged by the mere nature of his duties, but all should be judged by the manner and the spirit in which they perform them.

Later on we shall find that even this idea of duty undergoes change, and that the greatest work is done only when there is no selfish motive to prompt it. Yet it is work through the sense of duty that leads us to work without any idea of duty; when work will become worship—nay, something higher—then will work be done for its own sake. We shall find that the philosophy of duty, whether it be in the form of ethics or of love, is the same as in every other Yoga—the object being the attenuating of the lower self, so that the real higher Self may shine forth—the lessening of the frittering away of energies on the lower plane of existence, so that the soul may manifest itself on the higher ones. This is accomplished by the continuous denial of low desires, which duty rigorously requires. The whole organization of society has thus been developed, consciously or unconsciously, in the realms of action and experience, where, by limiting selfishness, we open the way to an unlimited expansion of the real nature of man.



## RELIGION: AN INNER PERSPECTIVE

### EDITORIAL

No other subject pervades and penetrates human consciousness as does religion. For the majority it remains in their mental hinterlands, unconsciously yet powerfully influencing their lives. But for a small minority, religion is a whole-time concern, vital as the air they breathe. Strangely however, though thus all-pervasive, religion is the most misunderstood of subjects under the sun. The more capable human intelligence becomes in comprehending the phenomenal world and its secrets, the less capable it seems to become of grasping the noumenal world and its mysteries. The basic aspects of religion elude the poet's power of expression or the painter's range of pigments.

In this regard there is this instructive little story:

A third-grade teacher asked her pupils to draw a picture of what they wanted to be when they grew up. The pictures came in—pictures of nurses, of space cadets, of firemen—but one little girl handed in a blank sheet of paper. 'Don't you know what you want to be when you grow up?' asked the teacher. 'Sure I know', replied the little girl. 'I want to be married. But I don't know how to draw it.'

This little girl's quandary about drawing married life illustrates the difficulty of discussing true religion—the eternal relation of the eternal soul with the eternal God—and as such, beyond description or delineation. Still, the saints and mystics through the ages have given us strong hints about the essential inner nature of religion and what it can do.

Religion looked at *from the outside* can reveal even less than any basic human emotion or relationship would reveal of itself from the outside. Yet most of the assessments of religion by so-called leaders

of thought are made by viewing it from the exterior. Religion is 'an illusion, a fantasy structure from which a man must be set free', 'the opiate of the people', 'an infantile reaction to fear', a 'body of stories designed to encourage a noble attitude toward life and humanity'—these are only a sampling of the shallow, negative and destructive opinions which external observers usually form. If these were facts, religion would have disappeared long ago from human society. That religion persists—and even flourishes—in the highly technologically advanced societies of today, both in the East and West, goes to show that religion, as Swami Vivekananda said, is a constitutional necessity of human personality.

In some minds religion is intimately associated with books and dogmas, churches and temples, rituals and ceremonies, priests and observances. Though many religions have these external expressions, these have nothing to do with the 'constitutional necessity' of man. A man may be religious without reading a single book or going into a single church or temple. If he has realized his infinite, immortal nature, if his happiness is entirely within, if he is free from all earthly cravings and selfishness, he has religion. From time immemorial, man has been struggling to attain this state. Saints and mystics of all lands represent the class of those who have succeeded in this struggle. It is only these who get an *internal* perspective of religion, and thus can speak with authority about its true nature. To learn of religion from them is to understand it in the right way. Swami Vivekananda, one of the greatest men of God in human history, gives us glimpses of religion from within. Let us here reflect on a few brief but luminous statements of his revealing the significance of religion.

a. *'Religion is the manifestation of the*

*Divinity already in man.'*<sup>1</sup>

Man as we generally know him is a psycho-physical being. As the body, he struggles hard to fulfil his physical needs which include some of the most basic, such as food, shelter, and reproduction. But life on the biological level does not fully satisfy him. He is a thinking being, and begins to explore the external world. As he unravels the secrets of nature, he becomes fascinated with his discoveries and these make him more extrovert. This knowledge gives him a great amount of control over his environment. Thus have developed the various branches of science and technology, aesthetics and fine arts, culture and civilization. But since mankind also has a capacity for inner reflection, here and there man begins to glimpse that real happiness, fulfilment, and victory over death are not possible on either the physical or the mental plane. To such a seeker, reflection further reveals that his personality, as well as the surrounding cosmos, has another dimension which is inaccessible to the senses and the ordinary mind. He then struggles to reach this transcendental reality. That is the beginning of true religion.

Thus, having mastered nature, physical and psychological, can man at last begin to realize this transcendental dimension which is here called 'Divinity' by Swami Vivekananda. 'Manifestation' of this Divinity is living in Its awareness. Just as the ordinary man feels and knows that he is a physical or psychological being, a truly religious man—one who has manifested his Divinity—knows that he is the divine existence. As Śaṅkara says: Such a knowledge of divinity is as strong as one's former body-consciousness but destructive

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<sup>1</sup> *The Complete Works* (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Dt. Pithoragarh, U.P.), Vol. IV (1962), p. 358

of that physical consciousness; and it liberates a person fully.<sup>2</sup>

Not only does this manifestation of Divinity confer shadowless self-knowledge; it also confers omniscience. Such a man of knowledge realizes the Divine Ground, the substratum of individual and cosmic existence. When one knows the unchanging background of the relative or phenomenal world, there remains nothing else to be known. Because all phenomena—inner and outer—are only distorted perceptions of the Divine Ground through the medium of space-time-causation. Therefore Swami Vivekananda declared in another context, 'Religion is the science which learns the transcendental in nature through the transcendental in man.'<sup>3</sup>

Manifestation of potential Divinity, or learning the transcendental in nature through the transcendental in himself, sets man free from the chrysalis of ignorance. Illusions and infatuations exist and breed while ignorance of one's true nature lasts. It is in darkness or dim light that ghosts and hallucinations are perceived. But not in the bright clear light of the day. Religion, far from being an 'illusion' or intoxicant, an 'opiate', destroys all illusions and delusions—not a few of them created by modern psychologists and socialists—by establishing man in his true self-luminous infinitude. Such religion outgrows the cradles of books, dogmas, churches, temples, rituals, and observances, and stands on its own strength and authority. By paying homage to it, books, temples, rituals, etc., become sanctified and meaningful. Religion, as Swamiji tirelessly stressed, 'is not in books, nor in theories, nor in dogmas, nor in talking, not even in reasoning. It is being and becoming.'<sup>4</sup>

b. 'It is renunciation, *Tyāga*, that is meant by religion, and nothing else.'<sup>5</sup>

To speak of a beautiful mansion is implicitly to speak of its strong foundation. To a layman's perspective, only the superstructure of the mansion is evident. But an engineer, who can mentally have a view 'from within', is instantly aware of the invisible foundations that support the beautiful, imposing super-structure. Renunciation (*tyāga*), likewise is the foundation of religion—of its ideals and realizations even more than of its outer forms. Only when a person realizes the inadequacy of the external world, as well as of the internal world—consisting of body, senses, mind, and ego—does religious aspiration awaken and grow. Side by side with this dissatisfaction with temporal things will almost inevitably grow an attraction towards God, the imperishable Truth. Therefore *tyāga* always has a two-fold character: negatively, it is moving away from the impermanent; positively, it is getting anchored in the permanent. Therefore religion, which totally concerns the permanent reality of God, demands *tyāga* as its foundation. Where this is absent and yet a claim for religion or spirituality is advanced, we must conclude that like water in a mirage, spirituality is conspicuous by its semblance only.

*Tyāga*, to the ordinary, external view, appears as a joyless discipline. But to its earnest follower it brings a rare type of joy—a non-sensuous inner joy—the joy from the spiritual self. In common parlance joy or happiness is always associated with 'contact', physical or mental. But all sensations and cognitions at their deeper levels being psychological, happiness is always really an inner phenomenon. Again, a more incisive probe will trace the source of all happiness to the innermost

<sup>2</sup> vide *Upadesa-sahasri* (Part II), IV. 5

<sup>3</sup> *The Works*, Vol. VIII (1959), pp. 20-1

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, Vol. III (1960), p. 253

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, Vol. VIII, p. 384

spiritual self in man. The bliss of the self is imperfectly reflected by the ego, mind, senses, and sense-objects, and this reflected joy is what the ordinary person desires and enjoys. Since *tyāga*, by breaking down the 'reflectors', takes a person straight to the spiritual source of all happiness, the right type of *tyāga* yields joy at all stages—especially in the advanced stages. 'The pleasure of the Self', said Swamiji once, 'is what the world calls religion.'<sup>6</sup> As much as it applies to the culmination of religious pursuits, this insightful statement of Swamiji's is valid for the interim stages also.

c. '*Religion is the manifestation of the natural strength that is in man.*'<sup>7</sup>

The natural strength in man is generally taken to be the muscular or physical strength. But this is not man's *natural* strength, for his nature is spiritual. As long as one remains ignorant of this spiritual nature, so long real strength cannot be obtained. Even between muscular strength and mental strength, a sensible man chooses the latter. However, it is the spirit—the life of one's life, the mind of one's mind—which is the real reservoir of strength, both physical and mental, individual and cosmic. 'By the Self', says the *Kena-upaniṣad*, 'one attains strength.' When Yājñavalkya, in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-upaniṣad*, finished his instruction about Brahman to king Janaka, he said to the king, 'You have now attained to fearlessness.' That is real strength which does not quail in the face of any danger or calamity, including death. Such strength and courage can only be attained through the knowledge of the inner Self, which is the infinite background of both the individual and the universe. Said Swamiji in another context, 'Infinite strength is religion and

God.'<sup>8</sup> Thus real religion is not an 'infantile reaction to fear', but an unfailing remedy for all human fears and complexes.

d. '*To devote your life for the good of all and to the happiness of all is religion. Whatever you do for your own sake is not religion.*'<sup>9</sup>

Swami Brahmananda especially stressed this saying of Swami Vivekananda, while instructing disciples about the need for selfless work in one's spiritual struggle.

By destroying the strangle-hold of egotism and selfishness on man, religion opens the inner floodgates of love and compassion in the human heart. Unselfish love is always spiritual. A person who attains spiritual knowledge sees his own Self indwelling all living beings. This vision is described by Meister Eckhart thus: 'The knower and the known are one. Simple people imagine that they should see God, as if he stood there and they here. This is not so; God and I, we are one in knowledge.' It is this unitary knowledge of God that makes a true religious person altruistic. While the altruism of others is apparently born out of simple faith, or sentimentalism, the altruism of a spiritual person is spontaneous. His interest in and noble attitude toward life and humanity are not born as result of reading 'a body of stories designed to encourage a noble attitude toward life and humanity'—to prevent human beings from turning misanthropic. In fact, the power of all such stories utterly fails in the face of human selfishness. Only the dynamism resulting from a transforming spiritual experience can subdue selfishness and lead to disinterested help for others. And in our own case—spiritual strugglers on the path—, all attempts towards this disinterested

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, Vol. VIII, p. 31

<sup>9</sup> *The Eternal Companion—Spiritual Teachings of Swami Brahmananda* (Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 600004, 1945), p. 247

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, Vol. VII (1958), p. 11

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, Vol. VIII, p. 185



service to others help in mental purification, finally leading to the transforming vision which alone can bring *real* benefit, individual and communal.

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## LETTERS OF A SAINT

SRI RAMAKRISHNA MY REFUGE

1st Caitra 1328 [Bengali Era]  
Calcutta

Sriman N—,

Received your letter of 6th inst. I see that many obstacles are arising in your effort to establish an Ashrama....

If you really want to work, then depending on God, stand on your own feet. Don't ever look unto any man for help—not even me. Even if none comes to your help, you will do that work single-handed and lay down your life—if you can work with this kind of spirit, courage, and dependence on God, then do the work. Otherwise don't proceed with that work. Y. did not go—at once you lose your head; L. fails to accomplish what he had promised—so you become depressed and sit down in a corner: if it is like that, can any work be done?

What more shall I write? Accept my blessings and love.

Ever your well-wisher,  
SRI SARADANANDA

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SRI RAMAKRISHNA MY REFUGE

Udbodhan Office  
No. 1, Mukherji Lane, Baghbazar  
Calcutta  
5/10/'20

Sriman A—,

Sri Sri Maharaj [Brahmananda] is still at Bhubaneshwar Math. It is true that at one time there was talk of his coming to Calcutta, but he didn't. During winter the climate of Bhubaneshwar is generally good. Therefore I think he will stay on there for some more days. For this reason you will not meet him this time when you come to Calcutta during the [Durgā] Pūjā holidays. Be enquiring now and then, and when Sri Maharaj comes, then you had better try to come here.

Instead of simply sitting in expectation of a *sadguru* (competent teacher), try as much as you can to practise contemplation of God, keeping holy company, and reading holy books. If the field is made ready and the seed is sown, there will be a good crop. Moreover, it is a secret of nature that when the field is prepared, the seed arrives of its own accord. If the want is felt, its

fulfilment will come. If there be a genuine feeling of want, the means of realization will be at hand: this is a truth in consonance with the opinion of holy men and scriptures, and its reality has been to a certain extent experienced in our lives.

A *sadguru* possesses super-sensuous powers. Observing the subtle body of the disciple and the latent impressions of the past and future, he teaches him accordingly. This is what is meant by the perception of the past and future. Telling the past and future through calculations or with the help of astrology will not be infallible.

If one tries to call on Him with a guileless mind, in time He will make all arrangements. Accept my blessing.

Ever your well-wisher  
SRI SARADANANDA

---

SRI RAMAKRISHNA MY REFUGE

Calcutta  
13/4/'21

My dear —,

I am glad to receive yours of the 8th inst. I am very gratified to learn that the Ashrama has become self-supporting. It is a matter for great rejoicing that Sri Sri Thakur [Sri Ramakrishna], making you his machine, has accomplished this through your agency. May you have unwavering devotion to his holy feet....

At present my health is not bad. Accept my love and blessings and convey them to all others at the Ashrama.

Ever your well-wisher,  
SRI SARADANANDA

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Calcutta  
14th Sept., 1917

Sriman P—,

I have received just now yours of 12th inst. Baburam Maharaj [Premnanda] is at present here and is doing well. Please accept his blessings. Accept also my love and blessings....

If any settlement is reached about the opposing factions in your village, of which you have written, please let me know. Regarding the matter of your ceremonial expiation, I give below my opinion:

1. You should try to do that by which expiation may be avoided. You should make them understand that what you have done is an altruistic act; it has nothing to do with social usage. If a society does not permit anyone to do such acts of kindness, then will follow a catastrophic loss to that society.

2. If, even after such attempts to make people understand, you find that

they still do not understand, and you see that by doing some minor expiation—which will not cost much money—the factionalism will be resolved, then it will be good to undergo the expiation. But then, before you accept the expiatory arrangement, you must fearlessly tell the local community: ‘We are accepting your arrangements this time. Nevertheless, if and when in future another occasion arises for serving helpless and distressed people, then we will again render such service. Even if we have to undergo expiation again, still we will do it. For it is not proper for man to become a brute, forgetting all kindness and love.’

That such acts deserve expiation has never been ordained by the Smṛti. Only for the unworthy deeds that men do out of selfishness, does the Smṛti enjoin punishment. Never can an unselfish act be considered as an unworthy act. Therefore, unselfish action is beyond the injunctions and inhibitions of the Smṛti. Have no fear. Thakur [Sri Ramakrishna] will in some way or other shield you from this kind of unjust persecution by society.

Ever your well-wisher,  
SRI SARADANANDA

## AT THE FEET OF SWAMI AKHANDANANDA—X

BY ‘A DEVOTEE’

One day, Bābā<sup>1</sup> was talking about his *parivrājaka* (wandering monk) years:

For fourteen years I had no contact with money. While in the hills and jungles, if I had had even a single rupee with me, I would never have been back again. I had nothing with me. Yet even so, I once had to bear a severe beating from dacoits. Just imagine what would have happened if I had had any money with me!

When searching for Swamiji [Vivekananda] in Kutch, I encountered a band of dacoits on the way to Narayan Sarovar. At last I met Swamiji. How much he loved me and encouraged me because of my travelling without any money!

Now that the Master has brought me here to do this Ashrama work, every pice

must be accounted for. When public work is undertaken by *sādhus* (monks) they will have to show how work can be done efficiently, yet without any attachment. Just to save one pice, I have sometimes to talk a lot by way of bargaining. Yet you pay up whatever price is asked! Now that the Master has placed these worldly activities upon us, the householders will come and learn from us how to live well in the world.

While travelling I sometimes purposely went along the path of danger. Do you know why? Whenever a doubt would arise as to whether the Master was present with me or not, I would choose such a path and challenge, as it were, the Master by saying: ‘Let me see whether you come and save me or not!’ Never even once did he fail me.

<sup>1</sup>The name by which Swami Akhandananda was called by most of his disciples and devotees.

At one time, in a Himalayan village I took shelter in a certain house and spent

the first part of the night along with the others and their cattle. But about midnight a tiger roared and they were all afraid. I got up silently, thinking, 'What, I am a *sannyāsin* (monk): am I still afraid of death and of a tiger?' I left the house and spent the rest of the night in meditation under a tree.

There was a time when I did not like the dualistic, devotional attitude so much. Rather, I entertained only thoughts of *advaita* (non-duality). Then suddenly I became aware of the Master in his room at Dakshineswar—he was showing me Yaśodā (Kṛṣṇa's foster-mother) and Gopāla (the child Kṛṣṇa as a cowherd-boy) and saying, 'See, what a grand idea!'

\*

One day Bābā was heard talking to himself:

An outward show of devotion does not last long. It vanishes with its appearance. Such devotion is generally imitative. In the beginning there is excessive display of devotion; later on, nothing is left. That is not good. The devotion that endures is good. What is the good of making a show of one's devotion? We can understand the degree and quality of a person's devotion by a mere glance.

A devotee had asked in a letter: 'Who is to be meditated upon first, the Guru or the Iṣṭa (Chosen Deity)? And how am I to meditate on them?' Bābā asked his attendant to reply:

The Master is the Guru and he is also the Iṣṭa. There is no first or second. Meditation on Him in the heart is best: it should be as if one were seeing Him face to face. Again it may be like this: He is sitting in the temple of the heart; I come and see Him. Those who are initiated can think of their own Guru in the beginning if it helps them. There is no special rule. What is needed is constant thought of Him.

\*

On the *guru-pūrṇimā* day<sup>2</sup> this year, after his bath, sitting as usual on his cot with folded hands, Bābā was bowing down to his divine Master and meditating on Him, when some devotees came in and offered flowers at his feet. He was glad at this. Then he learned that one of the devotees had also arranged to offer some *pāyas* (rice pudding) to the Master in the shrine. Bābā was pleased, and said to that devotee, 'So at last good sense has dawned on you!' In the evening the Devotee asked about the significance of that holy day. Bābā replied:

I do not know much about the background of the day. It may have been written somewhere; you can find it out. In western India, the day is zealously observed. The disciples flock to the Guru at the beginning of the *cāturmāsya*.<sup>3</sup> But this custom is not prevalent here. While travelling, I did not care to know about the stars and the lunar days. Only on the *dvitīyā* (second day after the new or the full moon) after the Sivarātri<sup>4</sup>, I would fast. That's all. I did not know how the days and months and years came and went.

A new-comer showed his respects to Bābā by just folding his hands and raising them to the forehead, without bowing down, even a little. Bābā rebuked him, and addressing others present, said:

<sup>2</sup> Also known as *Vyāsa-pūrṇima*: the full moon day in the (Bengali) month of Aṣāḍh, dedicated to paying homage to ancient sages and teachers.

<sup>3</sup> Literally, an observance for four months. In this case, a retreat of four months, observing certain vows, undertaken by orthodox Hindu monks during the rainy months—approximately June through September.

<sup>4</sup> *lit.*, 'night of Śiva'. The fourteenth day of the dark fortnight of the month of Magha, during which many devotees fast, keep vigil all night, and worship Śiva. The *dvitīyā* which follows Śivarātri happens to be Sri Ramakrishna's birthday.

This is no *praṇāma* (reverential salutation involving at least a deep bow). This is like raising an axe, as if to chop something. Don't you know how to pay respect to a *sādhu* or a *sannyāsin*? Do you know how many kinds of *praṇāma* there are? For example, *hastābhyām jānubhyām catathā padbhyām*, etc.—with the hands, knees, feet, heart and head—this is *praṇāma* with eight limbs (*sāṣṭāṅga-praṇāma*). But *praṇāma* while standing is unacceptable. To how many people—so-called educated people—I have to teach this!

There are rules for doing *praṇāmas*—dos and don'ts. You should not do *praṇāma* when a person is ill, or lying down, or walking, or hurrying to some place; when he is getting ready for a shave or bath, or when he is unmindful, or concentrated in something. In the last case you *may* call his attention first, and then pay your respects.

Nowadays I find there are only two types of *praṇāmas* observed, the first I have already spoken about. It is like 'chopping' with an axe. The second, with excessive devotion, anywhere and at any time. Nobody seems to be aware of these rules regarding *praṇāma*.

Last time I was at the Math [Belur Math] I was lying down after the midday meal and dozing a bit but not asleep, when someone entered the room and made *praṇāma* by touching the feet. I was startled and scolded him, 'You teach other people, and you yourself have not yet learnt that you should not make *praṇāma* to a sleeping person?' He was a bit taken aback, and admitted his fault with folded hands. Then I got up and asked him to make *praṇāma* to his heart's content, and I also showered my blessings on his head. Later on I learnt that he had been in a hurry to go out somewhere, and could not find time to come to me earlier.

A. Moslem devotee, the landlord (zemin-

dar) of village Eroani, in Kandi subdivision, Bengal, had written a letter to Bābā: the daughter-in-law had suddenly passed away and the bereavement had cast a gloom upon the family. If someone from the Ashrama (monastic Centre) would but visit them at this time, they would regain their peace of mind, etc.

Reading the letter, Bābā was very much moved. He said:

Ah, he is shocked very much by this bereavement in his old age. He saw me forty years ago only once, during the famine of 1897, and still writes letters to me—in a literary style. Once he wrote, 'I meditate on you, thus I regain my power of mind and am imbued with the spirit of service to all.'

He is a wonderful type of devotee. He does not want to come here to see me again, nor does he ask me to go there; but he writes, 'The form of a young *sannyāsin*<sup>5</sup> is still imprinted in my mind and that is enough for me.' He calls me 'Bābā', and writes, 'Bābā, I do not want to see you old. That young *sannyāsin* that I saw long ago, remains for ever the object of my meditation.'

Let some of you go there with a magic lantern and slides. There you will see the paddy fields rolling like green waves. Go, they will feel pacified. You can have a sight of the villages, and the village people will have a chance of seeing you and hearing about our Master and Swamiji.

\*

One day Bābā was speaking eloquently about persons who laid down their lives for others: in this connection he spoke about Nafar Chandra Kundu. He told how on the way to his office, Nafar Kundu had gone down a manhole to save the life of a man who had been suffocated while cleaning the underground sewer. He saved that

<sup>5</sup> Referring to Swami Akhandananda himself.

man's life, but his own life could not be saved. Bābā then said:

Sarat Maharaj [Saradananda] took me with him to the memorial meeting for Nafar Kundu. Every speaker was citing examples such as that of Sir Philip Sidney. No doubt they were great, but still I was feeling ill at ease. 'Were there no examples nearer home?'—I was thinking when I was asked by Sarat Maharaj to speak. I therefore spoke of Dadhīci<sup>6</sup>—how he had laid down his body for the good of others: how he had said, 'This body of bones and flesh will surely perish and become the food of dogs and jackals; if some good can now be done by these bones of mine, so much the better.'

After hearing my speech, Sarat Maharaj said to me: 'No more shall we let you go to Murshidabad (or Sargachi). Here in Calcutta you will be of much use.' However, after staying a few days there, I slipped away and came back.

Then Bābā returned to the main subject:

Why do you all speak of 'doing good to others'? Who is the *other*? Everyone is my *own*. In the *Bhāgavatam*, you will only find mention of 'doing good'. Instead of saying or writing 'overwhelmed with the misery of others', better say and write 'overwhelmed with the misery of the people'.

Just then Bābā remembered that in the 'Reminiscences' (*Smṛtikathā*) which he was dictating these days, had been written '*para-duhkha-kātar*' (grieved by others' misery). He asked for that manuscript and said, 'Cancel that word and write "*loka-duhkha-kātar*" (grieved by people's misery).' He continued:

Haven't you read what Swamiji has said 'By doing good to others we are doing

good to ourselves'? This is Swamiji's Karma-yoga: this is *sevādharma*, the religion of service.

Towards the end of his life, King-Yudhiṣṭhira (eldest of the Pāṇḍava heroes) performed a Horse-sacrifice (*aśvamedhayāga*—in which enormous gifts were made to the poor, to brahmins, and others). At the end of it a little mongoose came, began rolling on the ground, and proclaimed: 'This is no sacrifice, compared to the one I once saw during a famine. A whole family had perished to feed a hungry guest with the little wheat flour they had obtained by begging. I rolled on the ground where some grains of that wheat flour lay scattered: at the touch of those grains half my body became golden—but only half. Thenceforward I have been searching for another such sacrifice so that by rolling there my other half may become golden. Now you can see that this "sacrifice" has no such virtue.'

This story of the mongoose proves that 'renunciation and service is the greatest sacrifice, the highest religion. Renunciation of one's own interest, and service as if to one's own self—not showing kindness to 'others'—this is Karma-yoga, this is *sevādharma*, the religion of service. Here the end and the means are the same. The end is also the means. By serving, the heart is purified; by serving, the heart expands; by such service one can see oneself in all. This self-realization alone brings in the love for all. Nowadays even a schoolboy talks of universal love. Mark here, universal love comes only after knowledge of the Self. Then alone can you understand what Swamiji meant when he wrote:

'From highest Brahman to the yonder worm

And to the very minutest atom,

Everywhere is the same God, the All-Love;

Friend, offer mind, soul body, at their feet.

<sup>6</sup> An ancient Vedic sage, so holy that only from his bones could a weapon (thunderbolt) be made mighty enough for the killing of the powerful demon Vrtra, by Indra. So the sage voluntarily gave up his body for this purpose.

These are His manifold forms before  
thee,  
Rejecting them, where seekest thou for  
God?

Who loves all beings, without distinction,  
He indeed is worshipping best his God.<sup>7</sup>

Serving any *jīva* (creature) is serving  
Śiva (God). Who is the *jīva* here? Where  
is the *jīva* to be found? All is Śiva—O,  
everyone is Śiva!

<sup>7</sup> Swami Vivekananda: *The Complete Works*

(Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Dt. Pithoragarh,  
U.P.), Vol. IV (1955), p. 496

## ESSAY ON APPLIED RELIGION

### RESIGNATION TO GOD

SWAMI BUDHANANDA

What is resignation to God?

Let us take an illustration. A baby wants to go upstairs. He somehow manages to get near the first step of the staircase, and even that first step reaches almost his chin. He puts both his chubby hands with their stubby fingers on the step and tries to lift his right leg up onto it. Somehow that does not seem to work well. So he tries his left leg: that too works badly. Then an idea enters his little head. He sets his chin on the step and gathering all his baby strength, tries to lift his entire body up that step. And in trying this, suddenly falls on his back with a thud, gets hurt, and begins to weep and scream, 'Ma!' 'Mummy, Mummy!' He cries and cries; he cannot and has not even the will to rise.

Hearing the baby's distressing cry, his mother tosses aside her work and rushes to him. Seeing mother, now he turns over with face on the floor. In that little breast all the sorrow of the world, as it were, wells forth and he weeps all the more. Mother

melts in affection and taking him in her arms tries to pacify him. Somewhat comforted, the baby now shows by his hand that he wants to go upstairs. So in no time, mother carries him up.

Already baby is happy. Though the tears are not yet dried, he now begins to look around and through the window. He bubbles forth in that sort of irrepressible laugh which babies and saints alone know. He claps his hands, though they seldom really fall on each other. No pain is now remembered. It is all fun, all joy, all wonder, now. And mother watches the baby with glistening eyes.

This is a hint of what resignation to God is like. (What is to be noted here is that the baby cried only after failing in his mightiest self-effort to negotiate the steps and not before that.)

We, spiritual aspirants, also want to go 'upstairs', to the place of illumination where there is all fun, all wonder, all peace, all bliss. And at first, vain, self-conscious and proud as we are, we think:

'What is the difficulty? We shall become pure; we shall conquer māyā, go jumping up the steps, and reach illumination.' So: on the very first step, which is self-control, we founder, we get our ego badly bruised. We catch a glimpse of how terrible is this māyā, which has become the very stuff of our body, brain and mind—which is the warp and weft of this phenomenal world.

Māyā is so terribly subtle that even when someone says, 'I shall become pure!', even that pious intention also somehow turns out to be the product of māyā or illusion. For what is 'I'? What is purity? Neither question can I answer. Do I know who *I* am? Do I know what *is* purity? If I knew who I really am, I would not have to become pure. For 'I', the Ātman, cannot *become* pure: it *is* purity itself.

It is māyā which puts into my brain the idea of this little 'I', this ego, a product of the identification of seer with instrument of seeing—of the Ātman with the body and mind.

Being in a state of spiritual ignorance as we are, there is no way for us but to take our steps towards illumination in an ignorant way. But by means of ignorance how do we get to illumination? Can darkness be removed by darkness? Still, the saving factor in our ignorant attempts is that only thus will we get to know what darkness means—only by earnestly groping in the dark can we discover the true nature and impenetrability of the walls that block the way. The more sincerely we try, the quicker we come to realize that, left to ourself—this confused identification of the Ātman with body-and-mind which is called 'ourself'—, we can do nothing by way of realizing God.

Pointing out this basic fact of spiritual life, in his infinite compassion based on spiritual realization, Jesus Christ says:

'Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, ex-

cept it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

'I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

'If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

'If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.'<sup>1</sup>

Without abiding in God—or, as here, in Christ—there is no bringing forth of spiritual fruits. Abiding in God means emptying ourselves of the ego, and allowing God to work through us. Surely, 'without me ye can do nothing'—for by God alone everything *is* done. He alone is the doer. We are only His instruments. And when at last, after many trials and failures, we realize this fact that 'without me ye can do nothing', then a cry goes forth from the depths of our hearts:

'Lord, I know what is virtue, what is righteousness, but I have not the inclination to practise it; I know what is vice or unrighteousness, but I have not the power to desist from it. Therefore, O Lord of the senses, Indweller of my spirit, I do things as You impel me to.'<sup>2</sup>

This is indeed the spirit of resignation to God.

No use fretting and fuming, gnashing the teeth or tearing the hair, for truly without Him *we* can do nothing.

Making this fact absolutely clear, Śrī Kṛṣṇa says in the *Gītā*:

'Bound by your own karma, O son of Kuntī, which is born of your very nature, what through delusion you seek not to do, you shall do even against your will.

'The Lord dwells in the hearts of all beings...and by His māyā causes them

<sup>1</sup> *St. John*, XV. 4-7

<sup>2</sup> *Prapanna-gītā*, 56



to revolve as though mounted on a machine.

'Verily, this divine māyā of Mine, consisting of the *guṇas*, is hard to overcome. But those who take refuge in Me alone, shall cross over this māyā.'<sup>3</sup>

Māyā is that hard fact of existence which obscures our own divine nature from ourselves and prevents us from experiencing our relationship with God or identity with the Supreme Spirit. Only by taking refuge in God may we cross over this māyā. This is indeed the way for the vast majority of us. The other way is to take one's stand on the Ātman, and deny all phenomena, including one's own body and mind! But not one in a million of earnest seekers is able to do that.

## II

Viraja Devi, who attended all Swami Vivekananda's public lectures in San Francisco and Alameda, California, wrote:

'Once after being quiet for some time Swamiji said: "Madame, be broad-minded, always see two ways. When I am on the Heights I say 'I am He', and when I have a stomach-ache, I say 'Mother, have mercy on me.'"<sup>4</sup>

As long as we are body-conscious human beings—though all the time the Ātman is the all-powerful supporter of our being—, we yet are like weak reeds. As such, so long as we continue to have 'stomach-aches', so long we shall have to cry 'Mother, have mercy on me'.

Swami Vivekananda, though a fiery apostle of self-effort, of faith in oneself, was also necessarily a great teacher of self-resignation. The absolute need for it he had learnt from his own hard experiences. The doors of his spiritual

realizations did not really open until he could utterly resign himself to the will of the Divine Mother. He had had to face all kinds of bitter uphill struggles, which perforce brought home to him the unavoidable need of self-surrender: he had come to know very well that while he had 'stomach-ache', the 'I-am-He'-medicine, through no fault of its own, would not work. He had realized then the great efficacy of the 'Mother, have mercy on me'-medicine.

In his later years when Vivekananda gave shape to the way of life for his followers, he made the practice of self-resignation an integral part of the spiritual discipline of the Order. This is symbolized in the hymn daily sung in our monasteries:

'Spiritual powers, reverence and worship which put an end to this cycle of birth and death, are enough indeed to lead to the greatest Truth. But this while finding utterance through the mouth, is not at all being brought home to my heart. Therefore, O Thou friend of the lowly, Thou art my only refuge. 'If devotion is directed to Thee, O Ramakrishna, the way of Divine Truth, then with desires all fulfilled in Thee, they forthwith cross over this sea of Rajas: for Thy feet are like nectar to mortals, quelling the waves of death. Therefore, O Thou friend of the lowly, Thou art my only refuge.'<sup>5</sup>

This refrain, 'Therefore, O Thou friend of the lowly, Thou art my only refuge', occurring in each stanza, summarizes the way and the Goal of self-resignation; the earlier lines detail its rationale. Self-resignation is not only a rational approach to spiritual life: it is also a practical and pragmatic approach. Thus in this hymn is found this powerful reiteration of the word 'therefore'.

What good can it do to say 'I am He' when, due to ignorance, there is no illumi-

<sup>3</sup> *Bhagavad-gītā*, XVIII. 60-1, VII. 14

<sup>4</sup> His Eastern and Western Admirers: *Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda* (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Dt. Pithoragarh, U.P., 1964), p. 401

<sup>5</sup> Vivekananda: *The Complete Works* (Advaita Ashrama) Vol. VIII (1959), p. 172

native mind or heart? It is then only talk, only a thrust of the ego. Why should not one surrender oneself to God, when one can see that such surrender works and helps?

It is well known that Śaṅkarācārya was a great teacher and exemplar of non-dualism, which declares the unity of Ātman and Brahman, leaving no apparent place for a Personal God. It may not be so well known however that he himself also instituted the worship of the Divine Mother—a most popular aspect of the Personal God—in all the monasteries he established. While he was relentless in emphasizing the fact that 'Brahman alone is real, this world is unreal, and the embodied soul is identical with Brahman', Śaṅkara equally forcefully taught to struggling spiritual aspirants, through his many soul-stirring hymns, the abiding efficiency of self-resignation to God.

Millions of Hindus even today chant Śaṅkara's hymns daily as a part of their devotions. Śaṅkara, to be sure, taught us how to discriminate between the Self and not-Self. But he also taught us how to articulate our anguish, by opening our hearts, asking pardon for our transgressions, and appealing for everything we need to have in spiritual life. Among his many hymns, one to Bhavānī (the Divine Mother) — *Bhavānyaṣṭakam* or 'Eight Stanzas to Bhavānī'—will especially show how thoroughgoing was Śaṅkara himself in the practice of self-surrender. Moreover it will also help teach us how to present our surrender before the God of our hearts:

No father have I, no mother, no comrade,

No son, no daughter, no wife, and no grandchild,

No servant or master, no wisdom, no calling:

In Thee is my only haven of refuge,  
In Thee, my help and my strength, O Bhavānī!

Immersed as I am in the limitless ocean  
Of worldly existence, I tremble to suffer.  
Alas! I am lustful and foolish and greedy,

And ever enchained by the fetters of evil:

In Thee is my only haven...

To giving of alms and to meditation,  
To scriptures and hymns and mantras,  
a stranger,

I know not of worship, possess no dispassion:

In Thee is my only haven...

O Mother! of pilgrimage or of merit,  
Of mental control or the soul's liberation,

Of rigorous vows or devotion, I know not:

In Thee is my only haven...

Addicted to singing and worthless companions,

A slave to ill thoughts and to doers of evil,

Degraded am I, unrighteous, abandoned,

Attached to ill objects, adept in ill-speaking:

In Thee is my only haven...

I know neither Brahmā nor Viṣṇu nor Śiva,

Nor Indra, sun, moon or similar being—

Not one of the numberless gods, O Redeemer!

In Thee is my only haven...

In strife or in sadness, abroad or in danger,

In water, in fire, in the wilds, on the mountains,

Surrounded by foes, my Saviour! protect me:

In Thee is my only haven...

Defenceless am I—ill, ageing, and helpless,

Enfeebled, exhausted, and dumbly despairing,

Afflicted with sorrow, and utterly ruined:

In Thee is my only haven...<sup>6</sup>

Of course in our minds the question will

<sup>6</sup> Sankaracarya's *Self-Knowledge* (Tr. by Swami Nikhilananda, Pub. by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras 600004, 1947), Appendix (p. 242).

arise: how is it possible to be a non-dualist (*advaitin*) and at the same time practise resignation to God? But we may answer it thus:

First of all, none can deny that many of the world's greatest *advaitins*, like Śaṅkara and Vivekananda to name but two, practised resignation to God. So the possibility of it cannot be doubted.

Then, as to the way the *advaitin* thinks of self-resignation, Hanumān—the great devotee of Rāma—beautifully said:

‘O Lord, when I identify myself with the body I am Thy servant; when I consider myself as an individual soul, I am Thy part; and when I look upon myself as the spirit, I am one with Thee—this is my firm conviction.’

Sooner or later we all must learn that adoption of a philosophical stance does not mean anything if it is only intellectual assent or dissent. What is needed is to work it out in life. And when we—egocentric as we are—start working out the implications of non-dualism in life, we very soon find how far above our heads even the first steps of non-dualism remain.

Therefore we have to develop a true insight into the reality of our spiritual situation and start accordingly from where we are. Of course, our spiritual teachers, in giving personal instruction, will take into account all these factors; still, we too have to consider well, how far can we get by our own self-relying approach to God? Can we really make any headway in spiritual life by any kind of strenuous striving whatsoever? Can we possibly get an idea of the extent of all our weaknesses? You may well be taken aback to know what one saint says in reply to such a question.

Swami Turiyananda, a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna and a great admirer of Śaṅkara's non-dualism, says: All our strenuous spiritual efforts lead only to getting our wings tired. And he quoted

Sri Ramakrishna's parable of the bird on a ship's mast. Sitting on the mast of a ship, the bird did not notice how far the ship had sailed into the sea. When it finally became aware of the situation, it flew eastward. But failing to get any sight of the shore after a long flight, it returned to the mast. Still it felt restless all the time. So it flew westward, with no better result. Nor could it succeed any better when it flew northward, then southward. Now it was thoroughly exhausted. And then understanding dawned on it, why it had been doing all this strenuous flying. Was it not all right to remain on the mast and be carried whithersoever it was taken?

This is the resignation which comes after much spiritual striving: when we realize that left to ourselves we can do nothing, except get more and more tired, and we are convinced that we need help from God.

Sri Ramakrishna says:

‘What is the nature of absolute reliance on God? It is like that happy state of relaxation felt by a fatigued worker when, reclining on a pillow, he smokes at leisure after a day's hard work. It is the cessation of all anxieties and worries.’<sup>7</sup>

Real resignation to God must bring cessation of all fear. Then, our hand being held by God Himself, we will be safe. There will then be no more fear of falling or going astray. Sri Ramakrishna teaches a simple parable to explain the spiritual security in self-surrender:

‘A father was once passing through a field with his two little sons. One of them he had taken up in his arm while the other was walking along with him holding his hand. They saw a kite flying, and the latter boy, giving up his hold on his father's hand, began to clap with joy, crying, “Behold, papa, there is a kite!” But immediately he stumbled and got hurt. The boy who

<sup>7</sup> *Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna* (Madras, 1938), p. 165 (Saying No. 524)

was carried by the father also clapped his hands with joy, but did not fall, as his father was holding him. The first boy represents self-help in spiritual matters, and the second, self-surrender.'<sup>8</sup>

Again, in another setting, Sri Ramakrishna explains and emphasizes the same idea by the examples of the young monkey and the kitten:

'Surrender everything at the feet of God. What else can you do? Give Him the power of attorney. Let Him do whatever He thinks best. If you rely on a great man, he will never injure you.

'It is no doubt necessary to practise spiritual discipline; but there are two kinds of aspirants. The nature of the one kind is like that of the young monkey, and the nature of the other kind is like that of the kitten. The young monkey, with great exertion, somehow clings to its mother. Likewise, there are some aspirants who think that in order to realize God they must repeat His name a certain number of times, meditate on Him for a certain period, and practise a certain amount of austerity. An aspirant of this kind makes his own efforts to catch hold of God. But the kitten, of itself, cannot cling to its mother. It lies on the ground and cries, "Mew, mew!" It leaves everything to its mother. The mother cat sometimes puts it on a bed, sometimes on the roof behind a pile of wood. She carries the kitten in her mouth hither and thither. The kitten doesn't know how to cling to the mother. Likewise, there are some aspirants who cannot practise spiritual discipline by calculating about japa or the period of meditation. All that they do is cry to God with yearning hearts. God hears their cry and cannot keep Himself away. He reveals Himself to them.'<sup>9</sup>

Still, this surrendering of everything at

the feet of the Lord is more easily said than done. It requires a special type of re-orientation of the whole psyche of the devotee, a new and totally unworldly mood will have to be cultivated. And all the various nuances of that mood, all the throes of its abandon, its utter self-negation—these can hardly be even portrayed in words by any ordinary man.

But in one of his rare hymns, Srī Caitanya, who is regarded by most Hindus as a Divine Incarnation, does give such expression—being himself a perfected master of resignation to God. In this hymn is specially revealed the power, poetry and tenderness of true self-resignation, in a simplicity which deeply moves the soul. We shall therefore quote here the entire hymn:

Chant the Name of the Lord and His  
Glory unceasingly  
That the mirror of the heart may be  
wiped clean

And quenched that mighty forest fire,  
Worldly lust, raging furiously within.  
Oh Name, stream down in moonlight  
on the lotus-heart,

Opening its cup to knowledge of Thy-  
self.

Oh self, drown deep in the waves of  
His bliss,

Chanting His Name continually,  
Tasting His nectar at every step,  
Bathing in His Name, that bath for  
weary souls.

Various are Thy Names, Oh Lord,  
In each and every Name Thy power  
resides.

No times are set, no rites are needful,  
for chanting of Thy Name,  
So vast is Thy mercy.

How huge, then, is my wretchedness  
Who find, in this empty life and heart.  
No devotion to Thy Name!

Oh, my mind,  
Be humbler than a blade of grass,  
Be patient and forbearing like the tree,  
Take no honour to thyself,  
Give honour to all,  
Chant unceasingly the Name of the  
Lord.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, p. 164 (Saying No. 522)

<sup>9</sup> 'M': *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* (Tr. by Swami Nikhilananda, Pub. by Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 1947), p. 315

Oh Lord and Soul of the Universe,  
Mine is no prayer for wealth or retinue,  
The playthings of lust or the toys of  
fame;

As many times as I may be reborn  
Grant me, Oh Lord, a steadfast love  
for Thee.

A drowning man in this world's fearful  
ocean

Is Thy servant, Oh Sweet One.

In Thy mercy

Consider him as dust beneath Thy feet.

Ah, how I long for the day

When, in chanting Thy Name, the  
tears will spill down

From my eyes, and my throat will  
refuse to utter

Its prayers, choking and stammering  
with ecstasy,

When all the hairs of my body will  
stand erect with joy!

Ah, how I long for the day

When an instant's separation from  
Thee, Oh Govinda,

Will be as a thousand years,

When my heart burns away with its  
desire  
And the world, without Thee, is a  
heartless void.

Prostrate at Thy feet let me be, in un-  
wavering devotion,

Neither imploring the embrace of Thine  
arms

Nor bewailing the withdrawal of Thy  
Presence

Though it tears my soul asunder.

O Thou, who stealest the hearts of Thy  
devotees,

Do with me what Thou wilt—

For Thou art my heart's Beloved,  
Thou and Thou alone.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> *Vedanta for the Western World* (Edited by Christopher Isherwood, Pub. by Marcel Rodd Co., Hollywood, Calif., 1945) pp. 225-6. The hymn is translated by Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood).

(To be concluded)

## VIVEKANANDA AND HIS LIVING WORDS

CHRISTOPHER ISHERWOOD

'If only we had known him!' we say. Most of us take it for granted that we should be able to recognize a great spiritual teacher if we could meet one. Should we? Probably we flatter ourselves... Still, it must be agreed that a live teacher is vastly preferable to his dead book. Mere printed words can't usually convey the tone of their speaker's voice, much less the spiritual power behind that tone.

But Vivekananda is one of the rare exceptions. Reading *his* printed words, we can catch something of the tone of his voice and even feel some sense of contact with his power. Why is this?

Perhaps because most of these teachings were originally spoken, not written down,

by him. They have the informality and urgency of speech. Furthermore, Vivekananda is speaking a language which we can understand but which is nevertheless inimitably his own: Vivekananda-English—that marvellously forceful idiom of quaintly-turned phrases and explosive exclamations. It recreates his personality for us even now, three-quarters of a century later.

What S— C— has done here<sup>1</sup> is to bring Vivekananda in person, as it were, to teach us how to meditate. These short

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<sup>1</sup> *i.e.*, Swami Chetanananda. The present article is the Foreword to a forthcoming compilation by the Swami. See our 'IN THIS NUMBER'—under NOTES AND COMMENTS, this issue.—*Ed.*

self-contained extracts from his collected works tell us what religion is, why it is of vital concern to us and how we must practise it to make it part of our lives. Don't be in a hurry to read this book through to the end. Take one extract and think about it all day, or all week. Such instruction requires few words but demands unlimited afterthought.

Vivekananda's directness is disconcerting. He points his finger straight at you—like Uncle Sam in the old recruiting-posters. There can be no pretending to ourself that he is talking to somebody else. He means *you* and you had better listen.

You had better listen, says Vivekananda, because you do not know who you are. You imagine that you are Mr. or Ms. Jones. That is your fundamental, fatal mistake. Your opinion of yourself, be it high or low, is also mistaken; but that is of secondary importance. You may strut through life as the Emperor Jones or crawl through it as Jones the slave; it makes no difference. The Emperor Jones, if there were such a creature, would have subjects; the slave Jones would have a master. You have neither. For you are Brahman, eternal God, and, wherever you look, you see nothing but Brahman, wearing the many million disguises which are called by names as absurd as your own—Jones, Juarez, Jinnah, Jung, Jocho, Janvier, Jagatai, Jablochov; names which all mean the same thing, *I am not you*.

You do not know who you are because you are living in ignorance. This ignorance may seem pleasurable at moments but essentially it is a state of bondage and therefore misery. Your misery arises from the fact that Jones, as Jones, has got to die—while Brahman is eternal; and that Jones, as Jones, is other than Juarez, Jinnah and all the rest of them—while Brahman within all of them is one. Jones, in his illusion of separateness, is tormented by feelings of envy,

hate or fear toward these seemingly separate beings around him. Or else he feels drawn to some of them by desire or love and is tormented because he cannot possess them and become one with them completely.

Separateness, says Vivekananda, is an illusion which can and must be dispelled through love of the eternal Brahman within ourselves and within all other beings. Therefore the practice of religion is a denial of separateness and a renunciation of its objectives: fame, wealth, power over others.

I—Mr. or Ms. Jones—am made uneasy by these statements. I work for my possessions and I don't want to give them up. I am proud to be Jones and would hate to be Jablochov; besides, I suspect him of planning to take my possessions away from me. And then I am not just any old Jones, I am *the* Jones, the famous one, so I am unwilling to think of myself as an all-pervading non-person. I thoroughly approve of the word 'love'. But, to me, 'love' means Jane or John, and she or he is the most precious of all my possessions, whom I can only think of in exclusive relation to myself.

On the other hand, prudence advises me not to reject Vivekananda's teaching. My very uneasiness is an admission that what he says is at least partly true. I do get tense and depressed when I think about the future. My doctor has prescribed tranquilizers but they don't make me tranquil, only dull and sleepy. So why not devote a few minutes a day to this meditation? It's a kind of insurance, really. I take out hospital-insurance in the superstitious hope that it will save me from ever having to go into hospital. Why not take out Vivekananda-insurance in the hope that it will somehow save Jones from dying and losing his identity?

Good, says Vivekananda, with an indulgent smile. By all means make a start—even if it's for the wrong reason. He is

endlessly good-humoured and patient. He never despairs of us because he knows—knows with the utter certainty of direct experience—that Brahman, our real nature, will gradually draw us to Itself:

So never mind these failures, these little backslidings. Hold to the ideal a thousand times, and if you fail a thousand times, make the attempt once more.... There is infinite life before the soul. Take your time and you will achieve your end.

This sounds almost too reassuring, too soothing. Can he be making fun of us? No and Yes. He means exactly what he says, but he is speaking in terms of the doctrine of reincarnation. When he says that we may take our time, he means that we are at liberty to remain in the bondage of ignorance for another thousand lifetimes; to go on dying and being reborn over and over again, until we have had enough of our separateness and have become seriously determined to end it. If we find Vivekananda's words reassuring—well, the joke is on us.

But what about *this* lifetime? Vivekananda once remarked:

In trying to practise religion, eighty percent of people turn cheats and about fifteen percent go mad; only the remaining five percent attain the immediate knowledge of the infinite Truth.

Does this shock you? If it does, imagine how you would react if you were told by the instructor at a gymnasium that 'in trying to practise these exercises, eighty percent of my pupils cheat—by not doing the difficult exercises properly—and about fifteen percent over-exercise like madmen until they injure themselves and have to quit; only the remaining five percent really transform their physique.' Would you be surprised? Surely not, though you might well become depressed. You might decide, recognizing your own weakness, not to enrol at the gymnasium at all.

But there is no more miserable excuse for inaction than our claim to be weak, unspiritual, unworthy. When we make it, Vivekananda thunders at us that we are lions, not sheep; Brahman, not Jones. Then he turns gentle again and coaxes us to do something at least, to make some little effort, even if we are old, sick, burdened with dependents and worldly duties, hopelessly poor or hopelessly rich. He reminds us that true renunciation is mental, not necessarily physical. We are not required to disown our husbands or wives and turn our children out of doors. We must only try to realize that they are not really ours; to love them as dwelling-places of Brahman, not as mere individuals. We must realize also that our so-called possessions are just toys which have been lent to us to play with for a little while. A string of beads can be pretty. So can a diamond necklace. There is no danger in wearing the necklace when we have stopped being aware of their difference in price.

Again and again, Vivekananda makes us laugh, as he begs us not to waste time repenting, not to moan and groan over our sins; bids us dry our tears and see the fun in this mock-world which we have been taking so seriously. Thus, for a short while at least, he fills us with courage.

But Vivekananda did not devote all his tremendous energy to prodding forward the fainthearted ninety-five percent. He needed helpers in his work—dedicated men and women on whom he could rely—and for these he did not search among the weak. From time to time, unexpectedly, in the middle of a lecture, he would make one of his thrilling, resounding appeals to the strong, the still uncorrupted five percent:

Men and women of today! if there be among you any pure, fresh flower, let it be laid on the altar of God. If there are among you any who, being young, do not desire to return into the world, let

them give up! Let them renounce! This is the one secret of spirituality, renunciation. Dare to do this. Be brave enough to do it. Such great sacrifices are necessary.

Can you not see the tide of death and materialism that is rolling over these Western lands? Can you not see the power of lust and unholiness, that is eating into the very vitals of society? Believe me, you will not arrest these things by talk, or by movements of agitation for reform; but by renunciation, by standing up, in the midst of decay and death, as mountains of righteousness. Talk not, but let the power of purity, the power of chastity, the power of renunciation, emanate from every pore of your body. Let it strike those who are struggling day and night for gold, that even in the midst of such a state of things, there can be one to whom wealth counts for nothing. Put away lust and wealth. Sacrifice yourselves. But who is it that will do this? Not the worn-out or the old, bruised and battered by society, but the Earth's freshest and best, the strong, the young, the beautiful. Lay down your lives. Make yourselves servants of humanity. Be living sermons. This, and not talk, is renunciation.

Do not criticize others, for all doctrines and all dogmas are good; but show them

by your lives that religion is no matter of books and beliefs, but of spiritual realization. Only those who have seen it will understand this; but such spirituality can be given to others, even though they be unconscious of the gift. Only those who have attained to this power are amongst the great teachers of mankind. They are the powers of light. The more of such men any country produces, the higher is that country raised. That land where no such men exist, is doomed. Nothing can save it. Therefore my Master's message to the world is, 'Be ye all spiritual! Get ye first realization!'

You have talked of the love of man, till the thing is in danger of becoming words alone. The time is come to act. The call now is, Do! Leap into the breach, and save the world!

Once, in my own life, I have heard that challenge echoed, in the simplest possible way. A group had gathered to discuss religious matters. Several of those present spoke at length and with eloquence about God and the life of prayer. Then, when the last of them had finished, a fourteen-year-old boy exclaimed abruptly, with intense excitement: 'But—if that's all true—why do we ever do anything else?'

The question left us silent.

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## SERMONETTES AT ST. MORITZ—VIII

SWAMI YATISWARANANDA

Our aim is to be free while living, to reach the supreme freedom before we die. We must do our best in this life, as human birth is a rare privilege. Proceed towards the Goal. Strive intensely for contact with the Divine—the contact which puts an end to all our misery and bondage. As long as we have our ego, the responsibility is ours.

Let us do our best to attain perfection in this very life.

\*

Intuition is direct perception of Truth. It is a faculty that expresses itself through the purified intellect. Its seat is the heart. The heart-centre is the locus of intuition. This faculty is latent in all of us. It is dor-



mant, undeveloped or covered in most people. It is the divine eye. How to open this divine eye? How to develop this inner vision? First of all the heart must be cleansed of desires. And then the heart-centre must be awakened through meditation on and intense longing for God.

When the heart-centre awakens, we know it. We get glimpses of a higher truth. We see a new light. At first it is only partially and rather vaguely seen. Through systematic moral and spiritual culture we must make the vision our permanent possession. When intuition is clear we discover the full truth.

Each soul is potentially divine. Let us remember our heritage and struggle hard. We should at least get some glimpse of the higher Reality in this life.

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We should learn to seek our inspiration primarily within ourselves. To get inspiration from other people and books is of course good. But that is not enough. There is a perennial source of inspiration within us. Seek the light in yourself. Manifest your potential divinity. Too much exuberance of emotion and feeling is not good. There must be balance in both our inner and outer life.

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At present we are wasting a lot of energy in various ways. Merely working does not deplete us so much as our useless thoughts and restlessness do. Don't waste energy. Avoid aimless wandering and useless acti-

vities, talking and gossiping. Useless thoughts are like weeds. Pull them out. Then there will be plenty of time for useful work.

Energy can be increased, if we know how to open up our higher centres. We then feel refreshed and full of energy. Strict continence is very important for the building up of spiritual and physical energy. Do everything with concentration; this avoids wastage of energy. Through meditation the conserved energy must be so directed as to open up our higher centres.

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The morning is the best time for spiritual practice. Wake up with good thoughts. Fill your mind with good thoughts before you begin your day. It is necessary to have a central thought to hold on to for the rest of the day. Here lies the especial importance of *japa* (repetition of the divine name). All this helps concentrate the mind and reduce wastage of energy.

Those who are lazy and careless and soft can achieve nothing in spiritual life.

\*

There are two levels of mental energy—lower and higher. The lower or emotional energy must be conserved and the higher or spiritual energy must be tapped. Without practice, the higher centres remain closed and we find little energy left to maintain the tempo of our spiritual striving. Through purification and meditation we have to open our higher centres.

# THE SOCIETAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE EARLY BUDDHIST SANGHA

MRS. NANCY ANN NAYAR

## INTRODUCTION

Individuals in many of the world's religions have chosen to withdraw from everyday worldly life to lead lives of meditation and/or prayer in solitude or in religious community. While the renunciation of the world is usually founded on philosophical principles and a world view, yet the ascetic traditions themselves are, in a sense, moulded in and by the society in which they develop. For this reason, monasticism has taken different forms in different religions and in different social epochs.

But the monastic order of Buddhism is of particular interest, because there is every indication that the Buddha regarded the monastic life as 'the normative path in the Buddhist Community'.<sup>1</sup> And while the Buddhist community always included those outside the monastic life, the Order of Bhikkhus (Buddhist monks) represented the heart of early Buddhism.

The Buddha consistently refused to discuss metaphysical questions, and though his teachings were based on certain philosophical assumptions, it was always the internal experiential realization of those teachings which he stressed. For the Enlightened One the primary question was not 'What is Nirvana?' but 'How can Nirvana be attained?' The Buddha believed that Nirvana could best be obtained by leaving the world, for the community of monks. As E. J. Thomas once stated '[the Buddhist movement began] not with a body of doctrine but with the formation

of a society bound by certain rules'.<sup>2</sup> It is that society—the Buddhist sangha<sup>3</sup>—which is the topic of this paper.

The original ideal of the Buddhist monk was that of the homeless wanderer. The eremitical ideal was set forth in the Four Resources:

The religious life has morsels of food given in alms for its resource. Thus you must endeavour to live all your life... The religious life has the robe made of rags taken from a dust heap for its resource. Thus you must endeavour to live all your life... The religious life has dwelling at the foot of a tree for its resource. Thus you must endeavour to live all your life... The religious life has decomposing urine as medicine for its resource. Thus you must endeavour to live all your life.<sup>4</sup>

The quotations from the Buddhist Pali Canon which extol the eremitical life are numerous, e.g., 'Him I call a Brahmin, who holds aloof both from laymen and from mendicants, who is homeless and who has few wants.'<sup>5</sup>

Yet during the years between the initial formation of the sangha by the Buddha and the advent of Ashoka some 300 years later, the organization of monks evolved from a free wandering group of ascetics to a highly organized monastic order living in well established monasteries, governed by rules known as the *Vinaya*.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 166

<sup>3</sup> The term 'sangha' is here used throughout in its narrower sense, 'monastic order', rather than its larger sense as 'total Buddhist community'.

<sup>4</sup> *Vinaya Texts* (in T. W. Rhys Davids & Hermann Oldenberg, editors: *Sacred Books of the East*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1965), Vol. XIII: Mahavagga I, 31, 4

<sup>5</sup> *The Dhammapada*, XXVII. 404

<sup>1</sup> Joseph Kitagawa: 'Buddhism and the Sangha', in *Religions of the East* (by J. Kitagawa, Pub. by Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1960), p. 167

This paper is an investigation into the social origins of early Buddhist monasticism. Part I is descriptive, dealing with the institutional features of the early sangha, as it must have been a few years before the rise of Ashoka. Part II seeks to determine in what way Hindu or local tribal institutions influenced the form that the Buddhist monastic order had taken by that time. It seeks to answer such questions as: Was the democratic organization of the sangha a new creation of the Buddha, or was it borrowed from Indian society of the time? How, and under what influences, did the monastic law (*Vinaya*) develop? Were the major Buddhist ceremonies original to Buddhism, or were they derived from more ancient Hindu ritual? What were the key features that contributed to the evolution from the eremitical to the cenobitical life? An effort is made to see in what ways and to what extent the Buddha or those who followed him, adopted or adapted community organization and life style, ceremony and ritual, from the home society—Northeast India of the 6th century B.C.

## PART I

### THE LOCAL SANGHA: A CONTROLLED DEMOCRACY

Buddhist monastic life immediately preceding the rise of Ashoka had two very distinctive organizational features. Firstly, there was a totalitarian law contained in the *Vinayapitaka* with regulations governing even the most minute aspects of the monk's life. Secondly, there was, at the local level, a truly democratic assembly through which this law was administered.

*The Vinaya.* The monastic law (*Vinaya*) was well developed, though not yet written down, as early as 100 years after the Buddha's death. Every part of the *Vinaya* makes it clear that monks were expected to act not as individuals but as

members of the monastic society. While the compilers of the *Vinaya* did not ignore the laity altogether, it is obvious that early Buddhism was essentially a monastic movement.

The first and oldest section of the *Vinaya pitaka*, the '*Patimokkha*', was the disciplinary code of the Order. It lists the offences of the individual monk against the Order. The tone of this section of the law is negative, and it consists of 227 'thou shalt not's'. Essentially a liturgical composition, the '*Patimokkha*' is written in the form of a confessional. In each of its two main divisions (*Bhikkhu-Patimokkha* and *Bhikkhuni-Patimokkha*) offences are divided into different classes, starting with the most serious, that is, those which result in the expulsion of the offender from the Order. After the reading of each class of offences and the punishments that will be meted out to offenders, the Bhikkhus are asked three times, 'Are you pure in this matter?' The pure were to keep silent, and the guilty had to confess.<sup>6</sup> Offences range from major infractions requiring expulsion from the Order, e.g., theft or murder, to minor misdemeanours, e.g., taking hold of the water-jar with soiled hands, licking the fingers while eating, and going among the houses with the head uncovered.<sup>7</sup> The '*Patimokkha*' contains the accepted rule and standard of living for the monks.

The rest of the *Vinaya*, on the other hand, is not in the form of a monastic code or rule, but is rather an accumulation of laws and rulings, really a collection of legends, each containing a precept that pertains to the individual conduct of the Bhikkhu or to some institution of the collective life of the sangha.<sup>8</sup> Whereas the

<sup>6</sup> *vide*: *Vinaya Texts*, Vol. XIII: 'The Patimokkha', pp. 1-68

<sup>7</sup> *vide*: *ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *vide*: Sukumar Dutt: *Buddhist Monks and*

'*Patimokkha*' is wholly negative, the *Vinaya* is 'constructive and regulative'.<sup>9</sup> According to legend, each rule of the *Vinaya* is said to have arisen out of an actual situation with each point separately pronounced by the Buddha as the particular situation demanded. A particular occasion is attributed to each permission, prohibition or injunction, for example:

Now at that time the Khabbaggiya Bhikkhus set the woods on fire. People murmured, &c., saying, 'Like the charcoal burners.' They told this matter to the Blessed One. 'You are not, O Bhikkhus, to set the woods on fire. Whosoever does so, shall be guilty of a dukkata (a certain degree of offence). Now at that time the Viharas were hidden under masses of grass, and when the woods were set on fire the Viharas were burnt. The Bhikkhus, fearing to offend, would not make a counterfire for their own protection. They told this matter to the Blessed One. 'I allow you, O Bhikkhus, when the woods are on fire, to make a counter-fire, and thus afford yourselves protection.'<sup>10</sup>

The *Vinaya* covers almost every aspect of individual and communal life. A listing of some of the chapter headings from the *Vinaya Texts* will give an indication as to the type and extent of the rules. Rules on communal life include admission to the order of Bhikkhus, regulations as to the duties of the Bhikkhus towards one another, settlement of disputes among the fraternity, validity and invalidity of formal acts of the sangha, dissensions in the order, schisms in the sangha. Rules of individual monks' lives include 'on the daily life of Bhikkhus', 'on dwellings and furniture', 'on the dress of Bhikkhus', 'rules for foot-clothing, seats and vehicles', and 'on medi-

cements.'<sup>11</sup>

*Sanghakamma*. The *Vinaya* law of the monastic communities was administered by *sanghakamma*, which means 'transactions of the sangha'. Each separate community functioned as a corporate body and the institution of the *sanghakamma* was the organ for its functioning.<sup>12</sup> The most striking features of the *sanghakamma* were its essentially democratic nature combined with a meticulous observance of the rules and regulations. Its structure provided for the equality of all Bhikkhus in deciding matters of communal concern. Matters which came up for settlement were of several types such as:

(1) Election of the chief Thera or the President who held the post unless and until found incompetent, when a new one would be elected.

(2) Election of the Speaker on the Dhamma who answered any questions relating to it.

(3) Election of the Speaker on the *Vinaya* who answered any questions relating to the Discipline.

(4) Determination of the purity of the members by the response to the recital of the '*Patimokkha*'.

(5) Conferment of *upasampada* or full membership of the Order on novices on the recommendation of their respective *upajjhayas* (teachers).

(6) Matters of public or private interest relating to the sangha or any of its members.

(7) Deciding course of action to be taken regarding monks found guilty of violation of the *Vinaya*.<sup>13</sup>

*Sanghakammas* were of two distinct types: (a) dealing with non-disputatious

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*, Vols. XIII, XVII, XX

<sup>12</sup> *vide* Dutt: *op. cit.*, p. 87

<sup>13</sup> *vide* Gokuldas De: *Democracy in Early Buddhist Sangha* (Calcutta University, 1955), p. xvii

*Monasteries of India* (George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London, 1962), p. 74

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Vinaya Texts: The Kullavagga*, V, 32, 1

issues, and (b) dealing with disputatious issues. Non-disputatious acts were those acts in which the agreement of all the monks in the community could be anticipated, e.g., in the settlement of the boundaries of an *avasa*, or in the ordination of another monk. Disputatious *sanghakammās* were those in which disagreement was expected, e.g., disputes over an individual monk's infractions of the rule.<sup>14</sup>

The procedure for settling non-disputatious matters was fairly simple. The matter to be decided was introduced to the assembly by a Bhikkhu. Then those in favour of the resolution simply kept silent, and those opposed spoke up. This was followed by a vote on the issue. Various preliminary proceedings were required in the settling of disputatious matters, but the presentation of the matter and voting on it remained the same.

The validity of a *sanghakamma* depended on four points which were all important, since once a decision had been made it could be questioned only with regard to its validity: (1) that the minimum number of monks required for a decision was present (the number required varied depending on the type of matter at hand) (2) that the consent by proxy of all monks unable to attend had been obtained (3) that procedural form had been followed to the letter, and (4) that there was no dissenting voice.<sup>15</sup>

The local sangha had extensive authority over individual members, and various degrees of punishment, penance, even expulsion, were applied by *sanghakamma* for infractions of the *Vinaya* rules.

*Organizational structure and entry into the sangha.* The Buddhist Monastic Order had a fairly simple organization. Within the total membership of the Order two

kinds of hierarchies existed: a teaching hierarchy and an administrative hierarchy. Here we will discuss only the teaching side, in which there were four ranks of monks:

(1) The Thera or chief monk of the sangha unit.

(2) The Theras of second, third and fourth degrees according to seniority of age and qualifications (These were the teachers of the sangha, the *acariyas* or *upajjhayas*).

(3) Junior monks, that is, Bhikkhus learning various subjects and undergoing training under their *upajjhayas* and *acariyas* just after ordination.

(4) *Samaneras* or novices attached to teacher monks. Those awaiting final ordination.<sup>16</sup>

Each rank was supposed to acknowledge the supremacy of the one above it, and to fulfil the duties assigned to it. Obedience to superiors was expected at all levels.<sup>17</sup>

Membership in the Buddhist Order was open to all regardless of sex, class or caste distinctions. Certain restrictions on membership did exist, e.g., lepers, debtors, or thieves could not enter the Order. A separate Order for women, called the Bhikkhuni-sangha, had its own set of additional rules and regulations.

There were two forms (or stages) of admission into the Order. *Pabbajja*, or mere initiation into the Order, remained mainly in the hands of individual teachers, while *upasampada* (solemn ordination) required a *sanghakama*. *Pabbajja* simply denoted that the person was in the houseless state. The person who desired to receive *pabbajja* had to be at least fifteen years of age, had to cut off his hair and beard, put on the yellow robes, and choose a teacher who will present him before a group of ten or more monks. If none of

<sup>14</sup> *vide* Dutt, op. cit., pp. 88-9

<sup>15</sup> *vide* *ibid.*, p. 90

<sup>16</sup> *vide*: De, op. cit., p. xvi

<sup>17</sup> *vide* *ibid.*

these dissent, he is to salute the feet of the Bhikkhus with his head, recite three times the *triratna* (lit., three jewels) formula: 'I take my refuge in the Buddha, I take my refuge in the Dhamma, I take my refuge in the sangha.'<sup>18</sup> The novice was then required to live a strict life under the guidance of an *upajjhaya* while he awaited solemn ordination. He had to keep the ten precepts—abstinence from (1) destroying life (2) stealing (3) impurity (4) lying (5) intoxicating drink (6) eating at forbidden times (7) dancing, singing, etc. (8) garlands, scents, etc. (9) use of high beds, and (10) accepting gold or silver.<sup>19</sup> *Pabbajja* was revoked on the violation of any of the first five precepts.

*Upasampada* was a more formal ceremony. The candidate, aged at least twenty, was presented to the assembly of Bhikkhus by his *upajjhaya*: 'Let the Sangha, reverend sirs, hear me. So-and-so desires to receive the *upasampada* ordination from venerable So-and-so. He has been instructed by me. If the sangha is ready, let So-and-so come'.<sup>20</sup> Permission granted, the candidate then appeared before the assembly and requested full admission into the Order of Bhikkhus. He was questioned by the assembled Bhikkhus as to his qualifications for joining the sangha, and if satisfactory answers were received a proposal was formally presented to the group requesting his ordination. Voting followed. If there were no objections to his ordination, he became a full-fledged monk with all the rights and privileges that followed from such a state.<sup>21</sup>

*Major rites of solidarity.* The two major rituals within the Buddhist Order were the

*uposatha* ceremony, and *pavarana*. Whereas the function of the *uposatha* was to maintain and express solidarity within the Order, the *pavarana's* function was to maintain a continuing link between the sangha and the larger Buddhist community. *Uposatha*, originally held as a bi-weekly confessional service at which the 'Patimokkha' was recited, had become purely ceremonial in character, an expression of the communal and corporate life of the sangha. Laymen were, by law, excluded from participating in or even attending the ritual.<sup>22</sup> Attendance of all monks at the ceremony was compulsory. In fact, the validity of the ceremony depended on the presence of all the monks living in the designated area. The importance of attendance is brought out by the fact that the Bhikkhus were asked to count the days of half-months so that they would not inadvertently miss the ceremony. It became the duty of one of the Theras or elder monks to proclaim the date of the next *uposatha* at mealtimes to prevent Bhikkhus from wandering far in search of alms that day thus causing a delay in the ceremony.<sup>23</sup>

All the monks of the *avasa* who had committed offences against the 'Patimokkha' rule were required to confess their sins at the start of the ceremony. Even the ill (sickness was the only acceptable excuse for non-attendance) had to declare themselves pure (*parisuddhi*) and have the message conveyed to the assembled monks by messenger.<sup>24</sup> The *Vinaya* illustrates the nature of the private confession:

At that time a certain Bhikkhu was guilty of an offence on the day of Upo-

<sup>18</sup> *vide* R. C. Majumdar: *Corporate Life in Ancient India* (Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta, 1969), pp. 275-6

<sup>19</sup> *vide* *ibid.*, p. 280

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*, p. 277

<sup>21</sup> *vide* *ibid.*, pp. 276-80

<sup>22</sup> *vide* Sukumar Dutt: *Early Buddhist Monachism* (Asia Publishing House, London, 1960), p. 87

<sup>23</sup> *vide* De, *op. cit.*, p. 72

<sup>24</sup> *vide* *ibid.*, pp. 72-3

satha. Now this Bhikkhu thought: 'The Blessed One has prescribed: "Uposatha is not to be held by a Bhikkhu guilty of an offence. What am I to do?"'

They told this thing to the Blessed One: 'In case, O Bhikkhus, a certain Bhikkhu be guilty of an offence on the day of Uposatha let that Bhikkhu, O Bhikkhus, go to one Bhikkhu, adjust his upper robe so as to cover one shoulder, sit down squatting, raise his joined hands, and say: "I have committed, friend, such and such an offence; I confess that offence." Let the other say: "Do you see it?" "Yes, I see it." "Refrain from it in future."'<sup>25</sup>

After all had been purified in this way, the full assembly of monks gathered in the *uposatha*-hall to listen to the recitation of the 'Patimokkha'.

The other major communal celebration was the *pavarana*, which was held at the end of the rainy season. (The monks remained in retreat during the monsoon season, and were not allowed to wander beyond the boundaries of their *avasa*.) The real function of *pavarana* was to increase contact between the sangha and the laity. Technically, *pavarana* refers to a

confessional service. Literally, every Bhikkhu present (again attendance was compulsory) invited his companions to tell him if they believed him guilty, or suspected him guilty, of any offence.<sup>26</sup> Unlike the *uposatha* ceremony, however, the 'Patimokkha' was not recited, and acknowledgement of purity in the *pavarana* depended on mutual co-operation thus promoting unity in the sangha on a wider scale than the *uposatha*. Actually, less time was spent in dealing with matters of purity than in festivities centring around the offering of gifts by laymen. In order to be able to spend more time in discussion and debate before or with laymen, a set of rules was adopted allowing postponement of confession or a shortening of the ritual form.

In short, the sangha, or local corporation of monks, had as its foundation the *Vinaya*, administered through a democratic assembly. Rites of solidarity within the Order, such as *uposatha*, and the ceremony of solidarity with the laity, *pavarana*, acted as creators and expressions of the unity of the group.

(To be concluded)

<sup>25</sup> *Vinaya Texts*, Vol. XIII: Mahavagga, II, 27, 1

<sup>26</sup> *vide* *ibid.*: Mahavagga, IV, 1, 13.



### A QUEEN AMONG DEVOTEES—RANI RASMANI

Few if any great Teachers of mankind have been so liberally surrounded with notable helpers in their mission as was Sri Ramakrishna. Several of these he particularly pointed out as having been embodied forms of particular divinities; some as having previously accompanied other divine Incarnations. But it seems that aside from the Holy Mother—who was regarded as the Divine Mother Herself—the only *woman* in this elect group was the Rani Rasmani, 'one of the eight *Nayikās* (attendant goddesses) of the Divine Mother in human form.

One of the paradoxes of the worship of God as Mother, which is strikingly demonstrated in the Rani's case, is the evoking in her devotees of most of the qualities usually associated with 'manliness'—strength, courage extreme, self-confidence to the point of recklessness! God worshipped as Mother is looked upon as *Sakti*, the embodiment of power and strength. To Westerners, familiar with caricatures of 'Mother's boys' as weak, dependent, timid, it comes as a great revelation that the assurance of protection, of being God's very own, which is obviously best symbolized by a Mother is psychologically sure to bring out strengths rather than weaknesses.

By all accounts, it seems that the Rani had that assurance from childhood. Born in a very low-caste (*kaivarta* or fisherman)

family, she showed great interest in devotional stories and scriptures, and even began to wear *Vaiṣṇava* insignia like her parents, before the age of seven. At age eleven, a very wealthy young man was so attracted by her beauty at first sight, that he persuaded his parents to let him marry her! Thus at once she was taken from poverty to greatest luxury; but with remarkable humility she continued a simple manner of life doing much menial household work herself, serving her parents-in-law with devotion even to the point of regularly sipping a bit of the water with which she washed their feet! Far from feeling pride at being raised above her old friends, she seems to have bent every effort to help them up towards the same level. Her husband was also of a most generous nature; and finding that she had remarkable talents of efficiency, judgment, and understanding of people, he relied increasingly on her in managing his affairs and his charities. And when he suddenly died (in *her* forty-third year), she proved more than equal to the formidable responsibility of administering his estates and his philanthropies. The magnitude of the task may be glimpsed from the fact that several prominent gentlemen offered to help her with it, notably Dwarakanath Tagore (father of Devendranath)—to whom she respectfully replied that there was



no need for so great a man to bother with such trifles, which she felt sure she could handle with the Divine Mother's grace!

Events well proved that she had that Grace in plenty. She had found in her third son-in-law, Mathurnath Biswas, a worthy assistant, and with typical large-heartedness she trusted him implicitly—a trust which again showed her insight and foresight. Under their management the family properties were further improved, and charities extended so greatly that the Rani's name soon became proverbial in Bengal.<sup>1</sup> Yet at the same time, she fully adopted the austere life enjoined then on Hindu widows, eating daily only one meal consisting of *haviṣyānna* (rice, milk, boiled vegetables with a little ghee), fasting once each fortnight, etc. Naturally she increased her wonted devotional exercises, and the great annual Festivals and Pūjās were celebrated with lavish splendour. Here her exuberant devotion to the Mother sometimes brought tests of her mettle. Once her Durgā-pūjā procession disturbed the slumber of a 'white' neighbour, who brought a lawsuit against her, resulting in her being fined. She paid it duly, but promptly blocked off a main street of Calcutta—which her husband had built for the public good—with heavy posts. To the British officials' fulminations, she gave firm reply, until the fine was repaid her!

In an even more appealing way, she later tackled the Authorities head-on. When they laid a tax on fishermen of the Ganga, many of whom lived on the Rani's estates, they came to her as a last resort in their resultant misery. Ever sympathetic to the poor and oppressed, she reassured them, and undertook a massive reprisal. She leased from Government at great expense, that part of the river for fishing; proceeded to

put huge chains across it, 'to prevent large snips from disturbing that fishing'! As the government could find no loophole in her legal arguments, and as she kindly agreed to give up that particular right if they would abolish the obnoxious tax, they had to yield this, to the boundless joy of the fishermen.

Still, perhaps the most inspiring story is that of the attack on the Rani's house by some drunken soldiers, smarting under a preliminary repulse by her gate-keepers. Mathur and the other men of the family were out at the time; so, advising the others to flee by a back-door, the Rani posted herself with drawn sword at the door of their little temple, to prevent its desecration at cost of her life if need be. Fortunately—or by divine will—the soldiers were dispersed by an officer before reaching that temple!

Such then was the woman—the Companion of the Devi—whom She was moulding to be the first great *helper* in the unfolding and fulfilment of Sri Ramakrishna's mission. And here, the methods of moulding become a bit more tangible. When, somewhat past age fifty, she had made vast preparations for a pilgrimage to Benares, her Chosen Deity appeared to her in dream and said that if she would build a temple beside the Ganga and worship Her there, the whole object of pilgrimage would be fulfilled, and more. Such was her implicit faith that she at once abandoned the whole plan, despite protests of all! With great zeal she searched out a suitable plot of land and for the seven or eight years needed for the magnificent building-work she watched and supervised with ardent care and foresight. When unavoidable delays in the work occurred, she became restless thinking that even her life might go before she saw its completion; and (to quote Sri Ramakrishna) she 'practised severe austerities according to the scriptures from the day on which the making of the image began; she bathed three times a day, took simple food, lay on the floor and

<sup>1</sup> That this was no merely transient fame is evidenced, for example, by at least two popular motion-pictures in recent years, built around her life-story.

practised Japa, worship, etc...' But the gravest difficulty then began to loom, though she had certainly weighed its possibility from the start: coming from a low caste, she was prohibited from making offerings of cooked food to the Deity or even employing a brāhmaṇa to do so. Nor would any good brāhmaṇa partake of the temple *prasād*! Thus the supreme desire of the Rani's heart was seemingly doomed.

And here resulted shining proof of her courage and strength of will—both rooted in her faith in the Devi. She seems never to have doubted that She would accept her offerings, and would help find some way of overcoming the heartless customs of the day. She prayed fervently for guidance. And she began a vigorous search for at least one liberal-minded priest who would agree to officiate in the new temple. At last came an inspired 'prescription' from Ramkumar, elder brother of Sri Ramakrishna, suggesting making a gift of the temple to a brāhmaṇa. She promptly did so: to her own family priest. Ramkumar himself was persuaded to accept the post of temple priest. Here Ramkumar was acting as boldly as the Rani herself, since he was the *only* reputable brāhmaṇa in the whole area who dared stand out against the massed opinion of all the others. Even his own younger brother, Sri Ramakrishna, took many weeks of persuasion, plus the magic charm of the Goddess Herself, before he would agree to even take food cooked on the premises!

The rest of the story is familiar to all; yet against the background just sketched, perhaps it can now be better appreciated. That the Rani was the first woman of power and position who at all recognized Sri Ramakrishna's spiritual genius, we have of course heard; but can we even now glimpse the extent and depth of humility which this required in a lady who had risen so high from so low, who had twice put to shame the

foreign overlords, and erected and consecrated a great temple over anguished protests from the priestly guardians of society? Clearly, hers was a humility grounded in something or some One beyond human values.<sup>2</sup> That Ramakrishna was only a poor brahmaṇa, we have heard; but let us add to this the long list of good and great men and devotees who, even at the height of his later days, still would be only superficially impressed when they met him. Even his most noted disciple, Vivekananda, reports that the Master 'looked just like an ordinary man' when he first met him, and only through a spectacular series of supersensuous revelations was he brought to even partial 'acceptance'.

Indeed it seems now as if the Rani's whole life till this, her sixty-second year, had been a preparation for this fulfilment—for her immediate acquiescence in Mathur's astonishing appreciation of this strange brāhmaṇa boy whose only tangible assets seem to have been his good looks and a knack for drawing and modelling. And who very soon began behaving most peculiarly: avoiding more and more all ordinary talks and company, devoting hours and hours to prayer, worship, singing, almost wholly oblivious to others and their likings—often at night alone in the perilous jungle. In fact many began to call him 'mad'; but the attraction and devotion of the Rani and Mathur seemed to grow in similar ratio! What to speak of her 'whole life'—it must have required preparations birth-after-birth, to perceive the genius for godliness beneath such an exterior. Not merely to perceive, but to support and sustain it against all

<sup>2</sup> Compare Sri Ramakrishna's observation: 'A man cannot become great in anything, nor can he digest fame, power, position, etc., if he has not a special part of God in him.' [Quoted in Swami Saradananda: *Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master* (Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras 600004, 1970), p. 422.]

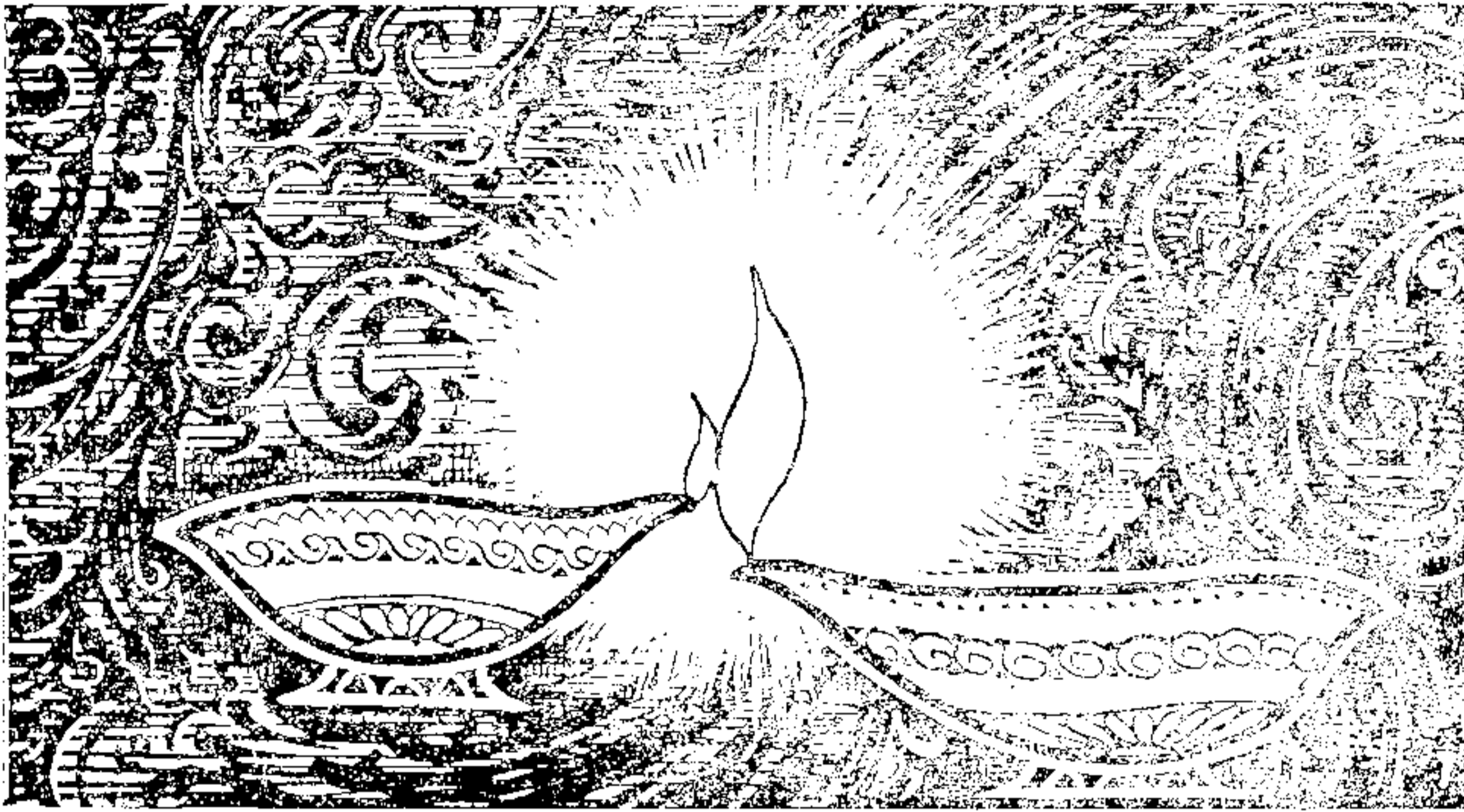
kinds of smiles, sneers, and taunts from friends and guardians of society. Even the work for which she had employed Ramakrishna, as priest of Kālī, seemed being desecrated by the 'mad' young man's unheard-of 'worship'. For hours he would sit absorbed, forgetting all about the offerings he had come to perform; then he might start talking to the Image, perchance holding a finger under Her nose to see if She were breathing, or scattering the flowers to the four quarters instead of at Her feet (for where was She not?). Or even feeding the holy offerings to a cat, which he clearly *saw* as the Mother! Still both Mathur and the Rani felt increasing delight, increasingly sure that all this sprang from the young man's supreme devotion, and that now at last the object of the temple's construction had been attained: the manifestation of the Mother Herself in the image!

The last straw however—as anyone else would have thought—came when Ramakrishna, noticing the Rani a bit absent-minded during one of his enthralling songs to the Goddess, abruptly slapped her saying, 'Shame on you—to think such thoughts even here!' One must recall that Sri Ramakrishna, gentlest of Incarnations, seems never to have struck any other woman for whatever cause! And here was the 'biggest' woman, in society's view, who was ever near to him. But, wonderful—not even for an instant did she show resentment; rather she seemed embarrassed a bit, repentant, serious! Naturally her servants and flatterers raised great hue and cry and doubtless would have badly beaten the offender, had she not promptly dispersed them all. And for some time she carefully reflected on that momentary thoughtlessness which had brought the reproof and the wonder of Ramakrishna's ability to perceive it. Later she told her attendants, 'You don't understand—it was the Divine Mother herself who punished me and enlightened

my heart.'

In a way, too, She has enlightened *us*: shown us sharply the meaning of the Rani's life-long struggles and achievements. For now it becomes crystal-clear that these had precious little to do with her own little self: even the riches and worldly power she seems to have valued chiefly as the Divine Mother's gifts, to be cherished for Her sake and that of her community and of other devotees. For, you see, now that a human manifestation of the Goddess had come to bless her (among many), she was wholly ready to throw at his feet the whole treasure house, including her apparent 'pride', which itself had been necessary to rise in the world. So, now she could and did become his first 'supplier of provisions', so absolutely necessary if he was to do in the world the tremendous work he did do. Further, her time-tested foresight enabled her to make such provisions far beyond the time of her death (1861). Till the end of his life, Sri Ramakrishna used to speak of the blessings resulting from her well-planned and inspired largesse, both to himself and to the many sadhus and devotees coming to that temple.

And her care in this high service manifested even in her last earthly moments. At her particular wish, she had been brought to the sacred Ganga, and half-immersed in its waters (though it was winter). All the lamps she ordered extinguished, for she was seeing the whole night sky illumined by the effulgence of the Divine Mother. But then a worry arose and she said 'Mother, art Thou come? But Padma has not affixed her signature; what will happen Mother?' (Her eldest daughter Padma had caused trouble about signing a deed of endowment of large properties for the Devi's temple.) But soon, apparently reassured, she became calm again and went back to the lap of the Mother, for ever.



# ILLUMINATING DIALOGUES FROM INDIAN LORE

## THE QUINTESSENCE OF THE *UDDHAVA-GĪTĀ*

When śrī Kṛṣṇa was about to leave the world, a great devotee named Uddhava went to Him and said: Lord, You should not leave us. The world will be empty without You. If You leave this world, take me also with You. I can't live without You.

śrī Kṛṣṇa said: My work is over and I am going to leave the mortal world. You please live in this world for some more time, devoting your mind completely to Me without any attachment whatsoever. The world is a passing show. You will not be lost in this world if you see the universe in Me and Me in the universe.

Uddhava: Lord, I find it very difficult to give up desires. I am attached to the body and to my children. They were created by You but I consider them as my own. Because of attachment, my vision is not clear. Only You can give me a clear vision. Please instruct me and tell me how I can get rid of my attachments.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa: I am beyond words, mind, and the senses; yet those that are totally free from egoism and are wholly devoted to Me can find Me out. A great Avadhūta<sup>1</sup> was wandering about the world in

a carefree fashion. King Yadu<sup>2</sup> asked him: 'How can you be so happy and carefree? Everyone in this world is bothered greatly by lust and greed; you seem to be indifferent to everything around you and are so happy. What is the secret of your bliss?'

The Avadhūta said: 'I have learned many things from many beings. One must learn to live like a tree: one must always live for others. One must be detached like the air. One must be cool and pleasant like water; like it, again, one must purify others when they come in contact with one. Like fire one must accept what others give, without discrimination, without likes or dislikes. A real ascetic does not concentrate on the reflections of the sun in various vessels of water, but concentrates on the *One* that is responsible for the various reflections. Like a python one should take the food that comes of itself. One should be calm and quiet, like the ocean. The ocean does not overflow nor does it dry up; even so an ascetic should neither be overjoyed nor depressed. You should not fall a prey to the wiles of women: here you must learn a lesson from the insects—they fall into the bright flame and perish. Like a black bee

<sup>1</sup> A class of liberated saints who wear no external badge, and whose realization of sameness in everything lifts them above the ordinary duties of life.

<sup>2</sup> The son of Yayāti and grandson of Nahuṣa, powerful kings of the Lunar Race, and ancestors of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

which gathers honey from a variety of flowers a sannyāsin (monk) should gather knowledge from several scriptures, small and great, as also food from various houses. However, the alms collected should not be stored either for the evening or for the next day. He should not follow the bee in respect of storing food. If he stores anything, his intelligence will be destroyed like the honey stored by the bee. You must learn to control your tongue; otherwise you will be hooked like a fish and die like a fish. You can control the other senses if you have control over your tongue.'

Srī Kṛṣṇa continued:

Hearing these words of the Avadhūta, Yadu became wise and calm. Like him, you must also give up all desires. You must not hurt any being and must have complete control over your body. You must worship your Guru. Now I shall tell you the characteristics of a good disciple. He will be humble, energetic, and detached. He will be dedicated to the pursuit of truth, will be free of envy and gossip. He will be able to see the Ātman in all beings. A fire that burns wood assumes for the time being the shape of the wood, but still it is free from all attributes. So also, the Ātman remains unaffected by the body or bodies it indwells. You, as a good disciple, must give up all attachments to this body.

The Atman is neither free nor bound. It is the reflections of the moon in the water that tremble and not the moon itself. A wise man looks on his body with detachment, as does a man who looks on his dream state after waking from sleep. He should be content with his Self. Mere knowledge of the Vedas is not enough: it is as futile as maintaining a cow which can no longer give milk. You should at all times think of Me. If that is not possible, then dedicate all your actions to Me. Recite My name or listen to My deeds or be in the company of the good and holy.

Uddhava: Lord, who are the people that You like?

Srī Kṛṣṇa:

My true devotee is kind, forgiving, true, restrained, compassionate, considerate, calm, patient and learned; he adores Me. Whoever worships Me whole-heartedly is My devotee. You get to know about Me by serving holy people. Association with good people is very important. The Gopīs (milkmaids of Brindavan) were not learned; but they are very dear to Me because they loved Me. The Gopīs wanted Me and nothing else. In My company they lost consciousness of their body. They did not know My real nature but they loved Me with all their heart.

I am the One, indivisible. The seed becomes the tree with a trunk, leaves, flowers, etc.; so have I become the many. The cloth is made up of threads, but you hardly are aware of them when you see the whole cloth.

The universe is like a tree. It is a tree of Action. Virtue and vice are its two seeds; the three *gunas*—*sattva*, *rajas*, *tamas*—are its trunk. The stems are the five elements. The supreme Being and man's soul are the two birds dwelling on it. Happiness and misery are its two fruits: ordinary people eat the latter; the wise ones eat the former. With the help of a Guru you can know that the One has become the many. With the axe of true wisdom, you must cut down the tree of ignorance. You must withdraw your senses from all worldly objects. A true yogī is as unconscious of the body as a drunkard is of the presence or absence of clothes on him.

As fire burns the faggots and reduces them to ashes, so does devotion to Me destroy all sins. Devotion removes all impurities of mind. He is close to Me who weeps for Me and sings My praises. Cast away all unbecoming thoughts and consecrate your mind and actions to Me. You

should keep away from the company of women, and of men that associate with them. Practise *prāṇāyāma* (control of the vital force, through breath-control) every day and meditate on Me. A man who concentrates on Me all the time will get occult powers. He will have knowledge of the past, present, and future. But these are not the important things. One must remain absorbed in one's Self. It is the mind that turns the wheel of misery; it has the three qualities (*guṇas*) of *sattva*, etc. But the Ātman is away and apart from the mind. It is quiet and detached and unaffected. He is supreme who can control his mind. The

mind becomes disturbed when it comes into contact with sense objects. One should keep away from them and meditate on the Self. When a person has become established in this state, like the sun he moves in the world, illuminating everything but himself unaffected. He looks on a scholar and an ignoramus, a high-born and a low-born person, alike; he is free from malice, pride, and dishonesty. He goes beyond the three attributes of the mind and engages himself in meditation all the time. He sees Me in everything and everything in Me. He becomes a liberated soul.

—PROF. K. SUBRAHMANYAN

## 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. 813-4; No. 2, p. 724. *Great Master*: No. 3, p. 500.

The words quoted in 'Onward For Ever!' are taken from *The Complete Works*, Vol. I (1962), pp. 66-7.

Religion's contribution to human evolutionary progress is inestimable. It has helped man to outgrow the back-drag of his bestial heritage, and attain lasting joy and illumination. Nevertheless, owing to its subtle, internal, supersensuous character, it has been and remains one of the most misunderstood and misrepresented of all subjects. Religion, we must remember, should never be assessed mere-

ly from without. Most of these misrepresentations have resulted just because of such external assessment. A true perspective of religion can be obtained only from 'within', through the experience-based sayings of mystics, saints, and divine incarnations. The Editorial this month is an attempt to present such an internal perspective, based on some of the profound sayings of Swami Vivekananda.

Numerous are the modes of spiritual striving leading to God-realization. Just as the self-reliant attitude, asserting the all-powerful nature of the spiritual reality in us, is one of these, so too is the path of self-surrender to the Divine, leading to the dissolution of the ego. Depending on the temperaments and mental constitutions of individual aspirants, one or the other of these can be adopted. But the goal to be attained in either case is the same, namely, God-realization. 'Resignation to God' by

Swami Budhananda, is a discussion of this important theme, in the light of the lives and teachings of some of the greatest spiritual luminaries India and the world have produced.

The second and concluding instalment of this 'Essay on Applied Religion' will be published soon.

Swami Vivekananda and his teachings make their own irresistible appeal to every sincere enquirer and seeker after truth. That is because he spoke from the depths of his personal realizations, the eternal truths for which a small but significant section of humanity always hankers. His teachings, moreover, sparkle with insights into spiritual life, of which meditation and contemplation are an essential part. 'Vivekananda and His Living Words', by Christopher Isherwood, is the powerful and revealing Foreword to a compilation entitled 'Meditation and Its Method According to Vivekananda', to be published soon in the U.S.A. by the Vedanta Society of Southern California at Hollywood. Swami Chetanananda, Assistant Minister of the Society, is the Editor and Compiler of this book. We are publishing Isherwood's 'Foreword' by the kind courtesy of the Hollywood Vedanta Society. Christopher Isherwood needs no introduction to our readers. He has been a devotee of Sri Ramakrishna for over three decades.

Scholars of ancient Indian history and of early Buddhism have not been able to determine with full certainty whether the Buddha owed the well-laid foundations of his monastic organization to the prevailing forms of Hindu society, or to his own inventive genius. As the history of monasticism shows conclusively, the Buddha was the progenitor of the organizational form of life for monks of all times and countries.

It is quite probable that the Buddha, a prophet and a bold innovator, himself conceived the Sangha-form for his predominantly monastic movement, though he liberally borrowed for its framework, from time-honoured customs and structures, institutions and ceremonies, of the contemporary Hindu society. 'The Societal Foundations of the Early Buddhist Sangha', by Mrs. Nancy Ann Nayar, is an erudite paper on this very interesting and important subject, based on deep study, as the references show. The author is working in the Department of Political Science, McGill University, Montreal, Canada. The second part of this article will be published soon.

Readers of Sri Ramakrishna's biographies are likely to be familiar with the name of Rani Rasmani. It was in a sense her deep devotion to Kālī that set the stage for the most fascinating divine drama of Sri Ramakrishna's life. As one of the earliest discoverers of his greatness and as one of the first few who accepted his spiritual mentorship, the Rani deserves our homage for her own spiritual sensibility. She has thus acquired an immortal place in the history of the modern Indian Renaissance. We bring our readers this month a revealing profile of this remarkable woman-devotee.

The *Uddhava-gītā*, occurring in the eleventh book of the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, is held in great regard for its spiritual profundity. This teaching fills twenty-four chapters, and consists mostly of a dialogue between Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Uddhava. 'The Quintessence of the *Uddhava-gītā*' is an exceedingly short but concise summary of these teachings of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Prof. K. Subrahmanian, the author, is Officer-in-charge, Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages, Shillong.

## TO OUR READERS

With this number the *Prabuddha Bharata* enters its eighty-first volume. On this joyous occasion of the new year we offer our greetings and good wishes to all our readers and subscribers, contributors and reviewers, advertisers and sympathisers. One of the oldest English monthlies in India today, the *Prabuddha Bharata*—founded and blessed by the Swami Vivekananda—has been unobtrusively but steadily and boldly bearing its message of ‘making divinity manifest in every movement of life’, to its large family spread all over the globe. Along with the blessings of the great ones, the cordiality, cooperation, sympathetic support and encouragement of our readers, subscribers, friends and well-wishers, have enabled this magazine to work unremittingly for the spiritual awakening of humanity over these eight decades. We trust that these blessings and friendly relations will sustain and strengthen us through the coming years also.

On the basis of what our readers often tell us, we believe that the *Prabuddha Bharata* is steadily supplying the spiritual sustenance so much needed in this busy, fast-changing and strife-torn world. Humanity today more than ever before needs the stabilizing message of spiritual certainty. That there lies hidden in man the spiritual self, the Ātman, the embodiment of peace and bliss, is a truth which has to be repeatedly told and heard. Hearing is the first of the triune means of realizing the Ātman. Then follow reflection and meditation. Swami Vivekananda in his famous poem, ‘To The Awakened India’, has commanded this Journal thus:

‘And tell the world—  
Awake, arise, and dream no more!  
...Be bold, and face  
The Truth. Be one with it! Let visions cease;  
Or, if you cannot, dream but truer dreams,  
Which are Eternal Love and Service Free.’

Broadly speaking, the reading matter in each issue is being oriented towards this end. We hope to keep up this character in the coming issues. There is, we feel, sufficient diversity at present in the contents; so we do not contemplate introducing further new features. ‘Letters of a Saint’ is continuing, though as the reader may note the letters of Swami Turiyananda have from this month been replaced by those of Swami Saradananda, another great disciple of Sri Ramakrishna. ‘At The Feet of Swami Akhandananda’ by ‘A Devotee’, which has been going on for two years, will continue a few more issues, but may necessarily come to its end before the close of this Volume. ‘Sermonettes At St. Moritz’ and ‘Essays on Applied Religion’ will, we hope, continue to appear steadily at least through this year.

Here a request to our readers. Undoubtedly the *Prabuddha Bharata* enjoys a fair-sized readership. But its awakening and strengthening message should reach more hearts and homes. There are many people who are hungry for this message, but do not know where to get the spiritual diet. In this situation, our readers may play a great part. Those who feel benefited by the magazine may enthusiastically recommend it to like-minded friends. Thereby they will be rendering a great service to the cause of the magazine as well as to their fellow-humans.

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## REVIEWS AND NOTICES

### BENGALI

**SAHASYA VIVEKANANDA:** BY SANKARI PRASAD BASU, Published by Nava Bharat Publishers, 72 Mahatma Gandhi Road, Calcutta 9, 1974, pp. 334, Price Rs. 15/-

What is a saint like? His popular picture, at least in the West, is of a grim-faced person, busy pulling up errant souls and, if they are suppliant enough, helping them get their redemption. He has little time and less inclination to laugh. He not only does not himself laugh, but does not encourage others to. How can one afford to, when there is so much sin in the world and the inevitable result of that sin is hellfire? His very presence has a chilling effect on those who love laughter: there is no question of anyone's enjoying a joke before him.

Swami Vivekananda by no means fits this description of a saint. He often laughed and made others laugh too, sometimes even at his own expense. This trait he shared with his Master, Sri Ramakrishna, whose jokes and mimicry are well known. Swami Vivekananda's love of fun shocked some of his western disciples who would rather have seen him with a long face, brooding over his responsibilities as their mentor. In one of his great lectures in San Francisco, he mentioned this feeling, 'Why do you laugh so much?'—and answered, 'I become serious sometimes—when I have a stomach-ache.'

Many books have been written on Vivekananda, but so far none about this aspect of his character. Prof. Sankari Prasad Basu has done much research on the Ramakrishna Movement and its leaders and has produced some outstanding works on the subject. He is continuing his research, and currently in lighter vein has written this book which is both interesting and revealing—as an intimate picture of Swami Vivekananda, the man. Here you see him not as a teacher, an exponent of Vedanta, or a champion of the downtrodden, but as a friend, as a playmate. Can you imagine a yogi, jubilant because he has beaten a young boy at twirling a stick between the fingers? Do you remember the incident in the U.S.A., in which he was challenged to show his marksmanship with a gun? He readily took up the challenge although he might easily have excused himself by saying that he, as a religious man, should not take part in such sports. (By his powers of concentration, he actually succeeded in hitting each 'target'—floating eggshells on a fast-moving stream!)

Normally his jokes were innocent and never

showed up others to their disadvantage. If, however, his national pride were hurt, he could be devastating. Once a Scotchman asked him, 'What is the difference between a "Baboo" and a "baboon"?' 'Oh, not much', readily replied Swamiji. 'It is like the difference between a sot and a Scot—just the difference of a letter.' Again, sometimes members of his audiences would try to trip him up over something he had said: they did not really want to understand what he was saying, but merely to heckle him. Swamiji would then often retort so appropriately that the laugh would be abruptly turned on the trouble-makers.

Yet always, behind even his harshest words, he hid a great compassionate heart. Even the most wicked had his sympathy: he knew man is very weak. Often those who made mistakes through inadvertence caught glimpses of this. A young monk once broke a very costly glass tumbler. When a senior monk began to scold him, Swamiji intervened saying, 'Why scold him for this? Such things always end up this way. After all, they cannot die of cholera or small-pox, can they?'

Professor Basu's credit is that he has helped us understand Vivekananda better. Swamiji may have been a saint, a yogi, treading dizzy heights, but his feet were still firmly planted on earth. He moved and walked as if he were a God (some, indeed, called him Buddha or Christ), but in his dealings with others he was entirely human, kind, compassionate, ever forgiving, ever friendly. If he sometimes showed temper, we love him the more for it, because we then are reassured he was like one of us, and not a God whom we can only worship from a distance.

Christ died on the cross because that was his Father's will. Vivekananda died young because that was his Master's will. He welcomed death because it meant going into eternal Life, because death was fun, as life was. He had seen the unity of life and death, good and evil.

SWAMI LOKESWARANANDA

### BOOKS RECEIVED

**PLATO ON MAN:** BY ATHENAGORAS N. ZAKOPOULOS, Published by Philosophical Library, New York, N. Y. 10016, 1975, pp. 142, Price \$ 7.50

**THE CHURCH'S NEUROSIS AND TWENTIETH CENTURY REVELATIONS:** BY C. EDWARD BARKER, Published by Rider & Co., 3 Fitzroy Square, London, W.1, 1975, pp. 272, Price £ 3.75

## NEWS AND REPORTS

### THE RAMAKRISHNA MISSION TUBERCULOSIS SANATORIUM—RANCHI REPORT FROM APRIL 1973 TO MARCH 1974

From its very beginning, in 1951, this Sanatorium has evoked keen interest from the public, and its growth was rapid, till by now it is one of the best-known of such institutions in a large area. It presently has 280 beds, with all facilities needed for the modern diagnosis and treatment of tuberculosis, including major chest surgery. An After-care Colony helps rehabilitate recovering patients for their return to society. The Sanatorium is situated on a 281.85 acres plot of land 2,100 feet above sea-level, in pleasant rural surroundings. Climate is very healthful, and a large reservoir ensures ample water supply. Of the 280 beds, 270 are in general wards—the rest in cabins or cottages.

Specialized *facilities* include: Air-conditioned operation-theatre and Recovery Room; four X-ray machines, one with provision for Tomography; Pathological Laboratory, including such important details as bacterial sensitivity tests; and Medical Library, oriented specially towards chest diseases. And for the *patients*: Recreation Hall with stage and auditorium seating 300, where dramas and motion pictures are presented; radio relays to wards; Library, with books and periodicals in four major languages; indoor-game equipment; and separate library for staff-members.

During the year under review, 809 patients were treated, of whom 274 were already in-patients at the start and 535 were admitted during the year. Of the 513 patients discharged during the year, 12 had their diseases arrested, 6 quiescent, 412 improved, 56 stationary, 5 'worse', and 22 suffering from diseases other than tuberculosis. 29 patients died including one non-T.B. case. Of the 47 surgical operations two were pneumonectomies, two lobectomies and 43, thoracoplasties—all

very extensive procedures. Meanwhile 3,805 X-ray pictures were taken. The number of laboratory examinations done was 18,907. In the Out-patient Department, 431 new and 252 repeated cases of tuberculosis and 2318 patients with other diseases were treated.

*After-care Colony and Rehabilitation Centre*: 26 ex-patients were accommodated in this Colony most of them doing useful work in various branches of the Hospital, while developing skills for future occupations.

*Free Homoeopathic Dispensary* treated during the year 5,163 new, and 6,895 repeated cases.

*Agriculture and Dairy*: In a sustained programme aiming at self-support in foodstuffs, nearly two-thirds of the cereals needed for the institution was produced by the Farm. The Sanatorium requires about 6 maunds of milk daily for the patients and other inmates. The Dairy yields about 5½ maunds of milk on average per day. Production of vegetables and fruits was also encouraging.

*Finances*: In the year under review, income was Rs. 10,86,414.44 and the expenditure Rs. 11,18,860.14. The yearly per capita expenditure came to Rs. 4,134.08.

*Needs: Office Buildings*: Office work is at present carried on in a temporary building devised to serve the purpose. *Dairy*: As indicated above, it has quite a way to go before meeting the needs of the institution.

*Estimated Costs of these needs: Office Building*: Rs. 1,00,000/-; *Dairy development*: Rs. 1,00,000/-.

Donations towards Endowment Funds are as below:

- (1) For maintaining a bed free of all charges .. .. Rs. 65,000/-
- (2) For maintaining a bed at half charges .. .. Rs. 35,000/-
- (3) Towards surgical treatment of patients .. .. Rs. 25,000/-

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### SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S BIRTHDAY

The birthday of Swami Vivekananda falls on Friday, 23 January 1976.

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